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Factors influencing an increase in the U.S. study abroad poplulation in the Middle East/North Africa

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The American University in Cairo
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FACTORS INFLUENCING AN INCREASE IN THE U.S. STUDY ABROAD POPULATION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA

A Thesis Submitted by
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degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

In the last 60 years, the relationship between the United States and the Middle East has become increasingly important to policy makers, academics, business people, and the general population. Particularly in the fallout of the events of September 11, 2001, both the U.S. government and the public have acknowledged an immediate need for a deepening of American understanding of the people, languages, and culture of the Middle East/North Africa (MENA). During the last decade, one significant way in which Americans have gained in-depth knowledge about this region has been through participation in Study Abroad (SA) programs. Data from the Institute for International Education show the number of U.S. undergraduate students studying abroad in the MENA is increasing, yet there is almost no literature related to SA in this region.

The purpose of this study is to 1) characterize students who study in the Middle East/North Africa region and 2) assess the factors which cause some study abroad students to choose this less common region rather than a more common destination. In order to investigate the motivations, attitudes, and aspects of human capital which influence study abroad destination choice, this research examines seven main factors: exposure to international issues, attitudes about national security, career intentions, language exposure, previous international travel experience, risk propensity, and scholarship support. This research analyzes data from a cross-sectional survey and focus groups of current U.S. undergraduate study abroad students.

Despite the large amount of research on outcomes and educational approaches used in SA in general, there is little literature which addresses influences on destination choice in SA. Given the increasing trend in SA programs in MENA region, this analysis provides insight into the multitude of factors which are leading students to this area of the world.

Dedication

To Michael Toomey

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

ACAS:	Association of Concerned African Scholars
AMIDEAST:	American-Mideast Educational and Training Services
AUC:	The American University in Cairo
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
CIEE:	Council on International Educational Exchange
DoD:	Department of Defense
ED:	Department of Education
GAO:	General Accounting Office
HEA:	Higher Education Act
IIE:	Institute of International Education
JYA:	Junior Year Abroad
LCTL:	Less Commonly Taught Language
MENA:	Middle East North Africa
MESA:	Middle East Studies Association
NASFA:	Association of International Educators
NDEA:	National Defense Education Act
NSEA:	National Security Education Act
NFLP:	National Flagship Language Program
NSEP:	National Security Education Program
NSLI:	National Security Language Initiative
PEJ:	Project for Excellency in Journalism
RAND:	Research and Development
RQ:	Research Question
SA:	Study Abroad
SIT:	School for International Training
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Chapter One: Introduction

I.   Introduction

In the last 60 years the relationship between the United States and the Middle East has

become increasingly important to policy makers, academics, business people, and the general

population. Particularly in the fallout of the events of September 11, 2001, both the U.S.

government and the public have acknowledged an immediate need for a deepening of American

understanding of the people, languages, and culture of the Middle East/North Africa (MENA)

region.[1] During the last decade, one significant way in which Americans have gained in-depth

knowledge about this region has been through participation in Study Abroad (SA) programs. As

Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdallah, President of al-Akhawayn University in Morocco, noted, this

knowledge has the potential to "help avoid misunderstanding and aggressive attitudes" (IIE

2009b, 5). Data from the Institute of International Education show the number of U.S.

undergraduate[2] students studying abroad in the Middle East is increasing at the same time that

the region is growing its level of strategic importance for the United States.

The tradition of SA by U.S. students was born in the early twentieth century and has become

a staple of the higher education experience over the last several decades. The solidification of SA

as an educational opportunity offered by U.S. institutions has been influenced by the

development of Area Studies, changing geo-political interests, and the growth in governmental

funding for area and language study. As the destinations for SA have diversified over the years,

there is a need for a greater understanding of the factors which contribute to growth in particular

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[1] Middle East/North Africa (MENA) and the Arab world will be used interchangeably in this paper. This refers to
all countries in the region excluding Israel. This research does not consider those students who choose Israel as a
study abroad destination as the demographics of students and rational for study in a Jewish state vary from those in
other countries in North Africa and the Middle East (see Donitsa-Schmidt and Vadish 2005).
[2] When discussing study abroad students, most reports collect data for only undergraduate students.

regions. Currently, the literature addressing student choices in relation to SA is limited. No literature specifically addresses how U.S. students choose their SA destinations.

For many students, the decision to study abroad in the MENA region is influenced by experiences accumulated during the first years of undergraduate education, personal career goals, and other individual interests which draw them to a specific region. Given the complexity of the factors involved in this choice, this study employs a theoretical model which combines expectancy, student choice, and human capital theories in order to identify the multiple factors which influence a student's decision to study in the MENA region.

This research analyzes data collected from a cross-sectional survey and focus groups with current U.S. undergraduate study abroad students[3] in order to 1) characterize students who study in the Middle East/North Africa region and 2) assess the factors which cause some SA students to choose this region rather than a more common destination.[4] The survey was administered to American study abroad students studying in the MENA region and in destinations in Western Europe and Australia during the fall of 2010. The students in the MENA region were participating in programs in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco. These countries attract high numbers of U.S. study abroad students in comparison to other countries in the MENA region: nearly 80% of those who choose the Middle East as a destination come to one of these three countries (IIE 2009b, 7). These responses are compared with those of students currently studying in common

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[3] Data was gathered from students who were currently enrolled in a semester or full-academic year program outside of the United States for which they will receive academic credit at their home institution. Other students, such as those who are fully enrolled in universities outside of the U.S.(i.e. someone who transferred to The American University in Cairo) were not included in this study.

[4] Wells (2006) has defined non-traditional destination as those in which few Americans study. Non-traditional destinations have been classified as those in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. European (both western and eastern) countries are considered the most traditional destinations. This study will refer to those destinations as "common destinations." In this particular study, common destinations are considered those in Western Europe and Australia.

destinations[5] in order to see if the factors which influence destination choice differ between the two groups.

In addition to the quantitative analysis of the survey, this study also collected qualitative data through focus groups of U.S. students studying abroad in programs in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco in order to better understand the student process of choosing the MENA region as a destination for SA.

Given the increasing trend in study abroad programs in MENA, a more rigorous analysis will be a valuable reference for educators and administrators in home and host countries. An understanding of the factors which draw students to this region will assist these programs in both recruiting and serving students. This research hopes to better explain how specific social, cultural, and economic experiences in college impact student educational choices. Further this study takes into account current attitudes and future motivations which are also seen to influence choices students make during their college careers.

II.   Research Objectives

In order to describe those students who choose to study in the MENA region and explore the factors which influence their choice, this research uses survey and focus group methods to address seven research questions (RQ):

1)   Does frequency of exposure to current international issues and events affect students' choice of destination?
2)   What is the relationship between concern for national security issues and SA destination choice?
3)   Do intentions regarding career paths serve as motivation for students' choice to study in the MENA region?

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[5] According to Open Doors 2010 data, Western Europe continues to host a majority (55%) of all SA students. Australia is currently host to 4% of all U.S. SA students. This research has chosen to include students who study abroad in Australia given that Australia has consistently been either the fifth or sixth most common destination for SA for over a decade. In addition, Australia is often seen as a common-destination for U.S students due to linguistic and cultural similarities between the two countries.

4) What is the relationship between prior language training and students' choice of study abroad region?
5) Does the amount of students' previous international travel relate to the decision to study in the MENA region?
6) In what way does a student's risk propensity relate to student choice of SA destination?
7) Does scholarship support for SA have an impact on the study abroad region of choice for students?

Exposure to International Issues

This study examines the relationship between exposure to international issues and SA destination choice (RQ1). The 2008 General Social Survey[6] indicated that only 17% of college-age respondents are very interested in international issues, with 45% moderately interested, and 38% not interested at all (National Opinion Research Center 2008). One of the key methods of exposure to issues related to current international politics and conflicts in the United States is through media coverage.[7] Following the series of attacks that took place in the United States on September 11, 2001, US-Middle East relations have become increasingly important issues for media outlets to cover. During the last decade, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calls for Islamisation of states throughout the Middle East region, and terrorism around the MENA region have remained prominent in the media and in public debate. For several weeks following September 11, 2001, 24-hour news coverage of the events played on all the major U.S. news divisions (Munchi 2004, 49). In the year following, the media focused on the 'War on Terror,' Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden. Starting with the anniversary of 9/11 in 2002, U.S. media attention began to focus on Sadaam Hussain and his

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[6]The General Social Survey is a sociological survey conducted annually by National Opinion Research Center which collects information on demographics and attitudes of U.S. citizens.
[7] Media coverage in this case refers to communications that reach wide audiences such as those from newspapers, television, or radio. According to data from the 2008 General Social Survey, college-age Americans (those 18-21) most frequently get their news from either T.V. (39%) or the internet (31%) and newspapers (12%).

regime due to stated intents by the Bush administration to attack Iraq. At this time, the word 'terror' became a "linguistic staple in US broadcast media, especially television" (Munchi 2004, 54). 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' was launched by the U.S. military in 2003, and news attention focused frequently on the war in Iraq. In the years since, media has devoted much air time to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as to the issues surrounding these conflicts such as terrorism, the Taliban, and domestic threat alerts.

According to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellency in Journalism (PEJ), in the five years following the events of September 11, 2001 there was a marked increase in U.S. media coverage of foreign policy, armed conflict, and terrorism. The PEJ examined the change in time devoted to specific topics on the three major U.S. television networks (2002-2005 vs. 1997-2000) and found the coverage of terrorism, U.S. foreign policy, and wars and armed conflict increased by 135%, 102%, and 69%, respectively. The American Council on Education found that people aged 18-29 "appear more likely to follow international news since 2000;" with 58% of the youth surveyed in 2002 stating that they follow news very closely or somewhat closely, as opposed to 45% of youth in 2000 (Siaya *et al* 2003, 3). As Philip Khoury argues, "it is true that war and acts of terrorism often correlate with an increase in media attention on the [MENA] region, and this in turn provokes student interest and enhances enrollment" in programs related to the Middle East (Khoury 2000, 120). This opinion has been supported with data from a 2003 survey by GradSchools.com, which found that 35% of "prospective graduate students say the war in Iraq has made them more interested in government or military jobs" (Anonymous 2003, 14).

Another way that U.S. university students are frequently exposed to international issues is through aspects of academic life which have an international focus. In the last ten years there

has been a push within higher education institutions in the United States to internationalize and expand "their roles in educating their students and the American public about international issues, events, and cultures" (Hser 2005, 45). Internationalization is defined by Knight as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of postsecondary education" (2003, 2). The rationale for internationalization of higher education typically falls within one of the following four categories: economic, political, academic, and socio-cultural (Childress 2009, 290). Following the events of 9/11, directors of higher education have supported internationalization largely for political rationales, emphasizing "the need to equip students with an awareness of world cultures and skills necessary to address national security and foreign policy concerns" (Childress 2009, 290).

In Hser's study (2005), the following characteristics were found to be the greatest indicators of a higher education institution's internationalization: number of foreign languages offered, variety of international courses, number of international students on campus, frequency of international activities, and amount of study abroad opportunities. In her 2001 work, Knight also suggested that the international nature of faculty (nationality, conducting research abroad, etc.) serves as a tracking measure for an institution's internationalization efforts. Based on previous research, this study measures students' prior exposure to international issues by examining the following variables: amount of media exposure, previous language courses, participation in courses with an international focus, interaction with international students, involvement in activities related to international issues, and contact with professors who integrate their own international experience into the classroom.

In addition to exposure to international issues, this study further examines the relationship between opinions about U.S. national security and SA destination choice (RQ2).

Research has demonstrated that national interests and approaches to national security can shape public opinion about international issues (Brewer 2006, 99). Currently, there is no research addressing the influence of opinions about national security on SA destination choice, and this study attempts to better understand how general attitudes about this topic are related to SA decisions.

Career Intentions

This survey looks at issues related to future career choices (RQ3). A recent study by the RAND Corporation[8] indicates that "in spite of the great demand for employees with international experience, a severe shortage exists in public, private, and nonprofit sectors in the United States" (Mohajeri and Gillespie 2009, 382). International education offices often suggest that SA experiences increase the marketability of young students because these opportunities offer them the chance to gain the type of international experience that is desired by future employers. Websites market SA programs to students as opportunities to "enhance your employment prospects, especially in the fields of business, international affairs, and government service" (Studyabroad online). Specifically, skills that students will gain during their foray abroad, such as foreign language proficiency, cross-cultural communication, analytical, and technical abilities are purposed to make them more economically competitive (Wells 2006). SA administrators suggest that these skills also make students more marketable to global businesses and more likely to gain future employment in the international workforce. A few studies have indicated that employers believe "study abroad enhances personal qualities and skills that they value in prospective employees" (Trooboff *et al* 2007, 29).

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[8] The RAND (Research and Development) Corporation was founded in the aftermath of WWII and is an American non-profit organization. Originally RAND focused on national security issues, but in the decades since its founding has expanded its research to focus on a broader range of issues which relate to public welfare.

Reflecting the need for internationally competent employees and the recruitment methods used by SA programs, students themselves also perceive SA experiences as a way to improve their job prospects. Empirical data from the Institute of International Education of Students demonstrated a perceived relationship between study abroad and career choices of students. Of the 3,753 alumni that participated in the survey, two-thirds reported that their SA experience affected the career choices they made (Norris and Gillespie 2009, 394). Some of the ways in which SA influenced their careers included sparking an interest in a certain career, improving foreign language ability which could be used in the workplace, acquiring skills that influenced career paths, or influencing them to work abroad.

In addition, a 1979 study of University of Colorado students found that 45% of those who studied abroad in the 1960s and 1970s believed that their SA experiences helped them obtain employment (Bowman 1987, 33). In 2000, the ACE and StudentPOLL surveyed a group of college-bound high-school seniors. Of the 500 respondents, "more than 60% reported that they were interested in international education to gain career-related experiences" (Norris and Gilespie 2009, 383). The same perception has been found in current college students. In 2003, the ACE released findings of a public survey of 1,290 undergraduate students examining the status of internationalization in post-secondary education. Eighty percent of these students believed that increasing their understanding of global issues, cultures, and international issues would help them in pursue future career goals (Siaya and Hayward 2003, 9). In addition, a survey of 656 undergraduate students conducted in 1999 by Albers-Miller *et al* found that over 60% of students thought that participation in SA programs would help them get a job after

graduation (30). The Institute of International Education (IIE)[9] has echoed these findings by stating that students studying abroad in the Arab world "seek to gain language skills and regional experience that they see as useful for future employment particularly in the fields of national security, foreign policy, and business" (IIE 2009b, 13). In order to more fully understand the relationship between career intentions and study abroad destination, this study examines intended career and graduate fields of students in different SA destinations.

Language Exposure

Through survey and focus groups this research looks at increasing interest in the Arabic language in the United States as one of the possible reasons for growth in U.S. SA numbers in the Middle East (RQ4). Although Arabic language offerings may seem to have become almost common at U.S. universities today, in the 1990s there was significantly "less interest in Arabic and the regions in which it is spoken" (Allen 2007, 258). Arabic language experts have argued that since the events of September 11, 2001, Arabic has been transformed "to become the number-one desideratum of the American government and its various agencies" (Allen 2007, 258). In the late 1950s, U.S. language educators referred to growing interest in foreign languages as "the Sputnik Moment" and al Batal argues that "the post-9/11 era represents the Sputnik Moment for Arabic" (al Batal 2007, 271). The Arabic language is important not only because it is spoken throughout the Arab world, but also because it is the language of the Qur'an. Therefore the Arabic language is becoming an important language in areas far beyond the Middle East given the increasing numbers of Muslims in Asia and Africa. In essence, Arabic has come to be seen "as a language vital to national interest and security" (al Batal 2007, 268).

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[9] The Institute is a non-profit organization which was founded in 1919. IIE focuses on international study and training programs and conducts research on international education. It should also be noted that the IIE also administers several programs for the U.S. State Department including Fulbright and Gilman scholarships.

This need for language experts has spurred growth in the number of Arabic offerings and enrollment at U.S. universities. A 2007 survey by the Modern Language Association showed "Arabic enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities has increased by 127 percent since 2002 and is now among the 10 most popular foreign languages taught in U.S. colleges and universities" (IIE 2009b, 19). There are now more than 24,000 students taking Arabic courses at more than 450 universities in the United States (IIE Networker 2009, 37). Since many universities only offer beginning and intermediate levels of Arabic, students often choose to come to the Middle East in order to obtain more advanced language education (IIE Networker 2009, 37). It is likely that many students make the connection between learning Arabic and potential employment with the U.S. government. In a small 2007 survey (n=142) at one American university, Taha found that most American students "were of the opinion that learning Arabic would increase the chances of getting a good job" such as one with the State Department, military, United Nations, *et cetera* (Taha 2007 155). Through an examination of past language coursework, this research aims to examine how previous language exposure relates to SA destination choice.

Previous International Travel Experience

Building on past research, this study examines students' previous international travel in relation to choice of study abroad destination (RQ5). Research has found that prior international travel experience has the potential to influence students' decision to choose to study abroad rather than remain at their home university for the duration of their degree (Relyea *et al* 2008, 353). Yet, the relationship between the two factors "remains unclear due to largely inconsistent empirical findings on this topic" (Goldstein and Kim 2006, 511). Research by Goldstein & Kim and Hembroff & Ruz suggest that previous travel experience may both provoke interest in

diverse cultures and give students confidence that they have the skills required for a SA experience, but there is no empirical data to fully support this hypothesis.

Although international travel has not yet been determined to influence a student's decision to SA, it has been recognized as influencing attitudes among university students. In a study of 1,000 undergraduate students at Michigan State University, Hembroff & Rusz found "significant attitude differences among those who have travelled abroad and those who have not" (1993, 29). The researchers also found that the method in which students travel abroad influences their attitudes towards international issues. Those students who travelled in a manner which allowed for cultural immersion in the host country "were consistently more interested in international relations, more understanding of the potential impact of global events on U.S. interests, less ethnocentric, more positive toward international cooperation, and more favorable toward foreign language study than others" (Hembroff and Rusz 1993, 15). In May of 2009 the American University in Cairo (AUC) Office of Institutional Research administered an exit survey to international students.[10] According to the survey, 47% of SA students (both one semester and full year) had traveled to five or more countries other than their own and Egypt. The survey does not ask students when specifically this travel takes place, so it is unclear if this travel happened prior or during their SA experience in the MENA region. In order to fill the current gap in literature, this study examines location and type of travel in order to investigate the relationship between previous international travel and choice of SA destination.

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[10] This survey sampled 519 international students at AUC. 147 of these students listed the U.S. as their primary nationality; 122 of those were non degree-seeking study abroad students. The survey did not distinguish the primary nationality or gender of the study abroad students, but 89.1% of all respondents identified as American indicating that it is likely that a high percentage of study abroad students responding would also be American.

Risk Propensity

Additionally, this research examines the relationship between risk propensity and SA location choices (RQ6). Previous research has indicated that the decision to SA "has a number of inherent risks" (Luethge 2004, 24). Some risks associated with SA include that students may not feel they have enough time to gather adequate information about a SA program or that they would lose control over situations if studying outside of the United States (Relyea *et al* 2008, 349). In addition, Relyea *et al* (350) argue that students perceive physical, financial, and psychological risks associated with the study abroad experience.

Relyea *et al* (350) found support for a relationship between risk propensity and likelihood of studying abroad. Students who are willing to take risks are more open to new experiences and as such, "a high degree of openness results in people more likely to engage in cross-cultural studies and to collaborate with people of diverse backgrounds" (Garber, 194). In specific relation to the MENA region, recent political events have increased a perception of high physical risk when travelling to this region. In 2003 the U.S. State Department warned that "terrorists may target U.S. interests overseas" particularly "restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels, outdoor recreation events, or resorts and beaches" (Quoted in Hoye 2003, B12). These locations, as Hoye points out, are "precisely the places where American students in international study-abroad programs tend to congregate" (2003, B12). The IIE has stated that student, parent, and university concern about security risks "is a leading reason why relatively few American students study in the region" (IIE 2009b, 17). It should be noted that although concerns about terrorism may have had an impact on the number of students who choose to study in the MENA region, this alone does explain why this region is not as popular as other destinations such as those in Western Europe or Australia. Quite simply, there is a smaller percentage of Americans

who have cultural ties and a history of travel to the MENA region in comparison to countries in common destinations. Rather than the primary explanation for low SA participation, safety concerns are one factor contributing to low participation of SA in the region.

Comments from a 2009 focus group with AUC SA students indicated that many students' families and friends did express unease and fear about the risks involved in studying abroad in the MENA region. [11] Despite these concerns, students themselves said they were not scared to come to the region. Previous research has pointed out that risk propensity is a complex concept that may be best understood as a continuum rather than its extreme ends. In Rohrmann's 2006 study discussing risk attitude scales, the researcher points out that "people differ considerably in their attitude towards risks, ranging from cautiousness to risk-seeking and even pleasure in risk-taking" (1). In the case of SA destination choice, students may either feel attracted to the risks of certain destinations or students exhibiting risk propensity may see risk as less of a deterrent than risk-averse students. Based on the work of Garver, Meertens and Lion, Relyea *et al,* and Rohrmann; survey and focus group data will examine student attitudes about risk in relation to their SA destination choice.

Scholarship Support

Lastly, this study examines the relationship between scholarship support and SA destination choice (RQ7). Participation in SA is often constrained by the cost factor for many students (Lien 2007, 203). One study abroad director has noted that "years ago we could say that studying abroad was the same price as staying on campus. There's no way we can say that anymore" (Quoted in Go 2007, n.p.). Anecdotal evidence points to increasing participation in

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[11] Two focus groups were conducted with U.S. students studying abroad at the American University in Cairo in the fall of 2009 in order to explore the reasons American students choose to study abroad in the Middle East as well as to learn about their future goals in relation to the MENA region. Both sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes. A total of eight participants were asked a series of 16 questions about studying abroad in the Middle East.

short-term SA programs and SA in the developing world as results of the increasing costs of study abroad (Go 2007, n.p). One of the main ways in which students are participating in SA programs, despite increased costs, is with the assistance of scholarship funds. Many schools offer specific SA scholarship funds for their students. In addition, government scholarships, which are rooted in U.S. national security interests, such as the Gilman, David Boren, and military scholarships have increased diversity of student participation and diversity of SA location. These particular scholarships are related to the growing number of students in the MENA region, particularly those students who are interested careers with national security agencies. This study examines students' receipt of scholarships to support their SA experience, their attitudes about whether or not they would have studied abroad without their funds, and how these factors relate to a student's destination choice.

III. Summary

Based on the research objectives laid out above, this research examines the factors influencing students' choice of the MENA region as a SA destination. This research investigates the motivations, attitudes, and human capital which influence destination choice. By employing a framework that accounts for the influence of seven main concepts (exposure to international issues, attitudes about national security, career intentions, language exposure, previous international travel experience, risk propensity, and scholarship support) this research uses data collected from current SA students to better understand the recent trend of growing numbers of U.S. undergraduate students choosing to SA in the in the MENA region. An investigation of this growth most appropriately begins by situating current trends within the long and rich history of the American tradition of SA.

Chapter Two: History

I.   Introduction

In order to better understand the factors leading to an increase of SA students in the MENA region, it is imperative to first look at the history of the outgrowth of SA in this particular part of the world. In this chapter, we will examine subjects including the history of Area Studies, government funding for area and language education, and the history of the tradition of studying abroad. Once this foundation is established, we can then investigate the relationships that connect federal funding and Area Studies to SA specifically. This background is intended to show how American foreign policy has shaped support for international education, which has in turn influenced the numbers of students studying abroad in the Middle East and North Africa.

II.   A History of Area Studies

Prior to WWII the United States' foreign affairs were primarily focused "on Europe, though they included East Asia and Latin America, and to a much lesser extent British and French imperial territories in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East" (Ludden 2001, 2). As WWII came to a close, the U.S. emerged as a dominant world power. With this shift in geopolitical power, the United States faced an increasing need to better understand regions of the world to which American academics, policy makers, and intelligence specialists had previously given only limited attention to. In the years following 1945, a common belief amongst American policy makers was that "a pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 1). At this point in American history the U.S. government possessed very little knowledge about the majority of the world's peoples. For example, prior to 1947 there was no centralized U.S. intelligence

agency. Only as a result of World War II and the attacks at Pearl Harbor was the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) created (Khaladi, 178). Previously the United States government did not possess the broad capabilities to collect intelligence and had relied on British or other sources for information about other countries of the world (Weiner 2008).

Prior to the 1950s very few U.S. universities were able to produce specialists in foreign areas besides Western Europe (Wiley 2001, 12). In 1947 "there were only fourteen language and Area Studies programs on all U.S. campuses—six for Latin America, four for East and Southeast Asia, three for East Europe, one for South Asia, and none for Africa or the Middle East (Wiley 2001, 12). The programs that did exist were only offered "in a few elite universities [and] tended to be focused on ancient history, archeology, and the philology of dead languages" (Khaladi, 178).

In the years following World War II, a large number of new nation states emerged and American interests became more global. In tandem with these developments, a new academic field of study came onto the scene in order to meet the need for knowledge and specialists on areas of the world that were becoming more politically active. That field was Area Studies, which has been defined as centering on the following activities:

> (1) intensive language study; (2) in-depth field research in the local language(s); (3) close attention to local histories, viewpoints, materials, and interpretations; (4) testing, elaborating, critiquing, or developing grounded theory against detailed observation; and (5) multi-disciplinary conversations often crossing the boundaries of the social sciences and humanities (Szanton 2004, 4).

Although Area Studies scholars may specialize in one country, they also "try to contextualize their efforts in large regions of the world (e.g. Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia), beyond the US and Western Europe" (Szanton 2004, 4). Area Studies is understood to differ from other disciplines such as History, Anthropology, or Political Science in that Area

Studies focuses on the training of people who may work in a discipline but "have a clear subspecialty in a language or area" as opposed to those scholars who associate primarily with their discipline and may only have "a passing acquaintance with one or more areas of the globe" (Brecht and Rivers 2000, 6). Academics, such as Sir Hamilton Gibb, supported the interdisciplinary nature of Area Studies and argued that "area studies is not a rival to, or a dilution of, classical oriental studies, but a valuable extension of them, directed to a wider body of students" (Gibb 1963, 17).

Area Studies is usually noted to have gained popularity in 1958 during the fallout of the launching of the Soviet Union's unmanned satellite *Sputnik*. This impressive feat by a U.S. rival caused a great deal of alarmist reactions amongst lawmakers and President Eisenhower's administration. The launch of the satellite was seen as "stunning proof of the USSR's technological leap from its pre-war days, and an unmistakable signal from the Soviets of their seriousness in contending for geopolitical leadership in a world of multiplying nations shedding colonial rule" (Wiley 2001, 13). This marked a particularly tense period during the Cold War in which the U.S. and the Soviet Union were increasingly competing for the allegiance of developing nations.

