



## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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A recent and steady increase in student participation in study-abroad programs has caused international educators and student affairs professionals to reevaluate the current study-abroad paradigm and redesign and implement new curricula better suited to meet the changing needs of international education. Recent emphasis has been placed on understanding outcomes of study-abroad and student development with special attention given to personal growth and identity development outcomes. This study investigated the impact of the study-abroad experience of four American students and their sense of national identity. National identity is explained as an individual's awareness and concept of self as a U.S. American and their relationship to the U.S. American culture and nation. Eight themes were identified in the study and were grouped under three different headings. These headings were: (a) influential study-abroad experiences, (b) American self, and (c) American self and nation. The results of this study have implications for international educators and student affairs professionals interested in developing and implementing programs that further support exploration of self as American both during and after the course of a study-abroad program.

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Study Abroad and National Identity

by  
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I understand that my thesis will become part of permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Giustina M. Pelosi, Author

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# Study Abroad and National Identity

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years study-abroad programs have become well known and recognized not only by higher education professionals but also by the public and government officials. Headlines such as “Study abroad blossoms into big business” (Farrell, 2007), and “Study-abroad courses demand our scrutiny” (Schuman, 2007), appear in scholarly journals as well as in the headlines of local and national newspapers. Researchers and educational professionals such as Michael Berg (2007) and William Brustein (2007) attribute this growth in public awareness and participation in study-abroad to a world that is quickly changing and strikingly different from what it was just a decade ago. Today, the United States of America faces shifting economic, political, and national security realities and challenges that force higher educational institutions to produce and graduate globally competent students (Brustein, 2007). As the face of the United States changes and shifts, so does that of the institution of higher education and its role in and demand for international education.

### *Background*

Just two decades ago, participants normally studied abroad mainly to “make some progress in another language,” and “in some mysterious way learn through exposure to, through contact with, another culture (Berg, 2007, pg. 393). Today, however, students are not only expected to learn a new language, they must also work toward becoming globally competent world citizens. Students who are globally competent will be better prepared for global citizenship, will possess the skills

required to address the United States' national security needs, and compete successfully in the global market (Brustein, 2007). The skills that form the foundation of global competence include:

[t]he ability to work effectively in [an] international setting; awareness of and adaptability to diverse cultures, perceptions, and approaches; familiarity with the major currents of global changes and the issues they raise; and the capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries. (Brustein, p. 383)

Higher education professionals and government officials question how to graduate globally competent students and how to equip them with the skills necessary to act as global citizens. Furthermore, they debate whether study-abroad and other international education programs currently meet their potential, and if not, how to intervene. Additionally, they discuss how to make international education experiences more widely accessible to all students.

International education and study-abroad experiences have been linked with the holistic and globally competent student. Berg explains that “through study-abroad, students can learn things, and learn in ways, that they will not if they stay on their home campuses” (p. 392). International study provides the unique opportunity to empower learners to break away from personal and cultural boundaries and invites them to change the way in which they view the world (Young and Asay, 2003). While this is one of the potential experiences that a student can have while participating in a study-abroad program, Berg (2007) points out that “if a study abroad’s unique potential is to be met, we need to intervene actively in our students’ learning— before, during, and after their experience abroad” (p. 392). This invested activity will enable students to better reflect upon and understand their experiences, recognize the

knowledge and skills they have gained, and apply newly learned skills to their areas of study.

### *Significance of This Study*

While researchers and educators such as Brustein (2007) may agree with and acknowledge the intervening theory that Berg (2007) discusses as an essential role for international educators, they also demand more. Brustein also states:

If we are to achieve global competence at our institutions— and there is no excuse for not striving to attain this overall goal— it will require international educators to be in consultation with administrators, faculty, staff, and students to design and implement a curriculum that is comprehensive; coherent; accessible to all students; and has as its principal goal the ability to know, comprehend, analyze, and evaluate information in the context of an increasingly globalized world (p. 390).

Before we can redesign and implement new curricula that are better suited to meet the changing needs of study-abroad programs, we must first evaluate and further understand the outcomes of study-abroad and student development (Dolby, 2007). Nadine Dolby (2007) states that in comparison to other areas of higher education, research on study-abroad policy, programs, and student participants is relatively limited and underdeveloped. Furthermore, much of the existing literature focuses on outcomes for individual students. Dolby (2007) explains that this is understandable but that more theoretical work on the relationship between study-abroad and identity is necessary; she states “that research on study-abroad must include efforts to move beyond the evaluation or ‘what works’ paradigm to interrogate the fundamental assumptions that shape our pedagogical approach to the study-abroad experience and the ways in which study-abroad produces identities” (p. 144).

Understanding how and why a study-abroad experience impacts a student's sense of self is becoming increasingly important as educators work to develop comprehensive and coherent study-abroad programs and standardized policies. This recent growth in public awareness and participation in study-abroad programs may compel educators to reevaluate the current study-abroad paradigm and investigate more effective ways of conducting and evaluating study-abroad outcomes. Researching the impact that a study-abroad experience has on a student's identity will allow educators to develop and implement programs that encourage greater self-discovery and personal growth. In addition, it is important to examine the experiences that impact student identity development, as this area of research is thus far underdeveloped.

#### *Overview of Methodology*

This research explores the possible impacts of a study-abroad experience on student identity development. In an effort to better understand how and why a study-abroad experience changes the way students view themselves and the world, their role in and involvement with their national and global community, and their responsibility as a globally competent citizen, this study discusses impact a study-abroad experience has on a U.S. American student's sense of national identity.

This study was a phenomenological study utilizing one-on-one interviews as the primary method of data collection. This research approach allowed for the lived experience of each participant to emerge and be heard. It also encouraged participants to share in great detail their personal development as well as the events and circumstances that influenced their development. Furthermore, this research presents the findings on how each student believed their experience impacted their overall

awareness of themselves as U.S. Americans and their current relationship with their U.S. American national culture and society. The results discussed in this research are rich in individual experience and provide an in-depth look at the lived experience of each participant and the impact each perceived their experience to have on their own sense of self as a U.S. American.

### *Definition of Terms*

In order to be clear in discussion of study-abroad and national identity, it is critical to define five pertinent phrases, they are: (a) American college students, (b) national identity, (c) developing country, (d) non-English speaking country, and (e) study-abroad.

*American college students.* For the purpose of this study, “American” will be defined as individuals that are citizens or permanent residents of the United States of America (U.S.A.). A “college student” will refer to any individual 18 years of age or older and enrolled full-time in and attending a four-year university.

*National identity.* The term national identity is highly controversial and greatly debated in American history, culture, and literature. Its meaning, existence, and importance has been largely discussed and researched extensively by theorists, writers, and politicians throughout American history (Stuckey, 2004 & Miller, 1991). This study does not seek to confirm or deny the existence of, to measure, or to define outside the realm of this study the concept of national identity. For the purpose of this study, the term “national identity” will be explored as it relates to the culture and nation of the United States of America. By my own definition, this term will be

explained as *an individual's awareness of and concept of self as a U.S. American and their relation to the U.S. American culture and nation.*

*Developing country.* For the purpose of this study, a “developing” country will refer to *any country with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of \$11,115 or less.* This study used per capita income data calculated by the World Bank for the 2006 fiscal year (World Bank, n.d.) in order to determine the developing status of each participating country. Countries with low-income or middle-income economies will be considered developing; however, the use of this term is not intended to imply that all economies in the group are experiencing similar development or that other economies have reached a preferred or final stage of development (see Appendix A for list of eligible countries).

*Non-English speaking country.* A non-English speaking country will refer to any country wherein which a non-English language (i.e. Spanish, Russian, or Bulgarian) is the official language and or dominant (spoken by more than 50% of the population) language (see Appendix A for list of eligible countries).

*Study abroad.* The term “study-abroad” is widely recognized by international educators as a “program in which students attend school in a country outside the United States and receive academic credit toward their major” (NAFSA, n.d.). A wide range of international educational activities meets these criteria and includes options to study, work, or provide volunteer service (i.e., internships, service-learning, etc) abroad.

Study-abroad programs vary in length and include *short-term* (a program of eight weeks or less), *mid-length* (a program one semester or one to two quarters in

duration), and *yearlong* programs (a full academic or calendar year abroad) (IIE, 2007a). Additionally, programs are located throughout the world in both *traditional* (programs in Western European countries) and *non-traditional* (programs in the Middle East, Africa, or Latin American countries) study-abroad destinations (IIE, 2007a).

For the purpose of this study, the term “study-abroad” will refer to *programs in which U.S. American students enroll and earn credit for completion of academic courses in a school located in a country outside of the United States.*

#### *Organization of the Thesis*

This research explores the impact of a study-abroad experience on students’ sense of national identity and may inform international educators and student affairs professionals as they evaluate and attempt to further understand outcomes of study-abroad and student identity development. The results have implications for the development and implementation of programs that encourage greater self-discovery and personal growth. The next chapter will review the literature as it pertains to this topic and it establishes the foundation upon which this study was built. Subsequent chapters include a review of the methodology used in this study, presentation and discussion of the findings that resulted from this study, and a concluding chapter that addresses possible limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review provides a foundation for this study and addresses existing research and theory in order to better understand the topic of study-abroad and national identity, provides context for why this subject needs be addressed, and informs the methodology for this research. The literature review discusses: (a) effects of international education experiences, (b) student development theory and study-abroad, and (c) American national identity development.

### *Effects of International Education Experiences*

The number of students studying abroad from U.S. higher education institutions continues to grow. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), the number of students receiving academic credit for studying abroad in the 2005-2006 academic year (including summer 2006) increased 8.5% to a record high of 223,534 (IIE, 2007a). This increase follows an ongoing surge in participation in study-abroad over the past two decades. The number of U.S. students studying abroad has increased by 150% in the past decade and 360% since the 1985-1986 academic year, when fewer than 50,000 students received credit for studying abroad (IIE, 2007a). More students also are studying abroad in less traditional destinations (i.e., outside of Western Europe) than in previous years (IIE, 2007a). Recent federal legislative initiatives such as the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act and the proposal for the Uniting Students in America Act (Dervarics, 2008) have been put forward as catalysts to increase the number of students studying abroad to one million college students per year in the near future, a four-fold increase from the current number. In response, higher education institutions also have developed and

implemented new goals and policies (e.g., diversifying program options and increasing program availability) to increase the number of students they are able to send abroad each year (IIE, 2007b). Given the rise in the overall number of students studying abroad and the establishment of federal and institutional goals for study-abroad (NAFSA, 2008), attention is being given to the outcomes of study-abroad. This section provides a general overview of the current outcomes of the study-abroad experience as described in major research studies in the field of international education, and discusses the common effects a study abroad experience has on students.

Much of the current research pertaining to study-abroad outcomes reflects a shift in focus away from the traditional Junior year abroad paradigm (Brustein, 2007; Hoffa, 2007) to one that emphasizes the investigation of personal development and non-foreign-language outcomes (Hoff, 2008). While research on these types of outcomes is still in its infancy, it represents the emerging trend toward students' personal growth outcomes. Much attention has been paid to identifying the variables that affect specific outcomes, including the process of learning. Researcher's have (Sutton & Rubin, 2004) demonstrated that learning outcomes can be roughly divided into two areas: (a) nonacademic (e.g., affective and attitudinal, personal development, awareness, etc) and, (b) academic (e.g., knowledge and skill development). The variables influencing study-abroad learning outcomes have been classified in a variety of ways. John Engle and Lilli Engle (2003) identify seven influencing variables that interlock and interact in "varying and complex ways in the context of countless programs worldwide" (p. 8), they are: (a) *length or duration of program* (e.g., short-

term, mid-length, or year-long programs); (b) *entry target-language competence*; that is, individual student proficiency in a foreign language prior to the commencement of the study-abroad program; (c) *context of academic work*; that is, the manner in which students are enrolled in courses and the varying types of programs (e.g., faculty-led programs, campus extension programs, third-party provider programs, etc.); (d) *types of housing for each student* (e.g., homestay, apartment with other U.S. students, etc.); (e) *provisions for guided or structured cultural interaction and experiential learning*; and (f) *guided reflection on cultural experience*; that is, whether students receive on-site mentoring that asks them to reflect on learning.

Adriana Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) describes influencing variables in reference to the student focusing on internal versus external variables. *Internal* variables specific to the student address student backgrounds, characteristics, and personal circumstances (including student language proficiency prior to departure, previous experience abroad, previous exposure to cultural differences, and academic discipline). *External* variables are further divided to include *program* and *student* choices. *External-program* variables describe choices about the experience made by the study abroad office; for example, the type of programs available (e.g., study-abroad, internship, service learning, etc), length and location of the program, the content of study, pre-departure and on-site orientation programs, re-entry activities, and the availability of support staff both on and off-site, etc. *External-student* variables describe choices made by the students, for example, housing arrangements, independent travel, and amount of contact with host culture and friends as well as contact with the host culture language(s).

The many variables related to study-abroad outcomes have produced a solid base of qualitative and quantitative research addressing study-abroad outcomes that spans a period of more than 40 years (Hoff, 2008). The majority of this research has been produced only recently and includes studies that mostly address learning outcomes as they relate to pre- and post-program change (Yachimowicz, Sutton & Rubin, Ingraham & Petersen as cited in Hoff), but also include studies that focus on the process involved in culture learning (Bacon, Laubscher, & Whalley as cited in Hoff, Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004) as well as studies that focus on discipline or academic-specific learning outcomes (Dwyer as cited in Hoff, Sutton & Rubin, 2004); however, research on the latter is limited.

Generally speaking, studies concerning learning outcomes in study-abroad demonstrate that students who study abroad show personal growth and development in both academic and non-academic areas. Researchers Michael Paige, Andrew Cohen, Barbara Kappler, Julie Chi, & James Lassegard (2004) explain that students, upon return from their study-abroad experience, generally have a newly developed sense of autonomy, feel more responsible about lifestyle choices and global consequences, have more concern for global international politics, are less consumer oriented, are more interested in concepts such as justice and injustice as it manifests itself in other countries, are more concerned with what happens around the globe and feel more like “global citizens,” and begin to see the “U.S. and the world in a new light” (p. 149). Additional skills and qualities students acquire through study-abroad include: foreign language skills, intercultural sensitivity (ability to adapt to new environments and understand cultural differences and similarities), self-reliance, confidence, and

knowledge, flexibility, cross-cultural communication skills, and ability to manage and cope with difficult and stressful situations (Paige et al, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; & Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Study-abroad outcomes demonstrate that international education experiences may impact student development.

### *Student Development Theory and Study-Abroad*

Student development theory provides a fundamental base of knowledge concerning student learning and awareness of self. While there is a great deal of research addressing student development, two specific areas of theory are addressed as each serves a specific goal in this research, they are: (a) impact of experiential learning on student development, and (b) identity development. In presenting these theories, the goal is not to provide an in depth look at each theory but rather demonstrate the general concepts of student development and identity development and illustrate that there are several theories that can be applied to better understand the impact of a study-abroad experience on student identity development.

