AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO CHOSE TO STUDY ABROAD:
CASE STUDY NARRATIVES

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Abstract

This qualitative study attempted to uncover motivations and influences that led ten American undergraduate college students to study abroad. The literature review discussed various types of study abroad programming, acknowledged benefits accrued from a foreign study experience, addressed criticisms of study abroad, and reviewed the few extant studies on motivation to study abroad. Narrative inquiry framed the data collection process, while hermeneutic phenomenology provided the analytic framework. I interviewed respondents and subsequently analyzed the data in order to unearth motivations and influences derived from participants’ lived experiences. I then categorized the findings thematically and compared them to existing literature on the benefits of study abroad, motivation to study abroad, and psychological approaches to motivation. A discussion of these comparisons details areas and methods for enhancing outreach and marketing efforts for study abroad programs, and for expanding and/or creating programming that appeals to students. The intent of this study was to assist in augmenting the knowledge of the field, to increase the number of qualitative, narrative inquiry studies relating to motivation and influences to study abroad, and to help increase the number of American students who study abroad.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Due to increases in globalization, cross-cultural interaction, and worldwide interdependence, study abroad has become a desirable educational experience for college students. Students, academics, employers, and the U.S. government see the value of study abroad in that it prepares students to better function within our globalizing world, permits better understanding and collaboration amongst diverse peoples, and promotes diversity foundational to improving academic, technological, and economic advances. Further, it acts as a humanizing agent in a world that works, actively or passively, to dehumanize people different from oneself. The benefits of study abroad are discussed in detail in chapter 2.

1.1. Definition and Evolution of Study Abroad

Dating back hundreds of years, well before the founding of this country, it was not uncommon for children to be sent to boarding schools abroad. By the mid-1800’s, this tradition was so pervasive that Birdsey Northup, with the help of noted scholars around the country, began a campaign to enlighten American parents on the “evils” of foreign study and to encourage those parents to enroll their children in American schools (Fraser, 1966). Northup’s intended audience consisted primarily of parents of grammar school students; however, there were some university students who attended foreign colleges (Fraser, 1966). These students were the pioneers of American study abroad.

The Bipartisan Presidential Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (Lincoln Commission) defines study abroad as, “an educational program for undergraduate study, work, or research (or a credit-bearing internship) that is conducted outside the United States and that awards academic credit toward a college degree” (2005, p. 14). From this definition, those students who travelled to Europe or other destinations for an undergraduate education were engaging in study abroad, even though it was not then conceptualized as such.

There is not much documentation on the evolution of study abroad. However, Indiana University appears to be the first degree-granting American undergraduate institution to offer study abroad programming (Lee, 2012). In 1879, Professor David
Starr Jordan began taking students to Europe to study language, culture, and natural history (Indiana University, 2012). As these programs took place over the summer holidays, they became known as “summer tramps.” Initially not-for-credit international experiences, in 1890 course credit was attached to the tramps, thereby establishing credit-bearing study abroad programming in the U.S. (Indiana University, 2012).

The next big step in American study abroad was taken in 1923 when the University of Delaware began sending students abroad to France for their junior year (Institute for Global Studies, 2013). Universities across the country began to offer similar programs. This junior year abroad program became the typical model for study abroad programming over the decades to follow. Over time, faculty innovation led to alternative programming (Hill, 1991). By the 1960’s, university students had various programming options including academic-year and summer term alternatives (IIE, 1963). Interest in study abroad continued to grow, and program options and structures continued to proliferate, perhaps due to the “global village” mentality that came out of the late 1970’s (McKeown, 2009). The global village replaced the previous concept of a “world order,” and with this new perspective came an understanding of the dependence of all people on each other. The expansion of globalization heightened this sense of interdependence, increasing student and faculty interest in foreign countries and cultures. The destinations, fields of study, and duration of study offered have likewise developed and expanded over time. While traditionally focused on year-long study of the social sciences in a European country, program offerings have evolved to include short- and long-term options in multiple fields of study in nearly any country. Study abroad offerings have also expanded beyond the university and worked their way into junior and community college catalogues.

A noteworthy aspect of the evolution of study abroad programming is that older models have continued to be offered alongside newer alternatives. Rather than replacing old program structures, new paradigms are simply added to the list of options. This expansionist character of study abroad has generated a plethora of alternative ways to study abroad.
1.2. Recent History

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) on the United States, a new sense of importance was levied on study abroad. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission) was formed to determine the facts and circumstances of these attacks and to make recommendations to prevent such tragedy in the future. Among the recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission (2004) was an increase in scholarship and exchange of students: “Education that teaches tolerance, the dignity and value of each individual, and respect for different beliefs is a key element in any global strategy to eliminate Islamist terrorism” (p. 378). The following year, the 9/11 Public Discourse Project was appointed to report on the status of the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations. Their report graded the scholarship and exchange programs recommendation as “unfulfilled” and reiterated the original recommendation, calling these programs “our most powerful tool to shape attitudes over the course of a generation” (9/11 Public Discourse Project, 2005, part III, p. 12).

In 2004, the Omnibus Appropriations Bill allocated funding to create the Bipartisan Presidential Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (Lincoln Commission) with the mandate to examine the importance of study abroad for the United States, determine the priority of funding fellowships for study abroad, and report its findings to Congress (Comp, 2008). Entitled *Global Competence and National Needs: One Million Students Studying Abroad*, the comprehensive report was issued in 2005, with the opening quote: “What nations don’t know can hurt them. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. ii). The remainder of the report supported the urgency conveyed with this statement, laying out the reasons for which the United States needs its students to study abroad and making recommendations to see this accomplished. Among the blanket statements made were the following: engaging American students with the world at large is “vital to the nation’s well-being,” and studying other languages and cultures “is in the national interest of the United States” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. v).
In 2007, the Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended passing the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2007 (Simon Act). “The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Act is an initiative based on the belief that no education today is complete without a global experience” (Association of International Educators [NAFSA], n.d.). Drawing heavily on the recommendations of the Lincoln Commission, this bill is intended to establish a foundation for raising and administering funds for study abroad. Government funding in the amount of $80 million per year would be allocated to the foundation, and additional donations and gifts up to $500,000 per year would be allowed (Lantos, 2007, p. 3-4). The primary goal of the foundation would be to increase the number of students studying abroad from 200,000 to one million within 10 years, with an emphasis placed on increasing diversity of student demographics “to more accurately reflect the demographics of the United States undergraduate population” and to encourage students to study in “nontraditional study abroad destinations [non-European destinations]” with a particular emphasis on developing nations (Lantos, 2007, p. 3). To date, the Simon Act has twice been reintroduced in congressional sessions, and is still pending in the legislature.

1.3. Context of Study

1.3.1. What Is Globalization? The concept of globalization emerged in the academic field in the 1960’s and 1970’s, and awareness in the general public intensified in the 1990’s (Held & McGrew, 2002). It has become a watchword of our time. It is used in many contexts and various fields, yet there seems to be no definitive definition of “globalization” (McGrew, 1992; Reich, 1998; Schuerkens, 2004). Reich (1998) states, “Despite the breadth with which the term has been applied, the meaning of ‘globalization’ remains so elusive as to defy definition” (p. 2). Reich continues on to say that the meaning of globalization is so obscure that whether the term refers to a time period, a process, a paradigm, or a theory is unclear (1998). One constant theme amongst the different fields and various proposed definitions is that of an altered understanding of space (Al-Rfouh, 2006; Asmussen, Pedersen, Devinney, & Tihanyi, 2011; Held & McGrew 2002; McGrew 1992; McGrew 2008; Poggi 1990; Schuerkens, 2004). Poggi (1990) explains that globalization is “a complex of economic, technological, ecological,
and cultural structures and processes [that] display their effects on the scale of the planet, or at any rate have a radius of action that ignores, or denies relevance to, any given state’s territory” (Poggi, 1990, p. 177). In support of this concept of globalization as a redefining of space, McGrew (1992) states, “Globalization . . . defines a far more complex condition, one in which patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space” (McGrew, 1992, p. 65). Expanding on this idea, McGrew (1992) continues on to refer to globalization as:

[T]he multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-states (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe. (pp. 65-6; Schuerkens, 2004)

While retaining the underpinning of space, Held and McGrew (2002) shift toward a focus on social interaction: “Globalization, simply put, denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world’s regions and continents” (p. 1; Al-Rfouh, 2006). In 2008, McGrew simplified this to read, “Globalization [is] simply the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness” (p. 16). It is this conception of globalization as a shrinking of space and increase in social interaction that this study embraces.

1.3.2. Why Engage in Globalization? In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, “Today, no walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises in one part of the world from national security crises in another” (2001). Buckminster Fuller espoused a similar concept in 1975: “It is critically important that [people] understand we live on a sphere. Everything is intimately related. Events at one point of the globe affect people and events everywhere else” (quoted in Adams & Carfagna, 2006, p. 152). Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, this has become even more apparent. Ambassador Richard Haass, Director, Policy Planning Staff, US Department of State stated, “The attacks on the World Trade Center. .
brought home the stark reality that if we do not engage with the world, the world will engage with us, and in ways we may not like” (Haass, 2002, p. 3). Ambassador Haas also addressed globalization from a health perspective: “As the case of HIV/AIDS also underscores, the transnational challenges inherent in this globalized era often defy the efforts of any single country. . . Transnational challenges demand transnational solutions” (Haass, 2002, p. 8; Tharoor, 2002). Transnational solutions can only be accomplished with the cooperation and collaboration of people across nations. Adams and Carfagna (2006) also underscore the need for transnational cooperation: “The case for world citizenship did not suffer a blow on September 11. Instead, it was shown to be the only way to answer those who try to divide and destroy us. Working together across cultures and countries, we can accomplish anything and overcome all challenges” (p.147). In order to accomplish this, they state, “We must better understand other cultures: In the process, we gain an appreciation for what makes our culture different from others, and most vitally, what we have in common with all who share this planet. And we must recognize our own limitations and acknowledge our mistakes” (Adams & Carfagna, 2006, p. 134).

Adams and Carfagna (2006) further stated, “[I]t is vital that we adopt global views and become world citizens,” (p. 154), and expounded on this idea by saying that it is necessary to “extend our circle of compassion” to encompass the entire world (p. 147). “A global world. . . is one where the ‘other’ cannot any longer be treated as inert. . . .In a post- traditional order, we see the formation of a cosmopolitan conversation of humankind” (Schuerkens, 2004, p. 15). Moser (2012) elaborates on the breadth and depth of this cosmopolitan conversation technology can now provide: “Given the undeniable utility of certain devices that allow someone to interact with another person that lives on the other side of the world, the possibilities for meaningful dialogue in addition to economic and cultural exchange seem to be limitless” (Moser, 2012, p. 2).

Worldwide security, health, economic, and cultural exchange provide the basis for the reasons to engage in globalization. According to Tharoor (2002), “[T]he tragedies of our time are global in origin and reach, and. . . tackling them is also a global
responsibility that must be assumed by us all. Interdependence is now the watchword” (p. 67).

1.3.3. Challenges to Globalization. There are several forces at work to hinder or slow engagement in globalization. The claim that globalization is Westernization in sheep’s clothing, the detriment of the complexity of identity formation inherent in a lack of territorialization, and traditional educational structures and expectations are at the forefront of the challenge to globalization.

Critics argue that “[T]he concept of globalization seems to be little more than a synonym for Westernization or Americanization” (Held & McGrew, 2002, p. 3; Schuerkens, 2004). “Cocacolization” is another term that has been coined in the debate over globalization as a form of neo-colonialization of the world, though rather than a specific country taking control of the globe, this power now belongs to the multinational corporations of the Western world (Schuerkens, 2004, p. 19). The contrary argument runs that, “[m]ost often, this sort of scenario is based on superficial and anecdotal examples which can rarely be proven with scientific methods” (Schuerkens, 2004, p. 19). Another critique runs that “a ‘deterritorialization’ of culture is occurring due to the hybridization of cultures. . . . The global culture that is emerging is complex and deterritorialized rather than simplistic and monolithic. This complexity exists because culture is not linked to local nation-states but is deterritorialized, which in turn, links to a cultural process of enforced propinquity and cosmopolitanism” (Al-Rfouh, 2006, p. 109-110). However, Schuerkens (2004) points out that a give-and-take, an exchange of values and ideas, exists in the globalization process and thus, “The fact that more and more groups consider their culture and lifestyle as a political right lets them put an emphasis on their own culture” (p. 22).

Education, on a structural level, does not engender a worldwide attitude. “[Schooling] has long been about the nation, not the world. It has been about building national values, a national identity, and a national workforce. From the time students first enter the doors of elementary school, they are treated to a parade of patriotic lessons designed to foster a distinctive national pride” (Adams & Carfagna, 2006, p. 205).
Exposure to such attitude, being mired in a national identity, hinders students from becoming citizens of the world.

On a content level, education also plays a detrimental role on individual engagement in globalization: “Choose a career and define your identity. One outcome of this attitude in our society is a growing interest in education as the foundation for future employment. The primary purpose of a college, in the view of the vast majority of Americans, is to develop the skills necessary to get a good job” rather than to develop a sense of wisdom and humanity (Adams & Carfagna, 2006, p. 156). When the goal is to get a job, to “Get in. Get out. Get ahead.” as the mantra of Heald College states, students are not looking to expand their horizons beyond that which will increase their potential income level (2013). In 2001, University of California President Clark Kerr noted, “Many students came to college looking for job training, not a philosophy of life” (p. 203). He further stated, “American higher education began as an effort at moral uplift. It continues as an effort to get a good or better job. A life of affluence is replacing a philosophy of life as the main purpose of higher education” (Kerr, 2001, p. 221). With students maintaining a focus on income and betterment of job prospects, few individuals are looking out into the world and attempting to place themselves in a position of the global community.

1.3.4. Why Educate for Globalization? This sub-heading begs the bigger question, why education? Is it truly intended only for job training, or is an educated person one who has wisdom and the ability to make connections and interrelate ideas? This author agrees with Adams and Carfagna (2006), who define an educated person thusly:

Educated people in the twenty-first century must understand the individual’s role in our global society. An educated person in someone who can look beyond the local and identify the global parameters of each and every question; someone who can embrace other identities and comprehend other viewpoints; someone who understands complex interrelationships and is comfortable in diverse environments. Being educated means being able to connect the dots and gain a sense of the big picture.
To keep pace with the forces of globalization requires a global education. (p. 159)

In line with this, in 1965, Arnold J. Toynbee stated, “Education should not make us specialists for some particular future professional job, but should make us citizens, social citizens, citizens today of the whole world. As citizens of the whole world we have to have some understanding of the world as a whole...” (quoted in Adams & Carfagna, 2006, p. 151). Yet, Adams and Carfagna do not ignore the professional aspect of education, but argue that it is a component of a proper education, not the aim (Adams & Carfagna, 2001). Underscoring students’ own understanding of a proper education, in a report on two national survey-based studies about international education for the American Council on Education (ACE), Hayward and Siaya conclude that students:

understand that success as citizens and in their professions depends on how well they understand other people, nations, cultures, economies, and languages. The graduates of our colleges and universities must have the ability to move seamlessly through other cultures, economies, and systems. To do that, our graduates need much more international knowledge, strong training in languages, and deeper cultural understanding than most of them are getting at the present time. (2001, p. 47)

Beyond the personal and professional aspects of education is a humanistic side. Nelson Mandela, a renowned leader of racial issues and tolerance, told us, “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite” (Mandela, 1994, p. 622). Adams and Carfagna (2006) support this statement and propose that the only way “[t]o combat ignorance and intolerance. . . requires an education, one that is inclusive, open, and responsive, that nurtures our awareness of global society, our global problems, and our global kinship. In other words, we need a global education” (p. 146-7). Without an education to understand and appreciate the various communities and societies that exist on our “shrinking” planet, we run the risk of continuing the education of fear and intolerance as described in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s (1946) South Pacific:
You’ve got to be taught
to hate and fear,
You’ve got to be taught
From year to year,
It’s got to be drummed
In your dear little ear,
You’ve got to be carefully taught.
You’ve got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You’ve got to be carefully taught.
You’ve got to be taught before it’s too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relative hate,
You’ve got to be carefully taught!

1.3.5. Why Study Abroad for a Globalized Education? This process of globalization is happening on both macro- and micro-levels, to the point that virtually no one is able to live apart from its influence. Intercultural interactions have become less of a novelty; they are becoming the status quo. As McKeown (2009) states, “Whether as immigrants or travelers, or simply as neighbors in diverse communities, the possibility of enduring life without cultural complexity is remote” (p. 8). Study abroad provides students an opportunity to learn to successfully navigate these normalized social interactions within a global social structure. It prepares students for active, engaged citizenship in a world that no longer strictly adheres to the concept of nation-states, allowing for the free flow of information in a global marketplace of ideas and commerce.

Beyond increasing an individual’s ability to function within the structure of a worldwide community, exposure to other people can increase understanding and empathy; personal experiences with people different from oneself can lead to humanization of all people. In 1873, Daniel Read, President of the University of the State of Missouri, referred to this aspect of foreign study as “enlarging [a student’s] views of
our common humanity” (quoted in Fraser, 1966, p. 17). This personal interaction is perhaps “the best way to develop the culturally sensitive person at any level and anywhere” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1998, p. 118), and acts as “an opportunity to become physically, mentally, and emotionally involved in a foreign culture in ways that a tourist could never experience” (Brush, 1998, p. 1). One of foreign study’s most vociferous opponents, Birdsey Northup, acknowledged that the experience has value for those who are emotionally prepared. Among other benefits, he states, “Personal observations abroad may happily . . . remove narrowness and stimulate the desire for knowledge” (quoted in Fraser, 1966, pp. 2-3).

U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright (1989), speaking of the Fulbright Program that is a two-way exchange of scholars between the United States and foreign countries around the globe, makes clear that his primary focus in creating the foreign exchange program was to increase a feeling of “common humanity” (p. 205). He eloquently elaborates on this concept: “The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy—the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something that we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately” (p. 217).

In 1973, Carter was already advocating a paradigm shift for study abroad; he called for the removal of study abroad from the esotericism of the privately well-funded and placement of it within the realm of public policy. He saw this as a necessary educational component to compete in the modern world, even prior to the current pace of globalization: “To study abroad for a while has long been recognized as a desirable part of anyone’s education, but, when a country sets out to modernize its society, what was a matter of private choice for those who could afford it becomes an indispensable part of public policy” (p. 7).

1.4. Statement of Problem

Approximately one percent of American university students participate in study abroad programming per year (Durbin, 2006; Durbin, 2009; Lantos, 2007), a figure Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009) refer to as “negligible” (p. 120). The most recent Open Doors report indicates a participation rate of only 1.4% in the 2010-11
academic year (IIE, 2012, Fast Facts). Though the value of study abroad has been acknowledged for decades, the body of research exploring factors behind the choice to participate in study abroad programming is limited. Few studies have attempted to discover what causes students to engage in study abroad programs. Salisbury et al. (2009) report, “Surprisingly, almost no empirical research has explored the array and potential interaction of factors that affect intent to study abroad” (p. 121). Further, of the few studies that have been conducted on reasons for study abroad participation, only a fraction have used qualitative methods; most of the limited extant literature uses quantitative methods which limit possible responses and fail to give respondents a voice in the research process.

1.5. Purpose of Study

Fifty years ago, cross-cultural interaction was limited in comparison to today. Yet, even then, our government and educational institutions recognized the value of global awareness and intercultural sensitivity, and they believed study abroad to be the best means to educate across cultures: “Today, in a world grown increasingly interdependent, our leaders recognize how important it is for young Americans to know the language, culture, and history, the problems, needs, and aspirations of other nations. They recognize also that there is no better way to acquire this knowledge than by studying in other countries” (IIE, 1963, p. 3). With the changes wrought in the world since this statement was published, the importance of foreign study has grown. Today, more than ever, students must learn to function and succeed in a world of ever-increasing diversity.

The need for study abroad programming in higher education is evident. As Hill (1991) states: “Study abroad has a fundamental role in the enrichment of the U.S. curriculum” as it permits cultural experiences and can provide “an acquired broader perspective” which is “relevant to students who live in an ever shrinking, cosmopolitan world” (p. iii). Carlson et al. (1990) agree; they see a dovetail effect taking place between the global village created by increasing world interdependency and the growing of America’s heterogeneous culture due the acceleration of our country’s cultural diversity. These researchers believe study abroad to “play a crucial role” in readying individuals “to
function effectively not only in the global village but also as members of the increasingly diverse American culture and people” (pp. 114-5).

Due to the indispensible knowledge and skills one can gain from a study abroad experience, it is paramount that all students who wish to engage in foreign study have the opportunity to do so. However, the reasons students study abroad are not well understood. Research that aims at a thorough understanding of these reasons should be conducted. This study used interviews that explored college students’ lived experiences and decision-making processes as they related to study abroad in order to begin to explain this phenomenon and fill the gap in the theoretical knowledge base. Additionally, research and development of programming options, policies, and marketing—the method of dissemination of information pertaining to study abroad opportunities—will be decisive in providing appropriate options to students. An examination of the reasons behind students’ choice to go abroad is an integral component of such research:

If colleges and universities are to increase student participation in study abroad programs in the years to come, work needs to be done to address the issues . . . that students and other decision makers perceive to be relevant when evaluating how studying abroad will affect their futures. . . . In order to accomplish these goals, more needs to be learned about how students actually view the study abroad opportunity. (Naffzigier, Bott, & Mueller, 2008, p. 42)

While much research has been compiled on the benefits of study abroad, discussed in chapter two, to date, few studies have been conducted that examine student decision-making in relation to study abroad, and even fewer investigate student motivation: “Outcomes associated with [study abroad] programs have been studied extensively, but relatively little is known about what motivates and influences students to participate” (Massey & Burrow, 2012, abstract).

1.6. Research Question

The current study proposes to examine this precise issue. In an attempt to uncover motivations for and influences on students’ decisions to study abroad, I address the research question: Which lived experiences and life influences motivated students to study abroad?
1.7. Significance of Study

The paucity of knowledge surrounding the phenomenon of study abroad participation should be remedied. Calls for studies to explain this phenomenon have been made, yet few researchers have responded. Of the studies conducted, most employ quantitative measures, limiting potential responses to that which fit neatly into pre-determined categories or on Likert scales. Research which uses qualitative methods, especially interviews of study abroad participants, can provide deeper, richer, more contextual knowledge about influences on and motivations of students who have studied abroad. The current study carried out such interviews in order to begin a dialogue between returned study abroad participants and the academy.

Also, a more thorough understanding of the personal experiences leading to students’ choices to study abroad can assist in the creation of effective marketing tools, appropriate policies, and new international programs that will increase opportunities for students to participate in study abroad programming. It is also pertinent to study abroad professionals as they can “use this knowledge in advising [students] about appropriate program options” (Council on International Educational Exchange [CIEE], 2006, p. 10). Clearly, a void in the research exists that, once filled, will assist in augmenting that paltry aforementioned statistic of one percent.

1.8. Research Design

As Lakshmi, De Jong, and Schnusenberg (2010) concisely propose, “Research would benefit from a holistic approach . . . which encapsulates all possible types of factors involved in the context of study abroad decisions” (p. 249). Qualitative research is best suited to understanding the plethora of factors that feed into a student’s decision to go abroad: “Qualitative methodology is useful in exploring and describing the experiences of college students, especially when little is known about the phenomenon under study” (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002, p. 1).