III.   History of Funding for Area Studies and Language Study in the U.S.

Formal Area Studies programs at American universities emerged largely because U.S. legislators saw an increasing need for global specialists and were now willing to provide funds through federal programs in order to support such training. The executive branch developed a legislative plan in response to the launch of *Sputnik* which "focused on improving scientific expertise, but it also included graduate fellowships and grants to universities for language study" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 269). The end product of the Eisenhower administration's

suggestions was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), introduced in Congress in 1958. The objective of the legislation was clearly tied to national security needs of the United States. The law stated that the purpose of NDEA was "to insure trained manpower of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the national defense needs of the United States" (Public Law 85-864). The section of NDEA which is most relevant to this research is Title VI, which provided federal funding for language and Area Studies at US universities.

The alarm caused by the initiation of *Sputnik* was accompanied by a realization that American diplomats and policy makers had either limited or no linguistic and cultural knowledge about much of the world. This consternation can be seen in statements made by members of the U.S. Congress during floor debate on the NDEA. One representative discussed his surprise "upon discovering that only five American diplomats working in Arabic-speaking countries were fluent in the language (the comparable figure for the Soviet Union, he claimed, was 300)" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 271). Further emphasizing the lack of American capabilities, Representative James Roosevelt (D-CA) said:

> [L]anguage instruction in our schools and colleges is so badly neglected that we do not even have enough people who are proficient in French, Spanish, and German to meet the requirements of our international affairs. The fast-moving events of the last few years have dramatically—often, for us, tragically—revealed the emergence of the peoples of Africa and Asia into the centers of world power. Yet for the most part we know nothing of their languages and all too little of their cultures (Quoted in O'Connell and Norwood, 271).

Another member of Congress, Representative John Linsay (R-New York) argued that "educational and cultural exchange is as fundamental—though far less costly—an instrument of our foreign policy as our massive programs of defense and foreign aid" (Quoted in O'Connell and Norwood, 273). There was very little opposition to the NDEA, and the law passed easily on September 2, 1958.

Although Title VI was originally approved as a temporary program and authorized for only four years, the legislation was renewed continuously throughout the proceeding five decades. In addition to Title VI, several other pieces of legislation were passed in the 1990s and 2000s in order to provide funding for language and area specialty training; including the Boren Bill and the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI). The records of legislation related to education and national security include a wide array of programs which have been amended, reorganized, introduced, and cancelled over the years. The history of government funding for higher education in connection to national security needs can be divided into four main periods:[12]

1) the initial years (1958-1972), the introduction of Title VI and emerging programs;

2) the middle years (1973-1990), solidification of Title VI programs;

3) the later years (1991-2000) the continuation of Title VI programs and introduction of the National Security Education Act (Boren Bill); and

4) the current period (2001-2010) when the usefulness of Title VI programs has been questioned and alternative legislation such as the NSLI was introduced to fill the gaps of Title VI.

A. Initial Years of Title VI (1958-1972)

As originally written, the NDEA legislation was designed to provide funding for the "education of specialists in various disciplines, among them foreign languages and Area Studies" (Hines 2001, 6). Title VI of the act, was entitled "Language Development" and allocated $8 million for language training. Adjusted for inflation, this allocation is equivalent to more than $60 million in current dollars. As mentioned previously, there were extremely limited options for

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[12] These designations are based on the rough periods of development as defined by the National Research Council's Committee to Review the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays International Programs (see O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 28).

language education in the U.S. in the late 1950s, with "few of the languages spoken by more than three-fourths of the world's population being offered in the United States, and not enough scholars were available to perform research in such languages or to teach them" (Hines 2001, 6). The Language Development section of Title NDEA consisted of four parts:

> (1) Language and Area Centers (Part A, Sec. 601a) for the expansion of instruction in higher education of the uncommonly taught languages and related subjects; (2) Modern Foreign Language Fellowships (Part A, Sec. 601b)-the "stipend clause"- to assist qualified advanced students in their study of the uncommonly taught languages. (3) Research and Studies (Part A, Sec. 602) relating to both the common and uncommonly taught languages. (4) Language Institutes (Part B, Sec. 611) for upgrading elementary and secondary school teachers of modern foreign languages. (Mildenberger 1961, 289)

NDEA focused specifically on increasing proficiency in less commonly taught foreign languages (LCTLs) which were defined as Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian (Wiley 2001, 13). These languages have been acknowledged as particularly time consuming languages to master for native English speakers. The Federal Interagency Language Roundtable has developed a timetable which estimates the amount of time necessary for federal employees to obtain the skills necessary for professional work in different languages. For languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, learners average "88 weeks, or 2,200 hours (with the second year of instruction taking place in the country)….as compared to the 23-24 weeks and 575-500 hours for languages close to English—Romance Languages" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 45). In order to provide education for these languages, Title VI supported four main programs: Language and Area Centers, Modern Foreign Language Fellowships, Research and Studies, and Language Institutes (Hines 2001, 7).

Perhaps the most lasting and important outcome of the initial passage of Title VI is that the legislation connected the government and Area Studies. Area Studies received its limited funding in the late 1940s and early 1950s from private groups such as the Ford, Rockefeller,

Carnegie, and Mellon foundations (Wiley 2001, 14). With the passage of NDEA, the combination of private and government funding led to an explosion in Area Studies. By 1964 there were already 55 Area Studies Centers around the country.[13] In the decades following the emergence of this field, Title VI became the main funding source that universities looked to in order to subsidize Area Studies programs. Although initially focused on appropriations for language study, over the years, Title VI funds were increasingly used to "learn in depth about the histories, societies, cultures, and political systems of the key foreign powers as well as of the rapidly multiplying 'Third World' nations" (Wiley 2001, 13). This relationship between the field and the federal allocations distinguished Area Studies from other disciplines in that discussions of academic funding for this field almost "always involved discussions of global politics and the usefulness of Area Studies for U.S. interests" (Ludden 2001, 3).

B. Middle Years of Title VI (1973-1990)

Although widely supported during the late 1950s and 1960s, federal funding for Area Studies came under scrutiny in the 1970s and 1980s. The Nixon administration attempted to "eliminate Title VI or at least reduce funding for it, hoping to ultimately phase out the program" (Keller and Frain 2010, 29). The opposition to Title VI was based on the belief that the program had accomplished the goal of training area specialists and in the future young people would pursue expertise in these areas without the help of the federal government (Keller and Frain 2010, 29). The administration failed in this effort and Title VI funding continued as a result of "lobbying by representatives of higher education (combined with an intervention by national security advisor Henry Kissinger himself)" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 275).

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[13] Of the 55 Centers 11 focused on East Asia, 10 on Slavic and East Europe, 8 on the Middle East, 7 on South Asia, 7 on Latin America, 5 on Sub-Saharan Africa, 3 on Southeast Asia, 2 on Uralic-Altaic regions, and 2 on Asian-Slavic (Mildenberger 1964, 27).

During the 1970s events such as the Vietnam War, the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, and the Cold War continued to complicate the U.S.'s geo-political relations and international standing. In light of this global landscape, Title VI programs and Area Studies were seen by many as a necessary way to address the strategic interests of the American government. When Jimmy Carter was elected as president in 1976, supporters of international education were relieved. Shortly after his election, President Carter "established a commission on foreign language and area studies, which recommended that the nation spend $178 million to enhance international education" (Keller and Frain 2010, 30). During this same year, Congress also passed the Educational Amendments of 1976 creating a program which was intended to help students obtain a deeper understanding of "cultures and actions of other nations to better evaluate the international and domestic impacts of major national policies" (Quoted in O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 277).

Under the Carter administration, funding for Area Studies found a permanent statutory place in new education legislation. In 1980, Title VI of NDEA was repealed and was incorporated into the Higher Education Act (HEA) under the title "International and Foreign Language Studies" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 278). According to O'Connell and Norwood's legislative history, the integration of Title VI into HEA was intended to emphasize the general importance of these types of programs in higher education. Further, amendments were added which injected more of a business focus into Title VI programs as a result of a growing concern about the U.S. competitiveness with Asia and Western Europe (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 280). This inclusion reshaped Title VI funding, which now focused on helping students to obtain knowledge critical not only to national security, but also economic security. Other noteworthy changes to Title VI upon integration into HEA included dropping the service

requirement of recipients of Title VI funds. The House Committee on Education and Labor removed this stipulation in order to "encourage individuals seeking careers outside teaching—such as business—to participate in these programs" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 279).

Ronald Reagan campaigned for president in 1980 on a platform which often pointed out the "foreign policy failings" of the prior administration and argued that "America needed to reassert itself in the world" (Keller and Frain 2010, 32). Although this message helped bring President Reagan to power, once in office the administration did not view international education as a means to pursue American interests. Instead, President Reagan attempted to "cut funds for federally supported international education programs substantially" (Keller and Frain 2010, 32). Once again, these efforts proved futile and programs such as Title VI continued to receive government funds. Although its funding remained in place, concern remained about the purpose of the program. In 1981, a study by the RAND Corporation stated that Area Studies centers "should make efforts to link their programs to more policy-oriented disciplines and help their students identify and prepare for nonacademic jobs…[There] is a disjunction between center focus and national need, as defined by academic, governmental and business employers" (quoted in Hajjar and Niva 1997, n.p.).

C. Later Years of Title VI and introduction of the Boren Bill (1991-2001)

As the Cold War came to an end, there were very few modifications made to Title VI programs. Title VI remained unchanged in this period because instead of altering the HEA, Congress passed a new piece of legislation in 1991: the National Security Education Act (NSEA).[14] The NSEA was "the first major new piece of legislation targeting international

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[14] Better known as the "Boren Bill" after Senator David L. Boren (D-OK) who introduced the bill.

education in nearly 30 years" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 281). Specifically, the designed purpose of the program was:

> To provide the resources and flexibility necessary to meet the national security needs of the United States; to increase the quantity and quality of teaching and learning for foreign languages and area studies; expand the pool of applicants for employment in U.S. Government agencies with national security responsibilities; expand the foreign language and area studies knowledge base upon which U.S. citizens and Government employees can rely; and permit the Federal Government to advocate the cause of international education (Riddle 1992, 3).

The $150 million in original appropriations were intended to create programs which would "complement, not duplicate or replace, the foreign language and area studies programs previously authorized under Title VI of the Higher Education Act (HEA)" (Riddle 1992, 2). Unlike Title VI which is administered by the Department of Education (ED), the new funding provided through NSEA would be controlled by the Department of Defense (DoD). This shift in administration of language and Area Studies funding was likely a reflection of the changing geopolitical context that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the United States' primary rival fell, there was a growing consensus that the government needed to be prepared for new and emerging security concerns.

In the months following the 1990/91 Gulf War, a number of Congressional hearings took place which focused "on the adequacy of higher education in preparing students for the new challenges of the world" (Keller and Frain 2010, 37). The results of these hearings were the identification of a pervasive lack of trained language and area specialists working in national security. Researchers have been unable to explain why area specialists, particularly those who benefit from Title VI funding, do not tend to work for the national government. Yet one can presume that many recipients go into teaching or pursue more lucrative work in the private sector. The NSEA was designed to help the federal government better identify languages critical

to U.S. interests, train language specialists, and then to have those trained individuals enter careers which focused on national security issues. NSEA attempted to draw legitimacy by emphasizing the idea that

> protecting U.S. national security was not solely limited to planning for wars and developing ever more sophisticated military technology. Ensuring national security interests was also an educational challenge, requiring the federal government and the American educational system to prepare young people in critical skills (Keller and Frain 2010, 37).

The primary component of NSEA was the National Security Education Program (NSEP) which was created to provide "scholarships for American undergraduates to study overseas; grants to colleges and universities to strengthen curricula in foreign languages, area studies, and international studies; and graduate fellowships for students interested in government service in areas where expertise is needed" (Boren 1992, 861). Those students who are awarded NSEP funding are then mandated to make an effort to find employment in the federal government, particularly in national security positions. The service stipulations oblige

> NSEP award recipients to first seek employment in one of four federal organizations (Departments of Defense, Homeland security, State, and the intelligence community) and, if no position is available, in any federal agency in a position related to national security (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 63).

Those individuals who fail to meet the service requirement are then required to "repay the amount of assistance given to them, plus interest" (Riddle 1992, 4).

One of the primary differences between Title VI and the David L. Boren funds is the government service requirement for those who receive NSEP funded language and area specialty training. Title VI legislation originally required that those who participated in certain programs to 'repay' their assistance by finding employment in public service. Those requirements were later dropped. In contrast the NSEP funds are "specifically aimed at developing a pipeline of individuals with specific talents into jobs at federal bureaucracies" (O'Connell and Norwood

2007, 81). A second difference between the pieces of legislation is that the NSEP had a more clearly defined national security application. Funds are concentrated on a limited set of critical languages; those from nations "that have not traditionally been the focus of American interest and study" (Riddle 1992, 3). The NSEP applied to "current language needs in the area of national security, the critical foreign languages spoken in nations that are important allies or actual or potential adversaries of the United States" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 63). Lastly, whereas most of the Title VI programs take place in the United States, NSEP fellows are more likely to spend long periods of time studying abroad.

Upon initial passage there was a great deal of apprehension from Area Studies educators that NSEP grantees would be too easily associated with U.S. intelligence agencies, particularly during their time abroad. Several academic associations such as The Middle East Studies Association (MESA), The Association of Concerned African Scholars (ACAS), the Association of African Studies Programs, the Latin American Studies Association, and the Association of Asian Studies raised concerns about the safety of students as well as the reputations of educational institutions if they are believed to have relations with agencies like the CIA (Riddle 1992, 7). The boards of these organizations feared that accepting funding from NSEP would "threaten the openness of scholarly inquiry and publication, the physical safety of scholars and students overseas and cooperation between African and US scholars" (ACAS 1992, 107). As a result of this fear, MESA and others encouraged both their membership and academic institutions to reject NSEP funding. In addition, ACAS and MESA have spoken out against the stipulation that a representative from the CIA will sit on the National Security Education Board which oversees NSEP programs and evaluates proposals (MESA 1996 and ACAS 1992). MESA urged the Senate and the House to change administration of the program to the ED in order to

make a clear distinction between area studies students and the interests of U.S. intelligence agencies (MESA 2002).

This debate is reminiscent of a flaring of criticism in the 1960s when the CIA was revealed to have links to American educational and cultural programs (Keller and Frain 2010, 38). Defenders of NSEA have argued that this should not be a concern as the bill stipulates that aid recipients may not be "engaged in intelligence activities…during the period such person is pursuing a program of education for which funds are provided" (Riddle 1992, 7). Despite these defenses, many area specialists continue to feel that the relationship between students and intelligence agencies has become too close for comfort. During the passage of NSEA there was wide agreement amongst lawmakers that "it was critical for the United States to increase opportunities for American students to study in geo-strategically under-served destinations" (Keller and Frain 2010, 38). NSEA became a way of sending students to these destinations, as well as ensuring that they returned and put their experiences to work within the U.S. government.

Within the first 10 years of existence NSEP sent 1,250 undergraduates and 620 graduate students abroad (Desruisseaux 2000, 1). The top destinations for NSEP recipients included Russia, Japan, China, Brazil, Mexico and Egypt. Just four years after its initial passage, Congress began to express concern that "the government was not benefiting enough from the program" and attempted to require not just government service, but service with either the DoD or intelligence agencies (Desruisseaux 2000, 3). Although the alteration was softened by the efforts of Senator Paul Simon (D-IL), the service requirement was changed to require recipients to repay their fellowships through service "in any federal agency with national-security responsibilities" (Desruisseaux 2000, 3).

Although the emergence of NSEP could have potentially replaced Title VI, Congress continued to reauthorize this section of ED legislation throughout the 1990s. Although there was nominal support from Congress for Title VI, a report prepared by the Congressional Research Service points out that "in 'real' terms, the FY 1991 appropriation for title VI remains well below the level of mid-1960s—a decline of an estimated 24 percent overall" (Riddle 1992, 6). Throughout the 1990s, Congress continued support for traditional Area Studies and language programs and also provided growing financial support for education in these fields in order to create a more effective pipeline of specialists to government service.

D. Current Period of Title VI and National Security Language Initiative (2001-today)

Many scholars have marked events of September 11, 2001 as a critical point in U.S. history in regards to the explosion of general academic concern about the MENA region and the need for governmental personnel who are well trained in critical languages and Middle East Studies. According to Zachary Lockman, there have been a large number of scholars who have "responded to 9/11 and its aftermath by devoting considerable time and energy to research and writing on Islamism, on the origins, meaning and consequences of 9/11, or on U.S. involvement in the Middle East" (Lockman 2007, 344). In addition to research, Lockman also points out that there have been increasing enrollments in university courses related to the Middle East and Islam in the past decade.

Following 9/11, funding for Title VI programs increased by 10% "as Congress made a connection between the terrorist attacks and the need for more expertise to prevent such attacks in the future" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 22). As of 2001 there were nine grant programs

which were funded by Title VI[15] and Title VI grants were supporting about 115 National

Resource Centers (Ludden 2001). In the current period, Title VI funding has been used widely to

support the expansion of Arabic language learning and teaching. For example, New York

University (NYU) has used Title VI funding to greatly increase its Arabic language program.

According to the National Research Council, at NYU "between academic years 1995-1996 and

2005-2006, average annual enrollment in all levels of Arabic nearly tripled, increasing from 112

[to] 302" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 131). Other institutions, such as the University of

California, Los Angeles, have used Title VI funds to develop Arabic dialect and Arab media

courses, as well as to provide training and support for new lecturers (O'Connell and Norwood

2007, 131).

Since the early 1990s and continuing into the present period, funding for Area Studies

and LCTLs has been provided by the government under shifting purposes. There has been much

debate as to what extent LCTLs and Area Studies should be supported for educational purposes

or as a tool of national security. The National Research Council summed up this debate as

> Disagreement on the extent to which the programs should be geared to meet immediate
> federal needs (particularly in agencies related to national security), or whether the
> programs should serve long-term interests and be geared toward maintaining capacity to
> teach and study a wide array of languages and areas, beyond those that may be in demand
> currently (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 22).

Although there continues to be no public service component to Title VI programs, there

has been increasing discussion about the limited number of Title VI beneficiaries who go on to

work for the federal government. In 2004 Title VI appropriations covered approximately 10% of

the cost of U.S. Area Studies programs, yet only 3.2% of graduates from such programs enter

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[15] The grant programs include: National Resource Centers; Foreign Language and Area Fellowships; International Research and Studies; Language Resource Centers; American Overseas Research Centers; Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language; Business and International Education; Centers for International Business Education and Research; and Institute for International Public Policy (Hines, 9).

federal government or military service (Kramer 2004, n.p). Particularly in the years following 2001, both the General Accounting Office (GAO)[16] and the 9/11 Commission pointed out that insufficient personnel "hindered US military, law enforcement, intelligence, counterterrorism, and diplomatic efforts" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 47). Prior to the attacks on 9/11 the intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA and FBI, did not have adequate numbers of translators to handle the amount of counterterrorism information they had on hand (House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 2002). Recent estimates state that between 25,000 and 34,000 federal jobs require extensive foreign language abilities, a need that is largely unmet (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 49).

The essence of this debate is whether or not it is the role of the ED to meet the federal government's need for language specialists. Critics of Title VI, such as Kenneth Whitehead, a former director of international education programs in the ED have argued that the main justification for this funding is still "the production of foreign-language and area specialists, trained, competent, and willing to help serve the defense and security needs of the United States" (Whitehead 2004, n.p). Others may counter this argument by stating that the legislation has morphed over the years and that other purposes such as development of language and area centers for the sake of knowledge should be seen as paramount to producing training for federal agencies.

Although critics argue that Title VI funding has been inadequate in providing government specialists, the importance of the legislation should not be understated. One of the most significant impacts of Title VI has been that it has "helped define the development of language and Area Studies programs in this country" (Hines 2001, 9). Title VI funded centers around the U.S. are currently offering courses in more than 250 LCTLs (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 3).

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[16] The GAO is now known as the Government Accountability Office.

A 2008 report by the ED noted that "although fewer than 3% of the nation's higher education institutions that offer modern foreign languages have Title VI national resource centers, these institutions represent 23% of all undergraduate enrollments in the LCTLs and 59% in the Least CTLs" (Office of Postsecondary Education 2008, n.p.) In addition, the ED notes that funding from Title VI has been used to produce over 50% of all of the textbooks which are used to teach LCTLs in the United States. It has been argued that without Title VI funds, many, if not most, of the programs which focus on the LCTLs would not have been developed or maintained throughout the years (Brecht and Walton 2001, 103). Another impact is that the NDEA and accompanying Title VI established a new sort of relationship between the federal government and institutions of higher education. As the National Research Council noted, "…once universities funded foreign language and international studies internally or looked to private foundations for such support, the legislations introduced the option of federal funding" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 271-272). A third impact of Title VI funding has been serving "national security needs, in the long term, by developing and sustaining area and international knowledge" (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 30). Title VI's focus on training experts not only in language, but in the culture, economics, and politics of world regions provides a base of experts on a variety of areas, not just those for which the U.S. has a current interest.

In addition to increases in Title VI funding from the ED, the DoD continued to fund its own grants for educating students in LCTLs through Boren Fellowships. Between the years 1991 and 2008, NSEP provided funds to over 2,600 undergraduate students alone (IIE 2009a, 19). Funding from the DoD has continued partially as a way to ensure that if Title VI was not providing a path for recipients to governmental service there would be other funds which would achieve this goal. Since 2003, NSEP grants have been merged into the National Flagship

Language Program (NFLP). In a 2006 address at the State Department, President George W. Bush announced a series of additional initiatives which would become known as the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), which focused on increasing capacity in LCTLs such as Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Urdu, Turkic, and Russian (O'Connell and Norwood 2007, 4-5). The proposals of the initiative included increasing the number of scholarships for study abroad in critical languages to 3,000 high school students by the year 2009, increasing funding of the NFLP to $13.2 million in order to help several thousand students reach an advanced proficiency in LCTLs, and increasing the number of Gilman scholarships which help students with financial need finance language study abroad (Kolb 2009, 51). In his 2006 speech, President Bush discussed the importance of language ability and relations with the Arabic speaking world when he said:

> When somebody comes to me and speaks Texan, I know they appreciate the Texas culture. I mean…somebody takes time to figure out how to speak Arabic, it means they're interested in somebody else's culture…In order for this country to be able to convince others, people have got to be able to see our true worth in our heart. And when Americans learn to speak a language, learn to speak Arabic, those in the Arabic region will say, gosh, America is interested in us. They care enough to learn how we speak (Quoted in Kolb 2009, 52).

With increasing funding for language and area specialty being allocated by the DoD, some Area Studies specialists continue to voice concerns about the implications of a growing relationship between academia and U.S. intelligence services. MESA has been particularly vocal about this issue, repeatedly expressing concerns as they did in the 1990s when the NSEP program was originally created. In 2002, MESA released a statement arguing that

> A government-funded program that emphasized cooperation between the U.S. academy and government agencies responsible for intelligence and defense will increase the difficulties and dangers of such academic activities, and may foster the already widespread impression that academic researchers from the United States are directly involved in government activities. (MESA 2002, n.p.)

Rachid Khalidi has noted that disagreement with government policy by academics, universities, foundations, and professional associations has commonly emerged during periods at which the U.S. has been at war. During the Vietnam War, Gulf Wars, and U.S. interventions in Central America "most American experts on these three regions opposed the government's policies" (Khalidi 2003, 178). Although Area Studies owes much of its *raison d'etre* to the federal government, as the field has grown and developed over the years, specialists have diverged from the historical idea that their primary purpose was to serve national security interests. Particularly in current times, when the U.S. continues to be engaged in two foreign wars in the greater Middle East region this debate will likely carry on. Academics and lawmakers will continue to explore the best way to both support Area Studies as an academic field, as well as ensure a cadre of specialists in critical regions who are willing to serve the government.

IV. Middle East Studies emerges as a part of Area Studies

One of the major sub-disciplines of the Area Studies field is Middle East Studies which was previously known as "Oriental Studies;" a largely historical field which developed out of "Biblical studies and Semitic philology" (Mitchell 2004, 77). The roots of Middle East Studies in the U.S. began to form in 1946 with the creation of international administration at Columbia University and language training programs for the Army at universities in New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan and Pennsylvania (Hajjr and Niva 1997, n.p.). In the same year, the Middle East Institute was founded in Washington D.C. but there was no formal establishment of Middle East Studies until the 1960s (Mitchell 2004, 74). Middle East Studies was a latecomer to the variants of Area Studies in the U.S. largely because many "senior Orientalists had to be brought from Europe to lead the new Middle East programs" (Mitchell 2004, 82). Once established, Middle

East Studies as a field of study exploded. By 1965 there were 180 colleges and universities in the U.S. which offered classes on the Middle East. There were additionally eight area centers (supported by Title VI funding) which focused on studying the modern Middle East (Hajjr and Niva 1997, n.p.). As of 2003[17] MESA provided a directory which indicated that there were 127 Middle East Studies graduate and undergraduate programs.

The study of the Middle East, as we know it today, was made possible largely because of Title VI funding. Additionally, NSEP and NLSI legislation has provided further support for students to study Arabic and subjects related to the MENA region. In the last decade, as federal funding for Arabic and Middle East Studies has increased and more young people are exposed to Middle East issues on their home campuses, there has been a corresponding increase of students choosing to study abroad in the MENA region. In order to understand this growing trend, we will now turn to a history of SA in the United States.

V. History of Study Abroad in the U.S.

A. Roots of Study Abroad: The Grand Tour

Today, SA is broadly defined as "the international movement of students and scholars" (Harari 1992). More specifically, it refers to educational endeavors in which students gain credit for their college degree while living abroad (Garver and Divine 2007, 191). Under the umbrella of these definitions falls a wide spectrum of student experiences abroad, all of which are classified as SA programs. Beginning in the 1950s there was a push among study abroad professionals to make the distinction between "student travel" and "study abroad." A 1966 version of the IIE's guide to Undergraduate Study Abroad argues against "the vague popular notion that we shall increase international understanding merely by shipping people across oceans" (IIE 1966, 12). IIE asserted that SA

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[17] Last update of directory.

must be like all true academic study, a genuine and serious intellectual effort, with systematic and planned progress toward a body of knowledge, with a large measure of appropriate reading and discussion under professional guidance, looking to the formulations of wise judgments on the basis of adequate information; and finally a rigorous control and validation of the results by examinations and reports, of the same level and quality as would be required of the same student at the home institution. (IIE 1966, 12)

In its current form in the U.S., SA is an outgrowth of a long Western tradition of intercultural educational journeys. The development of formal SA programs at U.S. institutions has a relatively short history, yet the concept of traveling in the pursuit of knowledge has existed for centuries. Although the SA did not begin in the U.S. until the 1920s, the tradition can only be truly understood when seen in light of the forms of educational travel that came before it (Hoffa 2007, 71). As William Hoffa points out in his comprehensive *History of U.S. Study Abroad,* "Many early cultures sent their young leaders on journeys of initiation and discovery, believing that their experiences in the realms of the unknown would provide them with the maturity, confidence, understanding and skills needed for the survival of the tribe" (Hoffa 2007, 1). These youthful experiences in the "unknown" form the basis of what we today know as study abroad.