*Impact of experiential learning on student development.* Student development theory shows that experience and involvement impact development. Researchers such as Victor Savicki (2008) among others, recognize the process of experiential learning as an integral component of an international education experience and have employed many different theories that discuss the process of experiential learning to better support and encourage student development while abroad. While there are several conceptualizations of experiential learning in the field of student development, attention will be directed to David Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito et al., 1998).

Kolb (Kolb as cited in Evans et al., 1998) defined learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience” (p. 209) and developed a four-stage continuous cycle that describes the process of learning through experience. Each stage in the four-stage cycles acts as a step that provides a foundation for the next stage in the cycle. Kolb’s (Evans et al.) theory of experiential learning asserts that while learning can begin at any stage in the cycle (and then progress to the next stage), learning often begins with a particular action (e.g., participation-observing, listening, acting— in a game or discussion, act of conducting research, thinking, etc.) that is further influenced by individual learning styles. The four stages are: (a) *concrete experience* or the feeling dimension, which describes learning that emphasizes personal involvement with people in everyday situations; (b) *reflective observation* or the watching dimension, which describes learning that occurs through watching, listening, and the integration of differing points of view; (c) *abstract conceptualization* or the thinking dimensions, which describes learning that occurs by taking impartial perspective and using logic and/or ideas; and (d) *active experimentation* or the doing dimension, which describes learning through action, participation, and risk-taking (Evans et al.).

Kolb (Evans et al., 1998) explains that the most effective learning occurs when learners develop abilities represented in each of these four categories; that is, learning through experiences that encourage feeling, watching, thinking, and doing. Alexander Astin (1985) states that in addition to doing, thinking and feeling, learning comprises behavioral components that emphasize involvement in an activity. Astin describes involvement as the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects

and explains that the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program (e.g., study-abroad) is directly proportional to the quality and quantity (i.e., the time and effort) of student involvement in that program.

Researchers Carney Strange and James Banning (2001) assert that in addition to individual student action and behavior, student learning is influenced by an institution's ability to create and support an environment that encourages student involvement and student learning. In Strange and Banning's (2001) theory of Dimensions of Involvement, four dimensions describe how student involvement and student learning are impacted, the four dimensions are: (a) *physical dimension of involvement* (the location, scale, design, and layout of a given institution); (b) *aggregate dimension of involvement* (the degree to which an institution supports synergy and involvement of student organizations and other groups where individuals of like minds come together); (c) *organizational dimensions of involvement* (the organizational structure of an institution and its ability to support involvement opportunities and student input); and (d) *constructed dimensions of involvement* (the ability of an institution to create an organizational and social climate that supports involvement).

Student development theories addressing student experience and involvement demonstrate the influence of experiential learning in international education and student development. Such theories can also be used to develop philosophies and methodologies for supporting and encouraging student involvement throughout the entire international educational experience (e.g., pre-departure and on-site

orientations, the development and implementations of in-country activities that encourage involvement, and re-entry support programs).

*Identity development.* Student identity development theory shows that there are multiple dimensions of identity and that identity change is impacted by social, cultural, situational, and experiential influences. Susan Jones and Marylu McEwen (2000) have contributed greatly to the field of identity development with their Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. The model evolved from a qualitative study that explored the self-perceived identities and the multiple dimensions of identity of 10 female participants enrolled at a large public institution. The study focused on “students understandings of their own identity and experiences of difference and of the influence of multiple dimensions of identity on an evolving sense of self” (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 407). From this research evolved a fluid and dynamic model that works to represent the continual construction of the multiple dimensions of identity over time and the influence of changing contexts on the experience of identity development.

Jones and McEwen’s (2000) model describes identity as consisting of multiple dimensions of identity and places in the center of these multiple dimensions a core sense of self. Surrounding the core are intersecting circles that represent significant identity dimensions and contextual influences that form an individual’s sense of self. The dimensions are variously experienced but include race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and social class. The dimensions may be experienced simultaneously and become more or less salient than other dimensions as they interact with contextual influences. Contextual influences include an individual’s sociocultural



conditions, family background, education, and current experiences including the experience culture, family, and religion different from their own. The importance or relative salience of these identity dimensions is represented by dots located on each of the identity dimension circles. The locations of these dots in proximity to the core represent the particular salience of that identity dimension to an individual at one moment in time.

Erik Erikson (Widick, C., Parker, C. A., Knefelkamp, L., 1978), in a theory of Psychosocial Development, also recognizes the importance *external* environment (i.e., social context or role in society) as well as the *internal* dynamics on an individual's development (i.e., impact of inner vs. outer influences on identity development or change). The theory comprises an eight-stage model that describes a person's development through the progression of time. Each stage corresponds to a specific time of physical growth and psychological development (e.g., infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, etc.) and is marked by specific events or crises that develop and cause the individual to make intentional decisions. An individual's ability to deal with the crises or events (successfully or unsuccessfully) related to each stage of development, and those that manifest themselves throughout their lives, result in a change of personality.

Stage five of Erikson's (Widick, et al., 1978) theory focuses on the emergence and development of the *ego*. The ego is explained as the part of the personality that "brings order and clarity out of varied experiences" (Widick et al., p. 2) and attempts to bridge an individual's inner life and outer life. More simply put, the ego refers to an

individual's sense of identity. It is in this fifth stage that adolescents and young adults begin to question who they are and what they will become.

There are multiple models of human development that specifically address aspects of cultural and racial identity development. For example, Milton Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, and Bernardo Ferdman and Placida Gallegos' (2001) model of Racial Identity Development and Latinos in the United States. Models such as these are important to the exploration of national identity development in study-abroad because they introduce additional variables of which researchers should be aware and take into account when investigating the impact of a study-abroad experience on a student's sense of identity. Ferdman and Gallegos' (2001) model of Racial Identity Development considers how individuals and groups deal with the surrounding racial order and constructs that do not embrace or are different from their own. While this theory specifically addresses Latinos in the United States it has developed an interesting system of patterns and orientations that take into consideration an individual's relationship with a larger group (i.e., Latino and White Americans). There are six patterns, they are: (a) *orientation*, describes how an individual identifies with a group; (b) *lens*, describes the way individual views their own ethnicity; (c) *identify as prefer*, describes how an individual prefers or chooses to identify; (d) *Latinos are seen*, describes an individual's view of or attitude toward Latinos; (e) *Whites are seen*, describes the individual's view of or attitude toward Whites; and (f) *framing of race*, describes the importance given to race when describing individual identity.

Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity is a six-stage model that describes the experience of culture difference and provides a framework for how individuals develop intercultural sensitivity; that is, people's ability to understand their own culture and the culture of others. The six stages progress along a continuum from a highly *ethnocentric* (belief or view that one's own culture is central to reality) to a highly *ethnorelative* (the belief that cultures can only be understood relative to another and that behavior can only be understood in the context of culture) perspective. The first three stages lie on the ethnocentric side of the model while the additional stages reflect an increasingly ethnorelative perspective. The six stages are: (a) denial, (b) defense, (c) minimization, (d) acceptance, (e) adaptation, and (f) integration. Bennett (1993) emphasizes that lived experience and exposure to new and different cultures present individuals with opportunities to see culture contextually and to interpret and analyze phenomena and complex interactions in culture-context terms. While the model is stage-based, Bennett (1993) explains that individuals can "retreat" signifying that progression through the stages is not one-way. Actions that encourage further involvement and critical analysis of culture promote forward movement along the continuum.

A review of identity development theory demonstrates that identity development is an integral component of an individual's development and that lived experience of culture and race greatly influence an individual's perception of self and their perception of the world.

*American National Identity Development*

Both student development and identity development theories demonstrate that international educational learning experiences can impact individual student identity. A review of theoretical and empirical research pertaining to national culture and American identity provide a foundation of knowledge addressing the concept of study-abroad and national identity relevant to this research. Two specific areas are discussed, they are: (a) providing a foundation for national identity, and (b) examples of the impact of study-abroad on national identity.

*Providing a foundation for national identity.* Although the idea of national identity is contested, the following research and theory provide examples of existing research and knowledge of the topic. Robert Rosen, Patricia Digh, Marshall Singer and Carl Philips' (2000) model depicting *The Cultures of Twenty-First-Century* show that national culture comprises history, geography, religion, politics, economics, and psychology; furthermore, to understand the national culture of any given country, it is necessary to understand each of these areas specific to every individual and unique country.

Delbert Miller (1991), creator of the Scale Battery of International Patterns and Norms, a tool for measuring and conducting comparative research of international patterns and norms, asserts that there are important norms and patterns within each national culture that when measured and compared internationally reveal international differences among national cultures and societies. Miller's (1991) scale of battery consists of 20 scales and includes measurement of patterns and norms such as: (a) social acceptance, (b) standards of personal and community health, (c) family

solidarity, (d) moral code and definitions of men and women, (e) belief in democratic political system, (f) standards of honesty and integrity of government officials, and (g) degree of nepotism in organizational life. Miller's (1991) scale has been used to compare two or more national cultures and has been applied to numerous problems of cross-cultural research, including "the impact of a foreign culture on the stranger" (p. 447).

Research that addresses the cultural norms and patterns specific to the American nation have begun to investigate such concepts as American identity. Jack Citrin (1990) in an effort to understand "who is an American" developed a survey comprising six descriptive qualities that address beliefs about the American nation and American identity. The six qualities are: (a) believing in god, (b) voting in elections, (c) speaking and writing English, (d) trying to get ahead on one's own efforts, (e) treating people of all races and backgrounds equally, and (f) speaking up for or defending the country. The six qualities describe an ethnocultural conception of American nationality and propose that there are certain qualities and beliefs that constitute American citizenship.

*Examples of the impact of study-abroad on national identity.* Previous research investigating the impact of study-abroad on identity development demonstrates that a study-abroad experience can influence and change a student's sense of self as an American. Studies investigating study-abroad and identity development show that through the experience of studying abroad, students begin to question their nationality and what it means to be an American (Gutzler, 2004; Juhasz & Walker, 1987; France & Rogers 2008; Dolby, 2007; Meyer-Lee & Savicki, 2009). Researcher Elaine Meyer-

Lee (Meyer-Lee, 2005) conducted a quantitative study that sought to measure students' sensitivity to cultural differences and American identity development. The study, using an American Identity Measure adapted from Jean Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, compared results collected from 59 study-abroad participants with a control group consisting of 56 participants at the home institution (Meyer-Lee, 2005). The study found the results difficult to quantify and questioned the validity of the adaptation but did note a significant increase in the scales measuring study-abroad participants' "Commitment and Affirmation", scales measuring student perception and understanding of self as American as well as attachment to American nationality (Meyer-Lee, 2005).

Dolby (2004 & 2007) conducted a study in which she investigated how students make meaning of their national American identity while outside of the United States. The research investigated how a study-abroad experience shapes students' perceptions of their national identity. Dolby (2004) defines national identity as it relates to Americans, as "that of being an American" (p. 163), and explains that the concept of national identity is continuously changing and morphing as it responds to and is reflected back by the culture, the people that make up the culture, and also the "other" inhabitants of the world that are both observers and authors of American culture. The investigation consisted of a collective case study in which a group of students (all American citizens or residents) enrolled at a large research university in the United States were sampled. All participants studied abroad in Australia during the spring of 2001. They were interviewed in person twice, before and after their abroad experience, and e-mailed a questionnaire asking them to reflect on their experiences

midway through their stay in Australia. Students were asked to reflect on “their study-abroad experiences, what they had learned about themselves as Americans, what they had learned about the nation where they had lived, and if and how their perspectives on the world had changed as a result of studying abroad” (Dolby, 2007, p. 147).

In summarizing the findings, Dolby (2004) explains the ways in which the American students in the study negotiated their national identities. Dolby (2004) states that students’ identities shift from passive to active identities during their study-abroad experience, “they become cognizant that others, outside the United States, are also authors— people who actively construct, form and influence— of America” (p. 152). Furthermore, they adopted a post-national identity, one that is both simultaneously local and global. Dolby (2007) found that all students “began to ask critical questions about their relationship to [the American] nation, the value and place of patriotism, and the geopolitical realities of the world” (p. 152).

While Dolby’s (2004 & 2007) research begins to investigate the ways in which study-abroad produces identities, further research is needed to continue to develop awareness and understanding and also to stimulate further discussion around this topic. Furthermore, while the findings presented by Dolby (2004 & 2007) regarding study-abroad and national identity are profound and stimulating, the parameters were narrowly defined and must be expanded upon in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. For example, all participants investigated in the previous study were enrolled in study-abroad programs restricted to one region of the world— more specifically, to one country— Australia. Australia is often

described as a developed or high-income level economy (World Bank, n.d.) with English as the official and dominant language. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic, research must expand to include an investigation of programs in various regions of the world, developing countries as well as developed, and non-English speaking countries.

In the fall of 2008 and following the commencement of data collection for this thesis, an additional study investigating the impact of study-abroad and national identity emerged. Researchers Hollis France and Kaylee Rogers (2008) conducted a collective case study that attempted to expand on Dolby's (2004 & 2007) research by investigating students that studied abroad in Havana, Cuba during the Spring of 2007. France and Rogers (2008) chose the study-abroad destination of Cuba because it "provides a different kind of experience for students in that it is a Spanish-speaking, developing country which continues to embrace communism" (p. 13). Additionally, France and Rogers (2008) stated that the oppositional context, historical background, geographical proximity, and political influence of the United States and Cuba further contributed to a unique study-abroad experience influential to national identity development.

France and Roger (2008) found that many participants prior to departure were confronted with the oppositional relationship between the United States and Cuba and described an increased awareness of privilege and opportunity afforded them as they were granted legal travel to Cuba; furthermore, participants began to encounter Cuba as a developing country and vocalized perceptions of what it was like to "be traveling to a third world country" (p. 16). Data collected during and post the study-abroad



experience revealed that students encountered Cuban perceptions of American identity as well as perceptions of the “other” that provided participants with an alternate lens not only “to view their government through, but their roles as American as well” (France & Rogers, p. 20). France and Rogers (2008) concluded that through this alternate lens, participants began to renegotiate their American identity and define a “new American self”(p. 24) with a post-national conception of citizenship. Participants, throughout their time abroad, began to reject the sense of “otherness” and “consider the allegiance that they must pay the global world, while simultaneously embracing national membership” (France & Rogers, p. 24).

Research shows that both quantitative and qualitative methods have been employed to explore study-abroad and American national identity. Dolby (2004 & 2007) and France and Roger (2008) chose a qualitative and interpretive approach to collect data through the process of collective interviewing. This present study further contributes to the current body of research regarding study-abroad and national identity development through a phenomenological approach investigating the student experience in four developing and non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, through the exploration of students’ lived experiences, this study seeks to identify and better understand the specific experiences that encourage national identity development, so as to more accurately describe personal growth outcomes.