This study attempted to fill a small part of the knowledge gap by using qualitative methods to delve into the intersection of factors behind the choice to study abroad. Following the advice of Kitsantas (2004), who, at the end of a quantitative study, called for “other methods of data collection [to] be used such as . . . interviews of the students”
(p. 448), I decided to interview returned American study abroad students to uncover the conscious reasons and pertinent life experiences that led to their decisions to study abroad. I hope that the results of this research will increase academic understanding of the phenomenon of study abroad participation. Along with further research on this topic, theory can be developed and put into practice, providing more students the opportunity to experience different people and cultures, to rethink their extant beliefs of people and cultures foreign to themselves, and to learn to be more effective global citizens.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1. Definition and Categories

Though credit-bearing study abroad began with faculty-led summer programming in the form of Indiana University’s summer tramps, the one-year programs in which students attended foreign universities instituted by the University of Delaware became the traditional structure. However, over the years, programming options have expanded and current study abroad programs provide numerous ways in which students can earn college credit while overseas. The Lincoln Commission defines study abroad as “an educational program for undergraduate study, work, or research (or a credit-bearing internship) that is conducted outside the United States and that awards academic credit toward a college degree” (2005, p. 14). The current study embraces this wide-ranging definition, as the primary goal of study abroad should not be that of strict academic study, but of academic study balanced with intercultural interaction. Mixing and mingling with people foreign to oneself, outside of one’s comfort zone, and within a foreign culture and country, acts as an agent of humanization, and allows one to better understand and develop empathy for new people and new ways of life.

Within the Lincoln Commission’s definition of study abroad, any foreign educational program that earns college credit may be considered a valid study abroad experience. This provides a plethora of options for students. Programs now range in length from a few weeks to an academic year; they take place during the year, the semester, winter break, and summer sessions. Available locations of study abroad programs, once restricted to Western Europe, now span the globe; Western European countries are still highly popular destinations, though programs are quickly growing in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. There are even opportunities to earn credit for scientific expeditions to Antarctica. The style of instruction can vary from courses at a foreign university to experiential education for the solo student; choices run the gamut from full immersion at a foreign university, classes specially designed for international students at a university abroad, U.S. university branch campuses providing instruction reflecting the home curriculum, team teaching by
American and foreign faculty, and faculty-led study tours that might include lectures by native experts, to individualized curriculum designed by the student. Administration of programs also varies widely; there are direct exchanges between partner universities, satellite campuses, consortium agreements, direct enrollment, third-party providers who work with accredited universities abroad, individual study, and internships. Each of these administrative structures has its own unique processes of communication, oversight, application, acceptance, and credit transfer. Additionally, content and context can vary widely across the different options available, as can the quality, reputation, and perceived benefits and critiques of each possibility.

What follows is a description of the major categories of study abroad, examples of each, and the specific benefits and criticisms accorded to each. It is important to bear in mind that with the diversity of options available, and the possibility to combine educational goals, structure, instructional style, and location, it is not possible to categorize every possible type of study abroad program. Rather, the following typology is a fairly comprehensive enumeration of available programming, though other, atypical, programs exist outside of these categories.

**2.1.1. Mainstreaming.** The traditional conception of study abroad, and perhaps the most rigorous and demanding, is that of total immersion, also known as mainstreaming. It usually lasts for one year, typically the junior year. There is little to no support from the home university, students being expected to completely immerse themselves in the local culture of both the university and the country. The so-called “local student experience” is highly valued by the advocates of this category.

Prerequisites for these programs include language fluency and academic excellence; acceptance is highly competitive and selective. Those who are chosen to participate in these programs are considered the best of the best. The primary benefit here is that of an “authentic experience” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1998, p. 34). Criticisms are numerous, as opponents claim the participant pool is limited to students in foreign language and area studies, the admissions process is elitist, the work and living conditions are overwhelming for students, and coursework abroad does not equivocate to coursework at home, thus making transfer credit too difficult to award.
One well established example of this type is the German Academic Exchange Service. This is an independent organization that facilitates and helps fund foreign study in Germany. Applicants to this program should be in their junior or senior year during the time abroad, can go for a semester or a year, and should exemplify outstanding academic achievement and personal integrity. The program prefers students who have a research focus on Germany, German language proficiency is preferred, though not mandatory, and the selection process is highly competitive. If accepted, students are expected to integrate into campus and German culture during their time abroad, becoming completely mainstreamed (German Academic Exchange Service, 2013).

A second example, perhaps better known, is the Rhodes Scholarship. This is a highly competitive scholarship program that fully funds graduate study at Oxford in the United Kingdom for one to three years, depending upon the degree sought. Criteria for selection include outstanding academic achievement, commitment to others, and strength of character. Students who are awarded the fellowship are expected to integrate into student life and become completely immersed in the culture of Oxford (The Rhodes Trust, 2013). Recounting his own experience as a Rhodes Scholar, Senator J. William Fulbright described the benefit afforded him by total immersion into the academic culture. He recalls the drive he felt to better himself academically to be able to fit in with the student body at Oxford: “The intellectual sophistication of these young Englishmen astonished me. I was embarrassed by my own inadequacy . . . I was astonished by the intellectual maturity of those seventeen- and eighteen-year-old boys. So I began to read seriously” (1989, p. 209). This experience of fitting in with and living as a local student had an impact he was to remember many years later.

2.1.2. Students and faculty abroad. A conversation with Sarita Rai (personal communication), director of the Study Abroad Center (SAC) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM), highlighted a program that deserves space in this discussion due to its singularity of structure as well as its ability to mitigate many of the criticisms of mainstreaming (12/05/2012). It is similar in concept to mainstreaming in that students attend and are immersed in a foreign institution after successfully navigating a competitive acceptance process, may need to be fluent in a foreign language, and have
little support from the home university. However, the UHM SAC program allows for a semester abroad rather than requiring a full academic year, works with particular institutions so host institution courses are prearranged to reflect on the home university transcript, occasionally uses English-speaking institutions so a lack of a foreign language is not necessarily a barrier, and, most unusually, has an additional focus on faculty development, sending UHM faculty members abroad. In this structure, students and faculty alike apply for the program, and acceptance for both is highly competitive.

These study abroad students are integrated into the host institution. They are required to take one course from the UHM professor, and three to four courses per term from the host university’s general catalog. Although UHM students take a course from the UHM professor, most students in that class are from the host institution, so there is still an intercultural component to even this singular class.

In addition to the standard application materials, UHM faculty are also required to have a research focus on the region in which the program takes place. While abroad, the UHM faculty member becomes visiting faculty to the foreign institution, teaching two courses for each term they are in residence. These courses are made available to the entire student body, which assists professors in developing new pedagogy and interacting with a wider range of students than on the home campus. Additionally, host institution students are introduced to foreign faculty, which enhances their cross-cultural experience. Faculty also work on research projects related to the host country or region, while simultaneously researching the UHM student abroad experience to enhance the study abroad literature. What makes these faculty positions unique within study abroad is that UHM faculty are abroad to continue their own professional development, rather than monitor or chaperone the study abroad students. Further, the intersection of students and faculty abroad create tighter bonds between the foreign institution and UHM, fostering long-term international relationships.

The benefits of this program include the opportunity for professional development and on-site research of study abroad students (practitioner research). Additionally, students have some access to familiar faculty without being “babysat,” thereby receiving an authenticity of experience similar to mainstreaming. However, like all programs, there
are drawbacks here, as well. Competitive applications can limit student and faculty acceptance, and language requirements of certain programs can also exclude participation.

When asked to provide an example of this unusual setup, Rai cited the SAC program in Paris. Here, the SAC partners with the American Business School in Paris, a degree-granting institution that teaches courses in English along with French language classes. This university is particularly successful for its academics, but also due to the cosmopolitan nature of its student body: 60% of the students are of international origins, including students from 80 nationalities (American Business School Paris, n.d.). This combination provides exposure to a wide range of cultures, enhancing opportunity for cross-cultural understanding and empathy.

2.1.3. Student exchange programs. A third category of study abroad consists of student exchange programs. In these, the home university partners with a foreign institution for direct exchange of students on a 1:1 basis. This traditionally has involved each student paying their home university tuition and then swapping places with a foreign student who has done the same; however, some institutions make different arrangements. Students go abroad for either a semester or a year. While they are in the foreign country, the host school offers advising, which provides students with academic and cultural assistance. As these institutional relationships tend to be long-lasting, it is common for the home university to have pre-arranged credit transfer for courses abroad. Additionally, these direct exchanges are often arranged through specific departments, making the relationships closer and the credit transfer smoother. Depending on the university and program applied for, foreign language fluency is occasionally required. Exchanges are similar to mainstreaming, but with more support from the home and the host institutions, they are open to various majors, credit transfer issues are eased, they can be for one semester, and students do not necessarily study in the junior year. The major criticisms of the direct exchange structure are similar to some of those of mainstreaming. As there are a limited number of places per exchange available, admission is competitive and elitist; programs can be limited to foreign language speakers or to English-speaking countries;
and, as they are often arranged through specific departments, acceptance can be limited to majors of those departments.

To exemplify, Minnesota State University-Mankato has several exchange programs available for its students. One such exchange is through the College of Business to the Rouen Business School in France. The program is available to declared majors of the business school. Available courses include finance, French, international business, management, and marketing. This particular school teaches half of its courses in English, alleviating the necessity for students to be fluent in French. However, the exchange program requires students to take French language classes each term they are in residence. Courses are easily transferred back to the Mankato campus, and students have the option of a dormitory, apartment, or homestay, giving them additional intercultural exposure if they prefer. Whatever their choice, while in France they have access to assistance from Minnesota State’s International Programs Office and the school in Rouen (Elizabeth & Wynn Kearney International Center, 2012).

2.1.4. Schools for foreigners. Existing foreign universities as well as start-up organizations have developed special schools for foreigners. These schools are specifically designed and run for international students, drawing a multinational student body. Courses offered focus on local language and cultural learning, and advisors are provided to help with academics, living arrangements, and cultural interactions.

The benefits of this type of program include availability to non-fluent language speakers, increased support offered to students while abroad, and credits that are usually pre-approved for transfer home. Critics of these programs cite “artificiality and isolation” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1998, p. 40), high costs, and lack of academic rigor in prerequisites.

One example is the Center for Study Abroad Spanish Language in San Jose program, located just outside of San Jose, Costa Rica. The intent of this program is for students to learn Spanish in an intensive, 20 hour per week course. The program is accredited and issues university-level credit; the number of credits earned depends on the length of time in the program, which is on a week-to-week schedule. The majority of its participants come from the United States, Canada, and Europe. Housing is provided,
usually in a homestay environment, and advisors are available to students (Center for Study Abroad, 2013).

2.1.5. The enclave model. Somewhat similar in structure to schools for foreigners, some American universities have institutions abroad catering to Americans and other international students. This is often referred to as the enclave model. Here, courses that use English as the medium of instruction focus on the culture and artifacts of the local region. Credits are typically issued through the U.S. university hosting the institute, and from there easily transfer to a student’s home institution.

Benefits and criticisms of this model are very similar to schools for foreigners. Of benefits, the programs are available to non-fluent language speakers, there are on-site community/support networks, and credits are pre-approved. However, some view the campuses as isolated, sometimes geographically as well as in opportunity for interaction with locals, and prerequisites are lacking in academic accountability.

The Berlin program of Bing Overseas Studies, Stanford University, is a prime example of the enclave model. It began in 1958 in Beutelsbach and has since moved to the capital. For two terms each year, non-German speaking students can participate in the program, enrolling in intensive language courses, while one term per year is reserved for students who have previously mastered language prerequisites. Course topics offered in English include history, economy, architecture, theater, and sports and culture. Additionally, there is an option to participate in a paid internship, arranged by Bing. All courses are preapproved for transfer credit to the home institution, and are taught primarily by local faculty with occasional faculty-in-residence taking courses (Stanford University, 2011).

2.1.6. Satellite campuses. Differing in administrative structure and curriculum from the enclave model are foreign satellite branches of U.S. institutions. These branch campuses function as departments of the home institution in that the curriculum mirrors that of the U.S. campus, and, in some cases, only enrolled students of the host university are accepted to the program. The student body is primarily American, the instruction is in English, and faculty members are predominantly from the home campus. There is no concern with credit transfer as the courses come straight from the U.S. institutions’
course catalogues. Students are provided with advisors, and live together in special
dormitories or local housing near each other.

Proponents of this category speak of the academic quality control, the positive
atmosphere provided by the high level of support and close networking with other
American students, and that programming is available to non-fluent language speakers.
Critics see students as isolated and overly pampered; Goodwin and Nacht (1998) go so
far as to call it “day care for adults” (p. 45)

The University of Washington Rome Center, located in Rome’s historic center,
exemplifies the satellite campus. Courses are not open to the public, and the center does
not confer any certificates or degrees. Its purpose is to offer courses for graduate and
undergraduate study from various departments of the Seattle campus. Curriculum is
determined by the home campus, enabling the university to maintain control of standards
and issue credit directly. All courses are taught in English. Examples include landscape
architecture; law, societies and justice; and visual communication design, all of which
appear in the course catalog for the home university. While not housed in dormitories, the
program arranges the accommodations for the students in centrally located apartments in
the city (University of Washington, n.d.).

A newer version of the satellite campus has emerged in recent years. In this
updated version of the older, more isolated, structure, international branch campuses are
opening their doors to residents of the host country. Courses are taught in English, reflect
the same curriculum and academic requirements as the home campus, and are degree-
granting institutions in their own right.

A quintessential example of this new structure is Florida State University (FSU)-
Panama. FSU-Panama grants undergraduate degrees in six fields as well as an Associate
of Arts, offers completion of the Liberal Arts requirements of the American campus, and
offers pre-requisite courses for the colleges of Business and Engineering, which students
can then use to enroll at the home campus in Tallahassee. American students who study
abroad at FSU-Panama take the same courses as at the Tallahassee campus, and enrich
their learning by taking these courses alongside Panamanian and other international
students. In fact, American students are now the minority in these classrooms, whereas
the traditional version of this model has U.S. students completely segregated from locals of the host country. This structure retains the benefits of academic quality control and inclusion for non-fluent language speakers while removing the isolation and day care aspect of the older model (Florida State University-Panama, n.d.).

2.1.7. Study tours. This category includes intersemester (winter and spring breaks) and summer travel programs. These faculty-led short courses abroad can last from a few weeks to an entire summer, and can consist of nearly any content imaginable. Art professors might take students to Italy for lectures and museum outings. Marine biology professors may arrange a SCUBA-intensive trip to the Caribbean for underwater study of the flora and fauna. History departments have taken classes to tour England’s landscape, lecturing in front of historically significant locales. Geology professors have run courses in Puerto Rico. Professors of languages, sciences, and archaeology have also taken students abroad to complete the fieldwork segment of a home campus course. The options here are potentially unlimited. As these courses are offered directly by the home institution, credits are recorded on students’ transcripts as any other course, and some universities include a study abroad designation.

The benefits of this category mirror those of satellite campuses: Academic quality is controlled by the home institution, an atmosphere of confidence is fostered by the professors’ presence and expertise, and the courses are usually open to non-language speakers. However, in addition to the above criticism of isolation, this category has garnered the additional reproach of “academic tourism.” Vincent Virgulti illustrates this position: “Academic seriousness, especially during short-term or summer programs, can deteriorate into tourism and travel mania more readily perhaps than in a program . . . for greater spans of time” (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 96).

My personal experience participating in a study tour did not erode into academic tourism. When I was an undergraduate student studying Spanish, my professor invited me to participate in an intensive language course in Antigua, Guatemala. Along with 29 other students, I travelled to Guatemala for a three-week, language and culture, faculty-led program during the summer break. The program was prearranged through connections my professor had in Antigua and on the home campus. Homestays were set up through
the small language school our group attended, classes were arranged for one-on-one learning with a native Spanish-speaking instructor, credits appropriate to our language level were prearranged to transfer back home, and our professor made herself available to us during the stay. We were given exit exams equivalent to final exams at the home campus, which determined our grades for the class. In addition to the language study and homestay experience, the escuela we attended offered cultural classes such as cooking and dancing, our teachers took us on field trips to highlight local customs and assess our use of Spanish in day-to-day interactions, and our professor arranged weekend excursions to local cultural sites. She also provided us the opportunity to meet indigenous women and learn about their ways of life and livelihood. This was my first major foreign experience—prior to this I had vacationed in Canada and on the beaches of Mexico, but had no true intercultural experience—and it impacted my life in ways I am still discovering. These experiences went above and beyond anything I could have learned in a classroom at my undergraduate university.

2.1.8. Individual study abroad. Individual study abroad is the most flexible category in its structure and execution. The programs in this category are commonly designed by the student and approved by an advisor. The courses tend to consist of short-term, focused study during which students travel on their own. Greater or lesser amounts of support can be made available depending on the program design and regional contacts. The program, academic content, and credits are arranged with a professor at the home university. Credits appear as a course taken at the university, commonly listed as a field study or independent study class. Experiential education is often part of these self-designed programs. Both individual study abroad and the previous category, study tours, require careful planning to ensure the academic needs of the students are met, and the quality of the academic work is worthy of credit.

This category has several advantages over the previous categories. Due to the flexibility of the length and program requirements, non-traditional students can design their own program to take advantage of the opportunity to study abroad. Additionally, as academic content is variable, this category can appeal to a variety of interests and fields of study. But critics warn that if they are not arranged and managed well, the time abroad
can decay into academic tourism, and can isolate students from cultural experiences. Another criticism centers on the inclusion of experiential education components often found in self-designed programs, and the complexity of evaluating such pedagogy. Vincent Virgulti states, “While experiential learning is an invaluable aspect of study abroad, it is nevertheless difficult to evaluate and measure a student’s non-academic progress” (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 95). Yet, if program and academic requirements are designed well and adhered to, this should not be a stumbling block to a successful study abroad experience.

Some examples of this type of study abroad could include an archaeology student joining a dig for a summer, or an Egyptology student using the winter break to travel to the sites and monuments of Ancient Egypt to better understand the structures in situ. An advanced language student could spend time abroad living, volunteering, and experiencing the culture first hand. Artists might use this opportunity to apprentice with an expert in their medium. All of these options require consultation and planning with an advisor to ensure that a program is designed to meet student needs and university requirements. Also, it is important to identify educational aims and communicate expectations of an end-product to reflect the students’ learning. Otherwise, the time abroad could well devolve into academic tourism.

A personal example of this category stems from my participation in a short-term, experiential study abroad program. Interested in the inner workings of education-based volunteer programs, I approached my advisor and educational leadership professor with an idea for on-site research. I had found an educational reef survey volunteer program located on the Caribbean island of Tobago. Participants went through a rigorous course on marine life identification and health that included lectures, written tests, oral exams, and practical in-water examinations. After successfully completing the course, participants were then taught reef survey techniques. Once a level of competence was achieved, volunteers were then allowed to take part in the actual reef survey, which would end up in the hands of the government as a tool to increase the quantity and health of marine flora and fauna off the coast.
I presented this material to my advisor, explained my focus of assessing the leadership of the program, and worked with my advisor to create a program plan and academic requirements for the course. Once approved, I registered for the expedition and paid the fees, registered for an independent study course at my university, paid tuition, and embarked upon the program and the assessment, reflection, and write up required. The end of a very successful course earned on-site experience with an experiential education program, three credits of graduate-level course work, and a deeper understanding of the needs and pitfalls of educational leadership.

2.1.9. Internships. Internships abroad, as with any work experience, are varied. They differ in length of term, amount of time required, the position held, reporting procedures, credits earned, and academic end-product. Some foreign internship programs operate through U.S. universities or established third-party organizations. Other internship opportunities require students to find and develop their own contacts abroad. The administrative aspects of a foreign internship can be daunting, as finding and arranging such a program with a large American corporation overseas, or contacting a foreign company directly, can be problematic without previously established connections.

For students able to network their way into such a relationship, the benefits are pronounced. They include uniquely intimate contact with the local culture and people, practical experience and new knowledge in the field of study, an opportunity to enhance foreign language skills, and a new perspective on Americans and American ways of life. According to Rita Goldberg, “Internships move students into a different aspect of the culture than they normally encounter abroad . . . Full-time internships, particularly, cast students in a whole new role in the culture of the workplace, and they tend to accelerate the maturation process that is probably the most important benefit of the experience abroad” (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 39). Further, more internship opportunities are opening up in developing nations, giving students a wider geographical field to consider. Additionally, proponents point out that an internship can cater to non-traditional and minority students’ needs. There are few outspoken critics of interning abroad, but there is some concern that, due to the nature of working in a foreign country, these programs are typically reserved for students who are fluent in the native language. Also, students
should be careful when choosing a program as not all internships are considered academic and therefore do not receive credit.

The following is an example of an established internship program abroad, administered by an American institution: The Boston University Madrid Internship Program is offered to students for the purposes of enhancing their language skills and participating in an immersive work experience abroad. The program has a minimum language requirement of five semesters of Spanish, six for students taking higher-level courses. Students are required to take courses in language and liberal arts at one of two local universities while interning at a Spanish organization. A wide variety of fields are represented in the internship possibilities, including advertising and marketing, radio and television, hospitality, health and human services, and journalism. The internship is arranged by Boston University, has highly structured academic and work program requirements, and requires a final analytical report from the student. All students live with local families in order to increase their language ability and cultural exposure. Student may enroll for one term or one year. Course and internship credits are pre-arranged to transfer back to the home institution (Boston University, n.d.).

2.2. Benefits of Study Abroad

The educational benefits accrued by students from a study abroad experience have been studied for decades. Results of such studies show that there are “numerous benefits for participants across a host of cognitive, affective, and interpersonal dimensions” (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011, p. 124). These findings are supported by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE): “Outcomes range from the cognitive to the affective to the behavioral” (2006, p. 7). Interestingly, results of repetitive and similar studies have remained fairly consistent over time. Findings from earlier studies have been reinforced and added onto in later studies; rarely have results been found to contradict earlier findings.

2.2.1. Global awareness. Students who study abroad gain a wider understanding of the geography, lives, and cultures that make up our world. Global awareness involves “learn[ing] about global human needs” (“Study Abroad Expands Perspectives,” 2002, p. 10) and experiencing changes in international understanding. Students become more
aware of how they perceive people of other cultures and develop increased care toward others. Seeing people as individuals, rather than as belonging to collective groups, is another aspect of global awareness. Goldstein and Kim (2006), in a study supported by a Hewlett Foundation Grant for the Improvement of Academic Programs through the University of Redlands, found study abroad students gained the “ability to see members of different national groups as individuals” (p. 508).

An example of this comes from Drews and Meyer (1996), working out of Juniata College, who studied the effects of study abroad on the conceptualization of other national groups using a free association task. Students who had studied abroad for at least one semester, those who were planning to study abroad, and a group of students who did not plan to study abroad were asked to write down all of the terms they associated with each of eleven different national groups. A total of 94 respondents completed the task. Free associations were then categorized on the basis of their semantic content. Comparisons between groups revealed that those who had studied abroad were more likely to conceive of other national groups in terms associated with the characters of individuals and less likely to think of national groups in terms of food, historical events, geographical characteristics, and similarly non-personal attributes. This suggests that one of the main effects of study abroad is a more personalized view of other national groups. Further, this study uncovered evidence that a single study abroad experience can be enough to change students’ conceptualizations of others on a global level, as the data “suggest that the tendency to personalize members of other cultures may extend well beyond the country visited” (Discussion section, para. 3).