A more formal concept of education abroad grew out of European traditions that have existed since the Middle Ages (Gore 2005, 35). In essence, SA is an evolution of the coming-of-age tradition of the European "Grand Tour," derived from the French term for "great circuit." The term was first used in Richard Lassles 1670 book *Voyage to Italy* and came to be defined as "a tour of the principal cities and places of Europe, formerly supposed to be necessary to complete the education of young men of position" (Gore 2005, 27). For members of aristocratic families throughout Europe, the Grand Tour was seen to have great educational and social networking value for young men (and some women). From the late Middle Ages, the

Renaissance, and afterwards "it became fashionable….to have a few foreign feathers in one's cap" (Hoffa 2007, 13).

During the early years of the United States' independence, the tradition of the "Grand Tour" also found its way to the New World. In the 18th and 19th century young American men, and a small amount of women, from prominent American families would study abroad in Europe in order to receive professional training. These experiences were seen as a way to compensate for the "perceived weaknesses of local institutions (Hoffa 2007, 25). During this time period the American version of the Grand Tour, in terms of where and how students traveled, was similar to that of young Europeans (Hoffa 2007, 31).

Not everyone in the U.S. believed that these experiences abroad were serving the best interests of young American students. By the mid-18th century, America's first educational institutions were developed in the form of small private colleges. These colleges were modeled on those of Europe and were intended to provide opportunities for Americans to receive high quality education without going abroad. In 1819, Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia "so that young Americans could avoid altogether the influence and side-effects of foreign travel" (Goodman 2009, ix). Although Jefferson was willing to admit that "the habit of speaking foreign languages cannot be so well-acquired in America" he also feared that study in Europe would rekindle in young people a "taste for luxury and dissipation" and "a passion for women of easy virtue" (Quoted in Hoffa 2007, 28). These sentiments were echoed by Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard, when he said in 1873 that "In a strong nation, the education of the young is indigenous and national. It is a sign of immaturity or decrepitude when a nation has to import its teachers or send abroad its scholars" (Quoted in Goodman 2009, ix). Although some people continued to participate in Grand Tours, this type of experience grew less common

in the early 20th century as more and more people came to believe that "professional training needs could best be satisfied at American universities" (Gore 2005, 37).

B. Study Abroad emerges in the U.S.

In the first several decades of the 20th century, leaders of American colleges became more conscious of the growing role of the United States on the world stage. As the geopolitical role of the country changed, it was believed that students would need to become familiar with the world outside of American borders. This awareness sowed the seeds of SA as a permanent component of the higher education experience in the United States. The first SA programs began in the 1920s. As WWI came to a close, the *Sorbonne* in Paris introduced the *Cours de Civilisation* which "was a set of special courses for foreign students seeking to study abroad" and which laid out the standard for SA (Gore 2005, 37). For the first time, the *Sorbonne* program allowed for study at a foreign institution without requiring students to directly enroll in that university. In the 1920s SA was seen as educational experience that took place in another country, and also produced credit at a students' American university in order to count toward their degree.

The first two SA programs in the United States were developed by Delaware College and Smith College in 1923. These initial programs emulated the structure of the *Cours de Civilisation* and provided educational experiences abroad primarily for juniors in college (Gore 2005, 38). During the 1920s, there were three different types of SA programs being offered to U.S. students. The first, and perhaps most well known, was the Junior Year Abroad (JYA). The JYA was characterized as "a full year of language and cultural immersion, prepared for by two or more years of US campus coursework in the language, history, and culture of the selected country, and generally done during the junior year" (Hoffa 2007, 70). The JYA was, by far, the most common model for SA in the early 20th century, with only a handful of other programs taking alternative forms such as faculty-led study tours and summer studies. Although the

structure of SA has evolved and taken many more styles in the last century, these initial three designs laid the groundwork for all future SA programs. In the inter-war period, a total of nine JYA programs were developed and which enrolled fewer than 2,000 students (Hoffa 2007, 158). Although limited in numbers, the importance of these SA programs lay in "their demonstration of how overseas study could become part of a domestic degree, as opposed to something apart from it" (Hoffa 2007, 159). Despite this positive beginning, political events put a stop to SA programs less than 20 years after they were set in motion. As World War II began in 1938 and 1939, JYA programs were no longer able to continue and were all shut down (Hoffa 2007, 100).

C. Study Abroad Post World War II

Following WWII, isolationist attitudes were common amongst U.S. citizens and policymakers. Despite these attitudes, during the 1950s and 1960s, "there emerged a growing awareness of the need for young Americans to understand the world and to represent their country globally" (Keller and Frain 2010, 19). This awareness spurred a re-emergence of SA in U.S. educational institutions. A few of the original JYA programs resumed operations soon after the end of the war, but it was not until the early 1960s that SA began to expand and grow quickly. In 1950 there were less than 10 formal JYA programs, expanding to 22 in 1956, and 103 in 1962 (IIE 1966, 7). The JYA programs in the 1950s and 1960s used foreign universities for instruction. Students lived with local families and participants were expected to be well versed in the language of the country in which they were studying (Durnall 1967, 450). Beginning in 1954, the U.S. Department of State provided funding for the IIE to collect data on the numbers of students abroad for academic reasons. Since the mid-1950s, IIE has released an annual report titled *Open Doors*, a designation suggesting "that both host and home nations and their educational institutions should 'open their doors' to welcome international students" (Hoffa

2007, 230). The first available data (from the 1956/57 academic year) indicates that there were 12,845 students studying in 358 institutions in 52 countries; a majority of which were in Europe (Hoffa 2007, 233). By 1965, *Open Doors* reported 18,092 students, or 40% more, were participating in formal SA programs (Keller and Frain 2010, 16).

One of the organizations essential assisting in the re-establishment and growth of study abroad during the post-war period was the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE, originally named the Council on Student Travel). CIEE was founded in 1947 and was originally focused on student difficulty in travelling to Europe due to a shortage of ships offering service across the Atlantic (Mikhailova 2002, n.p.). In association with the U.S. government, the original founders of CIEE worked to secure space on government troop transport ships for U.S. students. In addition to working to allocate space for student travelers, the Executive Committee of CIEE also created and implemented onboard cross-cultural orientation programs to help students prepare for their foray abroad. In these early years, CIEE supported the desires of young people to study abroad by assisting in both transportation and educational programming for a variety of educational institutions. These services were eventually developed into formal study abroad programs. These efforts served as the foundation of CIEE, which is now considered the "oldest U.S. non-governmental organization in the field of international education and student study abroad" (Mikhailova 2002, n.p).

The late 1950s and 1960s mark a shift in the tradition of US education abroad, introducing new models for the type and location of SA programs. In this period, alternative types of SA programs began to emerge, including those which took place for only a semester or summer period. In other words, SA was no longer just one thing (JYA), but was recognized as possibly taking many different forms. Program destinations also diversified due to governmental

initiatives such as the Fulbright-Hays program, the Peace Corps, and American global involvement which helped universities develop contacts in various parts of the world outside of Europe (Gore 2005, 39). Beginning slowly in the 1960s and increasingly in the 1970s and 1980s, American institutions began to offer students opportunities to study abroad in Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Lloyd 2000, 105).

D. Study Abroad and Federal Legislation

Given the growing geo-political role of the U.S., perspectives on the purpose of SA also began to change in the middle part of the 20th century. During the 1920s, SA was seen generally as a means for students to develop themselves personally, but as the U.S. became more powerful in the 1950s SA "took on a new political prominence" (Keller and Frain 2010, 16). As mentioned above, during the past five decades there have been several government initiatives which have provided funds to institutes of higher education in order to enhance their contribution to national security. Through NDEA and Title VI the federal government began to provide funds for language learning (in the US and abroad) as well as for the development of Area Studies centers. The relationship between Area Studies centers and SA is described by Hoffa as composed of several aspects. Hoffa notes that:

> Area studies programs impacted not just the graduate curriculum but also the availability of coursework at the undergraduate level. With area centers and specialists on campus, the visibility of other world cultures and regions became considerably higher. Undergraduates taking courses focusing on Latin America or Africa, for example, soon became interested in studying there. Undergraduate majors in area studies began to be possible, even on smaller campuses (Hoffa 2007, 118).

Area Studies centers often worked hand in hand with SA. Some centers would use SA opportunities as ways to expand their course offerings to Area Studies majors, thereby further integrating SA experiences into the achievement of formal degrees. Other federal initiatives such as the NSEP (1991), the NSLI (2006), and the Gillman Scholarship (2000) have been

effective in encouraging SA to uncommon destinations by exposing students to LCTLs and providing scholarship funds for study in areas where those languages are spoken.

In essence, these pieces of legislation have "introduced U.S. political interests into the broader picture of incentives to participate in study abroad" (Ogden *et al* 2010, 196). These federal expenditures have continuously raised philosophical questions amongst SA professionals, similar to those broached by Area Studies experts. Key among these is the question as to whether SA should be an undertaking that is intended to serve national objectives (Larsen and Dutschke 2010, 346). As of yet, there are no mutually agreed upon answers to these questions, but as the trend of SA grows these questions will need to be addressed by administrators and institutions.

The federal government has played a role in the expansion of SA by working to improve financial aid options available to SA students. In addition to the impact of forming Area Studies Centers, NDEA "also provided for low-interest loans to give students an incentive to study in areas considered vital to national security" (Keller and Frain 2010, 21). Given that SA was an expensive endeavor; those who had studied abroad in the inter-war period as well as the early 1950s were typically from affluent families (Hoffa 2007, 84). The NDEA loan offerings were the first instance of the government providing financial aid in order to make SA more affordable to a wider range of students. Since 1992 students have also been able to use put their federal financial aid toward fees for study abroad experiences (Dobly, 143). Most recently, the government developed the Commission on Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Programs. The Commission was established in 2004 and was responsible for creating a program which would expand SA, with a special focus on travel to developing nations. The purpose of the Commission was to help meet "the growing need of the United States to become more sensitive to the cultures of other countries" (quoted in Dolby 2007, 143). The Commission's report placed emphasis the

relationship between SA and national security needs. The members of the Commission expressed

the belief that

> Moving overseas to study does not produce experts, but it does begin a process of inculcating awareness of international and intercultural issues, a process that, multiplied many millions of times over, promises to vastly increase American global literacy. Producing successive generations of undergraduates who have engaged with the world beyond American boundaries will do more than anything else to enable the United States to hear the world, to see the world—and to know the world in ways that will alert us to emerging problems before they become serious threats (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Program 2005, 6).

The Commission's recommendations for expanding SA participation and diversity of locations

were incorporated in to the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act which was passed

in June of 2009 and will be funded in the Fiscal Year 2011 (NASFA 2009, n.p.).

E. Current Status of Study Abroad

In the late 1990s there were fewer than 100,000 students studying abroad (Goodman

2009, ix). In the 2007/08 school year 262,416 American students gained credit for studying

abroad (Open Doors 2009a). This number represented a 144% increase in the last decade (IIE

2007, 6). In the 2008/09 school year there was a slight decrease[18] in participation in SA programs

(Open Doors 2010a). Despite this, an online survey conducted by IIE of educators at 238 U.S.

campuses in the fall of 2010 indicated that numbers of students studying abroad is once again

growing with 55% of campuses indicating that study abroad participation has increased (IIE

2010b).

Particularly in the years following the events of September 11, 2001, SA has experienced

a growth. The pace of expansion slowed "slightly between 2002 and 2003, when the real impact

of the 9/11 incident first began to be felt" but numbers of SA participants have since grown in

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[18] In the 2008/09 school year there were 260, 327 American students studying abroad, down less than 1% from the previous academic year.

historically unprecedented amounts (Keller and Frain 2010, 41-2). In the year 2000, 65% of

American universities offered SA programs, with a jump to 91% in 2006 (Hoffa and DePaul

2010, 2). One university, Harvard, has gone as far to declare that in the coming years studying

abroad will not only be encouraged, but will be a requirement for all undergraduate degrees

(Dolby 2007, 141).

The current growth in SA participation is accompanied by strong public support for

increasing international knowledge among today's youth. Ninety percent of respondents to an

American Council on Education survey aimed at gauging public opinion in relation to

international education "agreed that knowledge about international issues would be important to

the careers of younger generations" (Siaya *et al* 2002, 3). SA has grown to be seen as a valuable

credential for young Americans and a recent survey of students entering college revealed that

three fourths of all students want to participate in a SA experience (Hoffa and DePaul, 1).

Commonly recognized goals and benefits of study abroad remain relatively unchanged

over the past 50 years. In 1958, the IIE released a report summarizing the goals of study abroad

according to institutions around the country which included

- To promote international understanding and good will among the peoples of the world as a contribution to peace
- To contribute to the economic, social, or political development of other countries.
- To aid in the educational or professional development of outstanding individuals
- To advance knowledge throughout the world for the general welfare of mankind (Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1958, 369).

As outlined by Hoffa and DePaul in more contemporary literature, international

education professionals have made the case for SA through four main arguments: the curricular

argument, the cross-cultural argument, the career enhancement argument, and the development

argument. The curricular argument is that SA adds value to an undergraduate education in that it

offers "academic learning of a sort not possible on the home campus, yet of a standard worthy of

home campus academic credit" (8). The cross-cultural argument focuses less on academics and argues that SA give students "a unique opportunity to learn about their own 'Americanness,' to understand a foreign culture more deeply through immersion, or to witness the emerging global culture" (9). The career enhancement argument contends that SA can help students prepare for their professional life "by building future workplace skills of value to employers that operate, inevitably, in the global marketplace, often through internships and other hands-on learning" (10). Lastly, the development argument maintains that SA "sharpens and deepens intellectual and social maturity, fostering independent thinking, and builds self-confidence" (11). Additional literature further emphasizes the development argument by reasoning that SA provides "(a) exposure to different social and cultural environments; (b) changing of stereotypes that might exist; and (c) students become more mature because they live in other cultures and become well-rounded, culturally sensitive adults" (Van Hoof and Verbeeten 2005, 44). A recent RAND Corporation study concluded that studying abroad "is one of the best ways to develop cross-cultural understanding and communication skills, deepen one's perspective on current issues facing the world, strengthen foreign language skills and cultivate and interest in further contact with other cultures and peoples" (Mohajeri and Gillespie 2009, 383).

Over the last decade, the demographics of U.S. students studying abroad have remained relatively unchanged. The majority of SA students are women (64%) and Caucasian (81%); 37% are undergraduate students in their third year of university studies (Open Doors 2010b). Most of these students choose to study in common destinations in Western Europe. There has been little change in the top 10 destinations for study in many years (see Table 1), with two exceptions: Israel and Japan have fallen sharply in popularity between the mid 1990s and today.

Table 1:
Top 10 destinations of U.S. study abroad 1985/86, 1994/95, 2004/05, 2008/09[19]

Rank	1985/86	1994/95	2004/05	2008/09
1	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
2	France	France	Italy	Italy
3	Spain	Spain	Spain	Spain
4	Italy	Italy	France	France
5	Germany	Mexico	Australia	China
6	Mexico	Germany	Mexico	Australia
7	Israel	Australia	Germany	Germany
8	Austria	Israel	China	Mexico
9	Japan	Costa Rica	Ireland	Ireland
10	China	Japan	Coast Rica	Costa Rica

According to the Association of International Educators (NAFSA),[20] more new short-term programs (fewer than 8 weeks) are emerging in the field than any other type of SA program (Engle and Engle, 3). Currently, the majority of all SA students (56%) take part in short-term programs while 38% participate in mid-length programs (one quarter, two quarters, or one semester) and only 18% for a full academic year[21] (IIE 2007, 14). Short-term programs can be classified as any SA experience in which a student is abroad for less than one semester. Shorter SA programs occur in two forms: Study Tours or Short-Term Studies. Study Tours have a duration to a few days to a few weeks and are composed of field trips and site visits. For these programs English is the language primarily used and intimate cultural interactions which encourage students to adapt to their environment are not common (Engle and Engle 2003, 10). Short-Term Study typically happens for 6-8 weeks during the summer, include basic language instruction, course work takes place in English, but due to language and time limitations

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[19] Data taken from IIE (2007, 12), Open Doors *2009 Report on International Educational Exchange,* and Open Doors *2010 Fast Facts.*

[20] This organization was founded in 1948 under the name "National Association of Foreign Student Advisors." In 1990 the full name of the association was changed to the "NASFA: The Association of International Educators" in order to better represent the groups work in multiple areas of international education.

[21] This percentage is based on a total of 205,983 students who studied abroad in 2006.

experiential learning about the culture is not considered as feasible in comparison to longer experiences (Engle and Engle 2003, 11). Long-term programs are those which take place for a semester or longer and typically provide students with opportunities for greater cultural interactions, experiential learning, guided reflection on experience, and academic and housing structure which allow for direct student/host-country national interaction.

F. Study Abroad in the Middle East/North Africa

Many SA professionals have argued that the persistent focus on studying abroad in Western Europe "has severely curtailed the capacity of study abroad to prepare students, and by extension the nation itself, for the global forces and realities that will shape life in this century" (Hoffa and DePaul 2010, 2). Although most students continue to study in common destinations, an increasing number are traveling to less common destinations.[22] In the 2007/08 school year, there were 20% increases in the number of students traveling to China, Argentina, South Africa, Ecuador, and India (Goodman 2009, ix). According to the IIE these increasing numbers reflect "the trend in recent years for more students to study in countries beyond the traditional study abroad destination in Western Europe" (IIE 2010b). Given the consistency of this recent trend, this movement toward less common destinations will likely continue in the coming years.

One explanation for the growth of enrollment in SA programs outside of common destinations is that "students today are increasingly open to and interested in learning about other areas of the world, expanding their repertoire of skills for working effectively within international and intercultural contexts, and gaining proficiency in language spoken outside of

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[22] During the course of history of SA in the US, most students have gone to Western Europe. These destinations have come to be defined as "traditional." The new destinations have been loosely termed "nontraditional" (Ogden, Soneson, et al). Nontraditional, or less common destinations, refers to those in Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East as outlined by Wells. It should be noted that less common destinations does not mean developing nations or third-world countries, simply those outside of Western Europe.

Western Europe" (Ogden *et al* 2010, 196). Another explanation is that the recent global economic crisis has added to the popularity of less-common destinations, since they are "less costly than Europe" (McMurtrie 2009, n.p.). Although Europe has consistently been an expensive destination, these costs may have become more prohibitive as American families faced increasing economic burdens in the last several years. The importance of expanding the number of SA destinations should not be understated. As Joan Raducha and Michael Monahan noted in the second edition of *NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators* (1997):

> Given that three-quarters of the world population lives in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, the United States needs a generation of citizens who have first-hand experience of living and learning about these tremendously important areas, with their myriad cultures and explosive growth potential. Such experience forms a base upon which to build the new global competencies we need if we are to meet the challenges of an increasingly transnational and global future. (Quoted in Ogden *et al* 2010, 182)

The Middle East and North Africa is one region of the world for SA which has experienced remarkable growth. According to the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, in the 2000/01 school year there were only 694 students studying in the MENA region (see Table 2). In the 2008/09 school year, there were 4,485 students: a 546% increase. Compared to 2007/08 year's total of 3,403 that represents a 32% growth in one year alone. Several SA programs have taken note of this surge. In IIE's fall 2010 survey mentioned above, campuses reported that SA to less-common destination such as the Middle East is becoming increasingly more popular. Compared to 2008/09 school year, 41% of surveyed campuses indicated increases of SA in the MENA region for the fall of 2010 (IIE, 2010b). The provost of the AUC, Lisa Anderson, has stated that the increase in SA students has been significant. Prior to 2001 the university had "50 to 75 American students studying there each year, compared with around 350 a semester now" (Anderson quoted in Conlin 2010, 1).

Although this increase is considerable, the overall percentage of U.S. students coming to this region remains relatively small, hovering around 1-2% of the larger SA population.

The Arab world destinations with the greatest number of study abroad students in the 2008/09 academic year included Egypt (1,781), the United Arab Emirates (955), Morocco (865), and Jordan (483) (See Table 2). Study abroad programs in MENA are available through private universities (e.g. AUC), U.S. based universities which hold partnerships with local universities (e.g. Middlebury College-Alexandria University), and third-party providers (e.g. America-Mideast Educational and Training Services or AMIDEAST). The two most common models found in the region are private university-based or third party provider-based. In the first model, students directly enroll in a private university in the host country and take classes in the Arabic language and other subjects (usually social sciences), which are taught in English. Students take classes with host-country nationals as well as other international students. They can live in dorms or off-campus housing. Third-party provider programs are found in multiple forms throughout the region. In one form, better known as *island* programs, international students participate in academic courses and often language classes in a small group setting. Students participating in island study abroad programs typically live in group housing or home-stays. Third-party providers also commonly offer a *hybrid* or *direct enrollment* models for study abroad. In hybrid models students study through a third-party but are integrated into classes at a local university. Programs based on this model also design specific program activities which work to integrate local students with study abroad students. In third-party provider direct-enrollment programs, students are supported by a study abroad program but are fully enrolled at a local university. The number and type of program varies by country.

Table 2: Destinations of U.S. study abroad students in the MENA region 2000/01-2008/09[23]

Destination	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	% Change from 2000/01 Academic Year
NORTH AFRICA	**579**	**750**	**431**	**495**	**882**	**1,407**	**1,658**	**2,362**	**2,776**	**379%**
Algeria	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	----
Egypt	388	436	241	573	807	983	1,100	1,466	1,781	359%
Libya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	----
Morocco	132	245	170	298	339	370	491	719	865	555%
Tunisia	59	69	20	11	29	54	0	173	130	
MIDDLE EAST	**4,013**	**1,368**	**1,100**	**811**	**1,972**	**2,578**	**2,757**	**3,362**	**3,670**	**-9%[24]**
Bahrain	0	2	3	3	3	1	33	37	26	
Israel	3,898	1,248	1,031	665	1,617	1,981	2,226	2,322	1,958	
Jordan	86	83	37	65	171	309	231	486	483	462%
Kuwait	2	3	4	3	2	1	2	35	25	
Lebanon	13	19	16	23	43	46	14	31	44	
Oman	0	0	1	1	2	23	21	33	27	
Palestinian Territories	1	1	0	1	23	25	7	4	8	
Qatar	0	0	0	2	7	2	2	24	70	
Saudi Arabia	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	26	
Syria	5	3	2	19	19	39	21	22	35	
United Arab Emirates	5	5	7	20	84	146	173	345	955	
Yemen	1	3	0	7	2	4	24	20	10	
TOTAL	**4,592**	**2,118**	**1,533**	**1,306**	**2,856**	**3,985**	**4,415**	**5,721**	**6,443**	
ARAB COUNTRY TOTAL[25]	**694**	**870**	**502**	**641**	**1,239**	**2,004**	**2,189**	**3,403**	**4,485**	**546%**

Nominal and scholarship support from the U.S. government, which is aimed at increasing

SA specifically in the MENA region can be found in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism

Prevention Act of 2004 as well as Boren Fellowship funding. The Act of 2004 calls for an

expansion of U.S. exchange programs in the Islamic World and states that the government

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[23] Data from IIE, Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange (2001-2009).
[24] This percentage decrease is related to the large drop off in SA in Israel in the compared years. As was mentioned previously, Israel has been excluded from this study due to likely differences in rationale for choosing to study in the one Jewish state in the region. Since Israel is commonly included in statistics related to the region, the percentage drop here is largely due to a decrease in SA in Israel.
[25] Excluding Israel (see Footnote 1).

should "promote engagement with people of all levels of society in countries with predominantly Muslim populations" and increase investment in people-to-people programs (U.S. Congress S. 2485). In addition, during the last ten years Boren Fellowships have reflected a growing focus on the Arabic language. Although China has been the most common destination for recipients of NSEP funds for several years, "it is interesting to note that four of the top five countries in 2007 are in the Near East" (National Security Education Program 2007, 13). Of the 2006-07 fellows, 40 studied Arabic, making it the most common language supported by these funds (National Security Education Program 2007, 13). In 2008, 35% of all fellowship recipients studied in the MENA region; a percentage that far outweighs that of the overall SA population in the region which is less than two percent (IIE 2009a, 19). Like Area Studies, there is a long history of linkages between SA and the foreign policy interests of the U.S. government. As U.S. foreign policy and international relations have increasingly focused on the MENA region, there has been a precipitous growth in funding and support for SA in this region.

VIII.   Summary

During the past 60 years, U.S. foreign policy has often dictated the terms for support of international education of American students. As we have seen, federal funding in the late 1950s supported the development of Area Studies and LCTLs and created opportunities for young Americans to learn about areas of the world that had been largely neglected. As the United States continued to grow as a world power throughout the later part of the twentieth century, federal funding for international education grew more closely connected to current national security needs of the country. The funds provided through the NSEA and the NLSI have contributed to the growth of Area Studies and LCTLs, particularly Middle East Studies and the Arabic language.

These legislative developments have been foundational in the expansion of SA in less common destinations, including the MENA region. Without Area Studies and more specifically the sub-field of Middle East Studies, American university students would have very limited exposure to courses addressing the Middle East, Islam, and the Arabic language. Furthermore, federal legislation that has connected higher education to national security interests has increased the number of financial incentives to students willing to study in less common destinations such as those in the MENA region. The implications for this relationship are many and yet there is very little research related to SA and federal funding. As the traditional form and location of U.S. SA continues to expand, it will be valuable for research to focus on the reasons leading to growth in certain regions of the world.

With this understanding of the history of the American tradition of SA, this research now turns to the deep collection of research which informs our current understanding of outcomes, best-practices, and issues of choice related to SA. The examination of existing literature will be used to identify gaps in current knowledge of the practice of SA as well as form the theoretical foundation for this research.