#### *Summary of Literature Review*

The theoretical and empirical literature presented in this review of the literature provides a general overview of the research pertaining to current learning outcomes of the study-abroad experience and discusses the common effects a study-abroad

experience has on students participating in international education programs.

Additionally, it demonstrates that experience and involvement impact development, that there are multiple dimensions of identity that are influenced by social, cultural, and situational and experiential changes. Furthermore, the literature reviewed here explores how individuals develop and interact with their cultural identity. Finally, it provides a foundation for the concept of national identity through the discussion of national culture and American identity, and provides review of significant and recent research describing the impact of international educational experiences on national identity development. The review of literature presents the knowledge base upon which this study is built and informs the chosen methodology for this research.

The following chapter describes the methodology chosen for this present research. It reviews the purpose of this study, presents my perspective as a researcher, describes the methods for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis, and addresses personal limitations pertaining to the research methodology.

## Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology chosen for this research project including (a) the purpose of study, (b) my perspective as a researcher, (c) methods for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis; and (d) personal limitations pertaining to the research methodology.

### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of this study is to more fully understand the impact of study-abroad programs on U.S. American students' national identity. This study expands upon a previous and related study (Dolby, 2007) and includes perspectives of U.S. American students that traveled to developed and non-English speaking countries (see Appendix A for complete list of eligible countries). It does so by exploring the research question: what is the impact of a study-abroad experience on a U.S. American college student's sense of national identity? Sub-questions include: (a) How is participant awareness or understanding of themselves as a U.S. American changed or impacted while abroad? (b) What experiences, if any, impact participant awareness of their U.S. American culture and identity? and, (c) How do participants relate or understand their U.S. American identity to the U.S. American nation as a whole?

### *My Perspective as a Researcher*

I approached this research with the intent to study the relationship between study-abroad and student identity development and to increase understanding of the impact a study-abroad experience has on a students' sense of national identity. Specifically, I wanted to investigate the lived experience of each participant and how each described, interpreted, and understood his or her study-abroad experience.

When I began, I proposed to use a collective case study research design. That design provides insight into a specific issue by looking at several cases and allows for in-depth analysis of each student (each seen as a separate and unique case). When each case is described and compared to other cases it provides insight into the issue of study-abroad and national identity development (Creswell, 2008).

What seemed appropriate about this approach is that it acknowledges that individual participants will interpret their (in this case, study-abroad) experience differently and that each offers a unique perspective. Furthermore, the case study research design allows the researcher to analyze the perspective and experience of each individual participant as a part of a cohesive whole, enabling clearer understanding of the topic to be developed and underlying themes to be identified.

After meeting with my thesis committee however, I realized that because the focus in this approach is to understand the larger *phenomenon* of each case as it relates to the whole study and because it requires the researcher to interpret and describe the experiences presented in each case, the individual voice of each participant and their perspective might be lost. For this reason, I subsequently adopted a phenomenological research design.

In a phenomenological study, the researcher “seeks to understand the deep meaning of an individual’s experiences and how he or she articulates these experiences” (Rosman & Rallis, 1998, p. 72). The focus in this design is to understand the essence of a lived experience by researching in depth the meaning of a particular aspect of an experience. As this study seeks to understand an individual student’s sense of identity as it relates to their own ideas of American culture, I determined that

a phenomenological research design would enable me to achieve a more complete understanding of the student's lived experiences as they relate to this topic.

### *Methods*

This methods section discusses the (a) setting, (b) participant recruitment, (c) participants, (d) data collection, and (e) data analysis as each relates to this thesis study. This study was approved (July 21, 2008) by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Oregon State University (see Appendix B for IRB approval letters).

*Setting.* This research was conducted at a large, public, land grant university in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States, herein referred to by a pseudonym: *Global Pacific University (GPU)*. While I briefly considered conducting my research at several universities, I concluded that reaching a deeper understanding of the lived experience of students would increase if I limited my study to one site. I also thought that this would decrease influential variables and increase the likelihood of identifying key themes and subjects.

Global Pacific University was selected because it facilitates a wide range of mid-length study-abroad programs in various countries around the world and has a relatively large target population. It sends roughly 500 students abroad each year and has programs in over 30 developing and non-English speaking countries (see Appendix A for complete list of eligible countries).

The final factor used to determine this site was access. I chose to limit my search to the Pacific Northwest because of my research budget and ability to travel for recruiting and collecting data. Furthermore, in selecting a site I considered my

knowledge of campuses and programs and also my ability to make contact with professionals who might assist me with recruiting participants.

*Participant recruitment.* As this study seeks to expand upon a previous and related study (Dolby, 2007), criteria for selecting participants was specific and narrow. Participants in this study were students who chose to study abroad in a developing and non-English speaking country (see Appendix A for complete list of eligible countries) during either the spring or summer of 2008. Furthermore, because this study seeks to understand the impact of a study-abroad experience on a U.S. American students' sense of national identity, only permanent residents or American citizens were chosen as participants.

All four participants in this study were enrolled full-time in Global Pacific University and three of the four participants participated in mid-length study-abroad programs facilitated by this university. Mid-length programs are defined as being one semester or one to two quarters in duration (IIE, 2007a). The fourth participant participated in a long-term study-abroad program. A long-term program is defined as being either a complete academic year or one calendar year abroad (IIE, 2007a). While it was my intent to recruit and select only participants that had completed mid-length study-abroad programs, it was discovered only after the commencement of the interview process that this participant had chosen to extend his study-abroad experience by one quarter, for a total of three quarters (an entire academic year) abroad.

I briefly considered narrowing the study further to include only participants who enrolled in and completed either the same or an equivalent study-abroad program

in *one* region of the world (i.e. Latin American or Asia) or to a specific developing and non-English speaking country (i.e. Ecuador). However, it was determined that it would be difficult to recruit the desired number of participants given the limited duration of this thesis study. The participants in this study were enrolled in and completed four different study-abroad programs located in four different developing countries. A brief overview of each program is included in order to clarify differences and similarities between each program (see Table 1 for program details).

Table 1 Program Details

Program	Language	Program Administrator	Class Format	Academic Emphasis	Housing
Program 1	Chinese	State-wide university program	Primarily U.S and International Students	Chinese language and culture	Residence Hall
Program 2*	English and Mongolian	Third-party provider	Primarily U.S. Students	Mongolian culture and development	Host Family
Program 3	Spanish	State-wide university program	Host-country and international students	Varied	Host Family
Program 4	Russian	University sponsored program	Primarily U.S. and International Students	Liberal Studies, Russian language and culture	Residence Hall

\* Requires the completion of an independent study project

Each program has been assigned a number (1-4) in order to insure anonymity of participants; these programs will be referred to by their respective numbers. The program details in Table 1 (above) include the following five elements: (a) *language*, which describes the primary language in which classes are taught; (b) *program*

*administrator*, which describes the party that facilitates the study-abroad program; (c) *class format*, which describes the student population attending classes in the study-abroad program, (d) *academic emphasis*, which describes the areas of study available to participating students; and (e) *housing*, which describes the housing options available to participating students.

In order to recruit participants, I contacted faculty and staff members who worked in the department of international programs at Global Pacific University to forward information about my study to qualifying participants. An email briefly describing the study and outlining both the expectations of and benefits awarded to participants was forwarded by members of the department of International Programs to all students who studied abroad in developing and non-English speaking countries during the Spring 2008 quarter. As this study sought to recruit students in mid-length programs (one to two quarters in length), students also may have studied abroad in the quarter preceding or following the Spring 2008 quarter. This recruitment email included a survey (see Appendix C for recruitment materials) consisting of nine (seven closed-ended and two open-ended) questions that enabled me to determine the eligibility of participants and to collect their contact information.

It was my intent to recruit as few as four and as many as eight participants for this study. After the first mailing was delivered, I successfully recruited two participants. The email was resent at the beginning of each week for an additional two weeks and a third participant was recruited. At the beginning of the fourth week, study-abroad advisors were asked to forward the recruitment email to individual



students with whom they personally worked and that met the requirements of the study. Unfortunately, no additional participants were recruited at that time.

In effort to obtain at least four participants, I re-evaluated the parameters of the study and adjusted the requirements to also include students that studied abroad during the Summer 2008 quarter. I carefully considered how this might affect my findings, and further considered that because participants recruited from the Summer 2008 quarter had more recently returned from their time abroad, the recollection of their experiences, feelings, and emotions might be more vivid and clear than those presented by other participants. It was determined that while this might influence findings, the study had already introduced this variable by recruiting students who studied abroad for one or more quarters either preceding or following the Spring 2008 quarter.

After acquiring IRB approval (October 23, 2008) for the changes made to the sampling pool, revised recruitment materials were sent to qualified student candidates who studied abroad during the Summer 2008 quarter (see Appendix B for IRB approval letters). Two additional students demonstrated initial interest; however, only one committed to participating in the study as the other felt that their time and resources were too limited to do so. The second recruitment email was sent during week five of a 10-week quarter and I believe that this influenced student willingness and ability to participate in the study, as many were preoccupied with finals.

*Participants.* A total of four participants, three males and one female, were successfully recruited and participated in all required aspects of the study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to which herein they will be referred. A brief

description of each participant is provided and includes significant background information.

*“Jasper”* is a 21 year-old male who identifies as Hispanic. He is pursuing a degree in Business Administration with an option in International Business and Business Marketing and a minor in Chinese. He studied abroad during his junior year of college in Beijing, China for a single quarter in the spring of 2008. After completing his study-abroad program, he remained in Beijing for an additional two months in order to observe the 2008 Olympic Games and attend a few of the highlighted events. During his extended stay, Jasper rented an apartment and acquired a job teaching “American” English in a local language center.

Jasper was home-schooled until he entered the ninth grade at which point he was enrolled in public high school. He traveled across many of the western states during family vacations and traveled outside of the country twice prior to his study-abroad experience. Jasper first traveled abroad as a junior in high school during a two-week trip to Guadalajara, Mexico with his grandfather and brother in order to visit with relatives. As a senior in high school he traveled to Spain with the Multi-Culture club and participated in a planned 12-day tour of Madrid, Barcelona, and Saragossa.

*“Bella”* is 23 years old, a female, and a first-generation (i.e., neither parent graduated from college) transfer student who identifies as White and Native American. She is majoring in Crop and Soil Science with a minor in Music. She studied abroad during her senior year of college in Ulaanbatar, Mongolia for two quarters in the winter and spring of 2008. She then traveled around Asia for an additional two and half months. As part of her study-abroad program, Bella completed

an independent study project that required her to travel to Mongolia and conduct research prior to the commencement of classes. Bella's study-abroad and post-program travel experience was her first international experience and the longest period in which she had been apart from her family.

*“Edward”* is a 23 year-old male who identifies as White. He is majoring in Music with an option in Recording. He studied abroad during his senior year of college in Quito, Ecuador for a total of three quarters in the fall of 2007, and winter and spring of 2008. He was enrolled in two different institutions located in Quito so that he could attend classes at each of them. Prior to his study-abroad experience, Edward had traveled to Ecuador during the summer prior to his application to the Quito program. Edward explained that it was this experience that most inspired his pursuit to study-abroad in Ecuador and that it also ignited his passion for Latin American culture and the Spanish language.

*“Jacob”* is a 21 year-old male who identifies as White. He is majoring in Political Science and International Studies with minors in Business, Philosophy, and Environmental Law. He studied abroad during his senior year in college in Moscow, Russia for a single term in the summer of 2008. Following the completion of his study-abroad program, Jacob traveled throughout Eastern Europe for several weeks. Prior to his experience studying abroad in Russia, Jacob described several previous international travel experiences, including previous visits to Russia. Jacob explained that he was born in Russia and lived there until he was three when his family relocated to the United States. While he had returned to Russia to visit family prior to his study-abroad experience, he chose the program in Russia because he hoped this study-abroad

experience would enable him to reconnect with his heritage and develop his Russian language speaking skills.

*Data Collection.* Three methods for data collection were used in this study: (a) a series of pre-departure essays, (b) a one-on-one semi-structured interview, and (c) a focus group. Phenomenological data gathering calls for three iterative interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Researchers Rossman and Rallis (1998) explain:

The first asks the participant to narrate his or her personal life history relative to the topic; the focus is on past experiences up to the present. The second brings the narrative into the present, with a focus on specific details of participants' experiences of the topic. The third asks participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences- 'the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life' (p. 133).

The three essays that each participant wrote and submitted with their study-abroad application prior to their departure were collected and reviewed. These essays included an autobiographical sketch, a discussion of each participant's strengths and weaknesses, and the influence each believed their study-abroad experience would have on their future.

It was my hope and intention that these essays would provide me with the information to better understand each participant's lived experience prior to their departure and possibly to identify individual factors that might have influenced and shaped their personal experiences while abroad. Furthermore, I determined that these essays would enable me to verify perceived changes in student perceptions of themselves, of their lives, and of their experiences.

The primary method of data collection used in this study was a two-part semi-structured, one-on-one interview consisting of open-ended and closed-ended

questions. Part one of the interview consisted of eight open-ended questions and several probing questions (see Appendix D for interview questions). Probes, “sub-questions under each question that the researcher asks to elicit more information” (Creswell, 2008, p. 229), were used in moderation and varied from participant to participant depending on length and depth of each response.

Part two consisted of eight open and closed-ended questions designed to solicit information specific to each study-abroad program (i.e. name of host institution and location) as well as demographical information (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity) (see Appendix D for interview questions). The interview was recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were returned to each participant to review, revise, and make additions to given responses in order to insure credibility and soundness of findings. Two participants made revisions to some of their comments with the intention of clarifying thoughts and remarks.

The final data collection method was a focus group. As defined by Creswell (2008), a focus group “is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six” (p. 226). Choosing to use the format of a focus group, I was able to present preliminary findings and identified themes and ask participants to reflect on these findings as a group as well as to explore their meanings as they related to their own lived experiences.

*Data analysis procedures.* As recommended by Creswell (2008), I used thematic data analysis in order to identify shared patterns of thinking and behavior as each pertains to study abroad and national identity development. Data was reviewed, segmented, and coded for themes and descriptions. This entailed my reading each easy

and transcript several times. I employed a method referred to as *in vivo coding* to code each segment and develop and identify a list of narrowed themes. *In vivo* codes are actual words or phrases used by the participant that are identified and tagged. As I reviewed each transcript, I identified and tagged codes as they related to each of the earlier identified sub-questions relevant to this study, they were: (a) How is participant awareness or understanding of themselves as a U.S. American changed or impacted while abroad? (b) What experiences, if any, impact participant awareness of their U.S. American culture and identity? and, (c) How do participants relate or understand their U.S. American identity to the U.S. American nation as a whole?