In 2004, Sutton and Rubin reported on the early stages of the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Initiative (GLOSSARI) project, a “long-term, comprehensive approach to assessing student learning outcomes from studying abroad” (p. 76). Using a study abroad participant group and a non-participant control group of approximately 250 students each, their results “indicate that the study abroad experience exerts an impact on [global interdependence],” an illustration of changing perspectives and increased international understanding (p. 77).
Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990) further exemplify this change in international understanding. Conducting a study as part of the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP), they drew on a participant pool of students who studied abroad in Europe for the duration of an academic year, and a comparison group of students who remained at the home institution for the same year. The researchers administered pre- and post-tests to both groups in order to assess the impacts of study abroad. One statistically significant finding of this quantitative study was that students who studied abroad reported lower domestic orientation after their year abroad in comparison to their pre-test results, and in contrast to the comparison group. This shift away from an orientation on America indicates a shift toward an emphasis on international issues and understanding.

2.2.2. Cross-cultural competence. Cross-cultural competence consists of an individual’s ability to interact with people of other cultures. Study abroad offers a unique opportunity for acquiring cross-cultural competency, for it is in the realm of others that one can best comprehend the culture and lives lived there, and be given an opportunity to integrate into a foreign culture. Sutton and Rubin (2004) state, “Students who had studied abroad reported a higher level of functional knowledge [the knowledge base needed for efficacy in navigating daily routines in a new environment] than did their peers who lacked this horizon-broadening experience” (p.77). Once initiated into cross-cultural interaction through study abroad, this benefit perpetuates itself. A significant finding from an Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) survey of 3,400 returned study abroad students that assessed the long-term impacts of study abroad was that “the [study abroad] experience continues to influence [students’] interactions with people from different cultures,” allowing for ongoing cross-cultural competence to accrue (Dwyer & Peters, 2004, Intercultural Development).

According to Kitsantas, from George Mason University, and Meyers, from the University of California San Diego, (2002), “The concept of cross-cultural effectiveness is a complex one involving the ability to maintain a positive attitude while fitting into the new social network and deciphering the inherent logic of the foreign setting” using communication, cognitive and interpersonal skills, and exhibiting patience, flexibility, and cultural empathy (p. 3). In a study of 24 respondents, nearly equally divided into a
study abroad participant group and a control group, these researchers used the Cross-
Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) as a pre- and post-test measure to assess cross-
cultural effectiveness and self-awareness. Though the sample size was relatively small,
the results were significant. The researchers reported, “The findings of the present study
demonstrate that study abroad programs significantly contribute to the preparation of
students to function in a multicultural world and promote international understanding for
both the local and the American students” (p. 12). They found significant differences in
students’ attitudes and behaviors that cultivate international understanding; “[t]hese
differences suggest that the study abroad students increased their ability to deal with the
stresses of the cross-cultural experience, and developed more flexible role behavior,
cultural empathy and respect for the host culture” (p. 13).

In a later study, Kitsantas (2004) researched the degree of cross-cultural
competence accrued by participating in study abroad programming. A sample of 232
respondents consisting of participants in various study abroad locations and fields of
study were given a pre-test and post-test of the study instrument. Significant increases in
cross-cultural competence were found on the pre- and post-test comparison. However, no
significant differences were found based on study location or courses taken while abroad,
suggesting that studying abroad itself is the important factor, not what is studied or where
it takes place.

2.2.3. Intercultural sensitivity. Closely related to global awareness and cross-
cultural competence is the benefit of heightened intercultural sensitivity, often indicated
by an enhanced appreciation of other cultures. This includes a reduction of ethnocentrism
augmented by an increase in cultural relativism. Further benefits include an increased
interest in the art, history, and architecture of other cultures and the seeking out of more
diverse friends.

In the aforementioned GLOSSARI study by Sutton and Rubin (2004), a measure
of cultural relativism was investigated between the study abroad group and the control
group. The researchers defined cultural relativism as the “cognitive realization that one
ought not judge other cultures or respond to individuals from those cultures based on
one’s own ethnocentric values and practices” (p. 78). Attempting to understand and view
other people from their perspective shows respect for and an appreciation of their cultural values and mores, an ability that study abroad has been shown to enhance in students. In Sutton and Rubin’s study, study abroad was found to account for ten percent of the variance in knowledge of cultural relativity between the study abroad and control groups.

Also in 2004, Chieffo and Griffiths published a study undertaken at the University of Delaware. More than 2,300 students, either participants in short-term study abroad programs through the Center for International Studies or members of a control group, completed a survey instrument that used a Likert-scale and included the open-ended question, “What do you think is the most important thing you have learned in the past month?” (p. 168). The focus of the two-year study was to uncover student perceptions on study abroad. One category of questions attempted to determine the degree to which students were aware of other cultures, including similarities and differences between the students’ and others’ cultures. The study found significant differences between the control group and the study abroad group; the latter tended to be more aware of divergent cultural norms, and to be more culturally relativistic than the control group. “Simply put, the students abroad were more apt to recognize that, ‘the whole world is not like the U.S.,’ and ‘there are other cultures that exist very differently from our own,’ as two students wrote as a response to the open-ended question” (p. 170). Another participant response from the open-ended question came from a student who studied in Italy, and indicated the respondent’s sense of importance of reducing ethnocentrism: “[The most important thing is] the importance of thinking more globally and being aware of other cultures . . . not being caught up in American ignorance” (p. 174).

2.2.4. Academic skills. Enhanced academic skills have been found to accrue from study abroad. For one, the day-to-day experience of living in a foreign country fosters problem-solving and critical thinking skills, both inside and outside of the classroom. On a more academic level, in a study supported by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at the Wabash College Center for Research on Undergraduate Education at The University of Iowa, Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2011) stated: Students “involve themselves more deeply in integrative and reflective learning experiences” upon return from study abroad programs (p. 124). A recent IES Abroad survey found that 52%
of 1,008 alumni obtained a graduate degree, of which 15% earned a terminal degree (2011, Academic Attainment). Further, as reported by a joint effort between North Dakota State University and Minnesota State University, Moorhead, “[s]tudents can develop new perspectives on academic subjects and real-world issues” due to unique experiences and interaction with new modes of thought (Spiering & Erickson, 2006, p. 315).

An example of this perspectival shift comes from Edmonds’ (2010) qualitative study of nursing students. Working out of Jacksonville University, Edmonds attempted to identify benefits and barriers of study abroad programming by exploring the lived experiences of nursing students who studied abroad. Using purposive sampling methods and a phenomenological approach, Edmonds interviewed and collected journals from 18 participants who represented a wide range of demographics. Analysis of the data uncovered a real world appreciation for a formerly learned academic concept through the study abroad experience. “[M]ost of these participants had been exposed to formal cultural diversity education in their nursing curriculum. However, it appeared to become more real to them once they were immersed in another environment” (p. 554).

Carlson, et al. (1990) also found that their data “strongly suggest that the experience enabled the students to expand their academic and intellectual horizons beyond what they would or could have obtained, had they remained at their home institutions” (p. 36). Their results showed that 66 percent of respondents took courses abroad that they would not have taken on the home campus; 57 percent reported developing new areas of interest while abroad; and, 68 percent “took courses to broaden their academic and cultural backgrounds” (p. 36). Additionally, results of follow-up interviews of past study abroad students revealed that of the alumni contacted, all of them completed the bachelor’s degree. 71 percent of the respondents continued on to graduate work; of these, 69 percent obtained master’s degrees and 41 percent completed their doctorate. “The educational attainments of the study abroad alumni/ae far exceed the norms” (p. 92). However, further research must be done in this area to confirm this finding as there is some argument that study abroad self-selects high-achieving students.
2.2.5. Career skills. Alongside enhanced academic skills, career skills have also been found to increase significantly due to a study abroad experience. A heightened intercultural understanding and increased cultural relativism serve employees well in the modern workplace, enabling better functioning with coworkers of different cultures and nationalities. An increased knowledge base of a given topic, particularly due to different perspectives gleaned from time abroad, can result in higher levels of creative thinking, productivity, and understanding of the content studied. This is suggested by a survey of American law school international program directors undertaken by Denise Koch. The findings included, among other things, that “respondents felt that participants would have the opportunity to evaluate the practical values of law in a different sociological environment and in turn broaden their understanding of the norms, philosophy, and constrains of the U.S. legal system” (quoted in Hill, 1991, pp. 41-2). This statement, while not an actualized finding of educational increase, indicates the prevailing professional opinion that study abroad can assist in providing new academic and practical perspectives.

Study abroad can also provide a better understanding of the needs and experiences of a practitioner’s diverse client base, as evidenced by Edmonds’ (2010) study of nursing students: “Several participants discussed how this will enable them to be more patient or compassionate with their future clients, having experienced language barriers or culture shock themselves” (p. 554). Further, Edmonds found evidence that being in a new environment can help students rethink their chosen profession, possibly leading to a deeper commitment to the work. From several participant responses, Edmonds found that “studying abroad provided an opportunity to identify oneself as a nurse” (p. 561). One respondent summarized her study abroad experience with the following:

I guess one way to look at it is [that] culture shock provides an opportunity to redefine my life objective of my nursing profession. What I experienced in this country [Dominica] helped me develop a better understanding of myself and stimulate a better, much more passionate interest in becoming a good nurse . . . and develop a better understanding of the value of nursing. (p. 554, brackets in original)
Interestingly, these particular examples come from studies of nursing students and law professors; yet, professional training programs have not traditionally been seen as fertile fields for study abroad. Perhaps these studies and others like it will encourage other professional programs to seriously consider the career-based benefits of study abroad for their students.

2.2.6. Foreign language skills. According to Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) of Muhlenberg College, increasing one’s foreign language skills through immersion study is a frequently cited benefit of study abroad. By immersing oneself in the country and culture of those who speak the target language, students use their classroom learning in their day-to-day lives. Additionally, by increasing their time on task, contextual processing, and understanding of the cultural grounding underpinning a language, learning is enhanced and retained at higher rates.

In their previously mentioned study, Carlson et al. (1990) also measured students’ language ability in speaking and listening using pre- and post-study abroad interviews. The results showed a substantial gain: Most students began the year at the intermediate level, defined as “able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands” (p. 52). By the end of the year, the study abroad students had moved to the advanced level, meaning they were “able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence” (p. 52). Some had even achieved the proficiency level of superior categories.

In 2004, Segalowitz, Freed, Collentine, Lafford, Lazar, and Diaz-Campos conducted a series of studies supported by the CIEE, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and from the Dean’s Office, Faculty of Arts and Science at Concordia University. The intent was to study linguistic gains between a study abroad group and a control group; participants in both groups were native English speakers studying Spanish. The study abroad group attended courses in Spain while the control group attended Spanish classes at a university in Colorado. Members of each group were matched on their previous Spanish experience and life-use of the language, among other factors. Respondents completed pre- and post-term questionnaires,
interviews, and computer-based tasks to assess a variety of linguistic dimensions. Comparison of the pre-tests between groups showed no significant differences on oral proficiency or oral fluency. Analysis of the gains between groups resulted in a statistically significant gain in oral proficiency for the study abroad group compared to the control group, and only the study abroad group gained in oral fluency. Further, “the study abroad students appeared to have developed superior narrative discourse abilities” (p. 13). The findings led the researchers to an interesting conclusion, one which may offer an explanation for the significant increases reported in foreign language learning while studying abroad:

In interpreting these results, we suggest the possibility of a consideration that has, as yet, been unexplored within the field of second language acquisition. The more the adult learner is able to communicate in the target language the more he or she will do so. As a result, the very act of communicating will further enhance learning, leading to more communication, which should promote further learning. This feedback effect is sometimes referred to as reciprocal causation, where the results of learning lead to consequences affecting the course of learning itself. (p. 14)

2.2.7. Personal growth. Personal growth encompasses a wide range of benefits, including improved self-efficacy, heightened self-confidence, increased spirituality, and “higher levels of emotional resilience, openness and flexibility, perceptual acuity and personal autonomy” (Kitsantas, 2004, p. 447). This increase in maturity is often accompanied by openness to new experiences and conflict resolution skills. Heightened patience, respect for others, and responsibility are also hallmarks of personal growth. Further, as reported in another study funded by the Wabash College Center for Research on Undergraduate Education, students gain “insight into their own value systems” (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009, p. 120). Cahill (1962) posited: “Go to a new place. Have your former gods challenged or, even worse, ignored. If they were really good, they will survive. If not, they shouldn’t” (p. 355). Either outcome will lead to a reexamination of one’s ideals, causing reflection and subsequent growth. Maurice Brungardt also lauds the perspectival advantages provided by a foreign study experience
with this statement: “A newly experienced culture is often a yardstick by which students can measure themselves, their presuppositions about life and reality, and their successes and failures” (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 89).

Students have also reported an intersection of the above-mentioned benefits of study abroad with personal growth. For instance, increased intercultural sensitivity and an embrace of cultural relativism can underscore feelings of maturity. Becoming more cross-culturally competent adds to feelings of personal autonomy, leading to higher levels of confidence and self-efficacy. Likewise, increasing one’s academic and career skill sets boosts self-efficacy in the respective fields, which further heightens self-confidence. An example comes from Cheiffo and Griffiths (2004). In this excerpt, a respondent used her self-estimated increase in intercultural sensitivity and global awareness as evidence of her personal growth: “I feel that I have learned to be open-minded and not judgmental. There are millions of people in this world, and there are lots of people who are just like me. The world is not confined to my backyard. Traveling is a very important part of life for me now” (p. 174).

Edmonds’ (2010) study of nursing students also contained findings of students’ personal growth and directly provided students’ perspectives on this topic. Participants reported the importance of increased self-awareness: “This study additionally found that by being out of one’s comfort zone and learning to adapt, personal transformations and self-awareness can occur” (p. 560). Respondents stated that they had the “mental clarity and time to take a self-inventory of their beliefs and values” (p. 560). In one student’s words, study abroad is “enlightening, you learn a lot. And if you take the time, and really seriously take the time, and take in your surroundings it brings forth a lot of self-awareness. Being out of your comfort zone is a time when you really learn a lot about yourself” (p. 554).

Another major finding of the study was that of enhanced self-efficacy, in career skills as well as on a personal level. Edmonds reported on the findings of self-efficacy pertinent to the skills required for a career in nursing: “Study abroad experiences . . . provide nursing students with the strongest possible source of self-efficacy in the form of enactive attainment” (p. 561). A related finding was the increase in self-efficacy
engendered by mastering the day-to-day challenges of living in a foreign environment. Edmonds related, “Several participants expressed feelings of true accomplishment” due to navigating transportation systems and being able to travel on their own in new environments (p. 561).

In Chieffo and Griffiths’ (2004) study at the University of Delaware, five questions assessed personal growth and development for comparison of the study abroad group to the on-campus control group. Four of these questions returned statistically significant differences between the two groups, with the study abroad group reflecting higher levels of growth. Additionally, 27 percent of study abroad respondents replying to the open-ended question about the most important learning outcome of the study abroad period noted some aspect of personal growth such as patience, flexibility, and respect for other people. In contrast, only 9.3 percent of the control group wrote about life lessons being the most important thing they learned, suggesting that study abroad provides more opportunity for experiences and reflection that leads to personal growth.

2.3. Criticisms and Challenges of Study Abroad

2.3.1. Discrimination. One of the strongest criticisms of study abroad has been that of its “discriminatory” nature. To begin with, it has been charged with academic and intellectual elitism. The required minimum grade point averages (GPA), foreign language prerequisites, ability to work independently and without a support network, and proper preparation time required in general studies combine to self-select those students for study abroad who are at the top of the academic system.

Some selection committees, particularly associated with the traditional mainstreaming programs, maintain the need for academic superiority in a study abroad student. They defend this position by stating, “[O]ur students are cultural ambassadors, and we should send only the very best” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1998, p. 74). This defense contends that academics at the foreign university will look to American students as representative of the United States. In 1963, The Institute of International Education (IIE) told students preparing to go abroad, “As an American student in a foreign university, unofficially you will represent the United States” (p. 16). Foreign schools will expect that America has sent the best; to send less than the most exceptional students would be to
lower the reputation of the American educational system. Therefore, students sent abroad “should have a high level of linguistic fluency and cultural sophistication” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1998, p. 74).

The argument further claims that some foreign systems of education are so different that most American students are not prepared to succeed within a new structure, philosophy, or pedagogy (Fraser, 1966). Students going abroad to these institutions are forced to sink or swim; typically, only the most exceptional are able to succeed. In a handbook written to students interested in studying abroad, the IIE warned:

Other countries have developed their own philosophies of education, and as a result their educational systems and ours have grown in different directions. In foreign universities you’ll find a number of things that are different: for example, standards, admission requirements, methods of teaching, the relationship of students to professors, supervision (or lack of it), testing, and marking. Unless you take part in a special overseas program designed specifically for American students, you may have difficulty completing any part of your undergraduate education abroad. (IIE, 1963, p. 34)

This distinctiveness in institutional structure and pedagogy serves to reinforce the ideals of the intellectual elitists; they assert that students who are not able to negotiate foreign educational systems are doomed to failure, and so to send them abroad would be a disservice. A contradiction to this comes from Goodwin and Nacht (1998): “Several program directors report that some students with mediocre records simply come to life after a foreign experience” (p. 74), indicating that it is possible for non-exceptional students to, in fact, reap benefits from study abroad.

Complicating the elitist viewpoint is that some intellectually gifted students are so focused and rigid that they are not equipped to deal with the necessary ebb and flow of life abroad. This is evidenced by Goodwin and Nacht’s (1998) finding, “The gifted tend to be extremely narrow in their interests, goal-directed, and devoted above all to preserving their grade point averages. These objectives do not equip them well for the easygoing rough and tumble of much study abroad” (p. 75). Applying the argument put forth by supporters of elitism, certain intellectually exceptional students would not able to
succeed abroad, and so should not be permitted to engage in foreign study. This would limit the participant pool to only those students who reflect academic achievement combined with the “right” attitude, further engendering elitist attitudes and narrowing the participant pool to a chosen few.

Fortunately, the traditionalist attitude of academic elitism in study abroad no longer holds much merit. While there are likely still pockets of administrators and selection committees that hold this mentality, the trend is to send abroad any student who chooses to go. Goodwin and Nacht (1998) illustrate the prevailing attitude with the following comment: “The conception that study abroad is for rich young women in the humanities at private colleges who wish to spend time in Europe, or for promising young men selected for Rhodes or Marshall scholarships has no validity today – if it ever had any even in the earlier days” (p. 118).

Though most programs maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) requirement, this usually is in place to ensure students can maintain a passing grade rather than to weed out non-exceptional students; a typical minimum GPA requirement is a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. However, this does not automatically exclude students who average lower than this, as some programs do not maintain a GPA requirement.

Further, in a day when study abroad programming was exceedingly limited, competition for the few slots available was very high. Today, programs proliferate and availability is not often a concern. While some specific programs are highly competitive, a student who is not accepted into one program now has the option of applying for a plethora of other, often similar, programs. The need to limit acceptance to foreign study programs to only the golden few has evaporated in the face of modern study abroad, and the accompanying elitist attitude has similarly gone out of fashion.

Another charge of discrimination takes the form of economic elitism. The high cost associated with studying abroad limits the opportunity to those who can afford it. Depending on the program undertaken, costs can quickly skyrocket in comparison to the same period of study at the home university. Tuition costs are handled differently through different programs. With some university exchanges, students pay the same amount as the home tuition, but still need to pay travel and foreign living expenses. Other programs
charge more tuition than a student is accustomed to. And still other programs require
students to pay tuition at the foreign university as well as at the home university, in
addition to their living and travel costs. Adding to this, some contractual situations
require students to concurrently pay home living expenses (such as rent, utilities, car
note, insurance, and cell phone) while abroad. Loss of income is another cost to consider
as students lose time on the job at home, and student visas typically forbid employment
while abroad. All told, study abroad can be an expensive endeavor, a factor that can
restrict participation by less affluent students. The University of Chicago’s Associate
Dean of Students and the academic director of study abroad, Lewis Fortner, was reported
as saying that foreign study “can seem ‘an elusive opportunity, utterly out of reach and
even inappropriate’ for students from working-class or impoverished backgrounds”

Financial aid packages and shorter, more affordable, programs are being put in
place to help minimize expenses. The Simon Act, if passed, will alleviate much of the
direct student cost of study abroad. Additionally, student financial aid departments
increase the amount of loans a student can qualify for if they are studying abroad. Short-
term programs, which are more affordable due to their lowered direct costs as well as the
shorter period away from work, have been increasing in popularity. The most recent
Open Doors report gives figures for the percentage of students studying abroad by
duration of program (IIE, 2012, Duration of US Study Abroad). Excluding study abroad
programs that lasted for one term or more, the remaining categories can be combined—
“Summer Term”, “8 Weeks or Less During Academic Year”, and “January Term”—to
reflect short-term program participation. In the 2000-2001 academic year, 48.1% of
students fell into this category; by 2010-2011, 58.1% of participants went abroad for a
short-term program. Making more programming of this nature available to students will
continue to alleviate the high costs associated with study abroad while providing a wider
range of courses, topics, and locations, thereby making the study abroad experience more
attractive and affordable to students of multiple income levels.

Charges of racial and/or ethnic discrimination have been brought to bear on the
field of study abroad as the numbers of minorities studying abroad have traditionally
been low. According to the most recent *Open Doors* report released by the IIE (2012), between January of 2000 and November of 2010, 77.8% of students who studied abroad were White; 7.3% were Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; Hispanic or Latino students accounted for 6% of the total; 4.2% were Black or African American; Multiracial students made up 1.6%; and American Indian or Alaska Native students constituted 0.5% (Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students).

The accusation of racial discrimination in study abroad consists of three primary factors: financial barriers, institutional discrimination, and cultural perspectives (Dessoff, 2006). In America, minority status intersects with low socio-economic status at a higher rate than for Caucasians, so it is no surprise that financial concerns create a barrier for racial minority students in relation to study abroad. This is reflected in an interview with Margery A. Ganz, Spelman College’s Director of Study Abroad and International Exchange: “At historically black colleges, study abroad is seen ‘more as a luxury than an enhancement in your education.’ . . . We have a lot to people who want to go but we have challenges with money” (quoted in Dessoff, 2006, p. 24).

While this financial issue is far-reaching, some strides are being made to help students overcome the financial barrier. As mentioned, the core of the Simon Act is to provide funding to help students go abroad. Minority students, in particular, will receive assistance if the Simon Act passes; the legislation calls for an increase in minority students studying abroad so the demographics of students abroad more accurately reflect and represent the demographics of the country (Lantos, 2007).

The institutional aspect of racial discrimination stems from the paradigm of the field. Put simply, “[S]ince the current structure is largely the creation of upper-middle-class white Americans of Western European extraction, it is unattractive to minorities. Neither the style nor the content is likely to appeal to persons of different socioeconomic background and geographic origin . . . programs are not constructed and marketed with sufficient imagination and sensitivity” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1998, p. 76). A study by Brux and Fry (2010), out of the University of Wisconsin–River Falls, assessed restrictions on participation in study abroad programming by minority students. These researchers interviewed 42 students in focus groups and collected 29 survey responses. The data
revealed that “multicultural students are especially interested in studying in regions of the world corresponding to their own heritage. They are also particularly interested in topics relating to their ethnic or national roots” (p. 523)—topics and locations that have not traditionally been catered to in study abroad programming.