Chapter Three: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

I. **Literature Review**

Although much research addresses the broader subject of SA, the majority is dedicated specifically to the effectiveness and best-practices of SA programs and outcomes for SA students such as personal development and global awareness (Bradshaw-Durrant, 2007; Chieffo and Griffiths 2004; Daly and Barker, 2005; Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005; and Williams, 2005). In addition, most literature on SA tends to focus on programs in the most common destinations for U.S. study abroad students (primarily those in Western Europe). Currently, there is a small body of research emerging which addresses alternative subjects, including topics such as the motivation for students to study abroad, outcomes of programs with varying duration, and the benefit of study in less-common versus common destinations. Many of these studies are limited in scope due to small sample sizes and multiple nationalities of participants. As of yet, there is no literature explaining how U.S. students choose their study abroad destinations. Although current research serves a practical purpose for many international educators who are interested in useful ways to improve their programs, there is a need for a SA literature to broaden in scope in order to better understand new trends in SA destination choice, such as growth the number of students choosing less traditional destinations.

In terms of the impacts of SA, research has found that it is generally "associated with increasing students' cultural awareness, perceived acquisition of international knowledge, world-mindedness, and receptiveness to global perspectives on issues" (Garver and Divine 2007, 191). For example in a survey of 353 participants from 22 different countries, Van Hoof and Verbeeten found that students felt the greatest benefit of SA was "that it had brought them a greater understanding of other cultures, that it had helped them appreciate their own culture more, that it

enabled them to learn more about themselves, and that it had enriched them personally" (2005, 56). Further, Chieffo and Griffiths report that study abroad students can acquire "global awareness"[26] in both long and short-term programs. Even programs as short as one-month in duration demonstrated "significant self-perceived impacts on students' intellectual and personal lives" (Chieffo and Griffiths 2004, 174).

Only in the last several years have researchers attempted to turn the focus of SA research toward the factors which lead students to choose to study abroad at all (Albers-Miller, 1999; Garver and Divine, 2007; Goldstein and Kim, 2006; Relyea *et al* 2008, Salisbury *et al,* 2008; and Sanchez *et al* 2006). Sanchez *et al* conducted a survey of U.S., Chinese, and French students which examined the relationship between student motivations and intent to study abroad. In this case, motivations were defined as "what drives a person to obtain satisfaction from a class of stimuli" (Sanchez *et al* 2006, 29). Factors which motivate participation in study abroad are varied and can generally be classified as professional, cultural, or personal motivations (Sanchez *et al* 2006, 29). The authors note that students may also see SA as a means to achieve a certain career, an opportunity to learn a new language, an exciting change in their life, and a means to gain experience in a new country. In addition research has pointed out that these factors are not exhaustive as "the results of the study indicated that motivations explain only a portion of the variance in the intention to study abroad" (Sanchez *et al* 2006, 46).

Although research has shown that SA does have an effect on the career goals of students (Bowman 1987, Norris and Gillespie 2009, Sanchez *et al* 2006, Siaya and Hayward 2003), students themselves tend to recognize personal growth as the most important outcomes of their experience. In addition to these perceptions Goldstein and Kim's longitudinal survey of 168

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[26] Global awareness is defined by Chieffo and Griffiths as being composed of the following four aspects: "intercultural awareness, personal growth and development, awareness of global interdependence; and functional knowledge of world geography and language" (167).

American undergraduate students also found "that expectations and intercultural variables played a far more critical role in determining who studied abroad than academic or career factors" (517). The researchers argue that universities have previously tried to encourage SA by organizing their programs in a way that would best help students to achieve academic and career goals. Yet this study found that the most relevant predictors of a students' participation in SA were "intercultural attitudes, specifically study abroad expectations, ethnocentrism, prejudice, and foreign language interests" (Goldstein and Kim 2006, 519). They suggest that students would be better served if SA programs were designed with these concepts in mind instead of primarily academic concerns. Although this examination provides valuable insight into the decision to study abroad, the researchers admit that their study was limited in scope as it was not able to differentiate predictors based on SA location due to their small sample size (Goldstein and Kim 2006, 518).

One of the most comprehensive studies addressing the factors which may lead students to choose to study abroad is that of Salisbury *et al* (2008). The researchers developed a theory based on previous models of college choice in order to look at "the impact of financial, human, social, and cultural capital on students' intent to study abroad (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 119). The study utilized data collected from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, a longitudinal survey of 4,501 American students. The results demonstrated that a student's intent to study abroad is influenced by more than just motivations, expectations, or intercultural attitudes. The range of issues contributing to the decision is complex and it is the collective influence of economic, social, and cultural forms of capital which influence students.

The Salisbury *et al* study found that several demographic factors influenced a student's intent to study abroad. Some of the relationships found included: "socioeconomic status of a

student's family is positively related to intent to study abroad [and] level of parents' education is positively related to the probability of planning to study abroad" (133). In addition, as hypothesized, the researchers found that students who acquired more social and cultural capital before they enrolled in higher education were more likely to study abroad during their college career (134). For example, the higher a student scored on the literacy scale and the more open a student was to diversity the more likely they were to plan to study abroad. Overall the study found that the social and cultural capital that is accumulated before entering college will "continue to impact the choices students make about their educational experience long after they matriculate" (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 139). Perhaps the biggest drawback to the study is that the data available only allowed the researchers to examine students' capital in comparison to their intent to study abroad, rather than real life choices. Further, this study examined the basic intent to SA but not the factors which lead students to select particular destinations.

Students who do in fact make a choice to study abroad are presented with other complex decisions. Students must now consider the country and institution in which they will study. Researchers have noted that "this choice is time-consuming to make, involves significant expenses, and has high personal relevance and risk, and must consider a wide range of possibilities and alternatives" (Eder 2010, 233). Limited research has addressed questions related to the factors which influence choice of particular SA destinations. One unsurprising argument was noted in the Van Hoof and Verbeeten study mentioned above. In regards to destination choice students in this study indicated that their interest in SA was "piqued more by the location of their host institution and by the ability to travel and see something of the world than by academics" (56). Additional research has suggested that multiple factors can either encourage or discourage students from selecting particular destinations.

In 2010 Judith Eder conducted a qualitative study which focused on the process of destination choice of foreign students studying abroad in a midsize university in the southern United States. By employing online interviews with 21 students, Eder developed an altered version of common "push-pull" models which have been used to describe travel behavior. The push-pull models are based on the idea that travel decisions (including SA) are influenced by certain motivations which push them to choose *whether or not* to go and the pull of *where* to go, or what attracts them to certain places (Eder 2010).

Eder separated the factors which were likely to drive or draw students to study in the U.S. The factors which were found to push students included personal growth, language, and future career issues. Those which were pulling students included college issues, physical geography, and U.S. culture. Expanding beyond the push-pull factors, Eder also found that "structural factors including visa issues and cost issues were identified as constraints" (Eder 2010, 232).

Even with the results of Eder's study, there is a perceived lack of comprehensive understanding of the issue of students' choice to study abroad. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) has made note of the limited amount of literature related to the decision to study abroad. A 2006 CIEE report stated that "while there is a good deal of folk wisdom about what motivates students to go abroad, there is very little hard data" (quoted in Salisbury *et al* 2008, 121). Goldstein and Kim argue that there continues to be a great need for empirical research which examines the variance between students who choose to study abroad and those who do not (508).

There continues to be a large gap in the literature explaining precisely how American undergraduate students choose their particular SA destinations. Particularly little research has examined a growing trend of American students selecting more non-traditional, or less-common,

destinations outside of Europe. As mentioned previously, less-common destinations have been defined as those in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The available literature addressing these less-common destinations has, of yet, focused only on outcomes of study abroad experiences. Information concerning the differing impacts of studying in less-common versus common destination typically "comes from two main sources: studies of specific programs in one given nontraditional country, or research concerning other study abroad factors that happen to include program location as a variable" (Wells 2006, 115). These studies have been deemed insufficient by Wells in that they have been unable to explain how students are affected by the fact that they have studied in less-common destinations. Wells points out that the two key problems of these studies are that they are either not examining effects on students or they are too focused on one destination and therefore unable to be extrapolated to understand other ways students in common destinations may be affected.

One exception to this gap in the literature is the work of the Georgetown University Consortium Project. The Consortium has designed a study[27] which, to a small extent, does take into account differences in student learning based on location of destination. The research as a whole addresses common questions such as second language gains and intercultural proficiency, yet the study's interviews also compared outcomes in developed versus developing countries (Vande Berg *et al* 2004, 106). Although the Consortium has not yet released final results, their design indicates that they will be able to provide valuable information about students who study in less-common destinations.

In an effort to examine the impact of studying in less-common destinations, Wells (2006) conducted an extensive review of past research and policy goals of education abroad programs.

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[27] This study was funded by the Department of Education's Title VI International Research and Studies Program.

Wells concludes that "regardless of the specific rationales utilized, nontraditional destinations appear able to help individuals, society, and institutions to meet their goals for education abroad" (2006, 117). Yet, Wells himself admits, that there is a great need for empirical research to specifically address the impact of less-common destinations on study abroad students. In addition to the need for further research on the impact of studying in these destinations, there is a great deal of opportunity for studies which examine the factors influencing choice of less-common SA countries.

Literature related to study abroad in MENA is particularly sparse: little research addresses SA trends, programs, student influences, or outcomes for the region. This lack of research is likely due in part to the fact that only 1-2% of the entire U.S. SA population chooses this region. Research on SA often addresses the most popular destinations in Europe or Australia, yet in doing so the nuances of growth in other geo-politically important regions is ignored. An extensive review of the literature regarding study abroad in the MENA region yielded only several short reports in the Chronicle of Higher Education, a white paper discussing the expansion of SA of U.S. students in the Arab world (IIE 2009b), an examination of language courses in the Middle East (Ferguson 1964), and a 2010 article in the New York Times (Conlin). The most thorough information on SA in the MENA region comes from the IIE white paper which reported on the findings of a 2008 workshop of MENA study abroad officials. Yet, the findings primarily discuss "credit issues and academic standards, international partnerships, cross-cultural issues, safety and security, resources and marketing capacity of host institutions, and Arabic language study" (IIE 2009b, 7). Although these discussions are critical for SA programs which aim to increase participation in MENA programs, there continues to be a lack of information regarding what factors influence choice to study in this particular region.

Particularly given the stunning growth of SA students in the MENA region (over 500%) in the last ten years, a better understanding of this issue is needed.

Anecdotal evidence related to the increase in study abroad in the MENA region generally attributes career goals and desire to study the Arabic language as the primary motivations for SA in this area. Professor Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdallah stated that desire to learn the Arabic language "remains for now the biggest attraction and the main motivation for study abroad in the Arab World" (IIE 2009b, 5). Through interviews with both SA students and SA administrators, a recent article in the New York Times investigated the growing trend in SA in the MENA region. In an interview, Lisa Anderson, provost at the AUC, notes that the types of students who study abroad in the MENA region are different than those in more common destinations. She stated that many students "are contemplating careers in the Middle East, perhaps with the Foreign Service or an N.G.O. They are very serious about this region of the world" (quoted in Conlin 2010, 1). Although these reflections provide interesting insight, a great deal of opportunity exists for empirical research on this topic.

II.   Theoretical framework

Previous research efforts to examine student choice in relation to study abroad have based studies on three main theoretical frameworks: expectancy theory (Sanchez *et al* 2006), human capital theory (Salisbury *et al* 2008), and the student choice theory (Perna 2006). A model based on these theories will be employed in order to examine the reasons U.S. undergraduate study abroad students choose the Middle East or North Africa.

Vroom (1964) described expectancy theory as the idea that people put forth effort in order to achieve performance and a reward that is considered valuable to him or her. In other words, expectancy theory suggests "the behavior chosen by a person is influenced by the degree

to which the perceived or expected outcome that would result from the choice is attractive"
(Sanchez *et al* 2006, 32). A study conducted in 2006 by Sanchez *et al* used expectancy theory to
examine the relationships between participation in SA programs and student motivations. As the
researchers employed expectancy theory to look at the intent to study abroad, "effort" was
replaced by motivations (Sanchez *et al* 2006, 32). Motivations are often used interchangeably
with terms such as needs and values. In essence, motivations are "what drive a person to obtain
satisfaction from a class of stimuli" (Sanchez *et al* 2006, 29). Sanchez *et al*'s study of 477
American, Chinese, and French students found that knowing basic motivations can to some
extent help to understand why students decide to embark on a SA experience. For example, the
research found one motivation for students to study abroad is the belief that the experience will
reward them with an improved professional situation in the future (Sanchez *et al* 2006, 32). Yet
the researchers note that possession of certain common motivations alone could not determine
fully if a student would study abroad. Rather it appears that nationality and other barriers
"moderate the relationship between motivations and the intent to study abroad (Sanchez *et al*
2006, 44). Although expectancy theory can help to shed light on the motivations which lead
students to study abroad, additional factors need to be taken into account.

Human capital theory has also been used to examine students' decision to study abroad.
Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, wrote extensively about the concept of "capital". The
notion of human capital can be divided into three forms: economic, cultural, and social
(Bourdieu 1986, 241). Bourdieu's work purports that people generally try to accrue as much
capital as possible and it is that accumulated capital which "defines their social trajectory (that is,
their life chances)" (Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone 1993, 5). An individual's economic,
cultural, and social capital can be best understood as the "productive capacities (knowledge,

understandings, talents, and skills), which can be enhanced through investments in education and exchanged for increased earnings, power, and occupational status" (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 122). Bourdieu defined *economic capital* as one's facilities which can be "immediately and directly convertible into money" (quoted in Calhoun 1993, 70). Economic capital differs from other forms: cultural capital and social capital. *Social capital* is the summation of all relationships and connections which give one access to information or support, while one's *cultural capital* is the combination of education, skills, language, and knowledge. Like economic capital, both social and cultural capital contribute to a person's place or status in society as well as their social trajectory. There are many ways in which people can "invest" in their personal human capital, such as "schooling, on-the-job training, medical care, migration" et cetera (Becker 1980, 9). Perna (2006) and Becker (1980) suggest that academic experiences are one of the most effective ways of increasing human capital and therefore increasing higher future earnings.

Human capital theory has been used to evaluate how students make choices about enrollment in institutions of higher education. Researchers, such as Perna (2006), have examined these student choices based on the framework of human capital theory by evaluating the "monetary and non-monetary benefits and costs of each option" (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 122). Some of these non-monetary benefits include "more fulfilling work environments, better health, longer life, more informed purchases, and lower probabilities of unemployment" (Perna 2006, 106).

In DesJardins and Toutkoushian's 2005 examination of the rational thought process in relation to student choices, the authors note that there has been a great deal of research examining how students determine the amount of education to obtain and where to get this education. These previous studies have been largely based on models which employ Bourdieu's

human capital theory in order to understand the decision making process (DesJardins and Toutkoushian 2005, 192). This model has been used to speculate "that students will weigh the expected costs and benefits of pursuing a college education and then choose to go to college if the utility of expected benefits outweighs the expected costs" (DesJardins and Toutkoushian 2005, 193). In terms of students' choice of which institution to attend, researchers have used human capital theory to argue that "students will calculate the expected costs and benefits from each institutions under consideration and then choose to enroll in the institution with the highest utility of net expected benefits" (DesJardins and Toutkoushian 2005, 193).

Though human capital and expectancy theories help researchers better understand the factors influencing students' choices; they cannot fully explain college choice and/or the decision to study abroad (Perna 2006, DesJardins and Toutkoushian 2005, Manski 1993, Sanchez *et al* 2006). DesJardins and Toutkoushian have suggested other factors also influence these choices, such as preferences, uncertainty, and tolerance for risk. In order to explore additional influences Perna (2006) created a model to examine student college choice, referred to as the student choice model, which integrates both economic influences (human capital) as well as four principal sociological concepts: "(1) the individual's habitus, or patterns of behavior, tastes, and thought; (2) school and community context; (3) the higher education context; and (4) the broader social, economic, and policy context" (Perna 2006, 116). In essence, the student choice model suggests that there "is not one set course leading to college enrollment" (Perna 2006, 116). Rather, multiple influences impact the decisions related to college attendance.

Perna's student-choice model has typically been used to explain the "sequence of postsecondary decisions-i.e. whether to attend college, which college to attend, what field to major in, whether to reenroll and persist, etc." as well as the factors which influence these

decisions (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 122). This model has been extrapolated to other student choices. Arguing that enrollment and persistence are only a few in a series of "educational decisions that students make in preparation or in the midst of their educational experience" Salisbury *et al* (123) found great similarity between the process of college choice and the choice to study abroad. Prior to the Salisbury *et al* study, there was no research which specifically examined the decision to study abroad in relation to the different forms of capital that students possess. Given this gap, Salisbury *et al* chose to use the student-choice model and human capital theory to explain the factors which influence undergraduate students to study abroad at all.

Salisbury *et al* specifically examined the perceived ability of SA to help one obtain professional goals as well as the influence of awareness of international events, previous travel experiences, and language ability (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 124). Salisbury *et al* (139) found that the cumulative amount of economic, social, and cultural capital influence a student's decision to participate in SA experiences. For example, the researchers found that those students who reported high levels of social and cultural capital such as "interest in reading and writing" or those who were more open "to diverse ideas and people" were more likely to intend to study abroad (Salisbury *et al* 2008*,* 134-5). The study also found that of the three forms of capital, low levels of economic capital would outweigh high levels of social and cultural capital. For example, "students who come from low SES [socio-economic status] families are decidedly less likely to plan to study abroad, even if they accumulate high levels of social and cultural capital while in college" (Salisbury *et al* 2008*,* 136). Further, those from families which had a high SES would be more likely to also have high levels of high social and cultural capital and would also be the most likely to intend to study abroad (136-7). Perhaps most importantly, this research demonstrates that although the factors which have an impact on students' decision to study

abroad are numerous, a theoretical model of student choice can help to better understand how accumulated capital affects "a range of student decisions regarding participation in meaningful educational activities during the college experience" (Salisbury *et al* 2008, 137).

Given the complexity of choosing a SA destination, the research below takes into account the many factors which influence student decision making. This study employs a theoretical model which combines expectancy, student choice, and human capital theories (see Figure 1). Building on previous literature, this research examines how certain experiences, which are defined as adding cultural and social capital, affect a student's choice of study abroad destination. Earlier studies have found that all three of these forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) influence decisions about whether or not one should study abroad and thus it is likely that specific aspects of capital will also influence a student to study in the MENA region, rather than a more common locale. In addition, this study takes into account how certain attitudes and motivations also impact the choice of SA destination.
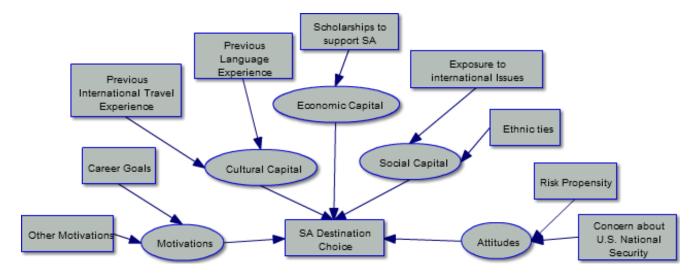
Figure 1: Factors influencing study abroad destination choice

In order to look at accumulated economic capital influences described above, the survey collected information regarding scholarship support for SA opportunities (RQ 7). Two contributors to a student's cultural capital, language and travel, are also be considered. Specifically, cultural capital is be examined in terms of the amount of language a student has studied at their home university (RQ 4) and the amount and type of previous international travel experience (RQ 5). Further, this study examines students' social capital through the amount of exposure to international issues (RQ 1) through courses, professors, and international students on their home campus.

In addition, based on Perna and Sanchez *et al's* work it is believed that additional factors such as attitudes and other possible motivations also impact the choice of destination. One of the hypothesized motivations which influence SA destination choice is career intentions. This study uses quantitative data in order to determine career related motivations such as intended career field, graduate school aspirations, and type of organization one hopes to work for. This information is used to better understand research questions such as whether students see the experience of SA in the Middle East/North Africa as an investment which will help them pursue a career in the U.S. government (RQ 3). In addition, through the use of focus groups this study gathered qualitative data regarding other possible motivations that students the MENA region note as having influenced their choice to study in this region. Lastly, this research looks at how certain attitudes influence study abroad destination choice. Through the use of a risk assessment scale, this research examines the relationship between a students' risk-propensity and their destination choice (RQ6). In addition, this research looks at concern about U.S. national security as an attitude influencing students' decisions about where to study abroad (RQ 2). By employing this integrated model of human capital, expectancy, and student choice theory this research

describes the multiple factors influencing U.S. undergraduates' choice of study abroad destination, and particularly those which are influencing students who choose the less-common destination of the MENA region.

III.   Summary

This chapter has demonstrated a need for international education research to expand in scope in order to address how U.S. students choose their SA destinations. Although there continues to be great value in understanding the outcomes and effectiveness of SA practices, there is a clear need to understand the factors influencing changing trends in SA destination choice. Prior research has informed a model of human capital, expectancy, and student choice theory which this research employs in order to understand the specific trend of growth in SA students in the MENA region. This research now turns to the methodological framework used to inform the sampling procedure, efforts to protect human subjects, modality, conceptualization and hypotheses, data analysis, and limitations of this present research.

Chapter Four: Methodology

I. Sampling Procedure

This research has been designed in order to investigate the population of U.S. SA students who were studying abroad in the Fall of 2010. The sampling frame included students who were currently studying abroad in common destinations in Western Europe or Australia as well as those who were studying abroad in one less-common area of destination; the MENA region. Students are defined as studying abroad if they are U.S. undergraduate students who are enrolled in a program abroad for which they will receive academic credit at their home university.

A student is categorized as studying in a common destination if they choose to study in one of the 50 sovereign nations which fall in the geographic region of Europe[28] or Australia. Although there are several other countries which currently have high numbers of study abroad students (such as China, Costa Rica, and Mexico) European destinations and Australia continue to be broadly considered common destinations for SA given their long tradition of U.S. study abroad, as well as cultural and linguistic similarities. Less common destinations are defined as all other areas of the world: Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East/North Africa, or areas of Oceania. For the purposes of this study, students who choose less common destinations will be further divided between those who study in the MENA region and all other less common destinations. A student is defined as an MENA student if they are studying in a predominantly-Arab country located in the Middle East or North Africa.[29] As mentioned previously, this

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[28] Geographically, Europe is defined as the northern part of the Eurasia landmass. The borders of Europe include the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, and the Black Sea to the south east. The easternmost boarder of Europe is general defined by the Ural Mountains in Russia, the Caspian Sea and the Caucus Mountains. Within these borders are 50 independent nation states.

[29] The seventeen countries which fall under this definition include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

research will particularly focus on the three top destinations for U.S. study abroad students in the MENA region: Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco[30]. Only data from students in the MENA region will be used in this research as a students' choice to study in other less common destinations such as Latin America or Asia may be due to factors outside of the scope of this thesis.

The members of the sampling frame were identified through three sources. First, an internet search for all SA programs in one of the three selected MENA region countries was conducted. The researcher contacted the Program Managers of each of these organizations and requested consent to meet with students in order to solicit participation in a survey and focus groups. The second source of SA students in the MENA region was snowball sampling of Program Managers. Of the five originally contacted programs, three program managers suggested four other programs operating in these regions and provided contact information for these additional SA programs. A total of thirteen study abroad programs in Egypt, Jordan, or Morocco were identified. Ten[31] chose to assist the researcher in contacting their students. The researcher travelled to each program location and distributed paper format surveys to interested students. In addition, given the size of U.S. SA population, an online version was sent to students at the larger universities of the AUC and Al-Akhwayn University given difficulty in gathering all students at one time to solicit participation in the research.

The third source for selection of subjects a set of international program offices based at U.S. institutions of higher education. These sources were used to identify American students who were studying abroad in common destinations. As of the 2008-09 school year, the U.S.

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[30] At the outset of this research (Fall 2009) Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco were the top three destinations for U.S. SA in the MENA region. In November of 2010, data shows that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) now ranks as the second most popular destination in the region. Since these statistics were released after data collection was complete, it was not feasible to include students enrolled in programs in the UAE in this research.

[31] The American University in Cairo, Egypt; Amideast Egypt;; Middle East Studies Program, Egypt; School for International Training (SIT), Jordan; Amideast, Jordan; CIEE, Jordan; Al-Akhwayn University, Morocco; Amideast, Morocco; IES Abroad, Morocco; and CIEE, Morocco.

Department of Education identified 4,409 universities in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics 2009, n.p.). Non-probability sampling, which does not involve random selection, was used to gather names of 104 universities which had both SA offices and publicly available email addresses. Of those universities contacted, 21[32] forwarded a link of the online version of the survey to all current SA students from their institution. Given the scope of this research, students studying abroad in Western European countries or Australia were not asked to participate in focus groups.

In light of the rapidly transient nature of SA students each semester and the large number of possible respondents, this sampling frame did not include every known U.S. student studying abroad during the fall of 2010. While the methods used to construct the sampling frame were not able to include all students, an effort was made to include every known participant enrolled in the 10 located programs in the countries being studied. In addition, efforts were made to include a large number of those students studying in common destinations which could be used in comparison to the MENA students.

A. Questionnaire

In order to explain the decision to study in the MENA region, a survey of 27 questions composed of multiple choice, short answer, and ordinal scale formats (see Appendix A) was administered to the two groups of U.S. study abroad students (MENA and common destination). The survey was developed based on exploratory qualitative research conducted via focus groups at the American University in Cairo in the fall of 2009. The information received from open-

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[32] Participating U.S. universities included: Arizona State University, Baylor University, Beloit College, Brandeis University, California Lutheran University, Fordham University, Lehigh University, Portland State University, Southern Methodist University, University of California San Diego, University of Florida, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of North Florida, University of Notre Dame, University of St. Thomas, University of Wisconsin La Crosse, University of Wisconsin Madison, Villanova University, Wellesley College, Western Michigan University, and Whittier College.

ended interviewing was used to design a quantitative survey which would provide data for statistical analysis.

The survey questions can be divided into the following sections: chosen destination, prior international exposure, prior language experience, future career plans, previous international travel, risk propensity, and basic demographic information. The survey began by with basic information regarding the name and location of their home institution, the country of their study abroad location, the duration of their study abroad (number of semesters), and the type of program in which they were studying (private university, local university, home-university partnership, or island program). A request for this information was placed at the beginning of the survey in order to ensure that this essential categorical information was captured. The survey then asks a series of questions measuring exposure to international issues from sources such as the media, university courses, university professors, students, and activities. The third portion of the survey addressed students' prior language experience including attitudes about language acquisition, languages spoken, and previous language courses completed. The next section addressed future career plans through a series of questions about graduate school plans, preferred career fields, and attitudes about the impact of a SA experience on future employment. The fifth section collected information regarding location, duration, and type of previous international travel. The survey also measured attitudes about physical, social, and financial risks. The last section of the survey requested demographic information such as age, race, U.S. institution, major, and academic standing. As Babbie (1990) has pointed out in his book *Survey Research Methods* "the order in which questions are asked can affect the responses as well as the overall data collection activity" (140). The order and grouping of questions was constructed to gather pertinent information regarding program location first, keep the questions in logical groupings,

and alternate positive and negative questioning in order to keep the students motivated to continue with the survey. Particularly in regards to self-administered surveys (as opposed to interviews) research has pointed out the importance of placing "duller demographic data" at the end of the survey and more interesting questions at the beginning (Babbie 1990, 141). In addition, in order to mitigate measurement errors in these self-administered questionnaires, efforts were made to ensure that questions were easy to understand and free of technical flaws which may confuse respondents.