After I had reviewed each transcript thoroughly and tagged them for codes, all codes were compiled and further reviewed. Slowly, I began to categorize codes according to type (e.g. experiences, cultural awareness, relationships, etc.) and I began to identify general themes. This was a long and difficult process that required a great deal of patience as I worked to group and regroup codes appropriately until I was able to identify themes that accurately described each student's lived experience.

After developing a list of preliminary themes, I began to organize identified themes under three different headings that each corresponded to one of the three sub-questions previously mentioned, these heading were entitled: (a) American self, (b) influential study-abroad experiences, and (c) American self and Nation. I discovered this process to be difficult, as it required me to first identify and then differentiate between several closely related themes. This coding process forced me to further develop and narrow my list of themes and enabled me to better understand and examine the phenomenon.

### *Personal Limitations*

When considering the high levels of interaction and engagement required for the methodology employed in this study, as well as my personal beliefs and potential biases concerning the value I place in international education experiences, I identified several factors for which I have had to continually acknowledge and adjust throughout the course of this study, and that might act as possible limitations.

The topic of study-abroad and national identity was initially interesting to me because of my personal study-abroad and international education experiences and the subsequent value I have placed in such experiences. Throughout my research, I have had to acknowledge and adjust for my personal beliefs that study-abroad is a beneficial and positive experience that greatly influence the lens through which individuals see themselves and their fellow Americans. When interacting and engaging with participants, I tried to separate my personal beliefs from those shared by participants. However, the nature of phenomenological research requires high levels of human interaction and engagement; it was therefore impossible to completely detach and isolate myself from the participants and their experiences.

### *Summary of Methodology*

This chapter provided a review of the methodology employed in this study and addressed my perspective as a researcher as well as the potential personal limitations I faced as a researcher. The chosen methodology informed the results and discussion presented in the chapters that follow.

## Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

As described in chapters 1 and 3, this study sought to better understand the impact of a study-abroad experience on a U. S. American college students' sense of national identity. It did so by exploring three sub-questions: (a) How is participant awareness or understanding of themselves as a U.S. American changed or impacted while abroad? (b) What experiences, if any, impact participant awareness of their U.S. American culture and identity? and (c) How do participants relate or understand their U.S. American identity to the U.S. American nation as a whole? This chapter presents the results of this study and discusses the findings as they relate to the research question.

It was my original intent to present the results of this study by clustering identified themes and sequencing them according to the three sub-questions as reviewed in Chapter 3. As I completed the coding process as developed by Creswell (2008), and described in chapter three of this thesis, I found it somewhat difficult, mainly because the manner in which the participants discussed their own American identity and its relationship to the American nation yielded themes that were closely interrelated. A close review of the findings demonstrated that participants indicated that they best understood and discussed their identity development when reflecting upon and discussing their experiences. For this reason, I have chosen to present themes grouped under three separate headings; each heading roughly corresponds to one of the three sub-questions above, although the order has been altered in order to better describe participants' understanding of their lived experience. The three theme headings are: (a) *influential study-abroad experiences*, which includes themes that



describe the specific types of experiences participants identified as having impacted their awareness of self as American while abroad; (b) *American self*, which includes themes that describe the impact of the study-abroad experience on participants' awareness and understanding of self as American; and (c) *American self and nation*, which includes themes that describe participant understanding of self in relationship to the American nation and culture. Each heading includes a presentation of results and a discussion of those results. Furthermore, each discussion is cumulative in nature and incorporates findings and reflections from previous headings. The themes in this chapter describe and discuss the study-abroad experiences of four participants. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym by which they will be referred. A brief summary of each participant's experience is provided following the discussion of the final theme, American self and nation.

#### *Influential study-abroad experiences*

Two themes were associated with influential study-abroad experiences: (a) forming interpersonal relationships, and (b) involvement in intercultural activities. The theme "forming interpersonal relationships" represents the formation of a close personal relationship with one individual from a culture other than American culture. Examples include relationships with individual host family members, friends, and fellow travelers. The second theme, "involvement in intercultural activities" describes involvement in any activity in which participants engaged in culture-specific activities typical of their host country. This theme has two significant sub-themes that describe how and when these participants became involved in such activities, they are: (a) extracurricular activities, and (b) pre and post-program experiences.

*Influential study-abroad experiences theme 1: Forming interpersonal relationships.* All study participants discussed the development of close interpersonal relationships with people from their host culture and the impact these relationships had on their study-abroad experience. Each also noted these relationships as their most memorable or most rewarding experience. Jacob commented, “(t)he one thing I don’t want to forget is, [. . .] the connections that you make with your culture, with the [host] culture and with other people.”

Jasper, similarly stated:

The one thing I don’t want to forget is the people that I met there, not necessarily the American students that I got really close to while I was there because that also was a great experience, but the Chinese people that I met while I was there. So I definitely met a lot of people, just brief conversations that I had. And there was I think two or three people that I met that I actually became pretty close to as friends. So I’m still keeping in touch with them a little bit, but it’s hard. There’s a time difference, and people get busy. But I definitely don’t want to lose that relationship that I had with them.

Two participants in particular spoke in length about the close relationships they developed with members of their host families and friends. Edward explained:

I made some really great friends, and like my family, I feel like I’m their son like I said, and that was definitely kind of unexpected. I kind of hoped that that would happen, but I really didn’t expect it to be the level that it is. Like I just love them so completely and it’s just awesome.

Furthermore, Edward explained that the friendships he formed enabled him to more quickly and easily integrate into the Ecuadorian culture:

When I was walking around, it was obvious that I was not from the culture and everything like that, but when I [was] with my friend group, I felt like I was totally integrated. Had all Ecuadorian friends towards the end. I lived with the Ecuadorians and I just felt like I was just part of the culture that they were my family and my community.

Bella too described the relationships she formed as the most rewarding aspect of her experience, she stated, “(a)nd the relationships were definitely the most rewarding thing I got out of this program.” Bella explained that it was through these relationships that she was able to truly connect with her host culture:

Relationships were, like, what gave me, I guess, the most real connection with – a real sense of the culture, not just the kinds of things that you, like, go and go, “Wow, that’s cool. Take a picture,” you know? Like, kinds of stuff that you can’t really see and find out just by, like, you know, reading a book or whatever, so.

The close interpersonal relationships described by each participant developed through both brief and ongoing interactions with individuals from the host culture. Three of the four participants have remained in touch and continue to maintain close relationships with the friends they made while abroad. Edward returned to Ecuador during his winter break to visit his host family and Ecuadorian friends. Jacob has plans to visit friends he met during post-program travel this coming summer, and Jasper has maintained his friendships through email and phone conversation.

*Influential study-abroad experiences theme 2: Involvement in intercultural activities.* Within this theme are two sub-themes, they are: (a) extracurricular activities, and (b) pre and post-program experiences. Two participants provided specific examples of involvement in extracurricular activities while the other two made general references to participation in different cultural or social events; furthermore, three of the four participants described and reflected on involvement in pre and post-program experiences. One or two examples of each of these types of activities are provided.

This first sub-theme addressed is that of involvement in *extracurricular activities*. All four participants talked about experiences resulting from involvement in activities outside of school. Bella became involved in throat-singing lessons. She explained that through this experience she learned a great deal about Mongolian culture and was forced to negotiate cultural differences. She described a situation that arose between her throat-singing instructor and her:

(h)e was giving me lessons, and I learned how to throat sing from him. He's a really awesome guy, but I think that he thought maybe we could be a little bit more than just, you know, disciple and teacher. And that was definitely not something that I was interested in, so. It didn't ruin our relationship, and we worked through it. I was – the cool thing about this relationship was that he would talk to me for hours on end, and I'd just try to understand what was happening, and maybe that's why it, like, happened like that 'cause he probably, like, divulged a lot of, like, meaningful things and I didn't even know. But – yeah, it, like, we ended up sort of being able to resolve it, and it, I guess, ended up being a pretty good experience after that. But it was really hard, and it came at the absolute worst time possible.

Jacob talked about joining a soccer team and how this enabled him to meet people, specifically to meet and socialize with other men:

With guys, like, there's kind of like there's a little bit anti-American feeling, so if guys, unless you find like a common ground, which is actually soccer tends to help if you play that or football or whatever with them.

The second sub-theme addressed is that of involvement in *pre and post-program experiences*. All four participants talked extensively about the impact pre and post-program experiences (i.e. independent study projects, independent travel and work experiences that occurred before commencement or after completion of the study-abroad program) had on their overall learning experiences. Jasper, after concluding his study-abroad program, elected to extend his stay and remain in China

for the 2008 Olympic Games. He described the processes of finding an apartment and job:

I started to get some friends together who were fluent in Chinese to help me; “hey, just asking around. Do you know where I can live? Is there any place that you know of that’s opening or somewhere I can get that’s cheap?” And so one of my friends who was a regular Chinese student helped me to find this place that was right new campus. And so I had one of my friends go with me and together we went and talked to the manager, and figured out the rent, and saw the apartment. She helped me initially fill out the paperwork and all of that kind of really difficult stuff that I probably couldn’t have done by myself. Once I got it all set up, I was able to wing it from there with the Chinese so it worked out pretty well. I stayed in the apartment all summer and I got a job through one of my friends teaching English at a private academy for children of middle school to high school age. So that ended up working out really well.

Furthermore, he talked about the differences between working and study-abroad and the process of transitioning between the two:

So it was a little bit harder and I got more tired, and I got a little bit sick at the beginning. But it was definitely more rewarding because I was getting paid as opposed to just learning, the experience. So the rewarding part was I was getting paid a lot, and the downside was it was a lot of hours and I wasn’t really able to practice my Chinese because the private academy was for Korean students. So all day I was speaking English and I wasn’t really working on my Chinese language which was what I had been doing up until that point. So I felt like I was kind of going backwards, but just the taxi ride there and back, and I would go out to eat – Everything else that I was doing, I was using Chinese because I no longer had my American friends who were there. They had all gone home; so it was just me. I was using Chinese outside of that speaking English, teaching English environment. So it was kind of half and half, the learning, not learning.

Jacob talked a great deal about his experiences as a traveler, explaining that he developed close and influential relationships with other travelers he met in post-program travel:

Just experiencing cultures. Like that really is the best thing, and like you can – like the things that you experience when you’re abroad like you can’t even imagine like here. Like when I was in Vienna – I traveled there after Russia, and it’s like 3:00 in the morning, and I’m standing there eating a kabob with a Turkish guy, an Australian guy, a Portuguese guy, and a Brazilian girl. Like how do you – like in Vienna. Like how do you even like imagine that? You can’t. It was just great, and then like the connections that you make. Like when you’re traveling, the connections you make are so much stronger than here.

Bella is the only participant who specifically addressed a pre-program experience. Prior to the commencement of her study-abroad program, Bella arrived in Mongolia to complete an independent study project. She described the experience of interacting with Mongolian culture and people through the aid of an interpreter and explained that this was both a difficult and unique experience.

*Discussion of influential study-abroad experiences.* The concept of involvement as presented in theme two and its impact on student development has been documented in the literature review (see chapter 2). Several person-environment student development theories, theories that address student interaction with their environment and how the environment influences behavior (Evans et al., 1998), discuss the concept of involvement and the impact it has on student learning and development. Astin (1985), in his theory of *student involvement*, asserts that the “quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience” (p. 307) influence their student learning and personal development. Furthermore, that “such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institution personnel” (p. 307).

Astin's (1985) involvement theory has five basic postulates emphasizing the behavioral aspects of involvement. The first of the five postulates states that involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. The author clarifies that these "objects" may be either highly generalized (i.e., the student experience) or highly specific (i.e., preparing for a chemistry exam). The second postulate states that involvement is continuous regardless of the object; that is, different students manifest different degrees of involvement in any given object, and that the degree of involvement varies from object to object. The third postulate explains that involvement has both qualitative and quantitative features; that is, the extent of involvement can be measured both quantitatively (i.e., amount of time each student invests) and qualitatively (i.e., the quality or nature of the energy invested). The fourth postulate stipulates that the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any education program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement. Finally, the fifth postulate, as described by Astin (1985), is that "the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement" (p. 298).

The experiences described by participants in this study support the conclusion that involvement increases student learning and personal development. Involvement in extracurricular activities and pre and post-program experiences proved particularly influential to the participants in this study because they further encouraged the development and formation of close interpersonal relationships. Bella, when discussing her participation in throat singing lessons, described the impact her

involvement had on the relationship with her instructor and specifically referenced the amount of time and degree of personal effort she invested in this activity (i.e., quantity and quality). Jacob also described how both his post-program travel and his involvement on a soccer team enabled him to meet people and participate in social and cultural activities specific to his host country.

Astin's (1985) theory specifically discusses the concept of involvement as it relates to a campus environment and highlights student interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel as a form of involvement. A campus is defined as the "grounds and buildings of a university or college" (p.) While studying abroad, the concept of a campus is redefined and often widened beyond that of the physical borders created by buildings and property lines to include the entire community wherein students are immersed. If this concept of a campus is embraced, it can be argued that all persons who possess knowledge of this community, its people, and its customs are in fact working members of the campus— in essence, its "faculty and staff." Participants in this study talked about how they learned a great deal regarding their host culture and its people and customs from the individuals with whom they established close interpersonal relationships while abroad. Bella specifically stated that it was through the relationships she formed that she was able to get a "real sense of the culture" and from which the majority of her learning came. Such conclusions further support Astin's (1985) theory of involvement with emphasis given to the different forms in which involvement can occur.

Additionally, when reviewing and coding the data for this study, I found it interesting that none of the participants referenced the courses in which they were



enrolled or the material they studied. When referring to learned and gained knowledge, all participants discussed events, activities, and or incidents that occurred “off-campus” or outside of their formal studies. Applying Astin’s (1985) theory of student involvement, this can be explained by understanding the time (i.e., quantity) and effort (i.e., quality) each participant put forth concerning off-campus learning. Each participant discussed the effort and time it took them each to negotiate a new culture and language. It was more often outside of the classroom that students were forced to negotiate language barriers and cultural differences, this often took a great deal of time and energy and in which involvement could not be avoided.

In general, the formation of close interpersonal relationships and the involvement in intercultural activities enabled participants to develop a greater understanding and awareness of their host culture and encouraged participants to become more invested in their own personal learning and development. These findings have significant implications on both the structure and facilitation of study-abroad programs. Effective study-abroad programs that provide greater opportunity for student learning and personal development must develop and implement program policy and practice that encourage and support student involvement.