With the publication of this and similar studies, more attention is being given to cultural programming abroad and diverse geographic destinations. In 1986, 80% of study abroad students went to Europe, a number that dropped to 63% in 2002. “Latin American, Asia, Oceania, and multiple destination study abroad programs increased from 14% to 33% of all study abroad participation during that same time (IIE, 2003)” (McKeown, 2009, p. 18).

Included in minority figures for study abroad are men. Study abroad tends to be a woman-dominated field, with a gender gap ratio that has consistently remained 65:35 (+/- 1.5) since the 2000-2001 academic year (IIE, 2012, Profile of US Study Abroad Students). The theory runs that men are more focused on career-goals and the sciences (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001). A lack of programming that fits their interests and academic schedules prevent them from going abroad at the same rates as women. John Marcum, director of the University of California Education Abroad Program, stated:

We need a greater variety of study abroad programs, tailored to the needs of students in such underrepresented categories as science, engineering, and the fine arts. . . . If, as some argue, men are more career-oriented, greater integration of study-abroad course work into science, mathematics, and business departments, and more diverse short-term options to study abroad, could promote a better gender balance. (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001, p. B7)

In addition to program creation, study abroad offices need to increase marketing to a diverse student body. Marucm suggested “[j]oining outreach programs that help prepare high-school and community-college students for university-level work, and encouraging them to think ahead about studying abroad when they reach the university” as one way to make students aware of study abroad opportunities, how going abroad can impact their education, and how they can prepare to take advantage of it (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001, p. B7). Appealing to minority students, including men, is an area that
demands more research, and much more can be done to overcome this aspect of discrimination in the field, but movement in the right direction is underway.

Expanding on his aforementioned interview with Dessoff (2006), Lewis Fortner pointed out, “While discussions with minority students about study abroad are often couched in financial terms and they are ‘not insignificant’, they also frequently are ‘the stand-in for more profound educational and cultural questions’” (pp. 23-4). These questions include concerns over family expectations and cultural views. An example of minority cultural views toward study abroad is found in Kasravi (2009). This study investigated students of color who chose to study abroad, and included an examination of the barriers they overcame to achieve their goal. One student reported, “When you do things, like if you do the American things, you’re kind of ‘Whitewashed’. I’ve always been called that. I’m ‘Whitewashed’ because I go to college and now because I’m going to study abroad” (p. 8). Though this particular student went abroad despite this negative cultural perspective, this statement is an illustration of how cultural attitudes toward study abroad can dissuade participation by minority students.

Cultural perceptions of an institution can often be rooted in the self-perception of that institution, which appears to be the case for study abroad. Goodwin and Nacht (1998) asserted, “One of the insidious features of discrimination in study abroad, as in other parts of society, is that it feeds on itself. So long as programs are perceived to be designed and reserved for the unusually talented, wealthy, young, and white, these are the participants who will tend to apply” (pp. 77-8). In order to combat discrimination in study abroad, the perception of who participates must be radically altered. A paradigm shift in the marketing and creation of programs to include all students, and a push to disseminate information, including images of a diverse student body abroad, is crucial to changing minds about who does, and who can, go abroad. Recreating the perception of who studies abroad can recreate the reality.

The final charges of discrimination in study abroad refer to age, marital status, and physical disability. Program structure and offerings are at the root of this inequity. The programs to provide for participation of people who are older, married, with families, and/or with disabilities have been extremely limited. This is yet another charge against
the institutional construction of study abroad programming. According to Goodwin and Nacht (1998), “Timing, living arrangements, miscellaneous requirements, all seem geared to the young, unattached, highly mobile students with few commitments, responsibilities to others, or other inhibitions” (p. 77).

This charge of discrimination is well founded and still pertinent. Short-term programming might work for some students fitting these descriptors, and a few programs exist that specifically accommodate people with disabilities, but by and large programs are not designed for these demographics. Research must be done to examine the needs and wants of these students so program and policy reconstruction can maximize potential participation.

2.3.2. Academic quality control. A major criticism of past study abroad programming, particularly traditional mainstreaming, was that the quality and expectations of much foreign instruction fell below American standards. Therefore, students who went abroad would fall behind in their education. This also raised questions of whether to award American university credit for overseas courses, and whether or not study abroad did a disservice to American students. Plainly stated by the IIE, “The educational content of all foreign study programs is not equally sound. Some programs are well planned and well executed; others are not” (1963, p. 35, italics in original).

Vincent Virgulti, a supporter of study abroad and experiential learning, acknowledged the issue of offering academically sound programs while incorporating important experiential aspects into the study abroad program: “Study abroad program designers often experience a dilemma maintaining high academic standards when a program consists of too many non-academic components” (quoted in Hill, 1991, p. 95). Another proponent of experiential study abroad, Joyce Salisbury of the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, admitted to past problems of academic quality encountered on a program to the Yucatan peninsula: “Some of the characteristics that make it so attractive also create potential problems for an academically strong program” (quoted in Hill, 1991, pp. 110-1).

Study abroad professionals have acknowledged the criticism of unreliable academic quality, and many changes have taken place over the years to mitigate this
issue. For one, many foreign institutions have been vetted for quality and course equivalency with the home university. In addition, study abroad offices and faculty are more invested in maintaining relationships with partner universities and programs. The proliferation of study abroad programming and the accessibility of modern technology have combined to make this feasible and desirable. Open lines of communication allow for a better understanding of what is being taught at foreign universities, which in turn facilitates accurate assessment of on-going educational quality. Additionally, some American universities have started opening branch or satellite campuses in foreign countries. With these programs, the home institution maintains control of the academic content and delivery, negating the concern of differential educational content. When students study abroad with a professor, engage in experiential learning, or participate in individual study courses, the programs are designed and/or approved by home university faculty. A well-designed program that provides appropriate attention to outcomes, strategies, and assessments can nullify educational content and experiential outcome concerns within these categories of study abroad.

2.3.3. A question of what is learned. Related to quality control is the question of what is learned while studying abroad. Along with concerns over the quality of classroom education that students receive from some institutions is the content focus of study abroad programs in general. According to Freinberg (2002), of the social-sciences department at Warren Wilson College, study abroad learning focuses on students’ growth and on group dynamics, rather than the host countries’ “cultures or social problems” (p. B20). The charge here is that the academic component takes a back seat to the experiential aspects of group dynamics and personal growth, and that the insular group functioning inherent in some program structures excludes truly learning about the host country. Freinberg expounded, “Students return from study-abroad programs having seen the world, but the world they return to tell tales about is more often than not the world they already knew, the imaginary world of globalized, postmodern capitalism where everything is already known, everyone speaks the same language, and the outside world keeps its eyes on those of us who come from the center” (p. B20).
These charges may have some merit. However, the research on study abroad outcomes, as discussed earlier in this literature review, indicates this is an anomaly rather than the norm. Further, ensuring content learning is a challenge for any educational situation. At the home campus, learning outcomes and strategies are devised to assist students in learning the desired course material; however, what the student actually takes away from a course is, ultimately, up to the student. Study abroad is no different. While some programs are better designed and executed than others, this mirrors course differentiation on campus. Ensuring content similarity and outcomes is no less a struggle for campus-based courses than study abroad programs, and quality and content control of study abroad programming can be managed in the same way as on-campus courses.

2.3.4. Social and academic development. Another charge against study abroad is that it stymies students’ social and academic development. The claims are that it takes students away from their social circle for an extended period of time, can radically alter their views on morals and nationalism, and, depending on which courses they take and credit transfer issues, can cause a delay in graduation.

These concerns are not new. While university-level study abroad officially began in the late 1800’s, students were being sent to overseas boarding schools and attending foreign universities long before. Over 250 years ago, Thomas Jefferson was quoted as being contrary to foreign study: “Let us view the disadvantages of sending a youth to Europe. To numerate them all would require a volume. . . . It appears to me that an American coming to Europe for education loses in his knowledge, in his morals, in his health, in his habits, and in his happiness” (quoted in IIE, 1963, p. 3). One hundred years later, concerns about moral development and nationalism as affected by overseas study were being discussed amongst the movers and shakers in academia. In 1873, Birdsey Northup, while Secretary of the Connecticut State Board of Education, began a campaign against overseas education for youth up to and through undergraduate study. He wrote to administrators in the highest levels of academe, requesting they weigh in on the subject, and was rewarded with a deluge of replies supporting his opinion. In a typical response, Abner Jackson, President of Trinity College, wrote:
But my strongest objection to the liberal education which is to be acquired abroad . . . arises from the fact that a young man is now at the most plastic period of his life. . . . He is thrown out of gear with the social and political machinery of his native country. He returns to it with sympathies chilled. He is disposed, insensibly it may be, to criticize and compare. His patriotism is somewhat dulled. His personality as an element of the life-force of the nation has lost somewhat of its intensity. (quoted in Fraser, 1966, p. 36)

Perhaps in the eras of Jefferson and Northup, a focus on patriotism and preparing students strictly for the American way of life was an appropriate educational aim. But even if this were true then, certainly this is not the case today. The age of globalization requires students to be able to understand and function within a multicultural society. What was once claimed as detrimental to a student’s development—exposure to new cultures and foreign ideas—is now a required component of a thorough education, and study abroad is an effective way of achieving that end.

Interestingly, of those who supported Northup’s contention, many were in favor of overseas experiences. It was the collective belief that going abroad was beneficial in many ways, though the advantages would not outweigh the disadvantages until a student had fully formed his or her character and intellect, and a sense of the American lifestyle and patriotism was firmly rooted. Many of these detractors of study abroad encouraged a jaunt overseas, but recommended waiting until after completion of the undergraduate degree. Charles Eliot, President of Harvard University in 1873, stated, “Young men of mature mind and trained powers of observation may profitably spend some time abroad when their education at home has been finished” (quoted in Fraser, 1966, p. 10). Northup himself concurred: “The advantages of foreign travel after the requisite preparatory studies are fully conceded by all and urged by many” (quoted in Fraser, 1966, p. 9). Clarification of “requisite preparatory studies” can be found in another statement from Northup: “[T]he greatest benefit to be derived from study in a foreign country is, I think, when one has finished his collegiate and professional education at home” (quoted in Fraser, 1966, p. vi, italics in original).
More recently, David Roochnik, associate professor of philosophy at Boston University, has levied charges of academic and social debilitation due to a study abroad stint. His argument cited the disruption than can occur for students when a process of gradual change is interrupted, creating upheaval and renewal issues just as a student is about to enter their most promising academic year. The degenerative process is best explained in his own words:

[S]tudents also pay a significant price, both academically and socially, a price that higher-education leaders should scrutinize. . . . First, study abroad programs, which usually take place during the junior year, risk interrupting a student’s gradual development in college. . . . In my experience, students often hit their stride in the junior year . . . juniors begin to appreciate the dedication that good academic work requires. They have become knowledgeable about and comfortable on the campus. They understand the bureaucracy governing them, and know what they want to study. They declare a major. Juniors begin to build serious friendships with their peers and professors. It is, frequently, the best of all academic years. . . . Spending the junior year abroad, however, can disrupt that pattern of development and interrupt the gradual process of developing friendships and establishing academic interests. Upon returning to campus, students have to acclimate once again. They have to renew friendships or make new ones, and resume the course work they left behind. For that reason, while the benefits of study abroad are not in doubt, the costs attached to it—especially when the student is away for the entire junior year and returns only for the senior year—are potentially very high. (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001, p. B7)

While this is an argument to consider, an analysis of the costs and benefits of social and academic development is perhaps best determined by the individual student. Some students do not see their social development lacking for time away from home, especially due to the ease of modern communication tools and access of social media. Other students have found study abroad appealing as it can widen their social network. It has been shown that academic development can be enhanced by study abroad, as some courses or academic experiences are not available at the home university. And for those
students who want to study abroad but are concerned about their academic progress and/or being away from their social circle, short-term study abroad can be an acceptable alternative. The student gains the benefits of a foreign academic experience without a prolonged absence from family, friends, and home coursework, and oftentimes, short-term programming is undertaken at times that do not conflict with the home university’s academic schedule.

2.3.5. Diversity at home. Roochnik agreed that learning about globalization is an important part of a collegiate education. However, he argued that study abroad is “the easiest and most direct—yet not always the most valuable—approach” (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001, p. B7). He accused higher education of “a failure of commitment and imagination” for sending students abroad when “we can help students experience the immensely diverse riches of this world right here at home . . . as [d]iversity . . . is ubiquitous, even if in its local inflections it is more subtle and difficult to reach” (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001, p. B7). His suggestions for accessing diversity education on the home campus included language learning, library visits, and reading religious texts that are different from one’s own.

Roochnik’s point that much can be learned of diversity from the plethora of people and cultures in this very country is accurate. However, study abroad takes cultural experiences to levels that cannot be replicated outside of an immersion experience. Visiting a new culture or situation for an hour or an afternoon does not begin to compare with the experience of living within that culture for a longer period of time. In fact, such brief, superficial trips would be akin to academic tourism. Reading books and hearing explanations of other cultures can be beneficial to students, but this learning lacks the overriding context of a culture or cultural practice that includes variables such as community, geography, language, and lifestyle. Edmonds (2010) found that study abroad offered a distinct advantage to her participants as it changed their perspective to that of being the outsider: “[S]tudying abroad presented a unique opportunity to see people and life outside an American frame of reference . . . Having had this experience allowed them to develop the understanding of what it was like to be lonely, feel like they did not ‘fit in,’ or to have their words be lost in translation” (p. 553). Such an experience cannot be
replicated with strictly text-based sources, or through encounters with diversity that are modified into an American context. As “Sabrina”, a student in Edmonds’ (2010) study, put it: “Even though people are from different places [and live in the US], once they come to the United States, they are . . . acculturated. Whereas, it’s a different experience when you go on their turf” (p. 556, brackets in original).

Another finding of Edmonds’ study was that for participants who had previously received diversity training on the home campus, the training became “more real to them once they were immersed in another environment” (p. 554). Learning about diversity at home is undoubtedly educational. However, it stops short of the degree of contextual understanding an immersive experience can provide. It is a solid educational component, but it cannot replace the learning acquired through a foreign study experience.

2.3.6. Culture shock. Oberg was first to use the phrase “culture shock” to describe the emotional, physical, and mental reactions people undergo when experiencing new cultures (Fabrizio & Neill, 2005; Furnham, 2003; Oberg, 1960; Winkelman, 1994). Culture shock is “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg, 1960, p. 177). These signs include words, gestures, facial expressions, body language, customs, and norms. By entering into a new culture, these cues are no longer useful, resulting in discomfort and frustration for an individual. Winkelman (1994) defined culture shock as “a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture” (p. 121). It is not necessary for a person to enter a foreign country to experience culture shock; it can occur in any situation in which an individual is introduced to a new environment. “The process of culture shock is underway when a person is feeling uncomfortable about being in unfamiliar circumstances” (Fabrizio & Neill, 2005, p. 45). Culture shock can lead to unusual emotional and behavioral responses, exacerbate existing fears, and hinder a student’s learning and personal development (Fabrizio & Neill, 2005; Winkelman, 1994).

Culture shock occurs in four distinctive phases, though progression through these stages is not always linear, the phases can repeat as new experiences arise, and not all phases are experienced by all people (Fabrizio & Neill, 2005; Oberg, 1960; Winkelman,
Stage one is often referred to as the “honeymoon” phase, or “tourist” phase. At this stage, there is excitement about and positive regard for a new culture; fascination in, interest with, and idealizations of the new culture or country are hallmarks of the honeymoon phase. After the initial excitement wears off, the “crises” or “cultural shock” phase sets in. This is characterized by feelings of loneliness, depression, confusion, and/or frustration as the individual begins to feel a lack of understanding of the new cultural norms. This can lead to aggressive, even hostile, feelings toward the host country. Minor irritations become major issues, differences become irritating, concerns about cleanliness and food preparation come to the fore, and the onset of isolationist behaviors, extreme tiredness, and excessive emotional reactions can occur. Not all individuals recover from the crises stage, and some return home. However, as one becomes more adept at reading and handling oneself within the new culture, an individual enters stage three. The “adjustment,” or “reorientation,” phase is marked by the individual making effective adjustments to the new culture. Recognition of problems as cross-cultural issues based in a lack of understanding leads to the seeking out of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Coping mechanisms are developed to assist in negating the frustrations felt in stage two, and a more positive outlook toward the people and culture of the host country is adopted. This stage is a prolonged exercise, and recurrences of negative emotions and responses to new stimuli can occur. The fourth stage, the “adaptation,” “resolution,” or “acculturation” phase, takes time to achieve, and not every traveller is able to accomplish this. It is represented by stability in managing the new culture while retaining one’s own identity. One sees the culture of the new country as “just another way of living,” and embraces aspects of the culture as permanent to one’s persona, creating a truly bicultural identity (Oberg, 1960, p. 178; Winkelman, 1994).

Contemporary research considers culture shock to be a temporary stress reaction “where salient psychological and physical rewards are generally uncertain, and hence, difficult to control or predict” (Furnham, 2003, p. 19). Anxiety, confusion, and apathy are normalized reactions. The type and amount of stress accrued due to culture shock has been found to correlate to the degree of difference between a student’s culture and the host culture (Furnham, 2003). In order to resolve culture shock, to move into the third or
fourth phase of the process, one must develop coping strategies and skills. Black and Mendenhall (1990) identified three dimensions of cross-cultural skills that are necessary to be successful in a new culture: self-maintenance; engendering relationships; and cognition. The dimension of self-maintenance includes psychological health and well-being, self-efficacy and self-confidence, and stress reduction. The relationship dimension is specific to fostering relationships with citizens of the host country and culture. The cognitive dimension refers to the creation of an accurate perception of the host country, including its institutions, environment, and social systems. Development and maintenance of these skills will quicken the process of culture shock and allow students to normalize into the host culture, enhancing interest and appreciation for the new country and increasing educational opportunities.

2.3.7. Cultural and communication barriers. Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede (2002) discussed five phases of cross-cultural communication barriers. These barriers prevent clear and accurate understanding between parties in a cross-cultural situation. Language differences constitute the first phase. This includes vocabulary and grammar differences, but also cultural competence—knowing the appropriate language use for particular settings, and the possibly ambiguous meanings of various words. Non-verbal communication is the second phase. Comprised of gestures, facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and other physical cues used when communicating, these can differ across cultures as much as spoken language. Stereotypes encompass the third phase of communication barriers. Preconceived notions of how others should think and act can color one’s perception, leading to inaccurate assessments and interpretations of communicative experiences. Related to this is the fourth phase of cross-cultural misunderstanding, evaluation of others based on one’s own cultural expectations. In this phase, an individual judges another culture from the perspective of the home culture, often leading to misunderstandings and frustrations for all those involved. Stress is recognized as the fifth phase. The more stress and discomfort an individual experiences in a new culture, the more defensive he or she can become. This can lead to a retreat into one’s own, familiar, cultural milieu, exacerbating the four previous phases. These barriers are what Lewis (2007) referred to as a “language straightjacket,” which can only be
removed by learning the language, culture, religion, and philosophies of another culture (p. 9).

An example of the confusion attendant in cross-cultural communication comes from Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, and Lassegard (2002). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Language Resource Center to create materials relating to language and cultural learning in order to improve students’ study abroad experiences, these researchers engaged students and faculty in surveys, focus groups, workshops, and semester-long courses to gather their data over a three-year timeframe. From this, three manuals were produced, one aimed at students, one for language instructors, and a third directed toward program coordinators. In a conversation directed to study abroad students, Paige et al. discussed potential issues with the homestay experience. They cautioned, “Since conflicts can occur because of culture or personal characteristics, it may be very difficult for you to figure out whether something is happening because you’re not used to the culture yet or just because this family is not a good match” (p. 78). They further warned that the relationship with the homestay family will effect one’s overall perception of the host culture and country. As a coping mechanism for overcoming these barriers, Hofstede et al. (2002) recommended “postponing interpretation” of the other culture until one has a better understanding of the cultural perspective and norms: “In other words observe behavior but try not to attach attribution to it” (p. 18).

Paige et al. (2002) addressed Howell’s four phases of cultural awareness. Phase one is unconscious incompetence, in which one may be aware of some differences, but is unable to process how to manage them and function within the new culture. More often, an individual is unaware of the differences: “This is a difficult stage for someone to discern, since it is very difficult for first-time travellers to know what they do not know” (p. 96). Phase two, conscious incompetence, reflects one’s awareness of differences, though the student still is uncertain of how to proceed with this knowledge. However, with effort, it can lead to phase three, that of conscious competence. In this stage, a student is aware of differences and has developed coping mechanisms and skills to integrate into society. The final phase, unconscious competence, is achieved when coping
skills are no longer needed. Host cultural values and norms have been internalized; understanding of and correct behavior within the new society has become instinctive. These phases align with the four phases of culture shock, with the difference being that culture shock refers to the emotional reactions one undergoes while integrating into a new society, and the phases of cultural awareness denote the intellectual processes involved.

What are seen as communication “barriers” most certainly may feel that way to many when first introduced to a new culture or environment. Yet, as Geertz (2003) reminded us, these barriers should not prevent us from engagement in nor preclude learning opportunities provided by foreign experiences:

It is clear that merely listening to other voices in other rooms saying other things in other accents can be a perilous business, liable to confuse our emotions, derail our judgments, and leave us both rattled and engrossed. But that is what listening to the voices of our own literary tradition, Macbeth or Merrill, Lear or Faulkner, brings on as well: the sense that there is more to things than first appears and that our reactions are where we start, not where we end.

We may indeed end almost anywhere. (p.36)

2.3.8. Re-entry issues. Re-entry, also referred to as readjustment, issues occur when students return to their home country after a period abroad. These issues can reflect the initial culture shock experienced upon arrival in the host culture, but are more unexpected in their manifestation. Due to this, re-entry into one’s home culture can be more difficult than integration into the host culture (Paige et al., 2002; Hansel, 2007). “For many exchange students, coming home is even more difficult than going abroad. Part of the reason for this is precisely because no one expects to have problems going home, and so students return home unprepared to cope with them” (Hansel, 2007, p. 142). According to R. Michael Paige, “Culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar; re-entry shock is the unexpected confrontation with the familiar” (Paige et al., 2002, p. 143, italics in original). These concerns can include feelings of isolation and alienation from friends and family, changed attitudes toward the home culture and national policies, and reconsideration of academic and career paths.
Returning students can feel as if they no longer are completely “American,” yet neither do they feel wholly a part of their host culture. They find themselves somewhere in between. “In a way they are emotionally in cultural ‘limbo’” (Paige et al., 2002, p. 153). This can lead to feelings of alienation from friends, family, and even everyday American life. Suzanne Hay, after studying abroad in Greece, reported, “I had heard of culture shock before I went abroad, but I didn’t really understand how difficult it would be to return to the U.S. In Greece, my identity had been so thoroughly ‘American,’ and yet now that I was back in the U.S., I felt so un-American. I knew I hadn’t become ‘Greek,’ but I certainly wasn’t the same ‘me’” (quote in Paige et al., 2002, p. 152). A student returning from study abroad in Spain stated, “I noticed that many of my friends I no longer have a relationship with because I feel like I can’t relate to them and they can’t relate to me. We both changed in different directions while I was gone” (quoted in Paige et al., 2002, p. 144). In her dissertation for the University of Montana, a qualitative study utilizing focus groups and workshops on re-entry, Arouca (2013) also uncovered feelings of isolation and alienation. One student reported, “Sometimes [it’s] frustrating when you’re trying to reconnect with those people and people are just so busy. . . [and] they just can’t really relate to the experience [which makes me] feel a little sad and a little lonely” (p. 88, brackets in original). The student further stated, “It just been hard to drop back into life, because . . . it was hard, me having changed personally so much, to just drop right back into the same routine that I had before all that change happened” (p. 88).