The survey was pre-tested on April 25, 2010 in a Survey Research Methods class and the formats of two questions regarding previous travel experience and preferred career field were made more user-friendly by reducing the length of the questions. The survey was then distributed in a pilot test from May 2-May 14, 2010 in both paper format and online through the survey hosting site, www.surveymonkey.com. Based on the 64 responses to this pilot, several questions were re-worded in order to be made clearer and several questions were added about scholarships students receive and attitudes about concern for U.S. national security.

The final survey was distributed in two self-administered formats: online, for those in common destinations and hard-copy or online for students in the MENA region. The researcher has chosen to collect as many hard-copy surveys as possible from students in the MENA region in order to meet with students in person. For larger programs in the region such as AUC and Al-Akhwayn University in Morocco students were also given the option of completing an online survey if they were unavailable to meet with the researcher. Given financial and time constraints, all students in common destinations completed online versions of the survey. Data were collected from September 20, 2010-November 18, 2010. The timing of the survey was intended to reach

students during the middle of the semester in order to collect information after the initial settling-in period and before final exams.

B. Focus Groups

In addition to the survey data, this research also collected information from students by employing focus groups. A focus group is a "nondirective technique that results in the controlled production of a discussion of a group of people" (Flores and Alanso 1995, 84). Focus groups have been found to be useful in social research for their ability to "draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys" (Gibbs 1997, 2). In this context, focus group data sheds light not only on the factors that influence choice of study abroad in the MENA region, but also the decision-making process.

Students from several programs in the MENA region were asked to participate in focus groups. Duration of focus groups ranged from 40 minutes to one hour and included questions regarding the decision to study abroad in the MENA region. An interview guide was used which contained questions about perceived influences on student's decision such as opinions of family and friends, language experience, recent political conflicts, and career goals. Students were briefed on the intended use of their responses and asked to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the research. Focus groups were recorded and later transcribed. Data were then organized according to simplified themes in order to expose common descriptions relating to the choice process. These responses, when combined with the quantitative data collected through a cross sectional survey, provide a more holistic view of the process of study abroad destination choice.

II.   Protection of Human Subjects

Efforts have been made to protect human subjects by designing survey and focus group questions which would pose minimal risk to participants, and questions have been approved by both the thesis advisor and the Institutional Review Board at AUC. Participants gave their informed consent to participate by reading and acknowledging a form which introduced the primary investigator, explained the nature of the research, assured confidentiality, and indicated that participation was voluntary (see Appendix B). Students were informed via the consent form that no information which could identify them would be recorded with their responses and that they were free to stop participation at any time. Students who completed a paper format questionnaire were required to sign a form indicating their willingness to participate. For those students who completed an online version of the questionnaire, an identical consent statement was displayed as the first page of the survey. Consent was implied if the student continued with the survey by clicking "Next" and continued with the survey. Students enrolled in programs in the MENA region were also asked to participate in focus groups addressing the RQs mentioned above (See Focus Group Script in Appendix C). Prior to participating in a focus group, students signed a consent form which indicates their willingness to participate as well as their understanding that their responses will be kept confidential (See Appendix D). All data which were collected via the survey and focus groups was kept secure and confidential during the research process.

III.   Modality

This research utilized two modes of data collection: both hard copy and online surveys. Both modes exhibit benefits and deficits in regards to financial and time costs, response rate, and

coverage. For example, hard copy surveys may require greater costs in terms of photocopies, postage, and travel costs incurred for distribution. In addition to requiring greater financial costs, hard copy surveys may also demand a larger time investment on the part of the researcher than online surveys. In this study, the researcher has chosen to present hard copy surveys in person to students in the MENA region rather than mail surveys due to the difficulty in obtaining mailing addresses for students residing abroad. The delivery of hard copy surveys thus required an investment of travel time and travel related costs. Despite greater financial and time requirements, hard copy surveys tend to have a higher response rate as participants are able to meet personally with the researcher. A wider coverage of participants is also possible with hard-copy surveys as students were provided with all needed materials, and did not need to have access to a computer and the internet. Hard copy surveys do present greater difficulty in terms of data entry, as responses need to be coded and re-entered in an electronic format in order to be suitable for statistical analysis.

Hard copy surveys are often the preferred mode for survey research, yet online surveys have also been found to be beneficial to researchers. Research related to SA has found that online surveys are often a valuable tool for researchers as this mode has the ability to reach a large audience with fewer financial and time costs (Van Hoof and Verbeeten 2005, 44). In addition to reaching large numbers of participants, web surveys are also more convenient than hard copy versions. Bradshaw Durrant and Rasmussen Dorius (2007) point out that "the web survey provides the most flexibility and easiest back-end data processing of all survey types" (45). In addition to easier data entry, the researchers also point out that open-ended questions tend to receive more lengthy responses in online surveys in comparison to hard copy versions.

One common concern for researchers when using online surveys is the issue of coverage. Cooper points out that many people do not have adequate access to the internet and thus web surveys face the issues of coverage error; that is there will be a "mismatch between the target population and the frame population" (467). Yet researchers who have worked with SA students note that most current university students have access to the internet and have email addresses. Thus this particular group may be more likely to respond to electronic surveys than the general population (Van Hoof and Verbeeten 2005, 44). The response rate of online surveys is a concern closely related to coverage. Researchers who have employed online surveys note "their low response rate, especially when sent out to the general population" (Van Hoof and Verbeeten 2005, 44). Similar to previous research, this study was able to mitigate the issue of low response by being able to contact students individually at personal email addresses via U.S. study abroad offices, as opposed to placing a link to the survey on a webpage.

Although hard copy surveys were the preferred mode for data collection from the study abroad population, given time and financial restraints, this mode was only employed with those students studying in the MENA region. Online surveys were deemed an acceptable way to reach students studying abroad in Western Europe and Australia as well as those studying at large institutions in the MENA region. Given the mixed modality of this research, efforts were made to ensure both hard copy surveys and online surveys were identical in formatting and questions. In addition, on the final page of the survey, contact information for the primary investigator was again provided and participants were encouraged to contact the researcher if they were interested in learning about the results of the study.

IV. Conceptualization and Hypotheses

This study examines U.S. undergraduate students' choice of SA destination, which serves as the dependent variable. Nominal data of a student's SA country choice was gathered. Countries were then divided between common destinations and less common destinations. As a means to explain the factors which influence the decision to study in the MENA region, this research explores the following concepts derived from the research questions:

A. *Exposure to International Issues*

Exposure to international issues was examined in this research as a measure of social capital. A university student's exposure to international issues occurs in home, school, work, or social spheres. Additionally, exposure can be casual (discussion amongst friends or family, for personal interest) or formal (within a classroom, as a requirement for work). Based on previous research by Knight and Salisbury, this study defines exposure to international issues as the combined frequency of interaction with the media and international elements on a university campus prior to studying abroad (see survey questions 6-10). On the survey, the following six items were measured through self-report scales: (1) frequency of watching, reading, or listening to the media (an ordinal measure with a 7 point scale ranging from "never" to "several times a day"), (2) foreign language classes taken (an interval measure of number and nominal measure of type), (3) university courses taken which focus on international issues or diverse cultures (an interval measure of number and nominal measure of topics), (4) contact with international students whose background, for example their race, religion, national origin, is different from the students' (a three point ordinal measure ranging from "rarely" to "often"), (5) frequency of participation in extracurricular activities such as clubs, organizations, internships, work, or workshops which have an international focus (a four point ordinal measure ranging from "never"

to "often"), and (6) number of times students have studied under a faculty member whose

national origin is different from his/her own (an interval measure of the number of different

faculty). All of these measures were then combined in a scale which classifies a student's

international exposure as low, medium, or high.

Based on these six variables, this study presents the following hypothesis in order to

address RQ 1:

Hypothesis 1: Students who indicate frequent exposure to the media, international students, extra-curricular activities as well as enrollment in language courses, courses focused on international issues and/or courses with faculty who integrate their own international experience into the classroom are more likely to choose to study in the MENA than those who have low exposures and or fewer enrollments in such courses.

Concern about U.S. national security was examined as a measure of attitudes which

influence SA destination choice (see survey question 20g). Following the events of 9/11, there

has been an increased sense among lawmakers and the general public that the national security of

the United States is threatened. Government has made efforts to reorganize and reevaluate the

security apparatus of the U.S. in order to prevent future intelligence failures (Spracher 2009, 1).

One of those transformations has been the creation of the Department of Homeland Security,

which oversees the numerous intelligence agencies of the U.S. government. National security,

intelligence, and homeland security have become increasingly understood as intertwined subjects

(Spracher 2009, 10). Previous literature has related the media attention to the current "highly

charged atmosphere surrounding national intelligence in the United States since 9/11" (Spracher

2009, 19). An individual's concern for U.S. national security may impact opinions about

international affairs (see Brewer 2006). In addition, these attitudes may also have an effect on

behavior such as aversion to interact with certain groups of people, career goals, or willingness

to travel. This research examined how concern for U.S. national security is related to SA

destination choice by asking students to rank their concern for this issue on a 9 point ordinal scale.

Based on the variable of concern for national security, this study presents the following hypothesis in order to address RQ2:

Hypothesis 2: Students who indicate they have a high concern for U.S. national security will be more likely to choose to study in the MENA region.

B. Career Intentions

This research also examined career intentions as one of the possible motivations for studying abroad (see survey questions 14-19). Vocational intentions can be broadly defined as including both careers and jobs (Sauermann 2004, 274). Although career selection is a complicated process which often changes throughout a lifetime, there are several points in which students make choices about their vocation, times often referred to as an "explicit decision phase" (Sauermann 2004, 274). U.S. undergraduate SA students are typically in their junior year of college, and thus are at a critical decision phase in which they experience pressure to make choices about their career goals.

Career intentions can be defined as future work and, in this case, academic plans of a student. In order to measure these intentions, this survey nominally measured and categorized a student's intent to attend graduate school, intended field of study, planned career field, type of work intended, and the type of organization they intend to work for. Based on research by Relyea *et al* and Goldstein & Kim this research also assessed the career value of SA experiences. The survey employed an ordinal Likert scale of agreement ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" in order to ask students if they believe studying abroad will 1) add value to

their college degree 2) give them a competitive edge in the job market 3) allow them to advance

their career at a greater pace 4) favorably influence perceptions of future employers.

Based on these variables this study hypothesizes the following in order to address RQ 3:

Hypothesis 3: Students who intend to pursue graduate studies in fields related to national security, international relations, Middle East Studies, international development, or the Arabic language are more likely to study abroad in the MENA region than students who intended to study in other fields.

Hypothesis 4: Students who plan to pursue career within the U.S. government (in specific fields such as foreign policy, international relations, national security, public policy) are more likely to study abroad in the MENA region than those who have other career intentions.

Hypothesis 5: Students who plan to pursue international careers (international development, foreign policy, international relations) or work with Non-profit Organizations or Non-Governmental Organizations are more likely to study abroad the MENA region than students with other career intentions.

Hypothesis 6: Students who study abroad in the MENA region will place a higher value on a study abroad experience in relation to their future careers than those in common destinations.

C. Language Experience

As a measure of cultural capital, this study examined how foreign language study at a

home university impacts SA destination choice (see survey questions 11-13). Through the use of

the Interest in Foreign Languages Scale developed by Barrows *et al* (1981) and adapted by

Hembroff and Rusz, Goldstein and Kim found that study abroad participants "view learning a

new language as an interesting and worthwhile concomitant of international education"

(Goldstein and Kim 2006, 518). This scale measures both language interest and competence.

Previous research supports these findings, as it has found that "interest in foreign languages is

associated with attending international programs on campus and discussing international issues

inside and outside the classroom" (Goldstein and Kim 2006, 510). Although this relationship

with interest and international programs has been noted, foreign language competence itself is

not a predictor of students' likelihood to participate in SA programs (see Goldstein and Kim

2006).The researchers stated that their sample size did not allow for analysis by SA destination and suggested that further research examine the language-related characteristics of students based on SA destination.

Language competence as reported by students themselves has not been demonstrated to relate to students' choice to study abroad. Rather than examine self-reported language proficiency, which has questionable accuracy, this research looked at language experience as defined by frequency of exposure to foreign language classes. The survey measured students' views on the usefulness of studying a foreign language. Using nominal and interval measures, students were asked to identify the type and amount of language classes enrolled in previous to study abroad. Further, using the Interest in Foreign Languages Scale as a model, this study used a 5 point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" to measure language interest (e.g. It is important for Americans to learn foreign languages).

Based on these variables and literature this study hypothesizes the following in order to address RQ 4:

Hypothesis 7: Students who have taken multiple language courses will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region than those who have taken fewer language courses.

Hypothesis 8: Students who place a higher level of importance on Americans learning foreign languages will be more likely to study in the MENA region.

D. *International Travel Experience*

This survey used previous international travel experiences as another measure of accumulated cultural capital (see survey question 21). As Hembroff and Rusz note, it is not adequate to simply measure students' travel experience or even travel beyond the borders of the United States. Students may have travel experience in Canada, which for many U.S. students is

not a cultural context different than that in their home or university state. In order to measure the effect of travel, this research will distinguish previous international travel as that which happens outside of the United States or Canada.

The type of arrangements surrounding a student's travel experience is also important to establish when examining the possible impact of international travel. Research has found that experiences which do not allow for living for a significant period of time in the country or for extensive interactions with the people of the culture are less as influential on students' attitudes (Hembroff and Rusz 1993). Therefore, this study distinguished type of travel and asked students to identify how their experience was facilitated (e.g. via prior study abroad, high school exchange, parent's work, volunteer experiences, work experience, group tour, or personal travel). Based on the findings of Hembroff and Rusz, this research assumes that the last two categories (group travel or personal travel) would not allow for extensive interactions or cultural exposure and therefore be less influential on student attitudes and choices. Living and studying abroad for an extended period of time during prior study abroad, high school exchange, parent's work, volunteer experience, or work experience would allow for greater cultural interaction. Based on previous studies, the following nominal and ordinal measurements of students' previous travel experience were examined: total number of counties a student has traveled to (interval level), the three most recent trips including the region of travel (nominal level), type of travel (nominal level) and the length of the trips (interval level).

Based on these variables this study hypothesizes the following in order to address RQ 5:

Hypothesis 9: Students who have more previous international travel experience based on the number of countries visited will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

Hypothesis 10: Students who have participated in culturally immersive international travel (studying or living abroad) will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

E. Risk Propensity

As a measure of current attitudes, this study examined risk propensity in SA students (see survey question 20). Risk has been defined by MacCrimmon & Wehrung and Relyea *et al* as being "determined by the individual's perception based upon quantity of time, availability of information, and control over the situation" (Relyea *et al* 2008, 349). More specifically, risk has been defined as a multi-dimensional concept which is sometimes seen as "the possibility of physical or social or financial harm/detriment/loss due to hazard" (Rohrmann 2005, 2). This negative perspective of risk is perhaps the most common view, yet there are also neutral and positive perspectives. A neutral perspective might define risk as "uncertainty about the outcomes (good and/or bad ones) of a decision" while a positive perspective might see risk as a "thrill (danger-induced feelings of excitement)" (Rohrmann 2005, 2). Fear and curiosity play a strong role for decision makers when they evaluate behaviors which are perceived as risky. If a person feels fearful about a decision "they will be more likely to avoid any perceived risk and focus instead on protecting themselves from harm" and conversely, if an individual is curious about the end result of a choice "they will be more likely to seek additional information about the decision outcome" (Relyea *et al* 2008, 349). There has been a great deal of research which has examined risk attitudes of people, that is, whether they should take or avoid risks in situations with unclear results. These attitudes have generally been defined as either risk-propensity or risk-aversion.

In order to "investigate the relationships between risk taking propensity and a variety [of] socio-economic characteristics" MacCrimmon and Werhrung developed measures of general attributes which characterize risk takers or risk averters (1990, 423). Research has pointed out the importance of distinguishing between the numerous types of risk and also suggests using multiple measures of risk propensity "because our research and that of many others have shown

that a single measure of risk taking is inadequate--risk propensity is too complex to be captured

by a single measure" (MacCrimmon and Wehrung 1990, 425). The following six risk

components have been associated with study abroad: "financial risk (expensive), psychological

risk (anxiety), physical risk (safety), social risk (thought of as foolish) and performance risk (that

something might be wrong with an experience or product)" (Luethge 2004, 25). Risk propensity

can be measured, as MacCrimmon and Wehrung did, in three ways:

>   (1) behavior in hypothetical, standardized situations framed using a basic risk paradigm
>   that has an underlying theory of risk,
>   (2) behavior in naturally occurring risky situations, and
>   (3) self-reported attitudes toward taking risks.

In previous research related to risk-propensity and the decision to study abroad, Relyea *et al* used

a single-item "I consider myself to be a risk taker" as a measure.

Based on the risk taking indices developed by MacCrimmon and Wehrung, Meertens and

Lion, and Rohrmann; a series of eight questions were developed which measured risk attitudes.

This research evaluated risk behavior hypothetically by asking students to rank how likely they

would be to engage in future decisions that may have financial and social risks. In order to

examine risk in naturally occurring situations, students were asked to rank agreement with

statements about feelings of psychological risk, physical risk, and performance risk related to

their SA destination choice (see survey question 19). Both the hypothetical and naturally

occurring situations will be ranked in an ordinal fashion on a 9-point scale ranging from 1

(strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree) in order to measure risk-propensity. The questions were

alternately worded in the positive then the negative in order to ensure participants closely read

the questions. Lastly, students were asked to self-report their attitude towards taking risks using

the above mentioned item used by Relyea *et al* as an ordinal measure of risk aversion or risk

taking. Through measures on each of these aspects of risk, answers were recorded into a two point scale which characterizes students' risk-propensity as either risk taking or risk averse.

Based on this variable and literature, this study hypothesizes the following in order to address RQ 6:

Hypothesis 11: Students who score higher overall on the risk scale are more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

F. Scholarship Support

As a measure of economic capital, this study examined the type of scholarship support some students receive to assist them with their SA experience (see survey question 27). Several federal scholarship programs such as the Boren Scholarship (funded by NSEP) and the Gillman Scholarship encourage SA to uncommon destinations by exposing students to LCTLs and providing scholarship funds for study in areas where those languages are spoken. Since the fiscal year 1994, the NSEP has "expended $2 million each year on Boren Scholarships for undergraduate students" who study abroad in regions which are deemed critical to U.S. national security (Larsen and Dutschke 2010, 345). In addition to these programs, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program provides funds to support undergraduate SA. The program was initiated through the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000 and is administered by the U.S. Department of State. The funds are specifically designed for undergraduate students who receive Pell Grant funds in order to help them study abroad in multiple destinations around the world. The general scholarship funds are on average $4,000 and around two thousand scholarships are granted every year (IIE 2010a, n.p.). Those awarded the Gilman funds are additionally eligible "to receive an additional $3,000 Critical Need Language Supplement" (IIE 2010a, n.p.). There are over 50 languages that are considered critical by the

Gilman program including: Arabic, Chinese, Turkik[33], Persian[34], Indic[35], Korean, Russian, and Swahili. During the 2007-2008 academic year, these language supplements were given to 50 students (IIE 2010a, n.p.).

This study requested nominal information regarding the name of any scholarships students use to support their SA experience and whether or not they think they would have gone abroad without the scholarships. The nominal data of scholarship names were then categorized into general university scholarships and specific scholarships aimed at promoting SA in regions related to national security interests of the U.S. such as Boren, Gilman, or Military scholarships (such as ROTC).

Based on this variable, this study hypothesizes the following in order to address RQ 7:

Hypothesis 12: Students who received Boren, Gilman or Military Scholarships will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

V. Data Analysis

Following data collection, responses from both hard copy and online surveys were coded and transferred into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). For hard copy surveys each response was manually entered into the data base, while for online surveys data was downloaded from the hosting website, re-coded in Microsoft Excel, and then imported into SPSS. Two descriptive statistics, frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were employed in the data analysis process. In order to test the 12 hypotheses of this study, independent variables were cross-tabulated with dependent variables (destination choice) and the Chi-Squared test for independence was run for each cross-tabulation, $\chi^2 \ (obtained) = \ \Sigma \ \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$. Although Chi-

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[33] Turkik includes: Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Kyrgz, Turkish, Turkmen, Uzbek
[34] Persian includes: Farsi, Dari, Kurdish, Pashto, Tajiki
[35] Indic includes: Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Sinhala, Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi

Squared is able to indicate the dependence of nominal variables, this statistic is limited in that it does not indicate the exact nature of the relationship between variables. Following Chi-Squared analysis, column percentages were also calculated and analyzed in order to best understand the relationship between the variables examined.

VI.   Limitations

The main limitation of this study was the inability to contact every U.S. study abroad student. The findings presented below are based only on students participating in programs in 10 programs in the MENA region and those in databases of 21 U.S. study abroad offices. The data collected therefore say more about these particular students than about all SA students, and cannot be extrapolated to larger populations. Despite this limitation, given the large number of respondents and the diversity of the geographic locations of their home school, the findings can reveal general tendencies of U.S. students studying abroad. Given greater resources, it would be ideal to design a random sample of U.S. students studying around the world.

VII.   Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework employed by this study and has particularly addressed the methods of selecting and protecting the sample population, the mixed modality of research methods used to obtain data, and an elaboration of the ways in which this information was processed. While keeping in mind the limitations of this current study, this research will now examine the results of survey and focus group data collected based on the methodology laid out above.

I. Survey Results

Demographics

This research was based on a mixed-modality survey consisting of hard-copy and online versions. A total of 601 valid[36] responses to the survey were received from online (65%) and hard copy (35%) versions. Online surveys were made available to students studying in the MENA region, who made up 16% (n=63) of the total, and those in common SA destinations, who made up 84% (n=326) of the total. A total of 389 valid online surveys were received[37]. In addition, 212 hard copy surveys were completed by students in the MENA region.

When all survey modes were combined, the responses to the survey were nearly equally divided between the two destination categories. Forty-six percent of the sample (n=275) were studying in the MENA region and 54% (n=326) were enrolled in programs in Western Europe or Australia. Respondents were studying abroad in 20 different countries, with large numbers of respondents indicating their SA destination as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, England, Spain, France, Italy, or Australia (see Table 3). Survey participants were studying with 189 different programs, the most common of which were the American University in Cairo (n=65), CIEE in Amman (n=52), and the Notre Dame London Program (n=34). Most respondents (74%) indicated they would have one semester of study abroad experience by the end of May 2011. There was no difference between those in MENA and traditional destinations in the length of study abroad.

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[36] A survey was deemed invalid if it was initiated but less than 25% was completed.

[37] A total of 561 students responded to the online survey. Of these, 16 entries were deemed invalid and discarded. In addition 156 of the responses received from the online version were from students who were studying abroad in non-traditional locations outside of the MENA region and were not included in the analysis as they are outside of the scope of this study.

Table 3: SA destinations of survey participants

Country	% of Sample	N	Total U.S. students in country*
MENA Destinations			
Egypt	16.8	101	1,781
Jordan	13.3	80	483
Morocco	13.1	79	865
Multiple, one in MENA	2.1	13	--
Oman	0.2	1**	27
Tunisia	0.2	1**	130
TOTAL	**45.7**	**275**	**2,776**
Common Destinations			
England	15.1	91	31,342
Spain	10.1	61	24,169
France	5.2	31	16,910
Italy	5.0	30	27,362
Australia	4.2	25	11,140
Germany	3.8	23	8,330
Ireland	3.5	21	6,858
Scotland	1.5	9	--***
The Netherlands	1.3	8	2,318
Denmark	1.2	7	2,244
Sweden	1.0	6	1,150
Greece	0.8	5	3,616
Austria	0.5	3	2,836
Norway	0.3	2	479
Switzerland	0.3	2	2,004
Multiple in Europe	0.3	2	--
Total	**54.1**	**326**	**140,758**

*Open Doors data for 2008/09 school year
**Although the researcher originally intended to only examine Egypt, Jordan and Morocco there was a small number of respondents in these countries who received the online survey from their home University and were included in analysis.
***Students in Scotland are combined with England by Open Doors.

As mentioned above, 64% of U.S. study abroad students are typically female and 36% male. Of the valid responses to this survey, 70% were female, 29% male, and less than 1% transgender; closely mirroring that of the larger U.S. SA population. Women in this sample were more likely to study abroad in common destinations (76%) than in the MENA region (64%), χ^2 (2, $N = 587$) = 11.01, $p = .004$. Similar to the greater U.S. SA population, a majority (78%) of this sample was Caucasian. The only notable difference between the two destination groups in

regards to their noted ethnicity was that 4% of the respondents in the MENA region identified as Arab, whereas no students studying in the common destinations described their ethnic background in this way.

Participants hailed from 163 different U.S. universities, the most common of which were the University of Notre Dame (n=70), the University of California (n=46) and the University of Wisconsin (n=34). Students were asked to indicate their current major at their home university. Of the 81 majors represented, the three most common were international relations/international affairs (18%, n=105), political science (8%, n=47), and psychology (5%, n=28)[38]. Notably, there were many more international relations/affairs majors in the MENA destinations group (34%, n=89) than in the common destinations group (5%, n=16) as well as more political science majors; 11% (n=30) amongst MENA students as compared to 5% (n=17) of common destination students. Respondents to the survey were enrolled at colleges in 40 different U.S. states. A majority (58%) of respondents noted that their home school was located in Indiana (n=68), California (n=62), Massachusetts (n=50), Wisconsin (n=42), Illinois (n=41), Minnesota (n=40) or the District of Columbia (n=37). In terms of current academic status, most students (70%) were in the junior year of college. There were more students in the MENA region who were in their senior year (32%) as compared to those in more Western Europe or Australia (21%), $\chi^2(3, N = 589) = 9.55$, $p = .023$. A majority of all respondents were either 20 years of age (61%) or 21 years (24%). In line with being more advanced in their college career, students in the MENA region were also slightly older than their colleagues studying in more common destinations. Of those students studying in the MENA region 28% were 21 years old in comparison with 20% of those in Europe and Australia.

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[38] According to the National Center for Education Statistics, out of the 1.5 million U.S. undergraduate degrees awarded in 2008 the most popular degrees were 1) business (335,000) 2) social sciences and history (167,000), health sciences (111,000), and education (103,000).