#### *American self*

Three themes associated with American self were identified: (a) recognition of American self, (b) increased appreciation or curiosity for American self and culture, and (c) rejection and acceptance of American self. The theme “recognition of American self” describes the process demonstrated by participants as they began to acknowledge themselves as American. This process involved the identification of self

as American (i.e. identification of American cultural values and customs, language, mind-set, etc.). The theme “increased appreciation or curiosity for American self” describes reactions participants had as they learned about their host culture and engaged in critical comparative analysis of their own American culture. Finally, the theme “rejection and acceptance of American self” describes participant reaction toward their American self and addresses how each participant personally identifies themselves.

*American self theme 1: Recognition of self as American.* The recognition of self as American was central to each participant’s study-abroad experience; however, the manner in which each acknowledged *recognition* varied. Each of the four participants began to more deeply recognize themselves as American, two participants articulated that it was for the first time, however their sentiments regarding this acknowledgement varied for each individual and for some changed throughout the course of their study-abroad experience.

Bella explains that prior to her study-abroad experience she identified as an Oregonian and rarely thought of herself as American:

I think I see myself as more American than I ever have. Before I saw myself as Oregonian, and I still do, but [ . . . ] hearing all these adverse things about America and seeing that people don’t necessarily like us [ . . . ] made me think about this country, and that I’m proud to be an American. Like, I actually am, and I didn’t really think I was before, actually. And I didn’t really care, you know, one way or another.

Jacob, who had spent a great deal of personal time traveling abroad prior to his study-abroad experience, explained that despite how he personally identifies, he acknowledges that he *is* American:

I mean, everyone's a product of their environment, so I have to – like even if I'm alone, I can still be identified as an American just by the way I talk and react to things, the way I think and do like everyday activities, by, you know, what my value system is, but at the same time, I have empathy and sympathy for others.

Jasper, unlike other participants in this study found that he often had to defend and explain to the individuals with whom he interacted in China that he was in fact

American. He explains:

And every time I would talk to a Chinese person who would, "Oh you're foreign. Where are you from?" And I would say, "Oh, I'm from America." And they would be like, "No, no you're not." And they would just start laughing. And I would be like what do you mean no I'm not. Yeah, I'm from America. And they would be like, "No, no you're not." And they would not believe me. And I was like, "Why do you say I'm not from America?" They're like, "Oh because you have black hair and dark eyes."

Edward, similar to Bella, always defined himself according to his individual culture, but throughout the interview process began also to speak of himself, in reference to his experience in Ecuador, as an American. He realized that he also identifies as American and, through his study –abroad experience, began to recognize what that means to him. He stated:

And so, I guess, as an American, I feel like that I definitely still am an American, and I identify very strongly with that. But I feel that I at least understand really what that means, I guess, for the first time.

Edward described this understanding of what it means to "be an American" in relation to the opportunity and privilege afforded to Americans. He specifically spoke of the material wealth and stability of government in contrast to what he observed in Ecuador and expressed an appreciation for what he personally had been afforded as an American.

*American self theme 2: Increased appreciation and curiosity for American self and culture.* Three of the four participants in this study expressed an increased appreciation or curiosity for their American self and culture. Three of the four participants explained that through interactive experiences with and observations of their host culture, they began to identify aspects of their own culture, both personal and general, that they wanted to learn more about or for which they suddenly had a new appreciation.

Bella explained that as she began to learn more about Mongolian culture, specifically the Mongolian government, she began to identify aspects of American culture that she appreciated:

I know that our country has a lot of greed in it, but at the same time, I really appreciate some of the things that it has set itself up to guard against, like corruption. Corruption in the Mongolian government is really easy. It's really – it's just, you know, a snap away, and I know there is some in our government, but there's ways for anyone to do something about that.

Furthermore, Bella explained that by learning about Mongolian culture and making observations about her own culture, she developed a new sense of curiosity specifically for her American self:

They made me really see that I could be really curious about my culture, and that there's a lot of things that I didn't even realize were there. Like a really obvious one is Native American history – I don't know anything about it, and I might have up to, like, an eighth of Native American blood in me. And yeah, I have no clue.

Edward explained that through multiple conversations with Ecuadorians with whom he had developed close relationships throughout his time abroad, he was able to gain awareness of the multiple perspectives, both positive and negative, that

Ecuadorians held of American people and culture. Edward described how these reactions made him reexamine his own culture and identify aspects of it for which he was appreciative:

We're very functional, very efficient. We get things done. Everything is very organized. Just that we have these systems that actually function. Our governments aren't terribly corrupt, and there's just you really – I think you need to leave the culture to be able to stop taking those things for granted and to really see that there's things about – like it's just so amazing how all the opportunities that we have that we live here. There's no way that you could say that this is a bad thing for what we have.

Furthermore, Edward explained that he began to recognize how he personally has benefited from the “American” opportunities of which he recently became more aware:

It's sad that the rest of the world doesn't have the same opportunities, but it's great that we have – like if I – coming from my socialist background, if I was born in Ecuadorian culture, there's no way that I would have been able to go to college, no way. And now I have a degree and I haven't had to pay for any of it so far. So it's just – that's an amazing opportunity.

Jasper, talked a lot about the adjusting to a communist government system and the impact he felt it had on daily Chinese life. He specifically discussed his observations of the Chinese governments' reaction to protests in Tibet:

And it was kind of a scary thought at some point when they were having problems with Tibet, and some people were protesting. And it was just really scary because at some point it was hushed, very quickly and very fastly. And they would shut down websites that had news reportings about it. And all these different things were happening that the government had total control over. And I felt like whoa – this total invasion of privacy kind of thing. And it just felt weird to be like yeah, they can totally shut down your email account if they wanted to. They had control over the internet. They had control over all the TV stations, what was being reported, and what people knew.

Jasper explained that both he and his fellow American classmates discussed the Chinese governments' reaction to the protests in Tibet with Chinese friends and locals in the community, but became frustrated by their lack of concern for their apparent violation of privacy and belief in change. He stated:

For me, there's always possibilities for everything. And for them it's just no, this is the way it is and it just wouldn't change. And so I wasn't sure if that had anything to do with the fact that China is a communist country. And I got a really great understanding of what it is or what it's like to be in a communist country. I don't think I really understood it before I went there and I saw how people live, and how the government dictates to people what the values are of the country in general kind of thing. So it's like these are the generally accepted values and cultural things that we do here, and if you're not with that then you're in trouble.

*American self theme 3: Rejection and acceptance of American self.* While I found that all four participants in this study began to recognize or acknowledge themselves as American, they did not necessarily embrace their American self or identity. Two participants in particular clarified a distinction between these two concepts. For example, while Jacob recognized that he was American byproduct of his environment, he did not identify as American:

Americans – it's hard, because my personal beliefs, it's not just because I've traveled. My personal beliefs also make it hard for me to identify as American, because I'm just very progressive. America in general is not as a population, so it's hard for me to identify with that, but maybe I'm progressive because I've traveled so much, so I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm progressive that I travel or vice versa. I don't know, but, yeah, I don't think Americans are bad people.

Additionally, Jacob spoke openly about his beliefs towards American culture and people, and expressed that he was often embarrassed by Americans abroad and tried to distance himself from American culture and people:

Well, American culture, you definitely become more embarrassed. You try to – you try to act as less American as possible when you’re abroad, one just to not stick out as American, because there is a little bit of discrimination, you know, just a little bit when you’re abroad, and two, just because like if you’ve ever been abroad and you see how other Americans act, it’s just – they’re very loud. Like in Russia, you don’t yell. Like if like if people are walking around the quad and you see someone across, like you’ll just yell. Like people don’t do that in Russia.

Edward talked about American influence on Ecuadorian culture and the degree to which American culture and American values have been adopted in Ecuador:

It’s really interesting because in Ecuador right now it’s becoming even, like there’s a lot of American influence in – every year, it becomes more and more Americanized, and there’s a lot of people that live – like I feel like I would say they’re more American than I am just in kind of the things that I see, our culture, kind of values and just kind of the general values that our culture has that they really respond to that and they really like it and just try to associate themselves with that.

Edward specifically addressed the concept of materialism in Ecuador and his disassociation with America’s concept of material wealth. When describing Ecuadorians, he stated, “[t]hey really – they like to have nice things. They really identify with the materials kind of values, and I say they’re more American than I am because I don’t really identify with those values.”

*Discussion of American self themes.* In general, the themes presented in this section are closely tied to the themes presented in the first section; that is, all participants explained that through the forming of close interpersonal relationships and involvement in intercultural activities they were able to observe, experience, and learn about the culture (i.e., language, government, politics, social customs and behaviors, etc.) of their individual host country. The themes discussed in this section demonstrate that through the process of learning about their host culture participants became

curious about their own culture and began to critically analyze and reflect upon aspects of their individual and American identity.

The three themes discussed in this section are complex and appear to be closely interrelated. The results presented suggest that the participants in this study first began to recognize themselves as American during their study-abroad experiences; and in doing so, were able to identify aspects of their American culture that they appreciated and or disliked, and then began to reject and or accept aspects their American selves. These findings are supported by and can be better explained through application of Jones and McEwen's (2000) conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2) of this study, this conceptual identity model is a fluid and dynamic model that address the multiple dimensions of identity (not multiple identities) and illustrates the ongoing construction of identity and the influence of changing contexts on the experience of identity development.

The conceptual model of identity (Jones and McEwen, 2000), places at the center of this model a core identity or sense of self (i.e., 'the inner' or 'inside self' often described as the personal attributes or characteristics of an individual's personal identity) and can be contrasted with the outside self (i.e., the facts or aspects of identity that are considered less meaningful than the aspects of the core identity). The "outside self" comprises multiple dimensions and includes generally categorized aspects of identity such as gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and social class. Each dimension of identity is said to move freely along circular intersecting paths surrounding the core. Jones and McEwen (2000) explain that "[t]he circles



intersect with one another to demonstrate that no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions” (p. 409-410). For example, for each participant in this study, culture was an identity dimension to which each related; however, their individual ideas regarding culture, and what culture meant to them, was quickly connected with other dimensions. For example, Edward discussed culture as it related to his social class, and Bella talked about how her new perspective on American culture impacted her awareness of her own ethnicity.

Furthermore, the theory presented by Jones and McEwen (2000) explains that the “importance, or relative salience, of these identity dimensions is indicated by dots located on each of the identity dimension circles” (p. 410) and that their proximity to the core represents the particular salience of that identity dimension to that individual at that particular moment in time. “These dimensions become more or less salient as they interact with contextual influences such as family background, sociocultural conditions, current life experiences, and career decisions and life planning” (p. 410).

This concept of contextual influences works to explain the varying degree to which each participant in this study acknowledged recognition of self as American and also to describe individual reaction to their American self (i.e., rejection or acceptance). As each participant acknowledged recognition of self as American through discussion of culture, the identity dimension of culture will be discussed as a representation for recognition of self as American and individual reaction to American self. That all four participants in this study described that their study-abroad experience aided in recognition of self as American demonstrates that the lived experience of studying abroad altered their individual identities by influencing the

position of the dimension of culture (i.e., American self) to move either closer to or farther from the core; thus signifying that their American self became more or less salient as it interacted with other dimensions and with different contextual influences. For example, Jacob, while recognizing that he is and can be identified by others as American, his “personal beliefs” did not allow him to identify as American; furthermore, he explained that his experience of Americans in Russia combined with Russian anti-American sentiment encouraged him “to act less American.” His personal beliefs, experience of Americans in Russia, and Russian anti-American sentiment introduced different contextual influences that ultimately moved Jacob’s cultural dimension (i.e., American self) farther away from his core, signifying that his American self is less important to his personal identity. In other words, Jacob was “rejecting” his American identity. The concept of rejecting or accepting aspects of an individual’s identity has been previously explored in several cultural and identity development theories (Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Bennett, 1993; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Jackson, 2001; Kim, 2001).

Bella, Edward, and Jasper also described different contextual influences that moved the dimension of their American self closer to or farther from their core. For example, Bella talked about her American self in relation to her gender, ethnicity, and also her religion (i.e. White and Native American, Christian, female). Edward talked about the “opportunity” provided by American culture and referenced his socio-economic background or social class and how this influenced his view of American culture and his American self. Jasper discussed the Chinese perception of Americans

as White, blonde, and blue-eyed and contrasted this with his own ethnicity and experience of Americans as diverse and multi-cultural.

Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of identity as fluid and dynamic allows for a continual exploration of identity throughout time. Similarly, the passing of time greatly influenced each participant's perception of self as American. Edward, who remained in Ecuador for a total of three quarters, specifically addressed how his experience and recognition of self as American changed and continued to alter throughout the course of his study-abroad experience.

#### *American Self and Nation*

Three themes associated with American self and nation were identified, they are: (a) familiarity with American culture and people, (b) Americans in the global context- negotiating the individual, and (c) responsibility to share what was learned. The first theme, "familiarity with American culture and people," describes the process in which participants began to identify common American cultural values and attitudes and recognize a sense of familiarity and comfort exchanged automatically between fellow Americans. The theme "Americans in the global context- negotiating the individual" describes participants' increased awareness of the American presence in and influence on the culture of their host country as well as the many different cultures of the world; furthermore, it describes the process that each participant underwent as they began to negotiate who they were individually and to understand their role as an individual American. The final theme, "responsibility to share what was learned" describes participant reaction to their cumulative study-abroad experience with

attention given to specifically what they identified and learned about their American culture and people.

*American self and nation theme 1: Familiarity with American culture and people.* Each participant described a sense of familiarity or comfort with both American culture and people. This was most often acknowledged when participants reflected on their interactions with fellow Americans while abroad. For example, Bella explained that she rarely felt homesick and contributed this to a group of 11 American students that she befriended, she stated:

I was not homesick, and I think it might have been the combination of having this kind of core group that – we didn't do everything together, but I got to know everybody pretty well. And, like, we could identify with each other on things that, you know, we wouldn't be able to identify with [non-American] people.

Similar to Bella, both Jasper and Edward described a sense of familiarity or camaraderie they immediately felt upon meeting fellow Americans while abroad.

Jasper explained his immediate connection:

[A]s soon as I got there definitely, [I] immediately hooked up with all the Americans that were there; and we kind of had a closed niche group going that even though we weren't in the same classes necessarily learning Chinese, after class we always hung out together.

He stated, “[i]t had a lot to do with just being comfortable with other Americans.”

Edward, when explaining the sense of camaraderie he felt with fellow Americans, similarly stated:

[W]e all come from a very – from the same background. Like we all understand what this is and what happens here, how our culture is and how very different it is. So when you meet someone down there, then you kind of expected they understand what you're going through like the same kind of culture shock things like, “Isn't it crazy they have this here?” And it's totally different there.

Edward continued to describe how his relationship with fellow Americans changed as he became more integrated into the Ecuadorian culture:

So, I guess, when the culture was new and I was experimenting it but still kind of like an outsider, then I would see [fellow Americans] and be like, “Oh, look at these things, we can experience this together we’re both outsiders,” but when I felt more of an insider in Ecuadorian culture, then I understood those kinds of cultural things. And then I was more inside looking out.