A qualitative study of returned African American students added a layer to the isolation felt by many students. In addition to feelings of alienation, being students of color required finding others who could understand their study abroad experiences and their minority identities. Bruce (2012), in his doctoral dissertation for Rhode Island College, interviewed students who had been returned from a few months to several years and found that “they still struggled to find others who understood the significance of their journeys and were capable of assisting them in deconstructing their new global perspectives and identities” (p. 133). A participant in Bruce’s (2012) study shared that “having someone who was sensitive to her ethnicity and cultural interests” would have made her re-entry transition more meaningful (p. 140).
Beliefs and values that were previously taken for granted have likely undergone cognitive shifts due to exposure to new perspectives and ways of living. New notions such as participation in a global community, cognizance of world imbalances, and an appreciation of world media can create a shift in personal perspectives. When re-entering a society that has not shared in these experiences, intellectual confusion and dissonance can occur, complicating the adjustment back to the home culture. One student noted that her experiences were “something that I could only share with others who had also studied abroad and understood the complexity of an experience in a different culture” (quoted in Paige et al., 2002, p. 144). Arouca (2013) recounted commentary on a participant’s changed attitude toward financial resources: “[I’ve lost] some illusions, like my idea of poverty changed a lot” (p. 88). A more severe change in attitude was reported by another participant in Arouca’s (2013) focus group:

I am continually reminded of cultural vacuum in our society that’s been replaced with nonsense, [a] washing over our cultural past. I feel so detached, [place of birth in the U.S.]. There’s very little distinguishing traits in my cultural heritage. I watch television and I look at restaurants like Applebees that try to superimpose an American cultural heritage on us, on the people, so I find it just really unsatisfying. It doesn’t feel real necessarily, coming back here. It’s bizarre. (p. 89, brackets in original)

Other members in the focus group added that American consumption and wastefulness were more apparent and frustrating to them since returning, adding to their negative feelings toward their home country. With the new perspective engendered by a study abroad experience, some students become so disillusioned with their previous acquaintances and way of life that they choose to create a new network. Bruce (2012) reported on such a student: “When Sierra returned, she only associated with her friends who had studied abroad. Her reentry led to a distaste in the ‘American lifestyle’” (p. 139).

It is not unusual for study abroad students to garner new interests while abroad. Occasionally, these interests lead to a desire to expand one’s academic scope, or even change academic tracks completely. Time abroad can also expose individuals to new career options, leading students to move into a new field of study and work. However,
changing plans set in motion prior to the study abroad program can be difficult. Switching majors may require additional coursework including prerequisites as well as major-specific classes. Further, applying to a new program does not guarantee acceptance. Even if a student is accepted into a new department or major, graduation may be postponed; additionally, the extended time on campus can lead to increased costs and a delay into the working world. Previously developed social and professional networks may need to be reconstructed within a different academic or occupational field. Arouca (2013) found another side of negative academic issues ascribed to the reentry process. These included students losing free time, being busier with their academic schedule, and having issues studying. Further, the home university’s courses were found to be more difficult than the foreign universities attended: “at home there is ‘a considerably harder education’” (p. 87).

“Re-entry is a transition, and like all transitions it has potential for both pain and growth” (Paige et al., 2002, p. 149). In order to move beyond the pain and maximize potential growth, individuals need to develop skill sets to manage the divergent changes in themselves and the world and people around them. Paige et al. (2002) and Hansel (2007) recommended that students expect change, maintain a positive attitude, use the adjustment skills garnered during their entry into host culture to readjust to the home culture, journal, and communicate feelings with friends and family. Further, returned students should not judge friends and family; rather, students should remember that they are now filtering life through a different perspective than they did previously, and understanding experiences differently than those who did not go abroad. Becoming involved in the local international community or becoming active in one’s home school’s study abroad community are ways of maintaining international ties and meeting people with similar perspectives and interests. Finding ways to continue exploring interests fostered abroad is another constructive way of continuing one’s international experience. Additionally, study abroad offices can offer re-entry workshops for returning students. Bruce (2012) advocated for culturally responsive, guided reflection. He espoused three major benefits from such reflective experiences:
Culturally responsive, guided reflection helps students open doors to emotions and thoughts they may not have previously considered or had time to explore. . . . Culturally responsive, guided reflection is a validation of a student’s identity and a confirmation of the unique reality reflected through their culture. . . . [and] culturally responsive, guided reflection inspires students’ critical thought while also encouraging their voice be included in the discussion. (p. 144)

2.4. Motivation, Influences, and Barriers to Study Abroad

2.4.1. Motivation and influences. Seeking an explanation of motivation requires an analysis of participants’ perspectives. Yet, “[d]espite the wealth of studies investigating the experiences of students who study abroad, little is known about the factors that impact the decision to participate in such programs” (Goldstein & Kim, 2006, p. 508). Of the studies that have researched motivation and influences to study abroad, many are quantitative, leaving a gap regarding qualitative, participant-driven knowledge of this phenomenon.

Additionally, some studies attempting to understand who goes abroad have looked at predictive factors, such as demographics, personality, and interests of students. The results are interesting to a degree, as they can provide knowledge of which students intend to study abroad and which demographic factors are common amongst those students. However, this information is of limited use as these studies did not delve into the reasoning behind the findings. Working from both Ball State University and Stetson University, Naffziger, Bott, and Mueller’s (2008) study of 471 business students at a mid-sized university in the Midwest provides an example: This study examined institutional characteristics, student attitudes, and individual differences to identify influential or predictive traits leading to participation in study abroad programs. They found that predictive factors included age, gender, extra-curricular activities, foreign-language abilities, and intent to study beyond an undergraduate degree. “The profile of someone considering a study abroad experience is a younger . . . female . . . student with previous travel experience . . . who has a moderate-level of extra-curricular commitment . . . and work components . . . with some language knowledge beyond English . . . who plans to study beyond his/her undergraduate degree after working a few years” (p. 47).
In contrast to this last finding, Stroud (2010), of the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, reported, “students who planned to pursue a master’s degree or higher were less likely to consider study abroad than students who intended to pursue a bachelor’s degree or less” (p. 503). This result comes from a survey of 2,258 entering freshman at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst that studied intent to study abroad. Two other unique findings from this study related to living arrangements: Students who attended university more than 100 miles from their permanent home were more likely to intend to study abroad, as were students who did not live with family, in either on- or off-campus housing. Stroud also reported that social science majors in this study were more likely to study abroad than professional or engineering students, which is in line with other studies of predictors of study abroad.

The Wabash National Study on Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE) included an investigation of characteristics indicative of the predisposition to study abroad. This longitudinal study of college freshmen was undertaken with the intent to determine the influence of a liberal arts education on intellectual and personal outcomes. Pre- and post-tests of various data collection instruments were given to students from over 60 institutions across the United States before and after the freshman year; the resulting sample size was 2,772. Analysis of the data relating to study abroad uncovered a complex intersection of socioeconomic status, pre-college social and cultural capital, and social and cultural capital accrued during the first year of college. Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009) reported: “The combination of these factors influences a student’s intent to study abroad substantially . . . from a 31% predicted probability of intent for students from low SES with low pre-college capital and low first-year capital, to a 85% predicted probability of intent for students from high SES with high pre-college capital and high first-year capital” (p. 137). They further found that while socio-economic status impacted intent to study abroad, “[t]he impact of social and cultural capital accumulation before college is influential for all students—no matter their socio-economic status” (Salisbury et al., 2009, p. 137). Though interesting on the surface, this study did not follow up to see if those who reported intent to study abroad did, in fact, go abroad. Predictive characteristics and studies on intent to study abroad can be helpful in driving
further research; however, on their own, these studies lack concrete information on who
does study abroad, and fail to investigate the rich, thick description that can provide
explanations behind the results.

On the other hand, Carlson et al.’s study for the SAEP included questions
examining students’ motivations to study abroad. The pre-test survey, given prior to the
year abroad, used a Likert scale to determine the intensity of given variables in the
decision to study abroad. The results showed the most influential reasons for studying
abroad: Desire for cross-cultural experiences, foreign language learning, making foreign
friends, acquiring new perspectives on America, the opportunity to travel, and gaining a
better understanding of a specific country (1990, p. 17). Enhancing career prospects was
also highly ranked. “A substantial number of study abroad students noted that career
plans were a significant factor . . . and viewed the upcoming experience abroad as almost
essential to their career development” (1991, p. 9). Even those students who did not list
career considerations as of utmost importance saw the sojourn abroad as helpful to their
future careers: “A very high proportion of the students, between 87 and 95 percent, felt
they would be able to utilize the general aspects of their international experience in their
later professional life” (1991, p. 9). The opportunity to take courses not offered at the
home campus was “of only moderate importance” (1990, p. 17), while joining friends on
a study abroad program, attempting to connect with family, and exploring ethnic heritage
overseas were the least important of the motivations (1990, p. 17). “In short, the primary
reasons students gave for choosing to study abroad were related to their desire to
experience new cultures and learn the language of the host country” (1990, p. 17). While
these findings are instructive, it is important to note that the study used quantitative
measures and the available responses were pre-determined by the researchers. Further
studies that use qualitative methods and include open-ended questions, such as the
current research, will uncover additional factors.

Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005), of Northern Arizona University, conducted
another quantitative study in which possible answers were determined by the researchers.
Using an on-line survey, these researchers asked 353 in-coming (to the U.S.) and out-
going (from the U.S.) students to rank, in order of importance, their reasons for studying
abroad. The top three reasons were: “1. It is/was a good opportunity to live in another culture; 2. It is/was a good opportunity to travel; [and] 3. I liked the country my exchange program was located in” (p. 47). These results aligned with Carlson et. al.’s findings that the most important factors related to cross-cultural experiences, travel, and the specific country of study. However, these results would have been more instructive had the survey question been open-ended, allowing participants to answer in their own words.

In a study of Asian American students conducted by Van Der Meid (2003), from Brandeis University, the number one reason to study abroad was “the desire to take advantage of an opportunity to be overseas” (2003, p. 79). Using questionnaires administered to and interviews of study abroad students and a control group, 153 participants from a cross-section of American institutions were queried to determine factors that influenced Asian American students to study abroad. Cultural exploration, foreign language learning, “[b]eing away from school,” exploration of cultural heritage, academic opportunities, and connecting with family abroad followed in descending order (Van Der Meid, 2003, p. 79-80). Van Der Meid further reported that for these students, program location was also an influential factor; more specifically, study in an Asian country motivated students over programs located elsewhere, as did the sharing of experiences by Asian American study abroad alumni. The influence of study abroad alumni was also found in Kasravi’s (2009) study on students of color who studied abroad. Kasravi combined past participants with peer groups into the category of “Social Factors”; other categories developed from Kasravi’s findings were “Personal Factors,” consisting of internal drive and perceived outcomes of personal growth, and “Institutional Factors” that included available programming, marketing, and campus culture (p. 6).

Allen (2010) conducted a study of language-learning motivation for students studying abroad in a foreign language program. The study was funded by grants from the University Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburg as well as the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Miami. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, interviews, and on-line learning journals in order to answer, amongst other research questions, what motivated students to learn a foreign language, and how study abroad related to these motives. The findings subdivided participant
motivation into two categories: those who were primarily motivated by language learning, and those who indicated career aspirations as most motivational. For students whose primary motive for studying abroad was reported as foreign language learning, it was found that they were further motivated by academic goals, career goals, cultural curiosity and understanding, and building relationships with people in the host country. The students who reported career aspirations as their foremost motivation were found to have subsequent motives of global awareness and understanding, cultural experience, exposure to new perspectives, the opportunity to travel, academic development, and making foreign friends.

Based in the department of psychology at Santa Clara University, Schroth and McCormack (2010) conducted a study in which the focus was to examine two personality dimensions among study abroad participants: sensation seeking and need for achievement. Participants were drawn from the California State University’s International Program and constituted 378 respondents who had studied in one of 14 countries from five regions of the world. This quantitative study used questionnaires to measure personality dimensions, with the results compared to an existing data set of non-study abroad college students. The findings were statistically significant, revealing that study abroad students indicated a higher need for achievement, and “were serious young scholars who sought experiences not available at home. . . . [The results] suggest that their needs consist of seeking new experiences through the mind and senses by traveling abroad” (p. 534).

Though the findings reported in these studies are promising, the dearth of studies and variety of research methodology suggests that the topic still promises to provide undiscovered results that will enrich our understanding of why students participate in foreign study programming. Qualitative methods need to be employed in order to give participants the opportunity to express the full range of factors that motivated them to study abroad.

2.4.2. Barriers. Discussed as criticisms of study abroad, academic components such as GPA, foreign language prerequisites, and the lack of ability to work independently can act as barriers to students who wish to study abroad. Also previously
addressed, finances, institutional discrimination, cultural values and perspectives, disabilities, and non-traditional student status can create hurdles that must be overcome in order to study abroad. Further studies have shown additional issues that arise for students who want to study abroad; some hurdles make study abroad more difficult, while other issues prevent students from participating altogether. These obstacles consist of lack of awareness of study abroad opportunities; lack of encouragement by professors and advisors; lack of academic courses of interest and/or need; lack of interest in other cultures; personal attributes and dispositions toward study abroad, including fear and uncertainty; academic scheduling conflicts; extracurricular obligations such as family, work, or other activities; family disapproval; and, health and safety concerns.

For her master’s thesis, Brush (1998) conducted a study of factors influencing undergraduates at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa against studying abroad. Data were collected using a two-part survey of 316 respondents who had not studied abroad during their college experience. Part one of the survey consisted of an open-ended question that requested students to list their reasons for not studying abroad, and the level of importance they attached to each. Part two was a closed-response survey, consisting of Likert-scale and yes-no questions. The data were then analyzed for content using descriptive quantitative methods. In addition to cost, four categories emerged as significant. “[A] careful analysis of all the data gathered by the study suggests that there is a factor of even greater significance than cost. That factor is unfamiliarity with the concept of study abroad and/or the programs offered by the University” (p. 74). This category included responses such as a complete lack of awareness of study abroad; having heard about study abroad, but not knowing about available programs; and, misunderstanding options such as housing or available courses. As an example of this, “[T]en students indicated that they did not want to participate in study abroad because they did not want to live with a homestay family” (p. 75). However, many programs through the university offer homestay as one housing option; it is not a requirement. Another category was that of fear and uncertainty. Included in this category were the concerns of cultural adaptation, language and cultural barriers, and not knowing what to expect or what to do in certain contexts in a foreign country. Health and safety issues and
fear of being alone were also indicated in this category, though at a lower response rate than other fears and uncertainties. Brush collapsed extracurricular activities, academic schedule conflicts, and work or family responsibilities into one category labeled “no time” (p. 79). In relation to work commitments, respondents reported they would not be able to study abroad “without losing their position” (p. 79). A correlation was reported between work obligations and family obligations, as many respondents stated they were married and/or had dependents to care for. Further, student athletes, members of the ROTC, and students preparing for graduate school exams reported a lack of time available for studying abroad. Academic schedule conflicts were reported as “a possible delay in graduation should the student participate,” meeting specific major requirements not offered abroad, and general education requirements that prevented participation in study abroad (p. 80). The final category reported by Brush, ranking third in significance, was that of interest; more specifically, a lack of interest in studying abroad, “that it is a waste of time” (p. 80). Student responses in this category included not wanting to change one’s lifestyle, wanting to pursue other hobbies, and that the logistics of study abroad “is too much of a hassle” (p. 80). Not surprisingly, this category further included a lack of interest in foreign languages and cultures. This study is particularly interesting due to the demographics of the University of Hawai‘i and the diversity of the students who responded to the survey, which covered a wide range of demographics and included a higher-than-average response rate of minority students. However, this study is over a decade old, and a more current replication of this study could be more instructive to contemporary research.

In her 2000 doctoral dissertation at the University of Delaware, Chieffo reported on a quantitative study that surveyed 1,060 undergraduate students at the University of Delaware. Questions focused on participation and non-participation in the study abroad programs available during the winter session of 2000 at the university, with the intent to analyze factors that influenced the decision to study abroad. Respondents included students who were scheduled to study abroad (n=78) and those who were not scheduled to study abroad (n=982) in the winter session. Chieffo found that lack of awareness of study abroad programming was a major factor for those not studying abroad. “[S]tudents
are not well informed about the University’s study abroad offerings, even if they are aware of the programs’ existence. . . . Fewer than 30% of the students purported to know more than the basics about any of the programs” (p. 95). It is important to note that the students surveyed belonged to groups targeted for study abroad marketing efforts; therefore, the sample was not representative of the university’s population, with the level of awareness of the general university population being lower than the sample surveyed. Additionally, Chieffo reported that professors were not providing information or encouragement, and advisors had “even less” influence on students (p. 97). “Students are obtaining very little study abroad information from their professors. . . . The statistics for advisors are even more dismal” (p. 105). Another area of interesting and significant findings related to the students’ year in school. Freshmen were more concerned about homesickness and adjustment issues (p. 99) and were less likely to be aware of study abroad programming than upper classmen (p. 100). On the other hand, seniors were less concerned with adjusting and being homesick, but were more concerned about academic components and credit offered. Seniors cited a lack of selection of courses offered abroad (p. 98). “The courses offered abroad do not help them advance toward graduation” (p. 100). Further, extra-curricular obligations of housing, activities, and work were frequent issues for the upper classmen (p. 101). These results are illuminating, but are limited as the study design focused only on one particular study abroad time period, that of the winter intersession of 2000. It would have been more instructive and generalizable had additional study abroad time frames—for example, study abroad programs in the course of a given academic year—been addressed.

As part of his doctoral dissertation at Pennsylvania State University, Surridge (2000) conducted a quantitative study in which 636 non-traditional undergraduate students aged 25 years old and older were surveyed to determine influences that deterred participation in study abroad. Not surprisingly, the factors of family responsibilities and financial considerations were found to discourage these non-traditional students from studying abroad. Interestingly, multicultural indifference accounted for the greatest amount of variance. Primarily comprised of “dispositional reasons caused by the internal beliefs, fears, and doubts that students have about themselves and the study abroad
experience,” multicultural indifference included concepts such as apprehension toward the study abroad experience and a lack of interest in other cultures (p. 106). Further, the factor of institutional shortcomings, which was comprised of “student reactions to the institutional policies, practices and procedures that students perceive as obstacles to participation in study abroad,” was found to be significant and included such responses as cost, lack of information and awareness, lack of professor and advisor encouragement, and academic scheduling conflicts (p. 106). These findings are consistent with Brush’s (2000) and Chieffo’s (2000) results.

Utilizing focus groups of 42 student members of various minority student organizations and 29 survey responses administered to the multicultural student population at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Brux and Fry (2010) explored constraints on the participation of multicultural students in study abroad. Mentioned earlier, the lack of programming relevant to minority students’ interests in exploring their heritage and ethnic roots was a factor preventing participation. Further, the survey results indicated that conflicts of academic scheduling, obligations to family and work, and safety concerns acted as deterrents. The focus group findings reiterated the survey results, and added concerns of racism and disapproval by their families. Specifically cited was the issue that “their parents had worked hard to bring their families to the United States and that they couldn’t understand why their child would be interested in studying abroad” (p. 518). Though instructive, this study’s limitations included a small participant pool, which prevented generalization to a wider population. Additionally, the researchers pointed out that given the low response rate of only eight percent for the survey, “the survey results can only be considered anecdotal” (p. 521).

2.5. Summary

Considering the expansion of study abroad programming in nearly every aspect—the numbers of students going abroad, the numbers of programs offered, the varying lengths of programming options, the variety of time periods in which programs are offered, the fields of study addressed, the various program structures, and the widening of locations of available programming—it is clear that interest in study abroad has grown. The typology provided in this literature review addressed opportunities for the majority
of undergraduate students in America. Traditional or non-traditional students, students of varying income levels, of varying academic success, of varying fields of study, and so on, can find or create study abroad programs to fit their needs.

The benefits gained from a study abroad experience, as well as the critiques and challenges of studying abroad, have been well documented over the course of decades. However, motivation and influences leading to study abroad are less thoroughly researched. With interest in study abroad on the rise, the obvious question arises: Why? What drives students to study in a foreign country? What life experiences, which influences, have intersected to motivate students to go abroad? A few quantitative studies have attempted to uncover answers to these questions, but quantitative design is limiting by its very nature; in order to delve into the deeper, richer, contextual factors that contribute to the decision-making process, qualitative methods must be employed. This research project provides the rich, thick, contextual data qualitative methods can reveal in order to more thoroughly answer the question: Which lived experiences and life influences motivated students to study abroad?
Chapter 3
Methods

Qualitative research emphasizes “discovery, description and meaning rather than prediction, control and measurement” as emphasized by quantitative methodology (Laverty, 2003, p. 2). Qualitative methods allow people to speak for themselves, to express their decision-making processes in their own words, and facilitate extrapolation of the lived experiences and life influences that are pertinent from participants’ points of view. This is most useful when research is being undertaken in an area within which little is known, as is the case with student motivation to study abroad. The conceptual framework of narrative inquiry, theoretically supported by constructionist epistemology, determined the construction of my research question and data collection methodology (see Figure 3.1). In order to provide an appropriate paradigm within which participants could fully express themselves, the research question was formed with wide parameters and the data collection was open-ended. Data were analyzed using a hermeneutic phenomenological framework. A discussion of my theory of research relationships underscored my personal relationship to the topic under study and explicated my conception of the role of the researcher. Finally, an explanation of case study design leading to participant recruitment provided the context for who was included in the study.

3.1. Statement of the Problem

The SAEP study conducted by Carlson et al. (1990) was quantitative in nature, employing pre- and post-test questionnaires with pre-determined response choices and Likert-scale assessments. This study was one of the first of its kind in terms of breadth and depth of investigation on study abroad, and it yielded an incredible amount of insight, as discussed in chapter two. However, examination of student perspectives was limited due to the established possible responses allowed on the data collection instrument. These researchers acknowledged the limitation and stated that additional research on student thought processes relating to study abroad should be conducted: “Further research is needed to address . . . how students’ perceptions concerning study abroad are shaped” (p. 34).
Figure 3.1. Illustration of Methodological Approaches
Similarly, calls for research on study abroad decision-making have been reported by the CIEE. Academics, administrators, and practitioners of study abroad want to understand the process behind the choice to go abroad. They are interested in identifying and understanding the influences of factors that lead to participation in a foreign study program. The CIEE states, “While there is a good deal of folk wisdom about what motivates students to go abroad, there is very little hard data. We know all too little about whether students are pursuing their own goals or are influenced by others—faculty, study abroad advisors, friends, parents” (2006, p. 3).