Exposure to International Issues

Hypothesis 1: Students who indicate frequent exposure to the media, international students, extra-curricular activities as well as enrollment in language courses, courses focused on international issues and/or courses with faculty who integrate their own international experience into the classroom are more likely to choose to study in the MENA region than those who have low exposures and or fewer enrollments in such courses.

In order to examine the relationship between students' previous exposure to international issues and their choice of SA destination, this research examined six independent variables: frequency of exposure to the media, interaction with international students, participation in extra-curricular activities with an international focus, language course enrollment, participation in courses addressing international issues, and contact with faculty who integrate their own international experience into the classroom. These variables were first examined individually in order to see if there were differences between those students who study in common destinations and those who chose programs in the MENA region. Later, all six variables were re-coded into a scale measuring the overall level of a students' international exposure in relation to their choice of SA destination.

Most respondents to the survey indicated that before they studied abroad they watched, read, or listened to the news on international topics, but students differed on the frequency of their exposure to the media. Three percent of all respondents were never exposed to media, 30% rarely (less than once a month-a few times a month), 39% sometimes (once a week-a few times a week), and often (once a day-several times a day). There was a relationship between the amount of reported media exposure and SA destination (See Table 4). A larger percentage of students studying in the MENA responded that they often watched, read, or listed to the news on international topics, with 45% (n=124) of them indicating they engaged with the news on a daily

basis as opposed to only 13% (n=43) of students in more common destinations, $\chi^2(3, N = 600) = 99.33, p < 0.001$.

Table 4: Frequency of exposure to news on international topics

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Never	4%	14	2%	6
Rarely	43%	140	14%	38
Sometimes	39%	128	39%	107
Often	13%	43	45%	124
TOTAL	**100%**	**325**	**100%**	**275**

Additionally, a large percentage (46%) of all respondents indicated that before they had studied abroad they had frequent contact with international students; meaning they interacted with students six or more times per semester. 58% (n=158) of students who chose the MENA region as a destination indicated that they had high levels of contact with international students in comparison with 35% (n=113) of students in common destinations (Table 5), $\chi^2(3, N = 595) = 40.63, p < 0.001$.

Table 5: Frequency contact with international students

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Never	20%	66	7%	20
1-3 times a semester	35%	112	24%	65
4-5 times a semester	10%	32	11%	29
6 or more times a semester	35%	113	58%	158
TOTAL	**100%**	**323**	**100%**	**272**

Students were asked also to indicate if they had participated in any extra-curricular activities such as clubs, organizations, internships, work, or workshops which focused on international issues prior to their SA experience. A slight majority of all students (59%) had not taken part in such activities. 57% (n=155) of MENA students indicated participation in comparison with only 28% (n=90) of students in common destinations (see Table 6), $\chi^2 (1, N =$

598) = 52.91 p < 0.001. Students who answered affirmatively to this question were further asked to indicate the names of their activities. Respondents listed 86 different activities which had a focus on international issues[39]. The most common of these were Model United Nations (n=23), International Affairs Association (n=11), International Student Club (n=9), and Spanish Club (n=9)[40].

Table 6: Participation in extra-curricular activities with an international focus

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Yes	28%	90	57%	155
No	72%	236	43%	117
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**272**

Three additional variables were examined in order to gauge students' previous exposure to international issues. These variables related to university level classes that students had taken prior to their SA experience. A large percentage (81%) of all survey respondents indicated that they had taken language courses at their university. A slightly higher percentage of students in the MENA region (90%, n=243) reported taking language classes before studying abroad in comparison to 74% (n=242) of students who chose more common destinations (Table 7), χ^2 (1, $N = 597$) = 23.13 p < 0.001. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they had taken university courses which focused on international issues or diverse cultures prior to studying abroad. A majority of all survey respondents (63%) reported that they had previously taken a course with an international focus. There was a large difference between the two groups of students in regards to this variable. While 45% (n=147) of students in common destinations reported that they had taken an internationally focused course, 84% (n=231) of the MENA

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[39] Students were able to list up to two different activities they participated in. Of all answers there were 86 different specific activities noted, with many students noting similar activities.
[40] Most of these activities were listed by students in the MENA region, with only a handful of common destination students mentioning participating in Spanish Club and Model UN.

region also answered yes (Table 7), χ^2 (1, $N = 599$) = 97.49 p < 0.001. Students were additionally asked to indicate some of the most influential of these courses. 139 different university courses were mentioned, the most common of which were international relations/affairs (11%, n=66), politics of the Middle East (10%, n=57), anthropology (5%, n=29), world politics (4%, n=25), and Latin American studies (2%, n=12). Most of these respondents were in the MENA region, with noticeable differences between the two groups. MENA students were much more likely to take courses such as international relationship and politics of the Middle East (Table 8). Lastly, students were asked if they had previously taken courses with professors who integrated their own international experience into the classroom. Nearly 76% of all participants indicated that they had taken courses from such professors. Students who choose to study abroad in the MENA region were more likely to have experience with such professors, with 87% (n=238) answering yes in comparison to students in common destinations, of whom 67% (n=218) answered yes (see Table 7), χ^2 (1, $N = 600$) = 30.95 p < 0.001.

Table 7: Prior exposure to international issues through academics

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
Language courses	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*
Yes	74%	242	90%	243
No	26%	84	10%	28
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**271**

Courses focused on international issues

Yes	45%	147	85%	231
No	55%	178	15%	43
TOTAL	**100%**	**325**	**100%**	**274**

Courses with professors who integrated their own international experience in the classroom

Yes	67%	218	87%	238
No	33%	107	13%	37
TOTAL	**100%**	**325**	**100%**	**275**

Table 8: Common courses by destination

International course	Common Destinations N	MENA Destinations n
International Relations	16	50
Politics of the Middle East	1	56
Anthropology	15	14
World Politics	12	13
Latin American Studies	6	6

Finally, all six measures were re-coded in order to develop a scale which would identify overall exposure to international issues. This scale divided exposure into three categories: low, moderate, and high. A majority of all survey participants (51%) were defined as having moderate exposure. As discussed above, MENA students were very likely to have scored higher on each of the six individual variables. This tendency was mirrored in the final international exposure scale, with 50% (n=136) of MENA SA students having a high level of international exposure in comparison with only 14% (n=47) of students in common destinations (see Table 9), χ^2 (2, $N =$ 601) = 106.60 $p < 0.001$. These results indicate that there is a relationship between previous international exposure and choice of SA destination. Further, examinations of column percents in the 'high' exposure category lend support to Hypothesis 1, indicating that students who had higher levels of prior exposure to international issues were more likely to choose the MENA region for their SA destination.

Table 9: International exposure scale

	Common Destinations %	n	MENA Destinations %	n
Low	29%	95	6%	17
Moderate	56%	184	44%	122
High	14%	47	50%	136
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**275**

Hypothesis 2: Students who indicate they have a high concern for U.S. national security will be more likely to choose to study in the MENA region.

In order to examine the relationship between students' attitudes about U.S. national security and their choice of SA destination, this research asked students to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement "I am concerned about national security issues in the United States." Responses were collected on a 9 point scale and re-coded in order to indicate a student's level of concern as low, moderate, or high. As a group, all students were evenly divided between the levels of concern with 34% indicating low, 39% moderate, and 28% high concern. Students studying abroad in the MENA region were more likely to note a high level of concern for national security (36%, n=98) in comparison with only 18% (n=58) of students from more common destinations (see Table 10), χ^2 (2, $N = 584$) = 29.96 $p =< .001$. This data supports Hypothesis 2, indicating that students who have a high level of concern for national security of the United States were more likely to choose the MENA region as a SA destination.

Table 10: Concern for national security of the United States

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Low	42%	131	25%	68
Moderate	40%	126	38%	103
High	18%	58	36%	98
TOTAL	**100%**	**315**	**100%**	**269**

In addition, there is a relationship between concern for national security and frequency of watching the news. Those who have a high level of concern also indicate that they watch the news often, χ^2 (6, $N = 583$) = 48.94 $p =< .001$. For example, of those students who had a high concern, 46% of them watch the news often, 21% sometimes, 17% rarely, and 15% never. The

opposite trend was seen with those who had low concern with 55% reporting they watch the

news never, 38% rarely, 38% sometimes, and 22% often.

Table 11: Concern for national security and frequency of media exposure

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Low	55%	38%	38%	22%
Moderate	30%	46%	41%	32%
High	15%	17%	21%	46%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Career Intentions

Hypothesis 3: Students who intend to pursue graduate studies in fields related to national security, international relations, Middle East Studies, international development, or the Arabic language are more likely to study abroad in the MENA region than students who intended to study in other fields.

This research further examined the relationships between career intentions and SA

destination choice by analyzing data regarding graduate school plans, preference for intended

career fields, specific job desired in five years, and opinions about the value a SA experience will

add to a student's future career goals. A majority of all survey respondents, 64%, indicated that

their current career plans include attending graduate school. Of the two groups of students,

MENA students were more likely to be sure of their intent to purse a graduate education (71%,

n=194) in comparison with 58% (n=190) of students in common destinations (see Table 12), χ^2

$(2, N = 599) = 11.21$ $p = .004$.

Table 12: Current career plans include attending graduate school

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Yes	58%	190	71%	194
No	8%	25	4%	11
Not Sure	34%	111	25%	68
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**273**

Students were also asked to indicate their intended field of graduate study. Fields chosen by the 359 students who responded to this question included 68 different areas of study. The most commonly mentioned graduate fields were international relations (n=53), law (n=49), medicine (n=40), and business (n=29). For students in common destinations the most often noted future areas of study were medicine (18%), business (14%), and law (12%). Students who were studying abroad in the MENA region were often interested in studying international relations (22%), law (15%), and Middle East studies (8%). In order to address Hypothesis 3, the intended graduate fields of study were re-coded in order to compare the two groups in regards to intent to study in the following five fields: national security, international relations, Middle East studies, international development, and the Arabic language. As demonstrated in Table 13, higher percentages of students who were studying abroad in the MENA region indicated they would pursue these five fields, thereby supporting Hypothesis 3. Only the field of international relations was mentioned by both groups, with a larger percentage of the MENA study abroad students noting they intended to study in this area. Students studying abroad in common destinations were much more likely (93%) to intend to study a field outside of these subjects.

Table 13: Comparison of specific graduate fields

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
National Security Studies	0%	0	4%	7
International Relations	7%	13	22%	40
Middle East Studies	0%	0	8%	14
International Development	0%	0	4%	7
Arabic Language	0%	0	2%	3
All other fields	93%	164	61%	111
TOTAL	**100%**	**177**	**100%**	**182**

Hypothesis 4: Students who plan to pursue career within the U.S. government (in specific fields such as foreign policy, international relations, national security, public policy) are more likely to study abroad in the MENA region than those who have other career intentions.

Hypothesis 5: Students who plan to pursue international careers (international development, foreign policy, international relations) or work with Non-profit Organizations or Non-Governmental Organizations are more likely to study abroad the MENA region than students with other career intentions.

In order to investigate the relationship between students' career intentions and SA destination, a series of questions addressed what type of organization students would like to work for, what fields they would like to work in, and what specific job they would prefer to obtain in five years. When examined as a whole, survey respondents were relatively equally divided about what type of organization they would most prefer to work for: private business (26%), non-profit organization/NGO (19%), government agency (21%), with the remaining students indicating they were unsure (33%). Yet, when distinguished by destination of SA, there were notable relationships with types of organizations students wish to work for in the future (Table 14), χ^2 (3, $N = 597$) $= 75.52$ $p < .001$. Students in MENA destinations were less likely to want to work for private business (15%, n=40) in comparison to students in common destinations (36%, n=115). In addition, students in the MENA region were more likely to want to work for the government, with 35% (n=91) of them noting this as the preferred type of organization as compared to 10% (n=32) of students in common destinations. There was also a slight difference in the percentage of students who wanted to work for non-profit/non-governmental organizations, with 22% (n=60) of students in the MENA region indicated this was their preference as compared to 17% (n=55) of students in common destinations.

Table 14: Preferred type of organization to work for in the future

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Private Business	36%	115	15%	40
Non-Profit/NGO	17%	55	22%	60
Government	10%	32	35%	97
Not Sure	38%	121	28%	77
TOTAL	**100%**	**323**	**100%**	**274**

Survey participants were given a nominal list of 19 specific career fields and one 'other' category. Students were asked to rank their top three preferences for the general career fields they would like to pursue. Frequencies were examined for each of the three choices students noted. As can be seen in Table 15, many respondents intend to pursue careers in international relations, international development, business, foreign policy, medicine, education, or public policy.

Table 15: Top ten desired career fields

1st Choice	%	N	2nd Choice	%	n	3rd Choice	%	n
Int'l Relations	12%	70	Int'l Relations	15%	86	Int'l Relations	14%	78
Int'l Development	9%	55	Foreign Policy	11%	61	Int'l Development	12%	66
Business	9%	51	Int'l Development	10%	57	Foreign Policy	9%	50
Medicine	8%	49	Education	9%	51	Public Policy	8%	44
Education	9%	49	Business	8%	45	Education	8%	42
Foreign Policy	8%	47	Sciences	6%	36	Business	7%	38
Other	8%	45	Law	6%	35	Law	7%	37
Law	7%	40	Social Work	6%	32	Social Work	6%	33
National security	5%	31	Communications	5%	28	Communications	5%	28
Social Work	5%	29	Medicine	4%	21	National Security	4%	21
TOTAL	*80%*	*466*	*TOTAL*	*80%*	*452*	*TOTAL*	*80%*	*437*

These results were examined in order to better understand different career intentions between the two groups of students. Respondents' answers were re-coded to see if they listed in their top three choices one of five fields related to governmental and international careers (foreign policy, international relations, national security, public policy, and international development). The data indicates that there is a relationship between students' intent to pursue

certain fields and their choice of SA destination. Those students studying in the MENA region were more likely to select four of the five fields related to governmental or international careers as one of their top three choices (Table 16). Notably, 41% (n=111) of MENA students selected the field of foreign policy whereas only 12% (n=38) of students in common destinations did so, χ^2 (1, $N = 594$) $= 66.83$ $p < .001$. Further, 48% (n=131) of MENA students responded that they were interested in international relations as a career field in comparison with 24% (n=78) of students studying in common destinations, χ^2 (1, $N = 594$) $= 37.81$ $p < .001$. There was also a relationship between the intention of students to pursue careers in national security with only 3% (n=10) of students in common destinations being interested as opposed to 21% (n=57) of students in the MENA region, χ^2 (1, $N = 594$) $= 47.37$ $p < .001$. Students in the MENA region were more likely to indicate in their top three choices the field of international development (42%, n=114) as compared to only 18%, (n=57) students in common destinations, χ^2 (1, $N = 594$) $= 42.45$ $p < .001$. The one field of these five where there was not a statistical relationship between career intention and SA destination was that of public policy, χ^2 (1, $N = 594$) $= 1.35$ $p = .245$.

Table 16: Comparison of Top 3 specific career fields with SA destination*

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Foreign Policy	12%	38	41%	111
International Relations	24%	78	48%	131
National Security	3%	10	21%	57
Public Policy	10%	33	13%	36
International Development	18%	57	42%	114

*These are pooled data from the top three choices students indicated.

Hypothesis 4 suggests that students who planned to work with the U.S. government would be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region. There is a relationship between

preference for government work and SA destinations (Table 12), as those who are more interested in working for the government chose SA in the MENA region. In addition, of the four career fields related to the U.S. government, students in the MENA region more frequently selected foreign policy, international relations, and national security than students in common destinations (Table 16). They were not more likely to select public policy as a career field. This evidence overall indicates a relationship between intention to pursue a career within the U.S. government and choice of the MENA region as a SA destination.

Additionally, this study found a relationship between intention to pursue international careers and the choice of the MENA region as a SA destination. In support of Hypothesis 5, this research demonstrates that MENA students were more likely to want to work with non-profit/non-governmental organizations than their colleagues in more common destinations. In addition, there was a relationship between choice of the MENA region as destination and intention to pursue career fields such as international development, foreign policy and international relations (Table 16).

Students were also asked to indicate the specific job they would prefer to have in five years. 84 different jobs were noted by respondents. The most common specific jobs noted were state department employee (12%, n=46), doctor (11%, n=42), lawyer (10%, n=40), and teacher (7%, n=29), see Table 17. Students in the two destinations differed in their preferred job, with only "lawyer" being common to both groups. For students who chose the MENA region as their SA destination, two commonly noted jobs (state department employee and military intelligence officer) are related to work for the U.S. government, further lending support to hypothesis 4, χ^2 $(1, N = 394) = 80.33 \ p < .001$.

Table 17: Top five specific jobs desired based on destination of SA

Job	N	%	Job	n	%
MENA Destinations			*Common Destinations*		
State Department Employee	40	23%	Doctor	37	17%
Lawyer	19	11%	Lawyer	21	10%
Military Intelligence Officer	12	10%	Teacher	21	10%
Consultant	10	6%	Translator	9	4%
Journalist	8	5%	Investment Banker	8	4%
173				**221**	

Hypothesis 6: Students who study abroad in the MENA region will place a higher value on a study abroad experience in relation to their future careers than those in common destinations.

A scale was developed in order to assess whether participants believed their SA experience would add value to their future careers. A series of four questions were posed, asking students if they thought their SA experience would add value to their college degree, have an effect on their job prospects, be seen as favorable by future employers, and give them a competitive edge in the job market. Responses to these questions were combined into one scale measuring overall value that students attributed to their SA experience on their career. Overall, a large majority of students (76%, n=457) strongly agreed that their SA experience would be a valuable resource for their future career goals. This scale was also cross tabulated with students' destination choice (Table 18) which demonstrated that there was no difference between the two groups in regards to their opinions of the value their SA experience would lend to their future careers and, χ^2 (2, $N = 599$) $= 2.32$ $p = .313$. This data does not support the relationship proposed in Hypothesis 6 and indicates that both groups of students view their SA experience as adding at least some value, with a majority strongly agreeing that their time abroad will help them in their future endeavors.

Table 18: SA experience will add value to future career goals

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Strongly Disagree	0%	0	0%	0
Disagree	0%	0	0%	0
Neutral	2%	7	2%	7
Agree	24%	77	19%	51
Strongly Agree	74%	241	79%	216
TOTAL	**100%**	**325**	**100%**	**274**

Although a relationship between value of SA to future careers and destination choice was not found, students studying in the MENA region were more likely to respond that they see a connection between their current SA experience and their future careers. Of all respondents, 66% (n=368) believed there to be a connection between SA and their intended career hopes. As noted in Table 19, a higher percentage of students who studied abroad in the MENA region affirmed that they saw a connection; 68% as compared with 56% of students in common destinations, χ^2 (2, $N = 598$) = 8.49 p = .014. There were slightly higher percentages of students in common destinations that did not see a connection or were unsure if there was a connection.

Table 19: Connection between SA experience and future career goals

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Yes	56%	183	68%	184
No	34%	40	28%	22
Not Sure	31%	102	24%	66
TOTAL	**100%**	**325**	**100%**	**273**

Language Experience

Hypothesis 7: Students who have taken multiple language courses will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region than those who have taken fewer language courses.

This study analyzed the relationship between foreign language learning and choice of SA destination. In order to examine this variable, students were asked to indicate what, if any, language classes they had taken at their home university as well as their opinion about the importance of Americans learning foreign languages. As mentioned previously, 81% of all survey participants indicated that they had taken university level language course prior to studying abroad. Survey respondents were given a nominal list of eight foreign languages and one 'other' category. Students were asked to indicate how many classes in each category they had taken at their home university. These responses were summed in order to gauge the overall amount of language courses taken by individual students. The scale divided the responses into four categories: none, limited (1-3 courses), moderate (4-6 courses), and extensive (7 or more courses) amounts. A relationship between amount of foreign language courses taken and destination choice was found, $\chi^2 (3, N = 601) = 32.94\ p < .001$ (see Table 20). Higher percentages of MENA students indicated that they had taken moderate or extensive amounts of language courses, 41% (n=113) and 18% (n=49) respectively. Students in common destinations were more likely to have taken none (26%, n=86) or just a limited amount (35%, n=114) of language courses prior to studying abroad. This data supports the relationship proposed in Hypothesis 7, that students who have taken many language classes are more likely to SA in the MENA region as compared to those who have taken fewer classes.

Table 20: Amount of language course taken previous to SA

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
None	26%	86	11%	31
Limited (1-3 courses)	35%	114	30%	82
Moderate (4-6 courses)	29%	96	41%	113
Extensive (7 or more courses)	9%	30	18%	49
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**275**

There were large numbers of students studying abroad in the MENA region who had previously taken Arabic language classes (63%, n=174) as compared to less than 1% (n=3) of students in common destinations who had previously studied Arabic (Table 21). Higher percentages of students studying in common destinations had studied Spanish, French, and German.

Table 21: Most commonly taken language classes*

Language	N	%	Language	n	%
MENA Destinations			*Common Destinations*		
Arabic	174	63%	Spanish	131	40%
Spanish	80	29%	French	62	19%
French	57	21%	German	36	11%
*Students listed indicated that they have taken at least one course in the specified language					

In addition, results were analyzed comparing previous language classes and specific destination chosen. For the five main languages studied by survey respondents (Arabic, Italian, French, German, and Spanish) there was a relationship with the country students chose to study in with Chi-squared statistics indicating a statistically significant relationship ($p < .001$) for all five languages. As can been seen in Table 22, those who studied a specific European language were likely to study in the corresponding European country: i.e., 39% of those who studied German, studied in Germany. The same was true for those who studied Arabic, almost all of whom studied in the MENA region. Notably, many students studying in the MENA region had studied other languages in addition to Arabic.

Table 22: Language classes and destination of SA

	Arabic	Italian	French	German	Spanish
Egypt	35%	11%	9%	8%	17%
Jordan	37%	0%	12%	10%	9%
Morocco	25%	14%	26%	10%	9%
France	1%	4%	25%	2%	2%
Germany	0%	7%	3%	39%	1%
Italy	0%	39%	2%	2%	6%
Spain	1%	7%	3%	4%	27%
Other Destinations	1%	18%	39%	27%	30%
Total Percentage	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Total Respondents	**177**	**28**	**119**	**52**	**211**

Hypothesis 8: Students who place a higher level of importance on Americans learning foreign languages will be more likely to study in the MENA region.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate on a five point scale their agreement or disagreement with the statement "it is important for Americans to learn foreign languages." Most students either agreed (28%) or strongly agreed (50%) with this statement. This data was cross-tabulated with students' destination choice and a strong relationship between the two variables was found, χ^2 (4, $N = 566$) = 85.59 $p < .001$. Large percentages of students studying abroad in the MENA region either agreed (20%, n=53) or strongly agreed (70%, n=107) with this statement (Table 23) A notably small amount of students MENA destinations disagreed with this statement, particularly when compared to the 26% (n=78) of students in common destinations who strongly disagreed.

Table 23: Opinion on the importance of Americans learning foreign languages

	Common Destination		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Strongly Disagree	26%	78	8%	20
Disagree	1%	3	<1%	1
Neutral	6%	17	3%	7
Agree	36%	106	20%	53
Strongly Agree	32%	94	70%	107
TOTAL	**100%**	**298**	**100%**	**268**

> *Hypothesis 9:* Students who have more previous international travel experience, based on the number of countries visited, will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region

Respondents were asked to indicate the amount and type of international travel they had done prior to studying abroad. Students' travel ranged from none to visiting 30 countries. These responses were re-coded into four categories: none, limited (1-5 countries), moderate (6-10 countries), and extensive (11 or more) amounts of countries travelled to (see Table 24). Of all survey respondents, the majority (52%) had travelled to a limited amount of other countries prior to studying abroad. A relationship between the amount of previous travel and SA destination choice was found, $\chi^2 (3, N = 601) = 20.96\ p < .001$. Thirty percent (n=81) of MENA students had travelled to a moderate number of countries as compared to 19% (n=61) of students in common destinations. In addition, 14% of MENA students had travelled extensively, compared with only 7% (n=24) of students who were studying abroad in Western Europe or Australia. This data supports Hypothesis 9 showing those students who had moderate or extensive amounts of previous travel experience being more likely to SA in the MENA region.

Table 24: Amount of countries travelled to outside of the U.S. and Canada prior to SA

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
None	18%	57	10%	28
Limited (1-5 countries)	56%	184	46%	129
Moderate (6-10 countries)	19%	61	30%	81
Extensive (11 or more countries)	7%	24	14%	37
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**275**

> *Hypothesis 10:* Students who have participated in culturally immersive international travel (studying or living abroad) will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

Students were given a list of eight different types of travel[41] and these responses were examined in order to understand the most common types for each of the most recent travel experiences (Table 25). Both the common destinations and MENA destinations groups indicated frequent personal travel and volunteer experiences. The two differing types of travel were prior study abroad and group tour, with MENA students more frequently mentioning their participation in the former.

Table 25: Most common types of recent travel

Type of Travel	n	Type of Travel	n
MENA Destinations		*Common Destinations*	
Trip 1		Trip 1	
Personal Travel	101	Personal Travel	131
Volunteer Experience	39	Volunteer Experience	31
Previous Study Abroad	36	Group Tour	28
Trip 2		Trip 2	
Personal Travel	90	Personal Travel	113
Volunteer Experience	32	Group Tour	20
Previous Study Abroad	17	Volunteer Experience	14
Trip 3		Trip 3	
Personal Travel	60	Personal Travel	64
Volunteer Experience	14	Group Tour	12
Previous Study Abroad	13	Volunteer Experience	8

As mentioned in chapter 4, "group travel" and "personal travel" are considered to allow for less cultural exposure, while experiences such as "study abroad", "high school exchange", "living abroad for parent's work", "volunteer experiences" and "work experiences" are typically considered to allow for greater cultural interactions. In order to examine the relationship between previous travel which allows for cultural interaction and SA destination choice, all type of travel answers were re-coded into two categories 1) providing extensive interaction or 2) providing

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[41] The categories included prior study abroad, high school exchange, for parent's work, volunteer experience, work experience, group tour, personal travel and other.

limited interaction. A majority (57%) of all students did not have experience with a type of travel that allowed for extensive cultural interaction. Yet when examined with SA destination, a relationship was found between type of previous travel students had participated in and destination choice, $\chi^2 (1, N = 601) = 21.37\ p < .001$, thereby lending support to hypothesis 10. As can be seen in Table 26, 53% (n=146) of students in the MENA region had at least one experience with travel which allowed for extensive cultural interaction as compared with only 34% (n=112) of students in common destinations.