Jacob, unlike the other participants, never felt a sense of camaraderie with Americans while abroad but commented on the sense of familiarity he felt with American culture, especially as he reflected on the comfort of returning home, he explained:

Well, I was most looking forward to finally being able to like understand, you know, things going on around me, just the conversations. [ . . . ] This is kind of my home, so I was looking forward to that, too. I wouldn’t say that I was unhappy, like, coming back, because even though I love traveling, there’s still that like one instance where you just want to be home. Just like you just want your own things just for a second, and then after a week I was like, “Crazy travel guy,” just like some familiarity, because, like, being nomadic is kind of hard.

He continued to explain what he recognized as familiar:

[T]o be able to like sit down and just relax without always having to like think of what’s going around you, because in another, especially if you’re not in an English-speaking country, like you always have to do that, because you can’t understand anything that people are saying, but here you can just sit down and just relax, you know. You know where everything is, and I think that’s the most important thing.

*American self and nation theme 2: Americans in the global context-negotiating the individual.* Throughout their study-abroad experience, each participant was confronted with the “outsider” (i.e. any person or groups of persons not affiliated with the American nation and its culture) perspective of American culture and people

as well as American influence on their host culture. Students began to contemplate America's global presence and began to negotiate themselves as a member of the American nation. In doing so, participants began to clarify their personal American values and customs as well as identify their personal role and responsibility as an American.

For example, Jasper explained how his study-abroad experience influenced his perspective of Americans in the global context:

It has influenced how I see Americans because I know now how important we are as far as globally. I didn't realize how it seems that most everyone is looking at us from an outside perspective and kind of paying attention really closely to what we do. So it's just something that I don't think about.

He continued to explain how this newly acquired global perspective changed his personal actions and sense of responsibility:

It has changed the way that I act now thinking what I do other people are looking at outside in the global, international community. And so I just need to be careful about what I do. I don't want to send a bad message out there. So it just kind of makes me think more about how I act, especially if I'm going abroad how I act is gonna change someone's whole perspective about American and about Americans, and things like that. So it definitely makes you feel more conscientious about what you do and what you say.

For Edward, this theme emerged as he reflected on observations of American influence and presence in Ecuador and also on conversations he had with close friends and family members from his host country regarding American politics and government. He stated:

They'd be talking bad about our president. They'd be talking bad about something that we had done to them or how this decision was going to badly affect the Latinos that live in the United States or whatever. And, especially, from like personal stories when people talk about friends or

relatives or anything they have here, it's just like, "I'm sorry I come from this culture that has done so many horrible things to you." So I just really – made me feel really guilty and just terrible for it. For being a representation of our culture which is mainly seen in a negative light.

Edward continued to describe how he occasionally reacted to such comments and attempted to define what aspects of American culture he did and did not embrace:

I would try – usually if I heard people talking about the United States and they would say something that I felt was wrong or generalizing, often I would try to get involved and try to show them, "Hey, everyone's not like this. I'm here because there's many things that I reject from my own culture ". [. . .] Especially that we don't care about Latinos [and] that we just see them as immigrants who are stealing our jobs and all that kind of stuff. You're like, "Hey, I'm here because I actually really like your culture, and I want to learn more about you. I want to be able to go back and speak with Latino population in my culture to help them deal with their problems and figure out what we need to do to solve these issues." Every once in awhile like that.

Bella spoke a great deal about negotiating the outsiders' perception of American women while abroad. She described several incidents in which she was asked personal questions regarding her sexuality, she stated:

A lot of times, like, men would ask me things maybe based on what they thought an American woman was like. Like, you know, "Have you ever had sex with a Mongolian?" Like, "Kazakh penises are bigger than Mongolian penises," and, like, ridiculous stuff, and nothing was, like, too forceful. Nothing was ever forceful. They were mostly joking, and in this one case, he was serious but he would've never done anything that I didn't consent to.

After reviewing her transcripts, Bella clarified that after further reflection of her experiences she could not be sure that the apparent perception of women was specific to American women or to Western women in general. Furthermore, she explained that negotiating this perspective was uncomfortable because her own sexual identity was

quite different from the perception most people with whom she interacted had. She stated:

I don't like it because I'm not sexually active at all, so there's – I mean, I definitely think I'm in the minority as far as, you know, girls in America, so it's – in a way, I didn't, like – I couldn't understand it, you know? 'Cause what they get is the media and there's not, like [. . .] it's not broad enough, you know? So what they got was Hillary Clinton and, you know, kind of like, movie star figures, you know?

*American self and nation theme 3: Responsibility to share what was learned.*

Upon returning from their study-abroad experience, participants began to reflect on what they learned, specifically about American culture and people, and demonstrated a desire to communicate what it is they had learned about their fellow Americans and their own American culture. Participants provided specific examples of how they felt Americans should interact with each other and with the rest of the world. For example, Jasper explained how his study-abroad experience changed his personal interactions with fellow Americans and American culture and reflected on how he thought *all* Americans should interact:

So coming back I feel going around people I don't know, I'm not so scared. I'm not so reserved. I feel more open to just discussing life, my family. Like, "Hey, how is your family" kind of thing. I don't know you but we're people. We're in the same state, and the same country; we should at least be friendly with one another kind of thing.

Edward, talked a great deal about how his study-abroad experience enabled him to perceive America and the American people as privileged, he stated:

I guess I basically feel like I said that I feel that most people here [in the United States] who are born in this culture and have never experienced anything else don't really realize just how incredible it is. Just all the opportunities that are available and just how much wealth there is here. This material wealth is just unbelievable.



He continued to explain how this impacted his relationship with his brother and described his desire to share with him his realizations about American opportunity:

Just like sometimes, I just want to slap my little brother like, “Wake up.” Like there’s just – I don't know. My little brother plays a lot of video games, for example, and loves to complain about, “Oh, I wish I had these \$200.00 to buy this video game.” And I just want to shake him and be like, “You have no idea like you have an Xbox. Do you have any idea what that is? What percentage of people actually have the ability to own an Xbox and all that?”

Jacob, while acknowledging America as his home, openly discussed his frustration with American people:

This is gonna sound really bad, but as an aggregate, as a society, like we are pretty stupid. I was talking to like the Turkish fellow that I was hanging out with in Vienna, and he knew everything about Turkey, everything. Like it was amazing, and like we have 200 – I mean, okay, maybe like we first settled in like the 1600s, like Roanoke or whatever, but 400 years, tops, like of American history, and most people know nothing, and like it’s kind of like, yeah, our education system sucks, but it’s like people like are so ignorant.

He continued to explain that his study-abroad and travel experience enabled him to think more openly about other cultures and persons and described a responsibility of the United States and it’s people to do the same, he stated:

Just being more open-minded is really important. You start thinking more about other people and cultures. Like, for instance, the U.S. only gives .1 percent of its budget to international aid, which is ludicrous, and that should be changed.

He stated that more Americans should travel and or study-abroad explaining that this would encourage them to become more compassionate American and world citizens.

He declared that by learning about other cultures and people:

(y)ou start being more compassionate to other people and their problems, because you can actually see it. In America, we’re so disconnected from other people’s problems. Like if we can see it – I

don't think we're bad people. I just think that people in general, if they see something, they're more apt to help, but if they don't, then they might think someone else might do it. It's not a priority of theirs, and that's a problem, so if they actually go travel and they see how other people live and go about their routines every day, what they do at home might change and how they think.

*Discussion of American self and nation.* The three themes presented in this section, in combination with the themes discussed in previous sections, demonstrated a changed or altered sense of self or personal identity for the participants as a result of a study-abroad experience. The themes presented in this section specifically demonstrate *how* participants began to think of themselves as American in relation to their American culture and American people, and described a developed awareness of a national American culture through the recognition of shared cultural norms and patterns; that is, the familiarity described by all participants regarding a sense of camaraderie or comfort with either American people or culture.

Participants were confronted by the outsiders' perspective of the American culture and nation, and began to conceptualize the presence of a national American culture, its presence in the global world, its influence on their individual host country cultures, and also their own personal roles and responsibilities as a member of that American culture. The responsibility to share what was learned as discussed by all participants in this study, reflect concepts presented in Robert Rosen, Patricia Digh, Marshall Singer, and Carl Philips' (2000) fourth and most inner level of culture discussed in their Twenty-First-Century Model of culture. This fourth level is described as *leadership culture*.

There are four components of leadership culture, which are referred to as “global literacies.” These four global literacies are: (a) *personal literacy*, which involves understanding and valuing yourself; (b) *social literacy*, is about challenging or engaging others; (c) *business literacy*, is about focusing and mobilizing your organization, and; (d) *cultural literacy*, which is knowing about and leveraging cultural businesses (Rosen, et al., 2000). While this model was designed specifically to address leadership in the field of business, the concepts can be applied to the findings in this present study.

For example, each participant clearly expressed development in the areas of *personal* and *social* literacy. In reflecting on their individual American membership, participants began to clarify their own cultural values and customs and identify their personal role and responsibilities as Americans. Jasper, in particular, discussed how his newfound awareness of himself as American changed his personal actions and interactions with others while abroad. Jacob discussed his frustration with perceived American ignorance and limited knowledge of other cultures and provided specific suggestions for improving upon or further developing the American culture and people (i.e., improving poor education systems, recommending that all people travel or study-abroad, providing more international aid, etc.). Participants demonstrated a more developed sense of self-awareness and understanding of their own personal culture as well as that of the national American culture; that is, they that exhibited qualities associated with *personal literacy*.

Furthermore, participants expressed that they became inspired to share with members of their host culture and members of their American culture and family

newly learned concepts, ideas and observations made while abroad and communicated a determination to challenge others and themselves to alter they way the interacted with one another. Edward discussed this when referencing his relationship with his younger brother, and Jasper did likewise when reflecting on his interaction with Chinese community members regarding the Chinese government's control of media following the Tibetan protests. This engagement with members of different communities describes persons that are *socially* literate, "by communicating deeply, teaching and coaching, and transforming conflict into creative actions, socially literate leaders inspire others to actions and greatness" (Rosen et al., 2000, p. 50).

It cannot be determined that the participants in this study are, as a result of their study-abroad experience, leaders better prepared to successfully navigate the four levels of culture as described by Rosen et al. (2000). Each participant did, however, develop a new sense of self-awareness regarding the American culture, their involvement and role in that culture, and their desire to communicate to members of their community what they had learned. Furthermore, this newly found awareness and confidence greatly influenced their sense of self or personal identity as it relates specifically to their American membership. Additionally, this new sense of self or personal identity was in a state of continual change as each participant confronted observations they made about their host culture, themselves, and the American nation.

#### *Summary of Individual Participant Experience*

In order to provide a more complete presentation of findings, a brief discussion of each participant's study-abroad experience is provided. The discussion includes a presentation of the results in this present study as they pertain to the four participants,

and a summary of each participant's study-abroad program and experiences. The four participants are discussed in the following order: (a) Jasper, (b) Bella, (c) Edward, and (d) Jacob.

Jasper is a 21 year-old Hispanic male who studied abroad for a single quarter in Beijing, China during the spring of 2008. He extended his stay for an additional two months in order to observe the 2008 Olympic Games. Jasper talked about the Chinese friendships he formed and his observations of the Chinese culture. He specifically discussed observations he made and conversations he had with Chinese community members regarding the Chinese perception of Americans as “White and blue-eyed,” and also the communist system of Chinese government. These experiences caused him to reflect on both the diverse nature of American culture and the American democratic system as well as his individual role as an American. Jasper explained that his study-abroad experience influenced his perspective of Americans in the global context—stating that he now feels a greater responsibility towards and is more conscious of his actions as an American, especially while abroad. Additionally, Jasper has mentioned that he has continued to remain in touch with a few of the Chinese individuals with whom he formed close interpersonal friendships.

Bella is a 23 years-old White and Native American female who studied abroad in Ulaanbatar, Mongolia for two quarters in the winter and spring of 2008. She arrived prior to the commencement of her study-abroad program to begin an independent study project (i.e., a pre-program experience) and stayed abroad for an additional two and half months to travel throughout Mongolian and greater Asia. She explained that through involvement in intercultural activities such as throat singing lessons she

developed close interpersonal relationships that allowed her to engaged in deep conversations that better enabled her to learn about Mongolian culture and people. Furthermore, these experiences caused her to reflect on aspects of her own personal and American identity (i.e., female, Christian, etc.). Bella stated that her study-abroad experienced allowed her to acknowledge her American identity, appreciate aspects of her American culture, and begin to negotiate her role as American in the global community. Bella also described an increased sense of responsibility to her American community members and has made specific attempts to share with her community what she learned while abroad. Since returning to the United States, I have learned that Bella has continued to throat sing and has preformed at several local community events.

Edward is a 23 year-old White male. He studied abroad in Quito, Ecuador for a total of three quarters, a period longer than any of the other three participants in this study. He described that his understanding of himself as an individual and as an American changed continuously throughout his study-abroad experience. He specifically addressed his integration into the host culture and a feeling of developed membership or belonging to the Ecuadorian culture. Edward explained that while abroad he became more aware of the opportunity and privilege afforded to him as an American. Furthermore, that he was both appreciative of, and at times ashamed by this when confronting social, economic, and political differences between American and Ecuadorian culture. Additionally, Edward talked about the close interpersonal relationships he formed with his host family and friends. During the final stages of

data collection in the focus group, Edward mentioned that he was leaving to return to Ecuador to spend the Winter break with his Ecuadorian family and friends.

Jacob is a 21 year-old White male who studied abroad in Moscow, Russia for a single quarter in the summer of 2008. Following the completion of his study experience, he traveled throughout Eastern Europe for several weeks. Unlike any of the other three participants in this study, Jacob was born and lived in Russian until the age of three. He chose to study-abroad in Russia with intention of learning more about Russian culture and to further develop his Russian language skills. Jacob, while he acknowledged himself as an American, openly rejected his American identity. During the interview he spoke about the frustrations he had with American politics and the American social and educational systems. Furthermore, he talked about how this most recent study-abroad experience in combination with several previous travel experiences enabled him to think more openly about other cultures and people and encouraged more young people to have similar cross-cultural experiences. Jacob specifically mentioned several of the chance encounters he experienced during his travels and the friendships that developed as a result. During the interview process, Jacob mentioned that he would be returning to Eastern Europe this summer to visit a friend he made while traveling.

### *Summary of Results and Discussion*

This chapter presented the themes identified as a result of the coding process of this research. A total of eight themes were defined, and were organized, presented, and discussed under three separate headings: (a) influential study abroad experiences, (c) American self, and (c) American self and nation. The next chapter will conclude this

study and provide a review of the research problem and the methods employed in this study. It will also summarize the results and discuss their implications as well as provide recommendations for future research.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research study considered the impact that a study-abroad experience has on a students' sense of national identity. The final chapter of this thesis provides a brief review of the research problem and reviews the methods used in this study. The sections of the chapter summarize the results, discuss their implications, and provide recommendations for future research.