To date, most work relating to study abroad motivation has been quantitative in nature. However, decision-making involves a complexity of informational processing that is difficult to quantify. Rather, qualitative research is the appropriate methodology for uncovering the richness and detail necessary, the “thick description,” to best comprehend lived experiences and decision-making processes (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Individuals are best suited to explain their own reasoning, and qualitative studies can give participants the space to do so. Qualitative methods provide a forum for participant voices, giving respondents an opportunity to express themselves while imparting to researchers information germane to their decision-making processes. In a study of foreign language learners studying abroad, Wilkinson (1998) used qualitative methods due to “their commitment to uncovering the participants' point of view” (p. 24). This study used a qualitative design in order to uncover the thick description of my respondents’ points of view.

3.2. Research Question

In order to uncover the intersection of factors that created the possibility for students to participate in study abroad programming, this study explored motivations for and influences on students’ decisions to study abroad. Thus, the research question: Which lived experiences and life influences motivated students to study abroad?
3.3. Narrative Inquiry

The literature indicates that very little research on students’ reasons for studying abroad has been conducted (Carlson et al., 1991; Kitsantas, 2004; Lakshmi et al., 2010). In order to understand students’ motivations to engage in foreign study, a qualitative exploration of the life experiences leading to participation in study abroad programming is essential. Thus, narrative inquiry was an appropriate conceptual framework for this study.

3.3.1. Definition and key terms. Narrative inquiry makes meaning of individuals’ lived experiences, relying on and depicting the storied nature of lives in order to honor individuality and the complexity of participants’ experiences (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Polkinghorne (1988) defined narrative as an “organizational scheme expressed in story form” (p. 13). Entrenched in the ideas of John Dewey, narrative inquiry focuses on Dewey’s criterion of continuity and interaction in experience; “[his] writings on the nature of experience [has] remained our conceptual, imaginative backdrop” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Thus, the primary assumption of narrative method is that “human experience is episodically ordered and best understood through a reconstruction of the natural narrative order in which it is lived” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 19). Narrative inquiry is seen as life story that participants and researchers co-author (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It researches a phenomenon using a narrative view of individuals’ experiences and incorporates a multiplicity of voices that includes the respondents’ and the researcher’s perspectives. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), “Narrative inquiry is a process of learning to think narratively, to attend to lives as lived narratively, and to position inquiries within a metaphorical three-dimensional space” (p. 120). This three-dimensional space elucidated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) consists of interaction—“personal and social”; continuity, or temporal location—“past, present, and future”; and situation—“the notion of place” (p. 50, italics in original). They claimed that “any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (p. 50). Along the interaction dimension, narrative inquiry
looks “inward” toward internal conditions such as emotions, hopes, and moral dispositions, as well as “outward” toward existential conditions, or environmental impacts on experience; “backward” and “forward” are used in the dimension of continuity to indicate temporal tense (p. 50).

In addition to interaction, continuity, and situation, other key concepts of narrative inquiry include tentativeness, experience, people, action, and context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These ideas are discussed as separate entities, but, in fact, overlap each other and intertwine. Tentativeness refers to positioning narrative within context, acknowledging that contexts can shift, and that what researchers write is interpretive and “always open to revision” (p. 17). Narrative inquiry does not produce definitive, non-negotiable knowledge of a phenomenon; rather, it furthers understanding of the phenomenon along a continuum of knowledge. Experience is what is studied in narrative inquiry while researchers investigate phenomena. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained the use of narrative inquiry in educational research: “Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Further, experience ties into the temporal dimension of narrative inquiry as experience happens temporally and changes over time. People are seen to be in an on-going process of personal change, and participants must be narrated in terms of that process. This relates to the temporal dimension as well as the dimension of interaction. Actions are construed as narrative signs which must be interpreted before meaning can be attached. In line with interpreting actions, the concept of context must be ever present. Actions, changes, language, explanations, and the like must all be considered contextually within each dimension of the three-dimensional inquiry space.

3.3.2. The in-depth interview. The in-depth interview is used to elicit first-person narrated experiences and perceptions from participants (Howarth, 1998; Yow, 2005). Respondents’ meaning-making of their experiences are at the forefront of this method of data collection: “Researchers who are using the recorded in-depth interview are seeking to understand the ways that the narrator attributes meanings to experience” (Yow, 2005, p. 9; Charmaz, 2006). The in-depth interview also allows for understanding

Yow (2005) expanded on the interview as a methodology: “The recorded in-depth interview is a research method that is based on direct intervention by the observer and on the evocation of evidence” (p. 4). Evidence, or field texts, results from a researcher’s questioning, and becomes tangible as words are recorded. In-depth interviews focus on the individual to elicit data, which can then be analyzed to examine a phenomenon.

Use of an interview protocol allows for flexibility of participant responses and the interview flow (Charmaz, 2006; Howarth, 1998; Yow, 2005). It consists of the topics an interviewer will explore, and often will include specific questions. Questions should be written in an open-ended fashion and be open to restatement, so as to invite each participant to discuss a topic in depth. The interview protocol provides topics and a strategy for approaching the interview, but does not need to be strictly adhered to throughout the interview. Flexibility of topics and ordering allow participants to discuss what they find important to them while ensuring the interviewer can return later in the discussion to points of interest. A researcher is cautioned against using slang, colloquialisms, and words or phrases that contain double meanings to increase clarity of meaning and avoid insulting or appearing to condescend to participants (Yow, 2005). Also, using emotionally loaded terms or leading language should be avoided; neutral, conversational language is best to elicit an in-depth accounting of the respondents’ experiences, thoughts, and perspectives (Howarth, 1998; Yow, 2005).

3.3.3. Limitations. Limitations of narrative inquiry relate to researcher influence, bias, selection, and memory. Charmaz (2006) discussed the possibility of misleading participants into confirming a researcher’s preconceived notions:

An interviewer’s questions and interviewing style shape the context, frame, and content of the study. Subsequently, a naïve researcher may inadvertently force interview data into preconceived categories. Not only can asking the wrong questions result in forcing the data, but also how interviewers pose, emphasize, and pace their questions can force the data. [The wrong] questions may also
impose the researcher’s concepts, concerns, and discourse upon the research participant’s reality—from the start. (p. 32)

In relation to selection, which can include selecting participants to interview and/or data to analyze, Yow stated that interviews “may result in a picture that is narrow, idiosyncratic, or ethnocentric” (2005, p. 17; Howarth, 1998). Clandinin and Connelly addressed the selectivity of how to report findings: “Narrative inquiry often seems to be making the claim of co-optation of voice. The argument may run either that voices are heard, stolen, and published as the researcher’s own or that the researcher’s voice drowns out the participants’ voices, so that when participants do appear to speak it is, after all, nothing more than the researcher’s voice code” (2000, p. 75; Howarth, 1998). Another statement underlining the issue of selectivity came from Yow (2005): “[T]he interpretation of the evidence depends on the interpreter” (p. 21). Selection of whom to interview, how to interpret and analyze data, and how to report findings is ultimately in the hands of the researcher. Yet, the limitations of selection and bias can be resolved by careful research design, transparency of design choices, articulation of the research relationships, and transparency of coding and analysis.

A critique levied against narrative inquiry is that narrative inquirers record stories that are anecdotal at best. It is “essentially a linguistic form of inquiry” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 77). However, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argued that narrative inquiry “in the field is a form of living, a way of life” and “trying to make sense of life as lived” by looking for narrative threads of meaning (p. 78). The concept of anecdotal limitations is bolstered by the fallibility of human memory, and that “the in-depth life review presents retrospective evidence” (Yow, 2005, p. 19). Memory is selective and can be faulty, leading to issues of reliability of testimony and validity of factual information; however, reliability can be checked by follow up on inconsistencies in participants’ responses, and validity can be checked by comparison to other sources (Yow, 2005). Charmaz (2006) argued that interviews are a reconstruction of reality, not a reproduction, that interviews are “contextual and negotiated” (p. 27; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Yow (2005) supported this and claimed that it is not the facts of the events that are significant, but the meanings attached to them that matter. Cole and Knowles (2001) took
this concept further: “If we accept the premise that all memory is selective, a reconstruction or perhaps a recreation of mind and, therefore, a fiction, then we should assume that the remembrances selected and told earn their status as memorable and significant events for good reason” (p. 119; Ricoeur, Blarney, & Pellauer, 2010). The literature agrees that memory, though fallible and selective, is not a hindrance to doing good research when the research is not a search for Truth, but for the meanings individuals attach to their lives and recalled experiences.

3.3.4. Application. Yow (2005) explained that in-depth interviewing allows for questioning a participant, which is “especially important when we need to know the underlying reasons for a decision,” which aligns with this study’s intent to explore factors behind the decision to study abroad (p. 9). Further, “intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). Charmaz (2006) also stated that in-depth interviews are “open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (p. 28). Additionally, Polkinghorne (1988) underlined “the importance of having research strategies that can work with the narratives people use to understand the human world. . . . [They will] make our research considerably more successful and useful” (p. xi). Therefore, in-depth narrative interviewing using hermeneutic phenomenology for data analysis embedded within a narrative inquiry framework was an appropriate approach for exploring the phenomenon of students’ decisions to study abroad.

Polkinghorne (1988) described the two types of narrative inquiry: descriptive and explanatory. Both use narrative data and the same data collection techniques; the difference lies in the intent of the study’s end product. Descriptive inquiry attempts to reproduce an accurate description of interpretive, narrative accounts to make meaning of lives. Explanatory inquiry accounts for connections in a causal sense and provides narrative accounts to support these connections. The current study was explanatory in nature, as the intent of this study was to explain the reasons students study abroad, and provide multiple narratives in support of the results. The characteristics of narrative inquiry that appealed most to this study were that it is a way of understanding experience
from the participants’ points of view, that it is a collaboration and social interaction 
between a researcher and the respondents, that the researcher becomes part of the context 
of telling and retelling participants’ stories, and that narrative inquiry is a way to 
communicate stories lived and told.

The living and telling of stories is accomplished through the process of narrative 
inquiry, beginning with the initial contact with each potential participant. In order to find 
respondents, I networked with people I knew and used referrals, also called snowball 
sampling, to grow the participant pool. As participants indicated a desire for possible 
involvement in this project, each potential respondent was sent an e-mail including my 
contact information, the study’s recruitment flyer\(^1\), and the confidentiality statement\(^2\). 
These documents conveyed the nature of the research project, the role and time 
commitment requested from each interviewee, and an assurance of anonymity\(^3\) and 
confidentiality relating to their inclusion in this research study. Further, potential 
interviewees were encouraged to contact me regarding any questions or concerns prior to 
agreeing to participate in this study.

Once a respondent agreed to participate and returned the signature portion of the 
consent form, a semi-structured pre-interview telephone or Skype call was scheduled 
with each participant\(^4\). The pre-interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and 
promoted initial, unofficial contact; rapport building and connections were made via 
shared study abroad experiences; demographic questions were asked to ensure the 
individuals fit this study’s needs; an explanation was given of what this research project 
was and how the interviews applied to it; and, an opportunity was offered for respondents 
to ask questions about the research and researcher to ensure they were comfortable 
participating in the project prior to any recording devices being employed. Conducting a 
pre-interview can be conducive to improving the quality of data collected as it can 
alleviate participants’ anxiety, provide opportunity for respondents to reflect on their 
lives prior to the interview, and form a trusting relationship between participant and 
researcher. Cole and Knowles (2001) underscored the importance of establishing a

\(^1\) A copy of the recruitment flyer is located in Appendix A.
\(^2\) A copy of the research consent form is located in Appendix B.
\(^3\) In order to maintain anonymity of the subjects, interviewee names will be changed.
\(^4\) A copy of the pre-interview protocol is located in Appendix C.
relationship with each participant, and placed the onus of this on the researcher. “More often than not, ‘the researched’ . . . comes to the first moment of involvement with particular expectations. . . . He or she is anxious to know of the extent, direction, and tone of the inquiry work, anxious to know what is expected” (p. vii). It is the researcher’s position, and in the project’s best interest, to allay any fears or anxieties respondents bring to the project and to form a common bond, and a pre-interview is a productive way to address these issues (Howarth, 1998).

At the end of each pre-interview, a date, time, and method (in person or via Skype) for the interview were set. The interviews proceeded under the guidance of the interview protocol and the procedures of narrative inquiry and in-depth interviewing. Charmaz (2006) provided helpful guidelines for producing an interview protocol, and permitted the researcher to tailor the structure of the interview to the project at hand: “The structure of an intensive interview may range from a loosely guided exploration of topics to semi-structured focused questions” (p. 26). This study used a semi-structured format guided by a list of topics in an attempt to elicit free-flowing conversation from the respondents. The topics were covered in a loosely chronological manner, from early childhood to university life. However, this was open to change as the interviews were participant-driven, and moved forward and back, from one topic to another, during the interview process. The conversations were redirected back to the topics on the interview protocol as befitted the conversational flow, or at the end of the interview. Charmaz (2006) also pointed out that one question may suffice for the interview, though more direction may be needed depending on each interview and participant, and clarifying questions and detail probes should be brought into the conversations (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews and the accompanying questions in this study remained flexible and dependent on each participant.

Shortly after each interview, the conversations were transcribed into written form with pauses and “filler” language such as “mmm” and “uhh” removed. As this study used a hermeneutic phenomenological interpretive approach, this aided in interpretation of the meanings participants’ had attached to their experiences (Kvale, 1996). Further, when

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5 A copy of the interview protocol is located in Appendix D.
providing a participant the transcript for their review, a formal, written style is more appropriate than a verbatim transcription of the interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Kvale (1996) referred to transcripts as “interpretive constructions,” and stated, “Transcripts are not copies or representations of some original reality. . . . Transcripts are decontextualized conversations, they are abstractions” (p. 165). As such, the respondents in this study were asked to participate in member checking by reading the transcripts of their interviews and verifying that their words and the meanings they intended to convey were reflected in the transcripts (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Seidman, 1991). Participants were encouraged to request any changes, additions, or deletions to the transcripts that they felt would either enhance clarity or make them more comfortable (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Seidman, 1991). Member checking was used to increase the measures of validity and reliability in transcription and in the ensuing analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Seidman, 1991).

3.4. Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Narrative inquiry draws on the traditions of linguistics and hermeneutic philosophy (Cole & Knowles, 2001). The current study was particularly interested in the hermeneutic tradition, which is “the theory of interpretation . . . the theory of achieving and understanding of texts, utterances, and so on” (Forster, 2013, para. 1). Johann August Ernesti’s publication of 1761, *Institutio Interpretis Novi Testamenti [Instruction for the Interpreter of the New Testament]*, began a shift away from hermeneutics focused strictly on theology toward a more general hermeneutic philosophy (Forster, 2013). In this text, Ernesti put forth four principles applicable to general hermeneutics. The first consists of a two-fold concern of language translation: different languages utilize different conceptual resources, and researchers’ interpretations “often diverge significantly” from the studied language (Forster, 2013, Sec. 2, para. 3). Though in reference to differing languages, a point of consideration for same-language studies is the “ever-present danger in interpretation of falsely assimilating the concepts (and beliefs, etc.) expressed by a text [or participant] to one’s own” (Forster, 2013, Sec. 2, para. 3). The second principle is that linguistic usage determines the meaning of words; therefore, interpretation is meaning-
making through linguistic understanding. Thirdly, Ernesti stated the need for detailed knowledge of context to be employed in interpretation. Directly related to this is Ernesti’s fourth principle, that of holism in interpretation: A text or participant must be considered in a holistic manner “to acquire sufficient evidence to be able to pin down word usages, and thence meanings” (Forster, 2013, Sec. 2, para. 6).

Contemporary researchers have furthered these concepts. Herda (1999) stated, “The act of understanding an utterance, spoken or written, involves a dual process: the utterance is part of an interpersonal linguistic system, and also is a moment in the speaker’s internal history” (p. 47). This dual process refers to both interaction, which occurs within “an interpersonal linguistic system,” and temporality as “a moment in the speaker’s internal history” would be plotted on the dimension of continuity. Herda (1999) continued by exploring hermeneutics’ two modes of interpretation: psychological interpretation and grammatical interpretation. Grammatical interpretation considers the specificity of language, comparing the words written or spoken to the entirety of the language to determine meaning. Psychological, or phenomenological, interpretation considers language from the viewpoint of the originator; this interpretive stance recreates the intent and subjectivity of the participant. Laverty (2003) explained hermeneutic phenomenology’s focus on the effects of these subjective meanings: “Hermeneutic research is interpretive and concentrated on historical meanings of experience and their development and cumulative effects on individual and social levels” (p. 15). This approach also takes into consideration all four of Ernesti’s principles by considering the participant contextually and holistically in an effort to clarify the intended meaning of language from the subjective viewpoint of the respondent. Walker (2011) expanded on this idea: “Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with identifying, describing and interpreting everyday lived experiences (in context), with the goal of discovering meaning and achieving a sense of understanding” (p. 19). Both interpretive approaches are valid within hermeneutics, but cannot be undertaken simultaneously.

The current study concerned itself with the phenomenological approach to interpretation, interested in the participants’ viewpoints and voices, the intended meaning rather than the grammatical meaning of language. Further, the hermeneutic focus of
historical experiences and their relationships to development and cumulative life influences was of particular interest. This approach was supported by Greene (1994), who stated, “What constitutes an appropriate and legitimate focus for social inquiry, is the phenomenological meaningfulness of lived experience—people’s interpretations and sense makings of their experiences in a given context . . . [T]his process is inevitably hermeneutical” due to the interactive nature of researcher-participant relationships, which place the researcher within the inquiry context (p. 536). The coexistence and usage of hermeneutics with phenomenology was further bolstered by Ricoeur’s (1991) claim that hermeneutics requires an underpinning of phenomenology, and that phenomenology cannot exist without hermeneutics: “phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics. . . . On the other hand, phenomenology cannot constitute itself without a hermeneutical presupposition” (pp. 23-4, italics in original).

The hermeneutic phenomenology focal points of context and psychological interpretation in social inquiry are central to narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry requires context to situate experiences in the three-dimensional inquiry space, and relies on the subjective meaning of language used by participants to express themselves and tell their stories; it is through the subjective meaning of language, the linguistic intent, of respondents that researchers can code and analyze data. The current study focused on coding based on the linguistic intent of the participants, and used thematic analysis to discover emergent categories. Rather than begin with preconceived categories and then glean evidence from the data to support those categories, I chose to allow the data to speak for themselves, permitting the categories to naturally emerge from the data. As instances of motivation and influence came to light, I noted their importance to the respondents. Returning to the transcripts multiple times, I created themes from these instances of motivations and influences as indicated by my participants. For example, when a participant clearly noted a family member as influential to their decision to study abroad, the category of “family” came into being. Each respondent’s themes were treated with equal import; many respondents reflected similar categories while several categories and sub-categories were reported by fewer than half of the interviewees, and one sub-category was found to exist for only one participant. However, I was interested in the
quality and importance the respondents attached to their responses. I did not discount any category based on lack of frequency; each category uncovered was reported, regardless of number of appearances in the data. The categories resulting from this thematic analysis are described in chapter 4.

3.4.1. Constructionist epistemology. Closely related to the interpretive tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology is the epistemology of constructionism. “Constructionist epistemology is fundamentally concerned with the meanings individuals derive from their lived experiences and social interactions” (Harris, 2010, p. 299). Lived experiences and social interactions in and of themselves do not lead to life choices; rather, the values one ascribes to and the learning taken from these experiences guide future decision making. Therefore, constructionists look to the meaning-making that occurs during experience and interaction, instead of concerning themselves with an objectivist viewpoint of events; a relativist ontological viewpoint underlies constructionist epistemology. The ability to understand life choices is found in the complex intersection of different experiences, interactions, and the subjective meaning an individual ascribes to these. In order to understand this interplay, researchers must uncover participant perspectives and derived meanings of events individuals consider germane to their life choices. In this way, constructionist epistemology complements and underscores hermeneutic phenomenology.

Constructionists challenge the notion that one true reality exists separately from human interaction and perception (Annells, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Harris, 2010). Therefore, one of constructionist epistemology’s primary assumptions is that “empirical knowledge is produced in partnership between researchers and participants through their collective involvement in the inquiry process” (Harris, 2010, p. 299). Dialectical and hermeneutical approaches are essential to this assumption. The researcher is interconnected to what can be known and interpreted within collaboration between researcher and researched. “Methodologically, the researcher engages in an inquiry process that creates knowledge through interpreted constructions dialectically transacted, thus aiming for more informed and sophisticated consensus constructions to provide a reconstructive understanding of a phenomenon” (Annells, 1996, p. 385, italics in original). This assumption aligns with a narrative inquiry approach.
to the research and the current study’s intent of creating knowledge through interpretation and shared dialogue between researcher and researched. Constructionist epistemology used in conjunction with hermeneutic phenomenology creates data as constructed between researcher and participant, with the meanings ascribed to such data determined by the respondent.

3.5. Research Relationships

Relationship dynamics are integral to hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative inquiry. These include relationships between researcher and participants (the researched), researcher and topic of study (the research), and participants and topic of study. Research relationships consist of a triad with dual directionality between each component: researcher-research, researcher-researched, and researched-research (see Figure 3.2). The researched-research relationship is found in the research processes of data collection, coding, interpretation, and analysis; this relationship is unveiled in a study’s findings. However, the researcher-research and the researcher-researched relationships can and should be examined prior to conducting a study.

Figure 3.2. Diagram of Research-Researcher-Researched Relationships

3.5.1. Researcher-research. Making explicit the researcher’s relationship to the topic under study is an important aspect of hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative inquiry. “One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher’s own narrative of experience, the researcher’s autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70). Narrative inquiry has a strong autobiographical aspect to it, as research interests develop out of personal experience and can help formulate the framework within which a study
takes place. Yow (2005) argued that these assumptions and interests change over the
course of a research process. In line with Yow, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) referred to
“negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating transitions, and negotiating
ways to be useful” (p. 63). These negotiations can be subsumed into the researcher-
research and researcher-researched relationships. For example, negotiating ways to be
useful involves a researcher becoming part of the research, “to join the narrative, to
become part of the landscape” (p. 77). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated it is
“crucial” for researchers to articulate the relationships between personal interests, the
significance of a study, and larger social contexts (p. 122). By acknowledging narrative
experience, a researcher situates herself in the context of the three-dimensional inquiry
space. Yow (2005) supported this concept: “Awareness of our biases and preconceptions,
the limitations of our experiences and preferences, brings us closer to an understanding of
how we influence research and our interpretation” (p. 5). Essentially, a researcher
explains what she is trying to do and how her experience effects her conception of the
research, and, “as the explaining takes place, clarification and shaping of purpose occurs”
(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 73). Laverty (2003) stated, “[T]he biases and
assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded and
essential to interpretive process” (p. 17). Further, articulation of a researcher’s
experience—personal and professional—with a topic of study underscores the level of
theoretical sensitivity a researcher can bring to a particular study. The more aware a
researcher is of various aspects relating to a phenomenon, the more accurate coding and
analysis becomes.