Table 26: Previous participation in different types of travel

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Extensive cultural interaction	34%	112	53%	146
Limited cultural interaction	66%	214	47%	129
TOTAL	**100%**	**326**	**100%**	**275**

Risk Propensity

Hypothesis 11: Students who score higher overall on the risk scale be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

A total of eight statements related to financial, social, psychological, physical, and performance risk prior to studying abroad were posed to students. Students were asked to rank their level of agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 to 9. These measures were then collapsed in order to classify students as risk-averse or risk-taking. Of all respondents, a majority (56%) were classified as risk averse. A relationship between risk propensity and choice of SA destination was found, supporting hypothesis 11, $\chi^2 (1, N = 598) = 20.41\ p < .001$. As is demonstrated in Table 27, 54% (n=146) of students in the MENA region were classified as risk takers as compared to only 35% (n=112) of students in common destinations.

Table 27: Risk propensity compared with destination choice

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Risk Averse	65%	205	46%	125
Risk Taker	35%	112	54%	146
TOTAL	**100%**	**317**	**100%**	**271**

Scholarship Support

Hypothesis 12: Students who received Boren, Gilman or Military Scholarships will be more likely to study abroad in the MENA region.

Students were asked to indicate if they had received scholarship support, the name of their scholarship, and if they would have studied abroad if they had not received the financial support. Overall 55% (n=324) of respondents did not receive scholarship or fellowship funds to help fund their SA experience. MENA students were somewhat more likely to have received scholarship support, χ^2 (1, $N = 588$) = 5.67 p = .017. As can be seen in Table 28, 50% (n=136) of those in MENA destinations indicated they had received a fellowship or scholarship to support their SA experience.

Table 28: Receipt of fellowship or scholarship support for SA

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Yes	40%	128	50%	136
No	60%	189	50%	135
TOTAL	**100%**	**317**	**100%**	**271**

If students indicated they had received financial support, they were further asked to list the name of the scholarship. Of the responses, there were 54 different scholarships listed. As stated in hypothesis 12, this research was particularly interested in the relationship between receipt of Boren, Gilman, and Military scholarships and SA destination choice. Responses were re-coded into four categories separating these three scholarships from all other scholarships

received. A relationship between the support from these specific scholarships and SA destination was found, χ^2 (3, $N = 223$) = 19.40 $p < .001$. Larger percentages of students in the MENA region received each of these three scholarships, thereby supporting hypothesis 12 (Table 29).

Table 29: Specific scholarships received

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Boren scholarship	0%	0	9%	10
Gilman scholarship	4%	4	11%	13
Military scholarship	2%	2	7%	8
All other scholarships	94%	101	73%	85
TOTAL	**100%**	**107**	**100%**	**116**

Overall, the majority of students (51%) who received scholarships said that they would have studied abroad even if they had not received these funds. There was a moderate relationship between this variable and SA destination choice, χ^2 (2, $N = 267$) = 10.35 $p = .006$. As can be seen in Table 30, a large percentage of students (34%, n=44) in the MENA region believed they would not have studied abroad had they not received funds in comparison with 20% (n=27) of students in common destinations.

Table 30: Would have studied abroad without scholarship funds

	Common Destinations		MENA Destinations	
	%	*n*	*%*	*n*
Yes	60%	82	41%	54
No	20%	27	34%	44
Not Sure	20%	27	25%	33
TOTAL	**100%**	**136**	**100%**	**131**

Factors Influencing Choice of SA Destination

Students were asked to indicate which of 10 listed reasons most influenced their decision to SA in their particular region of the world. Each of these factors was analyzed separately in order to identify differences between factors for students in common destinations versus those in

the MENA region. As can be seen in Table 31, there were noticeable differences between the two groups. Chi-squared tests for independence were run comparing each factor with destination choice. There were relationships found with eight factors: advancement of career goals, opportunity to improve foreign language skills, having fun, desire for an 'out there' experience, opportunity to complete requirements for major, recommendation of family and friends, cost of living, and intention to live in the region in the future. All of these factors were significant ($p<.001$). There was no significant relationship found between two factors: ethnic ties to region ($p= 0.14$) and recommendation of professors or advisor ($p=0.48$).

Table 31: Self-reported factors influencing SA destination choice

Factors	%*	N	Factors	%*	n
MENA Destinations			*Common Destinations*		
• Improvement of foreign language skills	82%	225	• Having fun	72%	223
• Desire for an "out there" experience	63%	174	• Opportunity to complete requirements for major	58%	189
• Advancement of career goals	62%	170	• Advancement of career goals	47%	153
• Intention to live in the region of study in the future	42%	116	• Desire for an "out there" experience	44%	142
• Opportunity to complete requirements for major	40%	110	• Improvement of foreign language skills	43%	140
• Having fun	36%	98	• Recommendations of family or friend	42%	137
• Recommendations of professor or advisor	22%	60	• Intention to live in the region of study in the future	26%	83
• Recommendations of family or friend	16%	44	• Recommendations of professor or advisor	24%	79
• Cost of living	14%	39	• Ethnic ties to the area	14%	46
• Ethnic ties to the area	10%	28	• Cost of living	6%	21

*Students could select multiple factors. This number represents the percentage of all students from these destinations who indicated a particular factor.

Large percentages of students in the MENA region chose their destination in order to improve their foreign language skills (82%) and to have an "out there" experience (63%), whereas only 43% of students chose common destinations in order to work on language skills

and 44% in order to obtain an "out there" experience. Students in the MENA region were less likely to have chosen their destination in order to complete requirements for their major (40%) or to have fun (36%) as compared with 58% and 72% (respectively) of students in common destinations. Larger percentages of students in MENA destinations also noted that they chose their destination in order to advance their career goals (62%) and because they hope to live in the region in the future (42%) as compared to 47% and 26% of students who are in common destinations.

II. Focus Group Results

In addition to the survey data, this research also collected information from SA students in the MENA region through focus groups. A total of 76 students participated in eight focus groups in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco. Responses received during focus groups revealed more in-depth insight into factors which played a role in students' decisions about SA in the MENA region. A content analysis of all focus group responses was conducted which resulted in several common themes, and often mirrored the quantitative findings above. Some of the commonly mentioned factors influencing SA destination choice included language acquisition, wanting an "out there" experience, exposure to international issues, desire for cultural understanding, financial costs, and career goals. Given that the primary goal of this research is to identify the factors leading students to SA in the MENA region this analysis was primarily focused on content or "what" was said by students. In certain cases interactive dynamics are noted which shed light on "how" issues were discussed among groups.

Language acquisition

Focus group participants frequently noted that they chose to SA in the MENA region because they wanted to learn Arabic. Students, particularly those in Jordan and Egypt, noted that given the differences between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and colloquial dialects, they believed it was necessary to come to the region in order to become proficient in the language. For some students the difficulty of the language influenced their choice to SA. A student in Jordan stated that it was "impossible to get beyond a certain point with the Arabic language without studying abroad." Reflecting this opinion, another student stated "Most of the classes [in the U.S] are in MSA and you can't speak with people in the street, even if you take five years of it at home, people won't be able to understand your Arabic here." In addition, although there has been an increase in the number of universities offering Arabic classes, students in all three countries noted that many schools only offer beginning or intermediate levels and thus they need to SA because they had "maxed out" their university's Arabic offerings. Interestingly both students in Jordan and Egypt frequently noted that they chose their SA program because their respective countries had "the most widely understood dialects in the region." Students in Jordan noted that Jordanian Arabic is very close to MSA, while students in Egypt emphasized that Egypt's entertainment industry has made people around the Arab world familiar with Egyptian Arabic.

When discussing language, some students commented on the connection between Arabic language acquisition and acquiring a better understanding of the culture. One student stated that "The most fascinating thing that I find about Arabic is just how you can learn about the culture just by understanding how the language functions." Another student told a story of how she initially became interested in learning the language:

When I was in high school we had a speaker who was a conservative news anchor who was discussing Islam. I remember he was talking about the word *SaHb* and quoted it from the Qur'an. He tried to twist the word into making the Muslim religion sound aggressive and saying "don't trust Muslims as your friend." He was translating *SaHb* as "friend", but the intention of the word in the Qur'an was "overload" and "owner," not friend. My Muslim classmate got up (he was only 16 at the time) and stood up to this very well known anchor and told him that he was wrong and that he was conceptualizing the culture in a completely and totally unfair way. I decided then that I needed to study this language.

Students also commonly made a connection between Arabic language acquisition and their future careers, particularly jobs in the Foreign Service. One student from Jordan stated "I knew Jordanian Arabic versus, for example Moroccan Arabic, would be more helpful for me in the future if I were to pursue a career in the Foreign Service, which is what I am looking into." Another student in Jordan mentioned that when he was in high school the head of the language department encouraged him to consider studying Arabic in college, in order to guarantee him a job right after graduation. There was widespread consensus on this issue, with students often feeding off of one another's comments: adding more and more examples of how Arabic would help them in the future job market. Although most students discussed this issue in a positive light, one student seemed conflicted when talking about the connection between Arabic and future jobs. She said "I feel sort of guilty saying that I am learning the language only to promote my career." She went on to say that "it is also a beautiful language and has value even beyond fulfilling career goals."

Wanting an "out there" experience

Many focus group participants also noted their desire for a different, challenging, and "out there" experience as being influential in their choice of the MENA region. Students in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco all mentioned that visiting Europe was something that they feel they could do on their own but that the MENA region was an area where they felt that they would need

structure and support of a program to help them experience the region. Students often described this desire by saying: "I wanted to go somewhere that wasn't as accessible for me."

Students frequently noted that their choice to come to this region was a result of wanting to do something different than their peers. Students were aware that only small percentages of students were coming to the MENA region and that this would be a way to get an experience "outside of the traditional European study abroad experience." One student in Jordan mentioned that "everyone in my major tends to go to Europe, and I didn't want to do the same things they were doing, I wanted to branch out into something completely different." Students also mentioned that choosing this region was a way of being making oneself "more of an individual" or "rebelling against the status quo."

Students consistently emphasized that they were different from their colleagues who studied abroad in Europe. A common distinction for focus group participants was the idea that students went to Western Europe to "party" or "have fun" while they came to the MENA region because of an intense interest in the region. One student in Egypt stated that "I would like to give our group more credit for not just wanting to go out and get drunk- we all want something more from studying abroad." Students frequently stated that they wanted to be challenged and get out of their comfort zone. Some focus group participants reflected this desire when they stated that they thought "studying abroad in Europe I don't think would be hard" or that they would gain "hispster travel cred [credit] by coming to the Middle East because everyone goes to Europe."

Some focus group participants also noted that the security risks associated with the region did not function as a deterrent to their decision to SA in the region, but in some cases these risks were in fact a draw. Students did not necessarily believe they were at risk by studying in the region, but rather it was the *perception* of others that it is a risky region which made the region

even more appealing. One student in Egypt said that "I think the fact that people think it is dangerous almost made me want to go." When discussing risks, a student in Jordan noted that "one of the attractions of the region is the sense that anything can happen."

Previous exposure to international issues

Focus group participants also noted that their previous exposure to international issues had influenced their choice to study abroad in the MENA region. Students talked, perhaps more than any other subject, about the influence of political events such as September 11, 2001 and foreign wars on their decision to SA in the region. One student simply said "our generation is completely influenced by the geopolitical events of the past 10 years." Some students were not sure when exactly they became interested in the region, but almost every student talked extensively about the political events of the last ten years in the MENA region and the personal impact these events had. Many students pointed to the events of September 11, 2001 as the catalyst for their interest in the region and eventually their decision to study abroad in that area. Many students noted that, for them, the events of 9/11 seemed to turn American's attention toward the Middle East. One student in Jordan noted one couldn't "underestimate the effect that 9/11 had on me and everyone in my generation, it kind of forced us to open our eyes to the world." She mentioned that after 9/11 she constantly followed the news related to the region and when she went to university she already knew that she would focus on the Middle East. One focus group participant discussed the influence of 9/11 and mused that

> Most of us were in Middle School when 9/11 happened and we were all at an age where we were old enough to know what was going on. It heavily influenced what we did with our lives. If it hadn't happened I don't know if I would be interested in this region…probably not… I would probably be interested mostly in Western Europe.

Another student from New York City noted that 9/11 "really impacted me and everything that happened afterwards" and noted that those events determined her future career choice and her decision to study Arabic. Another student was similarly influenced to study Arabic: "I can say pretty confidently that if it wasn't for 9/11 I would never even have thought of studying Arabic."

Many students also made the connection between political events and their career choices. One student in Jordan noted that the events of September 11, 2001 were "a driving force to join the Marine Corps and then I got exposed to Iraq….11 countries later and two tours in Iraq, I want to know more." Other students noted that if the U.S. did not have a significant presence in the region "then I wouldn't have cared to be here, honestly, because then it isn't relevant to my career." Students, often sheepishly, noted that because of conflicts in the region there is an "increasing sense that Arabic is a very marketable job skill."

Students who participated in focus groups frequently talked about how media coverage of this region has influenced their interest in studying abroad in this region. This topic often led to a fast-paced conversation where almost every student would mention their opinion of the media. Students noted that the Middle East "has been in the news ever since I can remember." Often the desire for SA in this region is because students believe the media is misrepresenting the region and students the only way to understand is to see it themselves. Students described this sentiment in the following ways:

- All the news and information I had interaction with in high school and even college didn't seem like it was coming out of real cultural understanding, it seemed kind of racist. (Jordan)
- I was really sick of hearing about it [the region] only on the news and hearing it from other people and their opinions and I wanted to experience it for myself so I know what the truth is. (Jordan)
- We weren't quite trusting of what we were hearing when we were growing up about the Middle East. (Egypt)

- I think in our generation there is a distrust of everything that we hear from the media and a desire to find out for ourselves exactly why these conflicts are happening and what the story really is." (Morocco)

A focus group participant in Jordan further talked about the connection between distrust of media and desire to come to the region when he noted:

> At our age, half of our lives have been spent with our country at war in the Middle East. I remember being 12 years old and being able to talk about Iraq. We grew up and heard about the Iraq war and Afghanistan on the news every day. To me it makes sense that people want to come to this region and know more about what actually goes on.

Some students had travelled to this particular region before and "fell in love with it" and wanted to return in order to have an experience living in the culture. Other students mentioned that they had not been to the region previously, but that other travel experiences had "bit them with the travel bug". Multiple students mentioned they started focusing on the region as a result of interactions with previous professors that "sparked their interest" in MENA issues. Often these professors were from the MENA region or had spent extensive time in this area of the world and integrated that experience into the classroom.

Cultural Understanding

As mentioned above, students often feel that the culture and people of the MENA region are misrepresented in the U.S. and as such many of them wanted to come here in order to obtain greater cultural understanding. Many students described what they considered to be ignorance of this region among their family, friends, or their communities at home. Many students stated feeling that although the general U.S. population knew that the Middle East was an important region, there was a lot of confusion and lack of in-depth knowledge about the region. One student described how he thinks the MENA region is seen by many in the U.S.: "the image is this big monolithic sandy blob full of angry peoples with camels." Nearly every focus group discussed the generalizations, misunderstandings, or misinformation that they have heard at

home, often with a high-energy atmosphere where students were eager to share the most ridiculous thing they had heard. Focus group participants further expressed it was their distrust for these types of generalizations which made them want to know more about this region of the world. One student in Jordan described this draw:

> I think people in our generation are really not willing to accept that the ME is foreign, dangerous and they all wear turbans and they are all crazy. I think that we hear these generalizations and don't think they are true. One of the underlying matters is that we want to get to the heart of it ourselves.

Students often expressed that they feel their time in this region will give them a sense of legitimacy, so that when they return home and confront ignorance, their voices will be better heard because they have personal experience living in the region. One student in Morocco described a situation of aggression in her home town toward Arabs and stated that she "wanted to learn more for myself and be able to stand up for people who couldn't say anything" This sense of wanting to bring the "truth" about the region back to the U.S. was often described in tandem with the desire to improve the image of Americans amongst the people of the Middle East. One student noted that it is important to show people in Egypt that "we are not just the policies of our government."

As with the acquisition of the Arabic language, focus group participants often discussed the connection between learning about the culture and their future careers. One student in Jordan noted that "those of us who want to go into an international field come here to not only learn the language but also the culture; you can't get that from university." Several students who are currently enrolled in the military also noted the importance of understanding people in the Arab world. One student stated that since the army "may not be exactly pro-Arab right now," she wants to counter this and in order to "go against the tide, I should learn more about the culture of the region." Other students in the military noted that they believed increasing cultural

understanding within the military to be essential to bettering the war and recovery effort in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Cost

Some participants in focus groups mentioned that the cheaper cost of living and government scholarships influenced in their decision to SA in the MENA region. Several students noted that they believed living in Egypt, Jordan, or Morocco was costing them significantly less than a SA experience in Western Europe. In addition, many students noted receiving government aid in order to come to the MENA region. A few also mentioned shifting their focus because of the aid of scholarship funds. One student in Egypt noted that "I received the Boren fellowship and then started to shift my career goals based on the opportunity to study abroad with the scholarship".

Career Goals

Participants also talked extensively about the relationship between their career goals and their choice to study in this region. Many students believed that their SA experience would make them stand out among their peers once they entered the job market. A student in Jordan noted "this is such a marketable experience and means so much more than going abroad in Europe." Another student succinctly described studying abroad in the MENA region as a "gateway to doing other things." As has been discussed earlier, many students in focus groups saw Arabic as a marketable job skill. Many students expressed the belief that being familiar with the Arabic language and Middle Eastern culture would give them greater opportunities, especially in a difficult job market. One student noted that he switched his focus in order to take advantage of these jobs related to the region. He noted "I have always been really interested in Russian but after 9/11 I started thinking about the opportunities available for people who spoke Arabic and

knew about the Middle East so I switched my focus." One student in Egypt noted that living in the region was essential if one wanted to work for the Foreign Service and that "because of the military there is going to be a lot of security, contracting, and reconstruction work" in the area for which experience in this region will be helpful. Another student bluntly stated:

> This is a fact: we wouldn't be doing this [SA] if there was [sic] no opportunities for us. Part of the end game is to use language to help with our future careers. For example, the government really recruits Arabic speakers. My Arabic department is very small, but it shoves us toward the government.

II.   Summary

Data received from the 601 survey respondents and 76 focus group participants provided much insight into the factors influencing choice of SA destination, particularly in the MENA region. Eleven of the twelve hypotheses proposed in this study were supported by the data. Overall, students who studied in the MENA region were different from students who studied in common destinations in four main ways. First, students who had higher levels of prior exposure to international issues were more likely to choose to SA in the MENA region. For many students, political events such as those of September 11, 2001 served as a catalyst for student interest in the MENA region. In addition, media coverage of the region influenced students' decision to SA in the MENA region as they often wanted to obtain greater cultural understanding of the region because of perceptions that the culture and people of the region are misrepresented in the U.S. Second, MENA students differed from their counterparts in common destinations in that they were more likely to prefer to work for the U.S. government in the future. Students in the MENA region believe their SA experience will help them as they enter the job market, particularly when seeking government employment. Third, students who have taken moderate or extensive amounts of language courses and those who have previously studied Arabic were more likely to study in the MENA region. Students frequently noted that they chose to SA in the MENA region in order to learn the Arabic in order to help their careers

and to help them understand Middle Eastern culture. Fourth, students in the MENA region were more likely to be classified as risk takers. Students noted they chose the MENA region because they wanted a different and challenging experience; something that would be different than the norm. Although students in the MENA region were not found to place higher value on their SA experience in relation to their future careers, they were more likely to see a connection between their experience and their future vocations. These results were found in survey data and were also reflected by information collected through focus groups.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

As the destinations for SA have diversified over the years, there is a need for a greater understanding of the factors which contribute to growth in particular regions. This research is particularly interested in the increasing numbers of Americans studying abroad in the MENA region during the last decade. Who are these students? Are they different than their counterparts in Europe? What is influencing them to choose this region as a destination? Through the use of survey and focus group data, this research has attempted to better understand U.S. students who chose the MENA region and to identify some of the main factors which are influencing their choice of this less common SA destination. This research will now turn to a discussion of these factors.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this research is based on a theoretical model that combines expectancy, student choice, and human capital theories. This model suggests that a student's social capital, cultural capital, economic capital, motivations, and attitudes influence SA destination choice. In order to investigate the specific aspects of human capital, motivations, and attitudes which influence this choice, seven main factors were originally explored: exposure to international issues, attitudes about national security, career intentions, language exposure, previous international travel experience, risk propensity, and scholarship support. In addition, through both modalities of research two other factors were identified: a desire for an "out there" experience and an interest in obtaining cultural understanding. Statistically significant relationships between each of these variables and SA destination choice were found, indicating that students who choose to SA in the MENA region are different from their colleagues who choose more common destinations.

Previous research by Salisbury *et al* and Sanchez *et al* (see Chapter Three) has found that motivations, attitudes, and all three forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) play a role in students' decisions about whether or not one should study abroad. This research finds that the prior accumulation of capital, current attitudes, and future motivations further serve to influence whether student will study in the MENA region rather than a more common locale. Notable findings of this research include:

1) MENA region students identify the events of September 11, 2001 as a catalyst which sparked their initial interest in the region.
2) As one measure of social capital, MENA students showed higher levels of prior exposure to international issues (RQ1).
3) As measures of cultural capital, MENA students were more likely to have taken multiple foreign language courses (RQ4), travelled extensively, and taken part in travel that typically allowed for greater cultural interaction (RQ5).
4) MENA students were more likely to possess economic capital in the form of scholarships. They were also much more likely to have received government scholarships such as the Boren, Gilman, or Military funds (RQ7).
5) MENA students indicated being motivated to study in their destinations by a desire to work for the U.S. government (RQ3), have an experience that is off the beaten path, and to obtain cultural understanding.
6) MENA students had attitudes which were distinct from their colleagues in common destinations, such as high concern about U.S. national security (RQ2), being risk takers (RQ6), and believing it is important for Americans to learn foreign languages.

I.   September 11, 2001 and SA Destination Choice

"I shouldn't underestimate the effect that 9/11 had on me and everyone in my generation, it kind of forced us to open our eyes to the world. After that I was always following the news."
-Study Abroad Student in Jordan

As revealed through the focus groups, the impact of one particular international event on students' decision to SA in the MENA region: September 11, 2001, was crucial. Surely, many Americans old enough to remember that fateful day could also point to ways in which their lives were changed by those happenings. But for the students who chose to study in the MENA region, 9/11 seems to have had a very specific impact; that of a catalyst. Students consistently mentioned

September 11, 20001 as a point in which the Middle East first truly entered their consciousness. In the years following the attacks, students indicated that they increasingly wanted to understand the myriad of issues surrounding the reasoning for such an act of terrorism. Yet they were unsatisfied with media coverage of Arabs, Muslims, Afghanistan, Iraq, Al-Qaeda, and the region as a whole. Some students noted that because of their interest in working for the government, the events of 9/11 determined their area of interest. Since the government has dedicated a great deal of resources (military, aid, diplomacy, etc.) to the MENA region in the last decade, many students believe their job prospects will be improved by obtaining familiarity with the language and culture of the region. Although the events of 9/11 certainly had an impact on students, the process in which students describe the development of their interest in the region indicates that there are other factors which moved them from simply noticing to wanting to study abroad in this region.

II.   Social Capital and SA Destination Choice

"I was sick of only hearing about the elusive Middle East in the news. I needed to see it for myself and know what to believe"
–Study Abroad Student in Jordan

This research examined students' social capital as the amount of prior exposure to international issues vie media, courses, professors, and international students. Half of all MENA students had significantly more exposure to international issues than their counterparts in more common destinations. Although the data demonstrate a relationship between all measures of international exposure and destination choice, not all students are equally influenced by individual factors. Qualitative data from focus groups indicate that students' decision to SA in the MENA region is commonly influenced by interactions with professors and by media representations of the region. Focus group data give insight to a process whereby high levels of

exposure drive students to choose to study in the MENA region. In one common narrative, students described feeling that information from the media was lacking or incomplete, becoming interested in the region through classes (which often emphasized the importance of the MENA region to current U.S. foreign policy), sensing a growing need for Arabic and Middle East experts, and finally feeling the need for personal experience in the region (via SA) in order to fill in information gaps and ultimately become qualified to work on MENA issues. When survey participants were asked to describe why they chose their particular SA destination, this narrative was repeated in comments such as: "I have a deep interest in socio-economic and political conflicts and challenges in the Middle East region. I wish to bridge cultures between Arab and western world in order to improve political and cultural understanding" or "I was interested in this specific language and culture in addition to learning more about the political situation of the region since it is so internationally relevant."

These results are not meant to imply that students who choose common destinations are ignorant of international issues, as many of them indicated moderate amounts of exposure to international issues. Previous research by Salibury *et al* indicates that students who have more cultural capital are more likely to study abroad, which suggests that students in common destinations have higher levels of exposure to international issues than their colleagues who choose not to study abroad. The current findings indicate that students who are constantly exposed to international issues during their college career may be more likely to study abroad and, once the decision is made, to go to less common destinations. Given the growing number of university courses related to the Middle East, Islam and Arabic and the prominence of issues related to the MENA region in the media, high exposure to international issues often corresponds to extensive contact with MENA issues.

III. Cultural Capital and SA Destination Choice

"I wanted to greatly improve my Arabic skills and I felt immersion in the language was the best way. I also felt in-country experience would improve my career opportunities in the future."
-Study Abroad Student in Egypt

Two contributors to a student's cultural capital, language and travel, were also considered. Specifically, cultural capital was examined in terms of the amount of language a student has studied at their home university (RQ 4) and the amount and type of previous international travel experience (RQ 5). In comparison to students in common destinations, MENA students were not only more likely to have taken language classes prior to study abroad, they were also more likely to have taken a greater number of classes. Many students who study in common destinations did not take language classes prior to studying abroad and students studying in the United Kingdom or Australia commonly expressed their choice in these ways:

- o "I wanted to experience another culture without the problem of a language barrier."
- o "No need to deal with foreign language."
- o "The lack of a language barrier was a key factor…"
- o "I didn't want to go to a country whose primary language wasn't English so I could reduce some of the culture shock."
- o "English is my first language, and since I am a science major, I did not take any language courses in college."

Another group of students in common destinations had studied French and Spanish and chose to study to study in the European country which corresponded with the language they had learned. Notably, many students in common destinations indicated having studied only one language while students in the MENA region had frequently studied Arabic in addition to romance languages. One student described her interest in Arabic in this way: "In an ever

expanding global market I feel that it is overwhelmingly important to learn about other cultures, their practices and languages and Arabic is a crucial one."