### *Summary of Study*

The purpose of this study was to more fully understand the impact of study-abroad programs on U.S. American students' national identity. This research expanded upon a previous and related study (Dolby, 2007) and included perspectives of U.S. American students that traveled to developed and non-English speaking countries (see Appendix A for a complete list of eligible countries). It did so by exploring the research question: What is the impact of a study-abroad experience on a U.S. American college student's sense of national identity? Sub-questions included: (a) How is participant awareness or understanding of themselves as a U.S. American changed or impacted while abroad? (b) What experiences, if any, impact participant awareness of their U.S. American culture and identity? and (c) How do participants relate or understand their U.S. American identity to the U.S. American nation as a whole?

As explained in chapter 3, this study sought to understand the lived experience of each participant and how each participant described, interpreted, and understood his or her study-abroad experience. In order to conduct this qualitative study, I employed a phenomenological research design. The focus of this design is to understand the

essence of a lived experience by researching the meaning of a particular aspect of an experience. Research was conducted at a large public university in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States and employed purposeful sampling methods to recruit students that participated in mid-length study-abroad programs located in developing and non-English speaking countries in the spring or summer of 2008.

Three methods for data collection were used in the study: (a) a series of pre-departure essays, (b) a one-on-one semi-structured interview, and (c) a focus group. Participants were asked to check the accuracy of data collected by reviewing interview transcriptions and by participating in the focus group. This process of member checking insured credibility and accuracy of the data.

Chapter four presented and discussed the findings of this study. Eight themes were identified and grouped under three headings: (a) influential study-abroad experiences, (b) American self, and (c) American self and nation. Each heading roughly corresponds to one of the three sub-questions explored in this present study, although their sequence was altered in order to better describe participants' understanding of their lived experience.

The first heading, *influential study-abroad experiences*, address the second of the three sub-questions explored in this present study and includes themes that describe the specific types of experiences participants identified as having impacted their awareness of self as American while abroad. Two themes were identified, they were: (a) forming interpersonal relationships, and (b) involvement in intercultural activities. A discussion of these themes noted that through the formation and development of close interpersonal relationships and involvement in intercultural

activities (i.e., extra curricular activities and pre and post-program experiences), participants began to critically analyze both their host culture and American culture.

The second heading, *American self*, addresses the first of the three sub-questions and includes themes that describe the impact of the study-abroad experience on participants' awareness and understanding of self as American. Three themes were identified, they are: (a) recognition of self as American, (b) increased appreciation or curiosity for American self and culture, and (c) rejection and acceptance of American self. Discussion of these themes demonstrated that through the process of comparative reflection, participants began to recognize themselves as American, and they attempted to define what that meant to them. Participants identified aspects of American culture for which they expressed increased appreciation, curiosity, or frustration. Furthermore, participants' sense of self as American became more or less salient as they interacted with the host culture and made comparisons to their own culture.

The third heading, *American self and nation*, addresses the final and third sub-question and includes themes that describes participant understanding of self in relationship to the American nation and culture. Three themes were identified, they are: (a) familiarity with American culture and people, (b) Americans in the global context— negotiating the individual, and (c) responsibility to share what was learned. Discussion of these themes showed that participants developed a new sense of self-awareness regarding their involvement and role in American culture, and their desire to communicate to members of their community what they learned. Furthermore, that they began to negotiate their role as an American in context of the global community.

*Implications for Practice*

Given the small sample size and the qualitative nature of this study, I do not purport to make broad generalizations about the impact of a study-abroad experience on national identity. The results presented in this research, however, provide international educators and student services professionals with valuable suggestions for practice. Identified themes suggest that experiences which encourage cross-cultural exchange while abroad can enable students to become more involved in their environment, to engage in critical analysis of their host culture, and to make informed observations about themselves and about their personal and American identity.

The findings demonstrate the importance of forming close interpersonal relationships and becoming involved in intercultural activities while abroad. Furthermore, they provide suggestions for how international educators might intervene in student study-abroad experiences to explore and further develop ways in which involvement and interaction with host culture is encouraged and promoted. International educators and student affairs professionals should seize the opportunity to consider new programs, events, and curricula that encourage students to explore and become involved in activities specific to the host culture. Furthermore, involvement in culture specific activities should go beyond that of study-abroad sponsored events, organized cultural excursions, and coursework to include programs that encourage students to identify and become involved in activities for which they have developed a particular interest, curiosity, or passion. For example, study-abroad programs might require students to complete an internship or practicum of their choice in conjunction with their studies.

Student development theory (Kolb as cited in Evans et al., 1998; Astin, 1984) demonstrates that the types of experiences that students have and their personal investment and interest in those experiences are critical to student development. Developing opportunities that encourage students to explore and to become involved in events, programs, and activities that occur outside of and in addition to the established curriculum will promote national identity development. Additionally, student development theory recognizes the role of the institution to provide and cultivate an environment in which involvement is welcome, encouraged, and supported (Strange & Banning, 2001). This suggests that international educators and student affairs professionals should also consider support services when introducing new program events and activities.

Additionally, the results presented in this study suggest that students continue to process and develop their own awareness of self as American and negotiate their individual role and responsibilities as an American upon return. Furthermore, that they seek ways to share what they have learned with others. Research (Brustein, 2007; Berg, 2007) acknowledges the importance of re-entry support but in my experience international educators and student affairs professionals have found the practicality of re-entry programs difficult to manage and promote. The results of this study provide specific suggestions (e.g., ways to become involved in local and global communities upon return, sharing insights and experiences with others, etc) for re-entry programs that might help students to further develop and articulate their identity. One such program may feature the organization of returnee conferences that bring returnees together from multiple institutions. Such conferences can provide students with

opportunities to share experiences with fellow study-abroad participants as well as the broader community, to stay connected to the international community through involvement with local and international organizations, and to investigate future international study, volunteer, and work opportunities.

### *Assumptions and Limitations*

The abbreviated time in which this study sought to conduct, collect, and analyze the research was an apparent limitation that influenced the methods chosen for this study, the participant recruitment process, and the number of participants recruited. First, only students enrolled at Global Pacific University (a single university located in the Northwestern region of the U.S.) were invited to participate in this study. Second, only one female participated in this study. The majority of study-abroad participants has been and continues to be female. In 2005/2006, 65.5% of study abroad students were female while 34.5% were male; this gender ratio has remained constant throughout the past several decades (IIE, 2007a). Lastly, all participants in this study were classified as seniors or super seniors (students that are in their fifth or sixth year at a university and who have been enrolled full-time). The majority of participants studying abroad today do so during their junior year; however, nowadays, more students are also studying abroad as freshman, sophomores, and also as graduate students (IIE, 2007a). It must be acknowledged that the restricted participant pool potentially limited data collected and results.

Additionally, the political and economic situation present in the United States during the time that the participants were abroad and when they were interviewed may have influenced student experience. The participants in this study were abroad during

and immediately following the Spring 2008 U.S. Presidential Primaries and they were interviewed during the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election. Each of the participants described incidents pertaining to these events. When analyzing interview data, I tried to acknowledge how such events may have influenced their international experience and perspectives and to adjust accordingly. I did so by asking participants to expand upon statements and provide additional examples and explanations when needed to further understand themes that emerged.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

As this study set out to investigate the experience of students participating in mid-length programs, it is recommended that future research explore the impact that programs of different lengths of study may have on a student's sense of national identity. As participation in and availability of short-term programs (i.e., eight weeks or less) continue to increase (IIE, 2007), future research should investigate specifically the impact of short-term study-abroad programs on national identity and explore the effects program length may have on identity development in general.

Results presented in this study suggest that future research should investigate the impact of study-abroad experiences on the sense of national identity of students of color. Identity development theory (Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Kim, 2001) demonstrates that students of color often experience their identity development differently and are confronted with aspects or dimensions of their identity much earlier than white students. As the field of international education is making an intentional effort to provide greater opportunity and promote greater participation of students of color in study-abroad (IIE, 2007b; Dervarics, 2008), it is

recommended that more research focus on understanding the impact of a study-abroad experience on students of color such that resources and support specific to their experience can be provided or developed.

Additionally, there are many student development theorists who assert that gender greatly influences learning patterns and identity development processes (Horst, 1995; Josselson, 1987). More gender-specific research regarding the impact of study-abroad on identity development is recommended. It may provide educators with a better understanding of how to promote programs and to determine what additional resources should be made available to male, female, and transgender students, before, during, and after the study-abroad experience.

Lastly, research exploring possible correlations between national identity development and leadership development should be explored. Research (Rosen et al., 2000) suggests that there are multiple layers of culture that are interconnected and may influence individual development as they experience each layer of culture. Rosen et al. name four layers of culture, they are: (a) world culture, (b) national culture, (c) business culture, and (d) leadership culture. Research exploring an individual's awareness of understanding of their national culture in relationship to leadership culture may provide educational professionals with greater understanding of the possible impact a study-abroad experience may have on leadership development.

### *Conclusion*

This thesis investigated the impact of a study-abroad experience on a student's sense of national identity. It provides insight into the lived experience of four unique and dynamic individuals who shared their perceived experiences as Americans while



studying abroad. Findings suggest that each participant in this study became more aware of himself or herself as American, and that this aspect of their identity (U.S. American national identity) became more or less salient through participation and involvement in a study-abroad program. It is hoped that results of this study provide international educators with valuable suggestions for effectively intervening in student study-abroad experiences both during and after the study-abroad program. Additionally, recommendations for future research as they pertain to the topic of study-abroad and national identity development were provided.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A: List of Eligible Countries

Country	Income Group	Language(s)
Argentina	Upper Middle Income	Spanish (official)
Belize	Upper Middle Income	English (official)
Bolivia	Lower Middle Income	Spanish, Quechua, Aymara (all official)
Brazil	Upper Middle Income	Portuguese (official)
Bulgaria	Upper Middle Income	Bulgarian (dominant, 85%)
Chile	Upper Middle Income	Spanish
China	Lower Middle Income	Standard Chinese
Costa Rica	Upper Middle Income	Spanish (official)
Croatia	Upper Middle Income	Croatian (96%)
Cuba	Lower Middle Income	Spanish
Dominican Republic	Lower Middle Income	Spanish
Ecuador	Lower Middle Income	Spanish (official)
Ethiopia*	Low Income	Amharic, Tigrigna, Orominga, Guaraginia, Somali, Ababic, English
Hungary	Upper Middle Income	Magyar (Hungarian, 94%)
Indonesia*	Lower Middle Income	Dahasa Indoesia (official), Egnlish, Dutch, Javanese, and more
Jordan*	Lower Middle Income	Arabic (official), English
Madagascar	Low Income	Malagasy and French (both official)
Mali	Low Income	French (official)
Mexico	Upper Middle Income	Spanish
Mongolia	Low Income	Mongolian
Morocco	Lower Middle Income	Arabic(official)
Nepal*	Low Income	Nepail (official 48%), english spoken by many in government and business
Nicaragua*	Lower Middle Income	Spanish (official, 98%), English and indigenous languages
Oman*	Upper Middle Income	Abrabic (official), English
Panama*	Upper Middle Income	Spanish (official), English 14%
Peru	Lower Middle Income	Spanish & Quechua (both official)
Poland	Upper Middle Income	Polish (dominant 98%)
Russia	Upper Middle Income	Russian
Senegal	Low Income	French (official)
South Africa*	Upper Middle Income	IsiZulu (23.8%), English (not official 8.2%)
Thailand*	Lower Middle Income	Thai, English (secondary language of the elite)
Tunisia	Lower Middle Income	Arabic (official)
Turkey	Upper Middle Income	Truekish (official)
Vietnam*	Low Income	Vietnamese (official), english (increasingly favored as a second language)

\* English recognized as spoken language (not dominant or official language)

Low Income: GNI of \$905 or less

Lower Middle Income: GNI of \$906 - \$3,596

Upper Middle Income: GNI of \$3,596 - \$11, 115

## Appendix B: IRB Letters of Approval



Institutional Review Board • Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance  
 Oregon State University, 312 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2140  
 Tel 541-737-4933 | Fax 541-737-3093 | <http://oregonstate.edu/research/osprc/humansubjects.htm>  
[IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)

**AMENDED INITIAL APPROVAL TO CORRECT EXPIRATION DATE**

TO: Tom Scheuermann  
 Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership

IRB #: 4017 – Study Abroad and National Identity (Student Researcher: Giustina M. Pelosi)

Level of Review: Expedited

Expiration Date: 7-20-09

Approved Number of Participants: 8

The referenced project was reviewed under the guidelines of Oregon State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has **approved** the:

(X) Initial Application      ( ) Continuing Review      ( ) Project Revision  
with a (if applicable): ( ) Waiver of documentation of Informed Consent      ( ) Waiver of Consent

A copy of this information will be provided to the full IRB committee.

- **CONSENT FORM:** All participants must receive the IRB-stamped informed consent document. If the consent is in a format that could not have stamp placement (i.e. web site language, email language, etc), then the language must be **exactly** as the IRB approved it.
- **PROJECT REVISION REQUEST:** Any changes to the approved protocol (e.g. protocol, informed consent form(s), testing instrument(s), research staff, recruitment material, or increase in the number of participants) must be submitted for approval before implementation.
- **ADVERSE EVENTS:** Must be reported within three days of occurrence. This includes any outcome that is not expected, routine and that result in bodily injury and/or psychological, emotional, or physical harm or stress.
- **CONTINUING REVIEW:** A courtesy notice will be sent to remind researchers to complete the continuing review form to renew this project, however – it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that continuing review occurs prior to the expiration date. Material must be submitted with adequate time for the office to process paperwork. If there is a lapse in approval, suspension of all activity including data analysis, will occur.
- **DEVIATION/EXCEPTIONS:** Any departure from the approved protocol must be reported within 10 business days of occurrence or when discovered.

Forms are available at: <http://oregonstate.edu/research/osprc/rc/humansubjects.htm>.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Human Protections Administrator at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu) or by phone at (541) 737-8008.

*Elisa Espinoza Fallows*

Date: 7-21-08

Elisa Espinoza Fallows  
 IRB Human Protections Administrator



## Appendix B: IRB Letters of Approval (continued)



Institutional Review Board • Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance  
 Oregon State University, 312 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2140  
 Tel 541-737-4933 | Fax 541-737-3093 | <http://oregonstate.edu/research/ospro/humansubjects.htm>  
[IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)

TO: Tom Scheuruemann  
 Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership

IRB #: 4017 – Study Abroad and National Identity (Student Researcher: Giustina Pelosi)

Level of Review: Expedited

Expiration Date: 7-20-09

Approved Number of Participants: 8

The referenced project was reviewed under the guidelines of Oregon State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has **approved** the:

Initial Application       Continuing Review       Project Revision dated 7-20-09  
*with a (if applicable):*  Waiver of documentation of Informed Consent       Waiver of Consent

A copy of this information will be provided to the full IRB committee.