I am an enthusiastic supporter of study abroad. I believe study abroad to be
critical to students’ abilities to understand people foreign to them, thereby decreasing
ethnocentrism, biases, attitudes of superiority/inferiority, and fear of the unknown. The
experience also increases first-hand knowledge of our globalizing world, and contributes
to personal growth through experiencing unfamiliar situations and undergoing analyses of
beliefs, values, assumptions, and perspectives when these are challenged in a new
environment. Therefore, I strongly believe that any student who desires to study abroad
and feels prepared to do so should be provided the opportunity. There are those, as seen
earlier in this paper, who feel that not everyone should be allowed to study abroad, that sending students abroad who are “not ready” is a disservice to the student as well as the host country and institution. There is an argument that takes this further, indicating that by sending “unprepared” or “undeserving” students abroad, the students are being set up for failure in academics and cultural adaptation, and will likely return to the U.S. having garnered negative feelings toward their host country, perhaps the world as a whole; essentially, accomplishing the opposite of the intent of an immersive intercultural experience. While I cannot disregard the possibility of this scenario, I question the validity of who is to determine which students are “prepared.” Quoted in chapter 2, Goodwin and Nacht (1998) stated, “Several program directors report that some students with mediocre records simply come to life after a foreign experience” (p. 74). This is a prime example of students succeeding in one arena where they were less successful in another. The circumstances of study abroad provide such a vastly different experience than the home campus that some students will unexpectedly flourish, and conversely, other, “successful” students will unexpectedly struggle. There is no definitive assessment to determine which students will succeed during a study abroad program; as such, there should be no discouragement toward those who feel they are ready. Students should be given the opportunity to succeed or fail as they will, and each student is the only person truly equipped to make such a decision.

I participated in several study abroad programs as both an undergraduate and a graduate student. Three were short-term programs—three weeks each—and one lasted for an academic year. One was a faculty-led language immersion course in Latin America; one was an independent study to the Caribbean co-constructed between myself and my advisor; one functioned as my Master’s capstone project in which I led a group of volunteers abroad to Latin America, also co-constructed with my advisor; and one consisted of Egyptology coursework at the American University in Cairo, culminating in a second undergraduate degree. These four programs had distinctive differences, but also shared certain qualities. What I studied in each program—Spanish language, educational leadership theory, educational leadership in practice, and Ancient Egypt—varied. And while the content and locations of the courses had some influence over my decision to
participate in them, there were other reasons that drove me to study abroad that were shared across the programs.

For one, I had no strong ties to the communities of the universities I attended. This was true for my Master’s program in Minnesota as well as my undergraduate program in Washington. Further, these places had become tiresome for me. I wanted to experience something new, take risks, and satiate my sense of adventure. My first study abroad, a faculty-led three-week program in Guatemala, seemed foreign enough to satisfy this desire, and knowing that my professor would be on-site and available in an emergency provided a mental safety net. After this first trip, I wanted to travel more independently, to take further risks. I traveled abroad alone on the next two programs, and my final study abroad program involved me being others’ support system.

Further, length of time for the first, third, and fourth programs was crucial to my ability to go. At those times, I could afford the program fees, but I was not in a financial position to quit work; the availability of three-week programming allowed me to participate while on paid vacation, thereby not losing any income. The year-long program became financially feasible after I learned that loan amounts increased to cover additional expenses associated with study abroad.

And while taking out loans meant I would need to eventually pay the money back, I felt that taking advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity made this worthwhile. The possibility of taking a year out of life to study and live in a foreign culture, to gain life experience that is unavailable to most people, was never again going to arise. Taking advantage of, or creating, opportunity was a factor in each of my study abroad programs. Learning Spanish in Guatemala was an opportunity provided by my professor; I later manufactured programs that allowed me to participate in an ecologically and financially important reef survey while concurrently studying educational leadership, and to put myself in a leadership position taking a group of students abroad to Nicaragua. Creating and taking advantage of opportunity is a core part of my personality.

Personality and determination were primary factors in my study abroad participation. Aside from the ability to create and take advantage of opportunity when possible, personality played a leading role in each study abroad program. Overcoming the
fear of travelling to Central America when it had a poor reputation for travellers’ safety, refusing to succumb to the pervasive atmosphere of fear that settled over America by moving to the Middle East less than a year after 9/11, travelling alone to Trinidad and Tobago, and placing myself in a position of authority and security for students who had never travelled outside of the United States before in a country where I barely spoke the language are all testaments to my determination, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and refusal to allow fear to determine the course of my life. In fact, when people would tell me not to go to certain locations, I found myself rebelling against their advice and being further motivated to go, to prove to myself that I could safely navigate any situation.

In addition, all four programs offered me the ability to increase my academic knowledge as well as cultural understanding. Each program offered something new and unique for me on an academic and a cultural level. Three of the programs also provided me the opportunity to learn and/or improve my language ability; Spanish in Guatemala and Nicaragua, and hieroglyphs in Egypt. Sadly, learning Arabic was not a motivator for me to move to Cairo as I was initially only interested in the ancient culture, not the modern culture, of Egypt.

A general desire to travel and explore the world also underscored my motivation to study abroad, though I chose the specific locations and programs based on previous interests. I chose Guatemala and Nicaragua as I wanted to improve my Spanish and felt that classroom work alone was insufficient. Moving to Egypt was a childhood fantasy come real, as I have always been fascinated by Ancient Egypt, pharaohs, the pyramids, and temple artwork. As a certified PADI Divemaster, the Caribbean program appealed to me with its intensive education in local reef flora and fauna, as well as daily SCUBA excursions. The combination of specific interests with a generalized need for exploration, alongside the ability to learn languages, increase academic and cultural knowledge, the strength of my personality, my sense of adventure and desire to take risks, a lack of ties to the communities in which I lived, and length, cost, financial support, opportunity, and timing of programs, coalesced to allow me to participate in these four study abroad programs.
My personal experiences abroad have biased me toward the positive effects of study abroad, and I believe that all students should be given an opportunity to participate in programming should they choose to do so. After exploring the intersection of factors that permitted opportunities for my study abroad experiences, I was interested in learning from this study’s participants what motivated and influenced them to study abroad. Clearly, participation in study abroad programming requires an intersection of multiple factors. I wanted to know which factors combined for respondents of this study, to determine elements common and uncommon to students who have studied abroad. Due to my experiences abroad, I went into this research with a high level of theoretical sensitivity—awareness of the meaning of data developed through insight, literature, professional and personal experiences, and interaction with the data and respondents—toward the topic, which increased accuracy in coding and analysis of the data. Assumptions of this research were that respondents would be capable of articulating their conscious reasons for studying abroad, and they would be open to questioning and reflection of their lives to discover possible additional, unconscious, factors.

3.5.2. Researcher-researched. Just as explicating the researcher-research relationship provides clarity of purpose and research direction and enhances theoretical sensitivity, so does articulating the researcher-participant relationship. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) did well to refer to relationships as negotiations, as these relationships constantly undergo change and require renegotiation throughout a research project: “Throughout the inquiry, the research-participant relationship is a tenuous one, always in the midst of being negotiated” (p. 72). However, it is beneficial to address researcher-respondent relationships prior to data collection. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), negotiating transitions at the beginning and the ending of a research-based relationship is “dramatic,” and the temporariness of the researcher-participant relationship can cause tension and renegotiation (p. 74). Further, Yow (2005) addressed how the power differential “based on knowledge, gender, race, class, status, age, and ethnicity impinge on the interview situation” (2005, p. 1) (Howarth, 1998). Charmaz (2006) reminded us that researchers influence the conversation through the questions asked, interview style, language used, and tone of voice. These “shape the context, frame,
and content of the study” (p. 32). To prevent unduly influencing participant responses, “researchers need to be constantly reflexive about the nature of their questions and whether they work for the specific participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested a resolution to the issue of researcher influence by stating, “nor do we set out to do our research with a predetermined notion of what kinds of field texts [data] will be important”; instead, they remain open to “imaginative possibilities” (p. 116).

Theoretical sensitivity plays a role in these relationships, as the more aware a researcher is of their participants’ backgrounds, experiences, and challenges, the more effective a researcher will be in connecting with their participants, creating a collaborative environment, and understanding their respondents’ meanings. In the researcher-participant relationship, theoretical sensitivity increases hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation, which in turn, enhances coding and analysis of the data. However, the literature agrees that a researcher need not be entirely familiar with all aspects of their respondents’ lived experiences in order to hold a sufficient level of theoretical sensitivity to conduct research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) addressed this concept within the framework of negotiating ways to be useful, stating, “Intimacy for a narrative inquirer is being able to take with participants at least some of the same things for granted” (p. 77). Charmaz (2006) affirmed this: “The researcher needs to share some experiences, but not necessarily all viewpoints, with those being studied” (p. 25). In addition to easing the transition into the research project and increasing accuracy of interpretation due to contextualization of language, theoretical sensitivity toward participants augments a researcher’s understanding of a respondent’s place in the context of the three-dimensional inquiry space (Howarth, 1998; Yow, 2005).

As a study abroad alumnus, I shared similar experiences pre-, during, and post-study abroad with the respondents of this study. This enhanced my ability to intelligently discuss the topic of study with participants, and also increased accuracy of coding and analysis of the data. Further, I was previously acquainted with six of my participants: two I had studied abroad with, one I had previously worked with, and two were academic colleagues. One participant I sat next to on a flight; she was just returning from her study
I contacted her and explained that I was conducting this study and asked if she would be willing to participate. The remaining four participants were unknown to me directly, but were referred to me by friends and colleagues. I had only one degree of separation from three of these respondents; the final participant contacted me after being written by the aunt of a friend. In all cases, even those in which I was referred to the participants, we had a shared connection. Those I was already in direct contact with reported feeling relaxed and excited to participate in the project, and those to whom I was referred seemed to ease into conversation quickly. I believe the familiarity my participants and I felt due to mutual acquaintances and shared study abroad experiences increased the reliability and validity of the data. The close networking engendered trust and free-flowing conversation that would be more difficult to evince with a complete stranger. I also believe that having these connections helped my participants to perceive me as an equal, rather than an authority figure, further increasing the ease of conversation and, thus, the accuracy of the data.

Within the three-dimensional inquiry space, my primary role was to present the opportunity for discourse, to probe areas of interest to participants for a more thorough understanding of their meanings, and to help construct a conversation which allowed participants to recount their lived experiences surrounding their decision to study abroad, to explore the intersection of factors that impacted their decision-making processes. My view of this research was as a collaborative endeavor between myself and the participants in which they recounted their lived experiences while I probed for deeper meaning and to uncover reasoning they might not have consciously considered. Further, I presented the findings in a manner that gave each participant a voice on this topic. I did not consider this research to involve participants giving me answers to my questions in my format. Rather, I wanted to open dialogue for the participants to share their experiences in their way and in their words. I then interpreted, coded, and analyzed those words to inform the study’s results.
3.6. Case Study Design

3.6.1. Definition. The phrase “case study” can be used to refer to a process, a unit of analysis, and/or an end product. Referring to the process, Yin defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context” (2014, p. 16). Huberman and Miles (1994) stated, “a ‘case’ is a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context—the unit of analysis, in effect” (p. 440). As an end-product, Merriam (1988) defined case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). A decade later, Merriam had shifted her perspective to align more with the unit of analysis definition. She stated, “[T]he single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case,” and defined a case as a bounded or integrated system (1998, p. 27). However, all three uses of case study—process, unit of analysis, and end product—are correct and appropriate, depending on the context in which they are used.

3.6.2. Interpretation in context. In fact, context is crucial in case study research. Cronbach delineated case study design from other research methods by referring to it as “interpretation in context” (1975, p. 123). Employed for a variety of reasons, case study design is particularly useful when a researcher is attempting to explore a phenomenon which cannot be separated from its context (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Merriam (1998) put forth three characteristics special to case study design: it is particularistic—focusing on a particular phenomenon; descriptive—entailing rich, thick description of the phenomenon; and heuristic—adding to a reader’s knowledge of the phenomenon. Olson (in Hoaglin, Light, McPeek, Mosteller, & Stoto, 1982) provided a list of specific case study traits that included: examination of a specific situation while illustrating a general issue; illustration of a case’s complexity; indication of the influence of personality on a phenomenon; consideration of differences of opinion on an issue; exploration of the background of a situation; and, explanation of the reasoning behind an issue. Stake (1981) highlighted four particular areas of knowledge that come from case study design which are not present in other research designs. He argues that knowledge gained from case study research is more concrete, more contextual, further developed by the
interpretation of the reader, and more generalized to specific populations in the mind of the reader. Because of these unique traits and areas of knowledge, case study design has a wide variety of applications in research relating to an investigation into any bounded system.

3.6.3. **Strengths.** One of case study design’s primary strengths lies in the rich, thick description obtained from the contextualized, holistic accounting of cases that are “anchored in real-life situations” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 1994). Due to the nature of the research problem and questions, a qualitative, in-depth study of one or more cases can provide the best way to uncover data, especially when little is known about the phenomenon under study or little to no theory exists on it (Merriam, 1998). Flexibility of application to various fields of study and a variety of research questions, to either qualitative or quantitative methods, and of data collection instruments is another strength of this design (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994). Also, the ability to study the particular, the unique case, is a strength of case study research; yet, case study design can also be used to study a “typical” situation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 1994). Case study can be used to investigate complex social structures or systems that consist of multiple variables in order to understand a phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994). Additionally, this design, due to its heuristic nature, can provide information and insights which readers can use to expand upon their own knowledge and experiences, to “vicariously experience these happenings, and draw their own conclusions” (Stake, 1994, p. 243) (Merriam, 1998). And, case study, when used to create hypotheses, can advance knowledge in the field by providing a building block for future research (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994).

3.6.4. **Limitations.** A major limitation of case study design is a lack of generalizability. Some generalizations may be made, but carefully, within a particular population, and usually this is done in a heuristic fashion by the reader (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994). As Stake (1994) articulates, “The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case” (p. 245). Additionally, results are limited to describing or interpreting a phenomenon rather than predicting future behavior (Merriam, 1998). A further limitation of case study research is the
subjective nature of decisions that rest with the researcher (Merriam, 1998). These can include the quality of information obtained, time considerations, and the nature of changing subject matter (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Different sources—such as documents, artifacts, and individuals—provide varying qualities of information and knowledge. It is up to the individual researcher to determine the level of quality provided by each source. Time considerations come from two directions: the amount of time allotted to the research project and how it is to be divided up amongst the various sources consulted; and, the time of day, month, or year the research is conducted. Information can change, human behavior changes, throughout these timeframes. A researcher must be sensitive to these cycles, determining when best to engage in data collection. Regarding time allocation, a researcher might not have enough time available to reach the thick description desired, or might produce an end product that is too lengthy to appeal to a reader (Merriam, 1998). Oversimplification of a case, or exaggeration of a particular concept, might also occur during research reporting. “Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 377). Another subjective issue that rests with the researcher is the decision of when to stop collecting data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). When engaged in longitudinal research, a case study can shift and change in its nature; a researcher needs to be aware of this and determine a point at which to end the project—a potentially difficult decision when intimately involved with participants. These subjective decisions that depend upon the researcher rely on ethical determinations, without which reliability and validity—already questionable factors in qualitative research—are of no value. Guba and Lincoln (1981) posited, “An unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated,” purposively or unwittingly (p. 378).

Ethics or no, bias is another limitation of case study design; researchers must clarify their biases in order to present their interpretations of each case in perspective. To resolve issues of subjectivity and questions of ethics in case study design, transparency in reporting, allowing the reader to ascertain whether the decisions made were appropriate and to understand a researcher’s biases, is the best course of action a researcher may take.
The time involved in creating this transparency is well worth it, as the strengths of case study design outweigh the limitations.

3.6.5. Application. The current research adhered to the concept of case study design as a unit of analysis, a bounded system (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1978). To narrow a unit for study and analysis, to determine what the boundaries of a system are, is critical in case study research. Without determining these boundaries, or delimiting what the integrated system is to be studied, case study as a unit of analysis cannot exist. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) view that a case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” permits wide latitude in defining the boundaries of a system (p. 25). Some examples in education are: a classroom, a policy, a school, a school district, and an individual student or teacher.

Within the context of this study, a bounded system was an individual human being. Each participant in this study was his or her own case study. Each participant was a particular illustration, a contextualized example of the phenomenon of students’ decisions to study abroad. In order to garner a wider field of perspectives on the phenomenon, this research project studied ten separate individuals, ten distinctive cases, in what is known as a multicase study, or what Stake (1994) referred to as a “collective case study” (p. 237). The purpose of the multicase study in the context of this research project was to increase generalizability and diversity, and to compare and contrast data collected from each case during analysis. The wider the range of cases, the stronger the precision, validity, and stability of the findings (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). “The inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of your findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). Discussed earlier, the analysis of this study took a hermeneutic phenomenological approach; comparing and contrasting the cases permitted of a deeper understanding of the reasons students study abroad.

In this study, respondents, or cases, were selected for their ability to illuminate the phenomenon under study. Therefore, this research employed instrumental case studies. “In what we may call instrumental case study, a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a
supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (Stake, 1994, p. 237, italics in original). This is not to say that the participants themselves are unimportant. Conversely, each case is considered in depth for the knowledge and understanding each respondent can provide in order to exemplify and disseminate information specific to his or her experience. In instrumental case study, cases are chosen in expectation of advancing knowledge of a phenomenon, and cases might be typical of each other or not.

3.6.6. Classification. This research project can be classified by its disciplinary orientation and its end product: It is a psychological, interpretive case study. Theory and method of case study design in education are rooted in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and history (Merriam, 1988). Each of these disciplines, alone or in combination, can inform the focus of an educational research project. Psychological case study focuses on an individual case, a person, as a method to explore some aspect of human behavior (Merriam, 1998). Psychological case studies are, by definition, instrumental in that they look at cases for the purposes of illuminating a phenomenon or situation. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated, “Sociological or psychological first-person life histories collected through case study interviewing are usually directed at using the person as a vehicle to understand basic aspects of human behavior” (p. 63).

The focus of this research project was to uncover knowledge relating to the phenomenon of students’ reasons to study abroad, and used participant experiences and perspectives in order to achieve this end. The end product of this research is in the form of an interpretive, or analytical, case study. Interpretive case study contains thick, rich description, and uses it to develop conceptual categories, or to support or refute a hypothesis (Merriam, 1998). “A case study researcher gathers as much information about the problem as possible with the intent of analyzing, interpreting, or theorizing about the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). Insight, exploration, and interpretation are the focus of case study design, not hypothesis testing. Further, this design does not prescribe specific data collection techniques. However, qualitative uses of the design often include interviews to collect data. This is in line with the conceptual framework of narrative inquiry and an in-depth interview method of data collection. Finally, a multicase study design permitted for a purposive, yet flexible, selection of participants.
3.7. Participant Selection and Recruitment

Using the Lincoln Commission’s (2005) definition of study abroad—“an educational program for undergraduate study, work, or research (or a credit-bearing internship) that is conducted outside the United States and that awards academic credit toward a college degree” (p. 14)—each participant, or bounded case, was purposefully selected to match, as closely as possible, the representative proportions of students who are currently studying abroad. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007):

If you are conducting additional data collection to show generalizability or diversity, your concern should be picking additional [cases] that will illustrate the range of . . . subjects to which your original observations might be applicable. If you are doing [a multicase] study to compare and contrast, you pick [additional cases] on the basis of the extent and presence or absence of some particular characteristic of the original [case]. (p. 70)

This research used a multicase study design in order to increase generalizability and diversity, and to compare and contrast cases. Therefore, I found cases that illustrated characteristics of those who have recently studied abroad, satisfying the advice given by Bogdan and Biklen. Using the most recent Open Doors (IIE, 2012) demographic data of U.S. students studying abroad—by gender (see Table 3.1) and race/ethnicity (see Table 3.2)—participants were chosen to roughly reflect the percentages of these demographics. Self-identification by the participants determined with which demographic categories they were associated.

Table 3.1. Profile of U. S. Study Abroad Students by Gender, 2010-11 (adapted from IIE, 2012, Student Profile)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Percent of U.S. Study Abroad Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Percent of U.S. Study Abroad Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino(a)</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A “mix-and-match” approach to participant inclusion presented an opportunity to fulfill the parameters of these demographics while allowing for flexibility in participant selection. “Like most decisions qualitative researchers must make, those relating to choice of informants . . . are always made in the context of the study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 68). The aim of this approach was to include cases that, collectively, represented six to seven women; three to four men; seven to eight Caucasians; one Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; and one to two Hispanics or Latino(a)s, Blacks or African-Americans, multiracial, or American Indians or Alaska Natives. By selecting participants in such a manner, a variety of demographic characteristics could be explored while researching students representative of the current study abroad landscape.

The demographics of the ten participants in this study correlated to the parameters provided by the IIE 2012 Student Profile (see Table 3.3). The participants each chose their own pseudonym for this study. The respondents included seven women, three men, eight Caucasians, one Native Hawaiian, and one multiracial student. These participants also represented a wide range of majors, study abroad locations, and study abroad durations. The respondents consisted of two archaeology majors, two cultural studies and language learning majors, one business major, one environmental sciences major, one health sciences major, one aviation major, one marine biology major, and one sociology and anthropology major. Two participants studied in Asia, three in Africa, two in Europe, two in Australia, and one studied in Latin America. One student studied abroad during the winter intersession (January term, or J-Term), one studied abroad for a quarter, two for a semester, three students studied over the summer session, one studied abroad for an academic year, one for a calendar year, and one student studied abroad for nearly her
entire degree. Additionally, the participants’ home institutions represented a range of geographic locations. Two respondents attended universities on the East Coast, three respondents were from universities in the Midwest, two respondents’ home universities were on the West Coast, one participant came from Alaska, and two participants attended universities in Hawai‘i.

**Table 3.3. Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emiko</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Alam</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxwell “Mack” McLendon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Carlin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ji-Hoon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants must have met the following additional criteria: They studied abroad as undergraduate students, are American in nationality, and participated in their study abroad programs after 9/11/2001. The reason for choosing this timeframe is threefold: the government focus on study abroad has changed dramatically since 9/11; globalization, and the need for globalized citizens, has increased since 2001; and, as the composition, beliefs, values, and attitudes of university culture changes, participants with experiences within the past decade allow these findings to be more applicable to current and incoming students.
Chapter 4

Findings: Unanimous Categories

In the coding and analysis of the data provided by these participants, five primary categories emerged as universal (see Table 4). All ten participants were motivated and/or influenced by their families, their personalities, childhood experiences, aspects of their particular study abroad programs, and having the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program. Some of these categories include sub-categories, which were not necessarily unanimously shared. However, in whichever manifestation they took, family, personality, childhood experiences, study abroad programming, and the opportunity to study abroad had an impact on each and every participant in this study.

4.1. Family

In this context, family consisted of the nuclear family of parents and siblings. This category includes exposure to cultural and/or travel-based experiences while the respondents were children, reported by all ten participants; the values instilled in participants through language and attitudes communicated while respondents were in their formative years, experienced by seven participants; and, direct encouragement to study abroad during the decision-making process while in college, reported by six participants. This category also includes financial support, either directly or indirectly, attested to by four respondents. One participant also expressed an interest in exploring his cultural heritage.

4.1.1. Exposure to others. The one subcategory of family influence that all ten participants reported was that of exposure to other cultures and/or travel-based experiences. This exposure opened new horizons of inquiry to the participants, and was reported as engendering the “travel bug,” increasing excitement to see the world, and creating opportunity for interaction with people different from themselves. In Kitty’s case, it was a matter of the family occupation:
Table 4. Motivations and Influences by Participant: Unanimous Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations &amp; Influences</th>
<th>Ms. Alam</th>
<th>Jennifer</th>
<th>Alicia</th>
<th>Sarah</th>
<th>Kitty</th>
<th>Stephanie</th>
<th>Maxwell “Mack” McLendon</th>
<th>Joe Carlin</th>
<th>Emiko</th>
<th>Ji-Hoon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Traveller’s Spirit</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Childhood Experiences</td>
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<tr>
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Table 4. (Continued) Motivations and Influences by Participant: Unanimous Categories

<table>
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<th>Program</th>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...thinking about travelling, I would say it definitely stemmed more from my childhood, especially the way I was raised. I grew up in a tugboat family and we were constantly everywhere. We had homes in two different towns, which we never lived in. We were always on the tugboats. We were all over Southeast Alaska, we crossed the Bering Sea into Russia, parts of Siberia, with the tugs. That was our job. I was enrolled in schools in eight different cities in Southeast Alaska at any given time. It was a very nomadic lifestyle as a child. I think that had a lot to do with it.