The opportunity to improve foreign language skills was mentioned by more than 80% of MENA students as a motivation for SA. This desire to use SA to learn Arabic was coupled with MENA students' tendency to see a connection between their SA destination choice and their future careers. These results were reflected in open ended survey questions in which students in the MENA region frequently mentioned that their decision to learn Arabic was a way to improve their future job prospects. The following answers demonstrate this connection:

- o "I wanted to learn Arabic so that I can eventually work in the U.S. State Department."
- o "I wanted to do something different than everyone else and learn Arabic to make more money."
- o "I want to work in the Middle East with an NGO and I desire to continue Arabic study for this reason."

Students studying in more common destinations very rarely discussed the importance of foreign language acquisition to their career intentions. Although noticeable percentages of both groups of students chose their SA destination because of a desire to learn a foreign language, students who choose the MENA region seem to see foreign language acquisition as a tool to open doors to future job opportunities.

The second measure of cultural capital in this study was previous travel. MENA students had more prior travel experience than their counterparts in common destinations and larger percentages had traveled to six or more countries outside of the U.S. or Canada prior to studying abroad. For students who have not travelled extensively, common destinations are seen as a good first step given cultural, religious, an linguistic similarities with the U.S. One student stated "I have never left the country and I thought England would be a good place to live while having the

opportunity to travel a lot while I'm there." Many MENA students who had travelled to Western Europe previously expressed a desire to do something off the beaten path. In both focus groups and in open-ended survey responses, MENA region students expressed this sentiment. For example, two students studying abroad in Morocco who had extensive previous travel experience stated "I wanted to have a challenge-living in a third world country and experience a completely new foreign culture. Western Europe isn't much different than the US." and "I decided to study in Morocco because I didn't want to study in Europe like a lot of students do."

In addition, type of previous travel is related to SA destination choice. Both groups of students noted frequently having taken part in personal travel and volunteer experiences abroad. The two groups differed in that the MENA group also frequently had prior study abroad experiences while the common destination students had done a good deal of group travel. Although there is similarity in the types of travel U.S. students are participating in, those who choose the MENA region were more likely to have past travel which were culturally immersive. MENA region students were eager to point out that they believe their rationales for travel differ from their colleagues in more common destinations; they hope to attain cultural understanding while they see their counterparts as only looking to have a good time. Their analysis may be correct: nearly three-quarters of students who studied in common destinations noted that one of the primary reasons for choosing their SA destination was to have fun, compared to approximately one-third of MENA students. It appears that students who choose to study abroad in the MENA region are more interested in travel which has more of a inter-cultural experience. As reflected in focus group discussions, many students see their current time abroad as a way to grain more in depth understanding of the culture and people of the MENA region. Reflecting back on the work of Hembroff & Rusz, students who have travelled in a culturally immersive

way often show high interest in "the potential impact of global events on U.S. interests" (1993, 5) which is reflected in this connection between the prior travel of MENA students and their decision to SA in the MENA region.

IV. Economic Capital and SA Destination Choice

"I received the Boren fellowship and then started to shift my career goals
based on the opportunity to study abroad with the scholarship"
-Study Abroad Student, Egypt

Students' economic capital also influences SA destination choice. Students who choose the MENA region seem both more concerned about the cost of living of their destination and are more likely to have received specific government support for their SA endeavors. MENA students were more than twice as likely to cite this as a factor in their choice to study in their location. As the U.S. is struggling to recover from the economic crisis of recent years, students may be increasingly concerned about the financial cost of studying abroad. Focus group participants discussed the cost disparities between living in the MENA and Europe. Others noted that the MENA program they selected was more affordable than other options they considered in common destinations.

The survey also collected information regarding scholarship support for SA opportunities (RQ 7). Not only were students in the MENA region more likely to have received scholarship support for their SA experience, but more than eight out of ten of those who received government in support in the form of Boren, Gilman, and Military scholarships were studying in the MENA region. Scholarship funding for students in the MENA region was mentioned much more frequently as a key to their ability to SA. Interestingly, those who had received military or Gilman scholarships also indicated that they would not have gone abroad without these funds,

whereas Boren scholars thought they would have studied abroad regardless of the receipt of the scholarship. These scholarships are examples of the type of financial incentives that the government is providing in order to encourage students to study in less common destinations, particularly those areas which relate to the current national security interests of the government. Given that such a notable percentage of those who received these three types of scholarships were in the MENA region, this is demonstrative of the successful role the U.S. government is playing in the increase of SA students in this region. These two factors indicate how in some cases lower economic capital may lead students to consider studying in cheaper destinations while the receipt of scholarships adds economic capital, thereby encouraging study in particular regions.

V.   Motivations and SA Destination Choice

"Security and International Relations are now closely tied with Arab states, so some experience in this region will help my future career plans."
-Study Abroad Student in Jordan

In addition to the capital students have previously acquired, this study took into account how certain motivations also impact the choice of SA destination. As hypothesized, intentions to work for the U.S. government function as a primary motivation for students to choose the MENA region as a SA destination. In addition, two other less universal motivations were also identified among MENA students: desire to have a unique experience and to obtain cultural understanding. On the other hand, students in common destinations reported being motivated by a desire to complete requirements for their major and to have fun.

Both survey and focus group data reveal that students are primarily motivated to SA in the MENA region in order to fulfill their career goals. In other words, by putting in effort to learn about this region, they believe they will be rewarded with opportunities to work for the U.S.

government. Student in the MENA region were much more likely to want to work for a government agency, with nearly half of all students who indicated a specific type of organization choosing the government.

In general, the career intentions of students who choose to SA in the MENA region are much more focused, whereas those who choose common destinations seem to have a much wider variety of intended fields. Notably, a large number of MENA students specified that they hope to work for the U.S. state department or for military intelligence agencies. Just as MENA students often see the Arabic language as a tool to give them an advantage in future careers, so too do they see general experience living in the region as a way to make them desirable government employees. For example, one student in Egypt stated "I want to become a specialist on the Middle East, possibly for the Army, and I thought the best way to understand the Middle East is to live, eat, and survive in the region." As noted Chapter One it is estimated that the government needs tens of thousands of Arabic speakers and regional specialists. MENA students are adeptly aware of this pressing need and see a direct link between their SA experience and a need in government agencies. Although many students in both groups recognized a connection between their SA destination and their future careers, this sentiment was stronger amongst MENA region students.

Students in the MENA region frequently mentioned choosing their SA destination in order to have an "out there" experience and to obtain cultural understanding. These sentiments were not repeated amongst students studying in more common destinations. For MENA region students there is almost a rebellious spirit of wanting to do something off the beaten path, extremely different than the majority of students, and outside of their comfort zone. When

students were asked on the survey to describe why they chose their destination, a number of students who chose the MENA region mentioned their motivation for something different:

- "It was something different than western culture. If I went to Europe or Australia I feel it wouldn't be a challenge."
- "Because it is completely not the norm. I wanted to do something different."
- "I have an interest in studying the Arabic language and I didn't want to go where every other American studied abroad.
- "I wanted to have a challenge-living in a 3rd world country and experience a completely new foreign culture. Western Europe isn't much different than the US."
- "It is exotic and different."

There was a sense that by doing something different than their peers they would not only gain 'street cred' but also would stand out among their peers. As the job market in the U.S. has become less stable in the past few years, many students intend to go to graduate school as a way to gain more qualifications and/or to put off entering the job market. Focus group participants indicated a concern about getting accepted into graduate school. Some students hope that a SA in a less common destination will set their applications apart from other graduate school applicants. Towards the end of focus group sessions, the increasing numbers of SA students in the region would often be discussed and there was often a sense of disappointment among the students when this topic came up. It was as though this increase made their experience less unique, a quality which was such a draw for them.

In addition, MENA students indicated being motivated to study in this region in order to gain a better cultural understanding of the MENA region, an area that is often seen as being in conflict with the U.S. For example, one student in Egypt stated "I wanted to study in the Middle East to gain an understanding of what the region is actually like outside of the lens of media and politics;" another student chose the region in order "to practice my Arabic language and to better understand the Muslim world." By gaining greater cultural understanding of the MENA region

students believe that they will be better able to assist in finding solutions to military conflicts. This was particularly true for those currently enlisted in the military.

Although the motivations for SA in common destinations were not as thoroughly examined in this research, it is worth noting that students in those destinations often indicated that they chose their destinations in order to complete requirements for their major or to have fun. Students in Western Europe and Australia often noted that because of their major (i.e. science or engineering) their destination choice was limited. Other students in common destinations had felt that they could not study outside of an English speaking country if they wanted to graduate on time. Students also mentioned choosing Western Europe as a destination because the geography of the region would allow for extensive travel to many countries during their time abroad.

At the outset of this research, some SA professionals suggested that "heritage seeking" was a primary motivation for many students coming to the MENA region. That is, part of the increase in SA in the region was due to increasing numbers of Arab-Americans wanting to visit the region to learn about their family background. This research did not find this to be a large influence on students in the region. Only one in ten of all MENA region students noted "ethnic ties to the region" as a reason for wanting to SA in the region, less than the number of students in common destinations noting this factor. Several first generation Arab-American students participated in the survey and focus groups, yet there is no evidence to suggest that this is a primary factor causing overall growth.

VI.   Attitudes and SA Destination Choice

"I like doing things on my own, things that other people don't do things that make me more of an individual."
-Study Abroad Student in Morocco

Lastly, this research looked at how certain attitudes such as risk propensity, concern for national security, and the view of the importance of learning foreign languages influence SA destination choice. Students in the MENA region were more likely to be classified as risk takers. For these students, common destinations seem less "risky" or "challenging" because of cultural, linguistic, or religious similarities to the U.S. Choosing to study in a country which is striking different than one's own produces a myriad of risks in addition to those experienced by all SA students (see Relyea *et al,* 2008*).* As mentioned above, Garber found that students who are willing to take risks are more likely to engage with people of diverse backgrounds. The openness to risk among MENA students this may also correspond with a greater willingness to encounter cultures that are starkly different. This orientation toward risk goes hand in hand with a desire for a SA experience that is "out there." MENA students are not looking for a safe, stable, or predictable choice but rather one that is unique and perceived by others as not the normal choice. As was mentioned in focus group results, the security risks associated with the MENA region were not so much a deterrent for them but rather a draw to their region partially because they dissuaded other participants (so there are limited other US students in the region) and because it seemed more adventurous than what "everyone else" does by studying in common destinations.

The level of concern for national security also set students who chose the MENA region apart from their colleagues in more common destinations. One third of those students in the MENA region reported to be highly concerned about national security, as compared to less than one-fifth of their colleagues in common destinations. Concern for national security was also

related to frequency of media exposure. Notably half of those who were exposed to the media often also had high concern for U.S. national security, as compared with just one-fifth who had low concern. The high level of concern expressed by MENA students also relates to their desire to want to work for the U.S. government and wanting to mitigate terrorism, all of which contribute to their desire to study and learn in this particular region.

Another example of an attitude that seems to play a role in influencing the choice of SA destination relates to foreign language acquisition. Students who chose to study in the MENA region were more likely to believe it was important for Americans to learn foreign languages. Given that a full quarter of students in common destinations had not previously studied a foreign language, it is perhaps not surprising that they do not think second language skills are important for Americans. On another level, students who choose to study in the MENA region would sometimes mention the importance of increasing the numbers of Arabic speakers in the government and military as a way to lessen cultural misunderstandings.

VII.   Conclusion

Within the last decade, changing geo-political events have brought much focus to the both the Middle East and North Africa. One of the changes in this region is the increasing numbers of U.S. students choosing to study abroad in the region. Within the first decade of this century, the U.S. study abroad population in the MENA has grown by over 500%. An examination of the history of SA in the United States has given insight into the ways in which government support for Area Studies and education abroad has laid the foundation for this type of expansion to happen.

Given this remarkable growth, there is an increasing need to understand who these students are and what factors are influencing them to choose this region over more common

destinations. Based on focus groups conducted with nearly 80 SA students in the MENA region and survey data collected from 601 SA students in the MENA region and common destinations, this research has described some of the factors influencing this historic growth. In this sample, MENA students were indeed different from their counterparts in Western Europe and Australia: they had more exposure to international issues, more language experience, more government scholarships, want to work for the U.S. government, and are more concerned about the national security of the United States. In the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 this group of students began to seriously pay attention to the political, cultural, and religious aspects of the MENA region.

Moreover, their choice to study in this particular region was influenced by accumulated aspects of human capital, future motivations, and current attitudes. The use of a theoretical model which takes into account human capital, expectancy and student choice models has shown that multiple factors inform SA destination choice. Although a range of factors which influence students to choose to SA in the MENA region were identified, one of the largest limitations of this current study is the difficulty in pinpointing the factors which *most* influence students to choose the MENA region. To a certain extent the amount of impact of any one factor may vary on an individual basis, depending on a student's home university, local community, or family background. Ideally, a multiple-regression model would be employed in order to attempt to tease out some of the more salient of the factors influencing students to choose to SA in the MENA region. Short of this, this research has identified several key factors which set students in the MENA region apart from their colleagues in common destinations.

A second limitation of this study comes from the methodology employed to gather data. Given that this was not a random sample, responses can only truly characterize these 601

participants. Yet, given that the 275 MENA survey participants represent 6% of all U.S. students studying abroad in this region; these findings do provide a useful characterization of this population. Future work which could employ random selection of participants would provide greater certainty of findings and ability to generalize to the larger U.S. SA population. In addition, there remains a great deal of room for future research on the choice of other less-common destinations such as those in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Future research could test the model described here to determine its validity with other areas.

Given the increasing trend in study abroad programs in MENA, this analysis may be valuable reference for educators and administrators in home and host countries. On an academic level, this research has provided insights into a previously unstudied population and set the stage for research on the best-practices, immediate outcomes, and long term impacts of study abroad in an increasingly important region of our world. This research has demonstrated that one of the primary motivations for SA in the MENA region is career advancement; particularly that students hope to work for the government. This finding brings to mind long-standing debates among Area Specialists as to the appropriateness of a growing relationship between national security concerns and government support for certain aspects of academia. There is much potential for future research which examines this topic, particularly the long term relationship between SA in the MENA region and employment with the U.S. government.

Questionnaire for U.S. Students Studying Abroad
(Please read and sign the consent to participate form before proceeding)

The following questions ask for information about your study abroad destination.

1. **What is the name of your study abroad program? (***e.g. CIEE French Studies in Paris or The American University in Beirut***)**

   _____

   a) **In what country is this program located?** _____

   b) **What is the primary language spoken in the country where you are studying abroad?**

☐	Arabic	☐	Italian
☐	Chinese	☐	Portuguese
☐	English	☐	Russian
☐	French	☐	Spanish
☐	German	☐	Other _____(name)

2. **By the end of May 2011 how many semesters will you have studied abroad?**

   ☐ One semester
   ☐ Two semesters
   ☐ More than two semesters (please indicate the total) _____

3. **Briefly describe why you chose your current study abroad destination:**

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. **Did you consider studying in another region of the world?**
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

   If Yes, In which region did you consider studying?

☐	Africa	☐	Middle East/North Africa
☐	Central & South America	☐	South and Central Asia
☐	East Asia & Pacific	☐	Western Europe
☐	Eastern Europe & Eurasia		

5. **Of the following reasons, which of the following factors most influenced your decision to study abroad in your particular region of the world? (Check all that apply)**

☐ Advancement of career goals	☐ Opportunity to complete requirements for major
☐ Ethnic ties to the area	☐ Recommendations of family or friends
☐ Improvement of foreign language skills	☐ Recommendations of professor or advisor
☐ Having fun	☐ Cost of living
☐ Desire for an "out there" experience	☐ Intention to live in the region of study in the future

The following questions ask for information about your previous experience with international issues.

6. Before you studied abroad, how often did you watch, read, or listen to news on international topics?

☐ Never   ☐ A few times a week
☐ Less than once a month   ☐ Once a day
☐ A few times a month   ☐ Several times a day
☐ Once a week

7. Before you studied abroad, did you take university courses which focused on international issues or diverse cultures?

☐ Yes
☐ No

        If Yes:

             What is the total number of courses you completed? _____

             Please list the titles one or two of the most influential of those courses:

             _____

8. Before you studied abroad, how often did you have contact with international students?

☐ Never   ☐ 4-5 times a semester
☐ 1-3 times a semester   ☐ 6 or more times a semester

9. Before you studied abroad, had you taken a course from a professor who integrated their own international experience/s into the classroom?

☐ Yes
☐ No

        If Yes:

             How many different professors like this have you had?

             _____(estimated number)

10. Before you studied abroad, did you participate in any extra-curricular activities (clubs, organizations, internships, work, or workshops) that focused on international issues?

☐ Yes
☐ No

        If Yes:

             How often did you participate these activities?
                ☐ Rarely
                ☐ Sometimes
                ☐ Often
             Please list these one or two of these activities:

             _____

The following questions ask for information about your language experience.

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

    It is important for Americans to learn foreign languages.

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly Agree

12. What languages do you speak (any level, beginning to native)?

☐ Arabic	☐ German	☐ Spanish
☐ Chinese	☐ Italian	☐ Other
☐ English	☐ Portuguese	_____(name)
☐ French	☐ Russian	

13. Before you studied abroad, did you complete language classes at your university?
☐ Yes
☐ No

      If Yes:

            Which language(s) did you study?
            (check all languages that apply and fill in the number of university courses you have taken prior to this semester)

☐ Arabic	____ (number of courses)	☐ Portuguese	____ (number of courses)
☐ Chinese	____ (number of courses)	☐ Russian	____ (number of courses)
☐ French	____ (number of courses)	☐ Spanish	____ (number of courses)
☐ German	____ (number of courses)	☐ Other _____(name)	
☐ Italian	____ (number of courses)		____ (number of courses)

The following questions ask for information about your career plans.

14. Do your current career plans include attending graduate school?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure

      If Yes:

          Which field do you intend to study? _____

15. What type of organization would you most prefer to work for?
☐ Private Business
☐ Non-Profit Organization or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)
☐ Government Agency
☐ Not sure

16. When thinking about your future career, please rank your top 3 preferences for general career field you would like to work in (1 = most interested).

____Architecture	____Information &Technology
____Advertising	____International Relations
____Business	____Law
____Communications	____National Security
____International Development	____Performing Arts
____Education	____Public Policy
____Engineering	____Publishing
____Environment	____Sciences
____Foreign Policy	____Social Work/Psychology
____Health/Medicine	____Other_____

17. In five years, what specific job would you prefer to have?_____

18. Is there a connection between your study abroad experience and your future career plans?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

      If Yes, please describe:

_____

_____

19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a) My study abroad experience will add value to my college degree.

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree   ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

b) My study abroad experience will have little to no effect on my job prospects in my intended career.

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree   ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

c) My study abroad experience will be seen as favorable by future employers.

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree   ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

d) My study abroad experience will <u>not</u> give me a competitive edge in the job market.

☐ Strongly Disagree   ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree   ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

The following questions ask for information about the way you make decisions.

20. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement by putting a circle around the option you prefer.

a) Safety should be a top priority in all situations.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

b) I take risks regularly.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

c) I really dislike not knowing what is going to happen in new situations.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

d) Previous to studying abroad, I was <u>not</u> fearful about how I would adjust to living in the country I selected.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

e) Previous to studying abroad, I was worried about my physical safety in the country I selected.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

f) Previous to studying abroad, I was <u>not</u> concerned about how I would perform at my study abroad university or program.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

g) I am concerned about national security issues in the United States.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

h) Some activities involve a "*financial*" risk, such as starting a business, investing (e.g. buying shares), or gambling (e.g. in casinos) that is, there is a risk of losing money or other assets. In the future, I will accept financial risks.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

i) Some activities involve a "*social*" risk, such as standing for election, publicly challenging a rule or decision, or do something against the advice of friends or family, that is, there is a risk of losing or doing something unpopular. In the future, I will try to avoid social risks.

strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 strongly agree

The following questions ask for information about your travel experience.

21. Before you studied abroad, had you ever travelled outside of the U.S. and Canada?
☐ Yes
☐ No

If Yes:

a) How many total countries outside of the U.S. and Canada have you travelled to (*not counting your study abroad country or other countries you have travelled to while studying abroad*)? _____

b) How much of your total life has been spent abroad?
Years _____ Months_____Weeks _____

c) Please list the most recent regions* you have travelled to before studying abroad, the number of weeks in each location, and check the box next to the type of travel.
(*Africa, Central & South America, East Asia & Pacific, Eastern Europe & Eurasia, Middle East/North Africa, South and Central Asia, Western Europe)

Region:_____ **Number of Weeks:**_____

Prior Study Abroad	High School Exchange	For Parent's Work	Volunteer Experience	Work Experience	Group Tour	Personal Travel	Other (please specify)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐_____

Region:_____ **Number of Weeks:**_____

Prior Study Abroad	High School Exchange	For Parent's Work	Volunteer Experience	Work Experience	Group Tour	Personal Travel	Other (please specify)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐_____

Region:_____ **Number of Weeks:**_____

Prior Study Abroad	High School Exchange	For Parent's Work	Volunteer Experience	Work Experience	Group Tour	Personal Travel	Other (please specify)
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐_____

This last section includes questions about your basic demographic information.

22. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender

23. How would you describe your racial/ethnic background? (please choose only one)

☐ Arab
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
☐ Black, African American
☐ African Origin

☐ Caucasian
☐ Hispanic/Latino(a)
☐ Bi- or Multi-Racial
   (please specify_____)
☐ Other (please specify_____)

24. In five years, where would you like to be living?
   (indicate the region, country or state) _____

25. What is your current age? _____ (years)

26. What is the name of your college or university in the U.S.? _____

   In what state is this school located? _____

27. Did you receive any scholarship or fellowship funds to help fund your study abroad experience?
☐ Yes
☐ No
   If Yes:
   a) **What is the name of this scholarship?** _____

   b) **Do you think you would have studied abroad if you had not received these funds?**
      ☐ Yes
      ☐ No
      ☐ Not sure

What is your current major at your home university? _____

What is your current academic status?
☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐Senior

General Comments:
_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!
If you have any questions or if you are interested in the results of the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me at cklane@aucegypt.edu

APPENDIX **B:** Consent to Participate in Survey

The American University in Cairo
Middle East Studies Department
AUC Avenue; P.O. Box 74
New Cairo 11835, Egypt

Dear colleague:

You have been requested to participate in a social survey conducted by Cara Lane, a graduate student in the Middle East Studies Department at the American University in Cairo. This research will collect data which will be used to write a Masters thesis, under the advisement of Dr. Helen Rizzo.

The purpose of the survey is to better understand how U.S. undergraduate students choose study abroad destinations. The survey will be distributed to U.S. students studying abroad in multiple destinations around the world.

The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. You may choose not to respond to any question or the entire survey. It is important that you understand that you are in no way obligated to respond to this questionnaire.

This is a *confidential survey* and no information which could identify you will be recorded with your responses. Neither your name nor your individual responses will be given to any other individual or organization either inside or outside of the American University environment. Only the researcher and her academic advisors will have access to your anonymous responses. This survey has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of The American University in Cairo.

I appreciate your willingness to cooperate in this research effort.

If you have any questions about the content of the survey or my interview procedures, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher or Dr. Rizzo:

Thank you again for your participation!
Sincerely,
Cara Lane
011.20.168.360.583
MA Candidate Middle East Studies
cklane@aucegypt.edu

Helen Rizzo, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
Chair, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology and Egyptology
2103 Prince Alwaleed (HUSS) Building
AUC, New Cairo Campus
hrizzo@aucegypt.edu

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above:
Signed:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX C: Focus Group Script

Introduction:
Thank you for participating in this focus group. My name is Cara Lane, and I am a student in the Masters program in Middle East Studies at the American University in Cairo. The purpose of the group is to better understand U.S. undergraduate students who study abroad in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the reasons for choosing this destination. Your focus group is one of several that will take place in Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt during 2010. The information obtained in the focus group will be used in academic research and may be published at a later date. I appreciate your participation as your input and thoughts will help us better understand this subject.

You can choose not to answer a question or to stop your participation at any time. I would like everyone to have a chance to share and participate. There are no wrong or right answers, as everyone's experiences are important. The focus group will be recorded with a digital recorder and I will take brief notes in order to make an accurate record of what is said including your comments. Your responses will remain confidential and no names will be mentioned in the report.

Engagement questions:
1) What programs and regions did you consider when you first thought about studying abroad?

Exploration questions:
1) What were your specific reasons for wanting to study abroad? (prompts: academic progress, to begin or continue study of a foreign language, personal growth, learn about other cultures, improve career prospects).
2) What do you think influenced you to study abroad in this destination?
3) Can you describe your previous exposure to international politics through classes, media, clubs, friends, etc?
4) Have you studied Arabic before?
5) Have you traveled outside of the U.S. previously?
   a. How do you feel that experience affected you?
6) Why did you choose to study abroad in the Middle East and not another destination?
7) How did friends and family react when you said you were studying abroad in this region?
8) Do you think the political conflicts during the last 10 years affected your decision to study in this region?
9) What are your current academic and career goals? How has this study abroad experience influenced those goals?
   a. Do you plan to use Arabic in your future academic or career situations?
   b. Would you consider working for the U.S. government in the future?
   c. Would you consider working with Arabs or Muslims in the future? If yes, in what capacity?
   d. Would you consider working/living in the MENA region in the future?
10) If given the option, would you choose to study in this region again? Why or why not?
11) In what ways has this study abroad experience been valuable to you?
12) What are your personal goals? How has this study abroad experience influenced those goals?
13) What have been the best/worst parts of studying abroad?

Exit question:
1) Is there anything else about the reasons you chose to study abroad in the Middle East that you think is important for me to know?

Thank you again for your participation!

APPENDIX D: Consent to Participate in Focus Group

Consent to Participate in Focus Group

You have been selected to participate in a focus group conducted by Cara Lane, a graduate student in the Middle East Studies Department at the American University in Cairo. The purpose of the group is to better understand U.S. undergraduate students who study abroad in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the reasons for choosing this destination. I am asking you to participate in this study because of your study abroad experience in the MENA region. Your focus group is one of several that will take place in Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt during 2010. The information obtained in the focus group will be used in academic research and may be published at a later date.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and to stop your participation at any time. If you are uncomfortable and you don't have to answer any question and you can leave the group if you need a break at any time. This focus group will last approximately 40 minutes.

The focus group will be recorded with a digital recorder and the researcher will take brief notes in order to make an accurate record of what is said including your comments. Your responses will remain confidential and no names will be mentioned in the report.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be raised in the group; the important thing is for you to share your varied experiences and viewpoints. The hope is also that you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential.

Our notes and the information you provide in this project will be kept confidential. Only the researcher and her academic advisors will have access to this information. No information will be disclosed which could be identified with you or connect your name to the information presented. After the group meeting, I would like to stay in touch with you in order to distribute an online questionnaire and to follow up with you about your future experiences.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above:
Signed:_____ Date:_____

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