- **CONSENT FORM:** All participants must receive the IRB-stamped informed consent document. If the consent is in a format that could not have stamp placement (i.e. web site language, email language, etc), then the language must be **exactly** as the IRB approved it.
- **PROJECT REVISION REQUEST:** Any changes to the approved protocol (e.g. protocol, informed consent form(s), testing instrument(s), research staff, recruitment material, or increase in the number of participants) must be submitted for approval before implementation.
- **ADVERSE EVENTS:** Must be reported within three days of occurrence. This includes any outcome that is not expected, routine and that result in bodily injury and/or psychological, emotional, or physical harm or stress.
- **CONTINUING REVIEW:** A courtesy notice will be sent to remind researchers to complete the continuing review form to renew this project, however – it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that continuing review occurs prior to the expiration date. Material must be submitted with adequate time for the office to process paperwork. If there is a lapse in approval, suspension of all activity including data analysis, will occur.
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Forms are available at: <http://oregonstate.edu/research/ospro/humansubjects.htm>.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Human Protections Administrator at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu) or by phone at (541) 737-8008.

Elisa Espinoza Fallows  
 IRB Human Protections Administrator

Date: 10-23-08

## Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

The recruitment materials for this study included two emails and a recruitment survey tool. A link in the first email directed candidates to a recruitment survey (included) designed to recruit participants that meet the requirements of the study, as described in the methodology (Chapter 3), and collect needed contact information. The second email was given to study-abroad advisors at Global Pacific University to distribute to study-abroad participants.

### *First Email: Participate in Study-Abroad Research*

**From:** Pelosi, Giustina  
**To:** Pelosi, Giustina  
**Subject:** Participate In Study-Abroad Research  
**Date:** Thursday, March 10, 2009 6:05:37 PM

---

Dear Study-Abroad Participant,

My name is Giustina Pelosi and I am a graduate student at Oregon State University. As part of my Master's degree program, I am beginning a research study (my thesis) looking at how a study abroad experience impacts a student's sense of identity. I recently learned that you have just completed or are currently finishing a term abroad and would like to invite you to participate in my study. This project would involve your participating in a one-on-one interview during the first few weeks of the Fall 2008 term to reflect upon and discuss your experiences abroad. Later that term, you would be invited to attend a focus group held sometime during the Fall 2008 term to hear about and provide feedback regarding my general research findings. A small cash incentive (\$20.00) will be given to all participants at the completion of the one-on-one interview and another (\$10.00) at the completion of the focus group.

If you think you may be interested in participating in my study, please click on the provided link and complete a brief survey. The survey is only 9 questions in length and should not take more than a minute or two to complete. Thank you for your time!

Link to survey below:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=M0d\\_2fs\\_2b7R5wmyddPlptMulg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=M0d_2fs_2b7R5wmyddPlptMulg_3d_3d)

Sincerely,

Giustina Pelosi  
 OSU Graduate Student  
 College Student Services Administration (CSSA)

██████████  
 ████████████████████

*Appendix C: Recruitment Materials (continued)*

*Recruitment Survey Tool*

## Recruitment Survey

### 1. Getting Started (1 of 3 pages)

Please take a few minutes and let me know if you are interested in participating in my study. The information you include on this survey will not be shared with anyone other than myself and my major professor. If you should choose not to participate in the study, all information will be disposed of confidentially. Thank you for taking the time to help me with my research! (\*indicates a required answer)

**\* 1. Did you study abroad during the Spring 2008 or Summer 2008 quarter?**

Yes  
 No

**\* 2. Were you enrolled as a full-time student (12 or more credits) while abroad?**

Yes  
 No

**\* 3. In which country did you study?**

Country Name

Please select a country.

Other (please specify)

**\* 4. Will you be returning to the (1) Campus for the Fall 2008 quarter?**

Yes  
 No

## Appendix C: Recruitment Materials (continued)

**Recruitment Survey****2. Next Steps (2 of 3 pages)**

The following information will help me to meet the requirements of my study. Your honesty and openness in responding to these questions are greatly appreciated. Any information you choose to share will remain confidential and will only be viewed by myself and by my major professor.

**\* 5. Are you 18 years of age or older?**

Yes

No

**\* 6. Are you a citizen or permanent resident of the United States of America?**

Yes

No

**\* 7. If selected, would you be willing to share the essays that you completed and submitted with your study abroad application with the researchers for the purpose of this study? (This would require that you obtain and submit to me copies of your essays. If you do not presently have copies, they can be obtained from the OSU study-abroad office).**

Yes

No

## Appendix C: Recruitment Materials (continued)

**Recruitment Survey****3. Last Step (3 of 3 pages)**

You are almost done! Thank you for completing this survey.

**\* 8. Are you interested in participating in my study?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe, I would like more information.

**9. If you marked "Yes" or "Maybe" in the question above, please provide me with the following contact information.**

Last Name, First Name   
(Doe, Jane)

Email:

Phone Number:

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials (continued)

**Recruitment Survey**

**4. THANK YOU!**

Thank you very much for completing this survey. If you have indicated that you are interested in participating in this study and have provided contact information, I will be contacting you shortly. If you should have any further questions, please contact me at [redacted] or at [redacted].

Again, thank you and have a wonderful day.

*Second Email:FW: Participate in Study-Abroad Research*

**From:** Pelosi, Giustina  
**To:** Pelosi, Giustina,  
**Subject:** Did you see this?  
**Date:** Thursday, March 19, 2009 6:12:32 PM

Hi [INSERT STUDENT],

Did you see this? There is a great opportunity to participate in a paid research study being conducted by a graduate student here at OSU. I believe you would find this experience interesting and enjoyable. Please take a look at the included email and see what you think.

Thanks,  
 [INSERT STUDY-ABROAD ADVISOR NAME]

---

**From:** Pelosi, Giustina  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 19, 2009 6:06 PM  
**To:** Pelosi, Giustina  
**Subject:** Participate in Study-Abroad Research

Dear Study-Abroad Participant,

My name is Giustina Pelosi and I am a graduate student at Oregon State University. As part of my Master's degree program, I am beginning a research study (my thesis) looking at how a study-abroad experience impacts a student's sense of identity. I recently learned that you have just completed or are currently finishing a term abroad and would like to invite you to participate in my study. This project would involve your participating in a one-on-one interview during the first few weeks of the Fall 2008 term to reflect upon and discuss your experiences abroad. Later that term, you would be invited to attend a focus group held sometime during the Fall 2008 term to hear about and provide feedback regarding my general research findings. A small cash incentive (\$20.00) will be given to all participants at the completion of the one-on-one interview and another (\$10.00) at the completion of the focus group.

If you think you may be interested in participating in my study, please click on the provided link and complete a brief survey. The survey is only 9 questions in length and should not take more than a minute or two to complete. Thank you for your time!

Link to survey below:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=N0d\\_2fs\\_2b7R5wmyddPip:Mulg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=N0d_2fs_2b7R5wmyddPip:Mulg_3d_3d)

Sincerely,

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol

## Interview Protocol

Project: Study Abroad & National Identity

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Giustina M. Pelosi

Interviewee:

[Describe the project and tell interviewee about the purpose of the study, individuals and sources of data being collected, what will be done with the data to protect the confidentiality of the interview, and how long the interview will take.]

[Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form.]

[Begin recording, turn on the tape recorder.]

1. What was your experience in (country) like?
  - Did you enjoy it? Why?
  - What did you find most challenging/frustrating?
    - Did you have communication challenges? (Verbal or non-verbal)
    - Did you become homesick? What did you miss and why?
    - Can you describe a situation where you felt particularly frustrated/homesick?
      - What happened in the situation?
      - What was said?
      - What did you see?
      - What did you feel at the time?
  - What was most rewarding or surprising about your experience?
  - What did you observe or notice about your host country that was different from/similar to America?
    - What was transportation like?
    - What was it like to buy groceries? Where did you buy them?
    - What was socializing like?
    - What was it like interacting with your host family?
    - What was your school experience like?
2. Were you able to identify or recognize other Americans while abroad?
  - How were you able to do so?
  - Was it a positive or negative experience?
  - Did you feel a connection or sense of camaraderie?
3. Were you ever identified/recognized by others as being an American? If so, describe these incidents/events.
  - How were you perceived?
  - Do you feel like this was an accurate perception or where they based on stereotypes?
  - How did these experiences make you feel?



## Appendix D: Interview Protocol (continued)

## Interview Protocol

- What positive or negative feelings do you have regarding these incidents/events?
4. Did you see the United States represented in your host culture in anyway?
    - Did you hear or partake in conversations that referenced the United States (e.g. politics, music, history, the war, etc.)?
    - Did you see any visual representations (e.g. American flags or other paraphernalia, American restaurants or TV advertisements)?
    - What did you feel when you heard or saw representations of home?
  5. What aspects of your culture did you recognize and/or become more aware of while abroad?
    - Did you notice differences in values and customs? (e.g. time and scheduling, discussion topics, depth of conversation, personal space, money)
    - How did this make you feel about yourself as an American and about your country?
    - Do you feel that this was a positive or negative experience? Why?
  6. Has your experience abroad influenced or changed who you are as an American? How?
    - Prompts (complete the following sentence):
      - I know I have changed as a result of my experience because. . .
      - The one thing I have learned about myself is . . . .
      - Now that I am home, I worry most about . . . .
      - One thing I don't want to forget about my experience is . . . .
    - How have your experiences influenced how you see or view your fellow Americans?
      - Have your perceptions of friends and family changed? In what ways?
    - How have your experiences influenced how you see or understand American culture?
      - What were you most/least looking forward to upon your return to the United States?
      - What values, beliefs, and behaviors did you learn from your host country that you would like to try and maintain now that you are back in the United States?
      - What else have you realized about your culture now that you have returned to the United States?
  7. Do you have anything else you would like to add or tell me about your experience?

[End recording and turn off tape recorder.]

[Thank the participant (interviewee) for their cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure them of the confidentiality of their responses. Discuss availability of meeting times for focus group and how and when they will be contacted in the future. Provide participant with \$20.00 in cash for completion of the interview.]

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol (continued)



ADULT EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP  
Oregon State University, 402 Education Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331  
Tel 541-737-4661 | Fax 541-737-8971 | soewebite@lists.orst.edu

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: **Study Abroad and National Identity**  
Principal Investigator: **Tom Scheuermann, Adult Higher Education Faculty**  
Co-Investigator(s): **Giustina M. Pelosi, Graduate Student in College Student Services Administration**

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to investigate the impact a study abroad experience has on a student's sense of national identity and will explore your understanding and awareness of yourself as a U.S. American and the experiences abroad that impact this awareness and understanding. The results of this study will be used to write a Masters thesis in partial completion of a Masters of Science degree in College Student Services Administration at Oregon State University.

We are studying this because we want to better understand how and why a study-abroad experience impacts a student's sense of self. This is becoming increasingly important as educators work to develop and implement comprehensive and coherent study-abroad programs and standardized policies that encourage greater self-discovery and personal growth.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?**

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You are being invited to take part in this study because you have indicated that you studied abroad during the Spring 2008 quarter of the 2007-2008 academic year and were enrolled as a full-time student in a program located in one of the selected countries. Furthermore, that you are a permanent resident or citizen of the United States of America, are eighteen years of age or older, are willing to share the essays you wrote and submitted with study-abroad application for the purpose of this study, and will be enrolled and attending classes at [REDACTED] during the Fall 2008 quarter.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**

This study asks that you participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher to discuss your study abroad experience and how it has impacted who you are and how you see yourself as a U.S. American. Following the interview, you will be invited to attend a focus group with three to seven

Oregon State University • IRB Study #:4017 Approval Date: 07/21/08

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol (continued)



ADULT EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP  
 Oregon State University, 402 Education Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331  
 Tel 541-737-4661 | Fax 541-737-8971 | soewebite@lists.orst.edu

additional participants in the study. The researcher will present general findings and you will be given the opportunity to provide feedback and additional information and discoveries.

If you agree to take part in this study, your estimated time commitment is no more than 5.0 hours over the course of the Fall 2008 quarter. No more than 3.0 hours for the first one-on-one interview and no more than 2.0 hours for the focus group (preparation time for each of these events are included in the approximated times). The one-on-one interview will be scheduled sometime during the first three weeks of the Fall 2008 quarter and the focus group between week three and week 10 of the Fall 2008 quarter.

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?**

There are minimal risks involved in this study. The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include possible discomfort or emotional distress in identifying, exploring, and describing concepts of self and discussing study-abroad experiences that were negative or distressing. You will be able to decline to answer any question and strong effort will be made to avoid deeply personal topics.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

We do not know if you will benefit from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because we will better understand the impact a study-abroad experience has on a student's identity. Furthermore, we hope that you will enjoy the opportunity to speak about and reflect upon your study-abroad experience and find it helpful in understanding your individual growth and development.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?**

You will be paid for being in this research study. Each participant will receive \$20.00 upon the conclusion of the first individual interview and \$10.00 upon the conclusion of the focus group. Furthermore, lunch will be provided during the focus group held sometime between weeks three and five of the Fall 2008 quarter. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will no longer be able to receive payment.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, we will store all collected information in a confidential and locked location. Upon completion of the research study or after a period of no more than five years from the completion of this study, all collected data will be deleted electronically and paper materials destroyed. You will be assigned an identification code that will be used on all data forms in order to secure your privacy. If the results of this project are published, your identity will not be made public.

Oregon State University · IRB Study #:4017 Approval Date: 07/21/08

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol (continued)



ADULT EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP  
Oregon State University, 402 Education Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331  
Tel 541-737-4661 | Fax 541-737-8971 | soewebite@lists.orst.edu

**AUDIO RECORDING**

One aspect of this study involves making an audio recording of your one-on-one interview. These recordings will be transcribed by a professional and confidential transcription service. This will allow the researcher to revisit, review, and analyze information discussed during the course of the interview. Only the researcher will have access to the recording and transcriptions. Furthermore, all recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the research study or after a period of no more than five years from the completion of this study.

**DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will have no effect on the quality of care and services you receive.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You may elect to pass or decline to answer any question posed during the interview or focus group. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Tom Scheuermann at (541) 737-5622 or [tom.scheuermann@oregonstate.edu](mailto:tom.scheuermann@oregonstate.edu) or Giustina Pelosi at (541) 737-3100 or [Giustina.pelosi@onid.orst.edu](mailto:Giustina.pelosi@onid.orst.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu).

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

\_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Oregon State University · IRB Study #:4017 Approval Date: 07/21/08