Ji-Hoon and Jennifer also had somewhat nomadic lifestyles as they grew up in the military. Their families were re-stationed multiple times, and so new people and new places became normalized for them. Jennifer’s father not only moved her from base to base, but also actively influenced her to enjoy the journey:

[Travel] was definitely a passion that both of my parents have. My dad was the one serving for the marines. He travelled a ton for work, not just from location to location where we lived, but wars and training overseas. He had that independent travel bug too, I think. From day one, I can never remember a time when we weren’t wanting to do something. For example, when you go from location A to B, either the military will fly you or they will give you money if you want to get there another way or on your own timeframe. We always drove. We never would take a flight. I remember thinking, “Really? We’re going to take two weeks to do a road trip from North Carolina to California? Can’t we just fly there?” But it was all about the experience. We would load up the van. My brother and I had specific seats. He was in the middle and I was always in the way back. We would see everything along the way and go a little bit out of our way to see family. It was all about seeing things. I remember when my mom would want to sleep, she would go in the back and I would sit in the front with my dad. This was before GPS, but my dad was really old school. He would have a big, thick, four or five inch thick book of maps of the United States and he would show me how to get certain places and which roads to take. It was all about the experience together. I think his job helped us. Sometimes I think that was his job just so he could see the
whole country and get out of Wisconsin. I don’t even know if he liked the military. It was definitely their love of travelling, which they instilled in me. While not military, Sarah’s parents also went out of their way to ensure she and her brother had opportunities for travel and new experiences:

I think my parents probably tried to do the best they could for my brother and me to go out and see as much as we could. Probably, not only for our benefit, but also for theirs, for their sanity, I’m sure to have a break now and then from the trials and tribulations of life. I do know we did do day trips pretty regularly, even if it was just maybe an hour or two away. It was very simple to just get to and from home. During the summertime when my brother and I were off from school, we would always go somewhere; we always had a vacation planned. It may have just been down to Disneyland where we would drive down and drive back. Even though it was a long drive, that was something that I always got excited about because it was a drive and it was something I could see and experience, and just watch all these places and these people go by. And other times we would go across the country, and we’d get on a plane. That was also very exciting for me, getting on a plane and going across country. That was quite an experience, going three thousand miles away and seeing these different places that were quite diverse from what I knew from being in California.

Stephanie also often took trips with her family in and around the United States, as well as into Baja, Mexico. Her father purchased land in Baja before she entered elementary school, and they would road trip to the property at least once each year, while also taking car trips around various states. Adding to her cultural exposure, when she was in high school her parents began hosting international exchange students: “[I]n high school, my parents started getting foreign exchange students. We had them constantly. They still have them now coming in and out of their lives. Having those new experiences with culture, with places, was very exciting to me.”

Alicia’s family would road trip to grandma and grandpa’s every year for the holidays, increasing her desire for travel and new experiences:
When I was little, we lived in Florida but my grandparents lived in Delaware. Once a year during Thanksgiving we would make the drive all the way up. We’d always stop at little places and it was always neat to see different areas and meet different people. Not that you really hang out with people at the truck stop, but those interactions with the people in the towns we stopped in... I always thought it was neat to see something new, something different. My grandparents lived in a really small town whereas I grew up in a suburb, so [the towns] were totally different. Stuff that I thought was completely, well, foreign to me, little mom and pop type stuff, I just thought that was really neat because it was a totally different experience, especially when I was little.

Compounding Alicia’s wanderlust and cultural curiosity were her older sister’s stories of her study abroad experiences:

[My] sister is seven years older than me. She went to college and would come back and tell us about it. She went on study abroad. She went to Europe; she went to England, Scotland and France; she went to a couple of different countries, and she absolutely loved it. I thought it was neat that she was going to school, but they were letting her do something fun. To me, of course, she’s seven years older... I was twelve at the time, I just thought, “Oh yay, I get to go to school and travel at the same time, and it counts.” That definitely got into my head.

Ms. Alam also reported travelling frequently as a child: “My parents were not the wealthiest, we didn’t travel abroad, or really outside of California, but California is an amazing state. You can go from desert to ocean to snow in a day. We would always go camping. Every school vacation we’d be camping, day trips on the weekends to [the valleys] or the coast.” She stated that this exposure to new experiences and travel engendered a love of travel in her, and it was a natural step for her to study abroad once in college.

Mack, who is multiracial, grew up in a household where various cultures were celebrated. He also had various opportunities to travel to different locations to visit family members. As he states, “I’ve had the excitement of getting on airplanes and going to see new things and different things.”
Joe had an entirely different experience. He grew up in the Midwest and had no personal experience travelling outside of the region. However, his father was sent abroad for a temporary assignment when Joe was young. Afterwards, his father would speak fondly of his trip, which influenced Joe immensely: “[M]y dad did travel to Indonesia. He worked there for two months when I was in elementary school, and it was interesting to hear all his stories when he came back. . . . It definitely made me want to see what’s out there. You realize there’s so much more to the world than your house, your friends.”

4.1.2. Values. The values one is exposed to while growing up are often communicated through words and actions. While it would seem reasonable to assume that exposure to new cultures speaks of the value of diversity, I did not find this to be the case with all of these participants. Seven of the ten students reported having a positive attitude toward cultures different from their own modeled by their families, while three were exposed to travel or other cultures without having those experiences underscored by their parents. Therefore, “values” became its own category, and refers to the importance of and positive attitude toward travel, other people, and other cultures as instilled by family during the participants’ youth.

In some cases, family influence was straightforward, such as in the case of Emiko. Emiko learned Japanese cultural values from her parents, while at the same time being exposed to the culture without even realizing it at times. This exposure to values and living the cultural experience was a driving force for her to study abroad in Japan:

The Japanese culture has always been a part of my life growing up. My mother and father were raised here on the big island [of Hawai‘i], and they both grew up in households where old-fashioned values still reigned. They were influenced by not just Japanese mannerisms, but also Filipino, Portuguese, Chinese, etcetera. Because of historical circumstance, Hawai‘i became a very diverse state; we ended up adopting so much from other cultures. When my mother was growing up, she fell in love with one particular culture, the Japanese culture, because the aesthetics that they have and that they live by were so beautiful to her. I grew up hearing stories about how Japanese culture impacted our family’s lives. My mother would tell me how even her mother used to participate with the Japanese
community during their festivals and ceremonies. I always loved hearing these stories but it really didn’t occur to me how much of our daily lives were influenced by Japanese culture, that is until I became and adult and more cognitive of my daily life. Let me see if I can give you an example. . . taking your shoes off before entering anyone’s home; I’ve been doing that all my life. It’s automatic for me. I always thought it was a practical thing, taking your shoes off, because you don’t want to insult the people cleaning the house. My mother was the one cleaning our house. Do you think I’m going to get her angry by dragging mud into the house? No, ma’am. Can’t do it. Other aspects she would talk about were their elaborate kimono, the foods they eat, ikebana flower arrangements and origami paper folding. She said they feast with the eyes, appreciate simple, clean lines in their homes, while in their gardens they utilize the natural settings. Japanese people live art. So as I grew up, I thought, “Okay, let’s see what this country has to offer.”

Mack comes from a family of mixed heritage. Being exposed to multicultural values was part and parcel of growing up for him, as well. For Sarah, Jennifer, Stephanie, Alicia, and Ms. Alam, their family values were evident in the time and effort their parents took to not only schedule and take family trips, but also in getting their children excited about their travels. Sarah exemplified the excitement that her parents instilled in her for travel and new cultures:

[T]hey definitely did try to get us excited. Certainly, there were certain times, these would be for the longer summer trips, when they would really try to get us excited and they would try to give us a couple options; “Would you rather go here, would you rather go there?” They would even try to surprise us occasionally about where we were going to go. One summer, they gave us a couple of options about where we were going to go, and one of them was Disneyland. They were actually going to make it a surprise. They woke us up one morning, and they took us into the main sitting room, and there was a big banner strung across that said we were going to Disneyland, and there were balloons everywhere. They did little things like that. . . . They did a lot, and I think they did a lot to tell us about some
of the places where we were going to go, even if it was just a day trip. What we were going to do there to try to get us excited about some of the things that we could do there.

Jennifer discussed the closeness of her family and the influence they had on her. This enhanced the impact their values had on her, including travel, but also taught her how to work with what was available:

I think [travelling] also helped in development as far as maturity at a young age. I just had my family. I moved around so much that I didn’t have a set group of friends my whole life. My parents were that, and I counted on them for things and talked to them about things. It was our own little Partridge Family kind of thing where we were all each other had. We made the most of our situations and travelled as much as we could.

In regards to how often they moved and the lack of long-term friends Jennifer and her brother never had the time to foster, her parents explained that there was value in doing other things in life:

My parents never made it a big deal. My mom was never, “Oh my god, you’re never going to see these people again.” That helped, too, that they never fed into it. They said, “Well, you’re doing other things. We have to go, and you’ll meet new people, and you’ll see new things.” They always made light of the situation and kept it positive.

Ms. Alam also related a story about her mother which illustrated her values of travel, having new experiences, and shifting cultures, which she then passed on to her daughter: “When she was 18, in the late 60’s, early 70’s, she left Buffalo, New York. She got in her VW bug with her best friend and drove to California and started a new life. . . . She did something that was unheard of back then, and I did by moving to Hawaii, going abroad, things like that.”

In another case, family values took an odd turn. Ji-Hoon came from a family that wasn’t very close, and he thought that helped to teach him the values of self-survival and self-sufficiency, two values that stood him in good stead when it came time to study abroad. He reported:
I also think that because my family wasn’t that close, too. My parents divorced when I was older, my brother and sister were never the people to put me under their wing. And my dad, he wasn’t the guy who talked about those things. I had to learn that no one was going to make you feel better except yourself. You can’t be depressed about these things, you have to go out and make things better. You have to make things happen for yourself.

Though a difficult lesson to learn, ultimately, he appreciated the education and has been successful in his life and academic career because he has learned to be self-sufficient and not rely on other people.

4.1.3. Direct encouragement. Six participants reported being directly encouraged by family members to study abroad during the decision-making process, positively influencing the decision to go abroad. Ji-Hoon’s dad told him that if he found a way, he should go for it. Mack’s mother was incredibly supportive of his decision to go abroad. Stephanie stated, “My parents were always supportive with college. They were, ‘Go away. Don’t stay here. We’ll miss you, we love you, tears. Go. You’re going to regret it if you don’t.’ They were always, ‘Go do that if it’s something you’re interested in.’” Sarah had to convince her mother, but her father was very supportive of her decision to study abroad from the first. Ms. Alam knew her parents supported her decision, even though “[t]hey never told me that to my face, but they were always so encouraging.” Jennifer, also, knew her parents were completely supportive of her going abroad; though they would miss her, they wanted her to have the life experience offered by the opportunity of study abroad.

4.1.4. Financial support. Finances, often an insurmountable barrier for students wanting to study abroad, was a major issue for four participants whose families were able, in one fashion or another, to make study abroad a reality for their child. Mack’s family directly supported his ability to study abroad financially: “I had a lot of help from my mom. My mom was really supportive. She took out a parent loan to cover the difference. Financial aid wouldn’t cover me, unless I had a Parent Plus loan. I asked my mom, and she was really supportive.” Without this financial backing, Mack would not have been able to study abroad. Ji-Hoon, Sarah, and Ms. Alam also had financial support
from their family. Ji-Hoon’s finances were covered as his mother was a disabled veteran, so he “was able to receive a tuition waiver because of the disabled veterans’ benefits” and he received a foreign language-based scholarship from the ROTC, which his father strongly influenced him to participate in. Ji-Hoon was reluctant to join ROTC, but did so after his father pointed out that “it was a good opportunity to get to [his] goal of travelling the world.” Sarah’s parents paid outright for her undergraduate education, including her study abroad: “[T]hat was their big gift to me,” though she did have to convince her mother that study abroad made sense as it was less expensive than a year at the home university: “I was saving a lot of money, actually, even with plane tickets and housing, etcetera, and so that was actually my main argument to my mother: ‘Look at all this money you’re saving.’ . . . I put that forward to her and said, ‘You can’t argue if you’re going to be saving all this money, sending me to Egypt for the year for my education.’” Ms. Alam’s parents also paid for her undergraduate education. She was reluctant to study abroad due to the extra costs it would incur to her parents, but she did her part to minimize the damage:

My parents paid for college for me. I got my first year covered from an academic scholarship, but the remaining two years my parents paid out of pocket. They had saved their whole lives for that. I was always really worried I was going to spend too much money so I hesitated. . . . The plane ticket was thousands of dollars, and that’s a lot of money, especially back then. I was really concerned, so I went and spent a lot of time looking for the cheapest possible flight, which ended up being 40 hours and I stopped all over North and South America. But it was worth it to me, even to save $300 or $100.

4.1.5. Heritage seeking. One student reported wanting to explore his cultural roots. According to Mack, “I had this thing where I wanted to visit everywhere I have roots in or blood in. My dad is Mexican and Italian, and my mom is Irish, Scottish, Norwegian, and French. So France was two birds with one stone.”
4.2. Personality

All ten participants evinced character traits that influenced them to study abroad. They discussed having an innate desire to travel, a determination that helped them overcome hurdles to program participation, and/or an inherent flexibility that motivated them to find and participate in available programming.

4.2.1. Traveller’s spirit. The ten participants all alluded to having a traveller’s spirit, wanting to see the world, wanting to explore new cultures, and that this was an integral part of them without being able to state the basis for such a desire. As they could not articulate a specific event or influence that started them on the path to travel, it appears to be an innate part of their personality. Ms. Alam, Alicia, Stephanie, Mack, Jennifer, Sarah, and Emiko talked about the excitement of travelling when they were young. Having new experiences with different cultures, places, and people came up in the discussions with all of these participants. When asked what excited her about travel, Jennifer responded:

That’s something that I can’t pin point. It’s an internal itch to get out. You can’t explain it unless you have that itch. I appreciate seeing other people live their lives, and the day-to-day tasks and exciting adventures of other cultures. I’ve always had this wanting to be involved with other people for work. I’m very much a people person. I like interacting with people and I like seeing why people are the way they are. I think seeing different cultures definitely helps bridge some of those gaps and questions. Travelling answered some of my questions as far as, why do people think this about this? Or, why is this place so pretty? Or, why do people live in this country? Just random questions I have. I think not travelling, life can be very boring and repetitive – and waking up, going to work, having dinner – that is sickening to me, thinking about that being my life. It’s another way to introduce excitement and diversity in my day-to-day routine, as well. . . . Not just travelling, but associating it with educating myself, tumbled into one thing. It became expected and was second nature that I wanted to travel.
Sarah also had a strong desire to ask and have questions answered, from the time she was very young:

> I guess that I was always interested in exploring different places. I would keep it very broad and just say different places, even if it was just a different town or a different city, or a different state, just so long as it was something other than where I was. I remember feeling that way from a very young age, from being a small child. . . . when I was growing up, whenever my family travelled, whether it was around California where I grew up or across the country, I was always very excited to go, whether it was in the car for a road trip or even on an airplane. Just the idea of going somewhere and having a new experience was something that was thrilling for me. I couldn’t wait to go, even if it was just a day trip. I just loved getting in the car and seeing the sites. Even just the journey was very exciting for me, not just the destination. Being able to see everything that was going on around me was something that I really enjoyed. Just trying to absorb all that, and the ideas that would fill my imagination about what was going on and what I was seeing, and the questions, as well. I would get a lot of questions in my head and I would ask a lot of questions of my parents. Some of my ideas, as well, about things I would want to do, I would just blurt out. When I was especially young, maybe four or five years old, when we would take these road trips, my parents probably thought I was very weird. I can’t really say where that stemmed from. I think it’s something that’s always been there.

Mack talked about his experiences travelling, and how the excitement factor played a large role in his travels:

> I guess to some degree that’s part of my personality. I feel like everybody likes to be excited, although some people are afraid of trying new things and get stuck in their own ways. But definitely part of that experience is feeling the initial excitement of being in a new environment. I guess that is part of my personality. . . . You could say I’m a calculated risk-taker. As far as travelling goes, I really wanted to go to Libya or Greece when things were going on. I would definitely go there for the excitement of a first hand account to see what’s going on.
Kitty discussed her desire to see the world in comparison to what she was accustomed to from her home culture:

I wanted to go and see all these things and experience these things, and see things… I think it was also the idea that nobody else had done it. I didn’t know anybody who had ever been to Egypt. I didn’t know anybody who had ever been to Nepal. It was completely unheard of. I think it had a lot to do with that. Being able to go and to see these things that nobody else really does. Sure, you go to New York where you’re going to find a greater population of people who make more money, and sure, you’re probably going to find a handful of people who have seen those places. But where I come from, nobody has seen those places. It was about that, just doing something that was completely off the beaten track; something that nobody does. Seeing things that nobody gets to see.

Neither Ji-Hoon nor Joe had opportunities to travel when young. However, they still had the traveller’s spirit. Joe exemplified this with the following: “I was really interested in the world. . . . I lived a sheltered existence, and I wanted to get out. . . . I wanted to meet other people and go other places. . . . I actually won the geography competition at my school in 5th grade and took second in 6th grade. I was really more interested than other kids in travel.” Ji-Hoon recalled telling his father at a young age that he wanted to travel the world, that “It was a dream as a kid.” However, he never thought it could happen for him:

[B]efore I went to Korea for the first time, I had no international experience. Of course, I wanted to, but it was never in the cards for us. We never had the funds. When I first got that drive, I look back on that time when I never thought it was going to be possible. I always knew I wanted to do it, but I never knew how it would happen. I just knew my whole life that it was my dream to travel the world. I’m still going to, now that I know it’s possible.

**4.2.2. Determination.** Having the determination to overcome obstacles, move out of one’s comfort zone, or to tell doubters they are wrong and to move ahead with one’s dreams despite negativity was reported by six of the respondents.
Ms. Alam showed her mettle when it came time for her to leave the only geographic region she had ever known, leaving friends, family, and a boyfriend behind:

I had never been away from home. I was born in one town, I grew up in a town thirty miles away, I went to college in a town another thirty miles away. I lived in a sixty-mile radius that I never went out of. So, moving to the other hemisphere, I moved so far away and I was so scared when I got there. . . . I think it’s a lot about my personality. I have these little checklists in my mind, and one of those things that I wanted to accomplish in college was studying abroad. I didn’t want to be held back by a boyfriend, or feeling like I was going to miss out on friendships. Somewhere in me, I knew it was more important to go and have this life experience.

Ji-Hoon, who had lived in a variety of locations growing up, faced an internal struggle of a different sort. First, he absorbed ambition into his personality and learned and how to achieve it through grueling work:

For about 5 years, starting from 8th grade, [my father and I] had to deliver newspapers every morning to get some extra cash. He was going to school at the time, and my mom couldn’t work. They were having troubles, they’re divorced now, but during those times we delivered newspapers until I finished high school. That taught me how to work for what I want. It was three hours of work everyday, from 3am to 6am, so that’s what drove me to be more ambitious, knowing you have to work hard for what you want.

Once ambition became part of his psyche, he then had to overcome the taunts and bullying of his peers. He was so successful at this that he helped to create on-campus programs that intermingle students of different nationalities and cultures:

When I was younger, getting bullied verbally gave me a very low self-confidence. I had to learn to stand up for myself, to stop letting other people bring me down, and learn to not care what other people thought about me. But when I was younger, it was really hard on me. I always wanted people’s acceptance, and I would just do what other people wanted to do. I was a conformist. But I had to learn to move on from that. When I first got to college, I would spend my time
with my Korean friends, and people at [his university] are 95% white. They would see me with my Korean friends and they would think, “Oh, there’s the Asian kid.” When I was a freshman it bothered me. I felt like I had to hide that I was hanging out with my Korean friends. I cared so much what people thought about me. Nowadays, I’ve come to the realization that I don’t care what those people think about me. They’re the ones missing out on the great culture of these people, and their great ideas and things they have to offer. They’re just closing themselves off because they’re so comfortable hanging out with the same people, the same white people, all the time. That was a huge hurdle for me. But now, I’ve come to mix well. We created a program that mixes international students with American students, and people are now hanging out with everyone. My freshman year was very segregated, but I’m a senior now and people are becoming more integrated. I think people are becoming more open to international ideas than they were four years ago, but that was a really big hurdle and it was hard for me. Now I don’t care.

The combination of these two personality traits directly fed into his drive and ability to do something different, to break away from the crowd, which in his case was studying abroad. It also assisted him in providing innovative ideas to his home campus, bringing different cultures together and increasing understanding between American and international students; he not only wanted to better himself—an ongoing goal in his life—but also to better his community.

Joe talked about his determination to be independent, which he associated with his need to travel: “I’ve always been really independent and I can take care of myself. [Study abroad] was one way to prove to myself that I can get by in a totally new environment. . . . I’ve always been restless if I’m in one place. Even now with my job, I’m out of the office and all over the place.”

Sarah’s determination was evident in her choice of study abroad program. Several programs were available which included pre-approved credit transfer, programs in which “you are taking BU courses, you’re just abroad. They are exactly BU. That’s it. It is a BU course, you’re just in another country. That’s not how it worked with AUC,
unfortunately, so it was a more complicated process.” This “complicated process” involved a large amount of additional paperwork, attempting to ensure credits would transfer back to BU without a guarantee they would apply as she planned, applying for acceptance at the host university, taking a leave of absence from the home university, and repeating much of the same paperwork after returning from her study abroad to make the credit transfer process official. While Sarah could have chosen another, “paved” BU-approved program for her study abroad, she wanted to attend AUC, and she was not going to let anything stop her. Sarah’s resolve and personality were illustrated when she said, “I was determined to find ways to ensure that I got credit, as well. . . . I was determined to receive the credit that I deserved. I was careful in selecting the courses that I did to make sure they were courses I still wanted to take, but they were courses I was going to, indeed, receive credit, and to move forward within my university curricula.” She did, in fact, receive credit for all courses taken abroad, and they applied to her degree program as she intended, though she did not know this for certain until after she had returned to her home institution.

Emiko faced doubting professors, a discouragement that would prevent some students from participating in a study abroad program. However, she revealed the strength of her determination in that she not only went abroad despite their voiced doubts, but she took the time to meet with the professors and tell them they were wrong about her:

Before I left, some people doubted me. Some of my teachers questioned my going because I’m a slow learner. I sat down with them and told them I was going to put my best foot forward. . . . I had already reflected and convinced myself that I could do it. I have to convince myself before I can convince other people. If I didn’t, I would have been flustered, I would have been slightly demotivated, but since I had already made up my mind and I was self-assured, I knew I could handle it. I knew because of the fact that I’m mature enough to handle it. I told them that. I told them I have test anxiety, they know I’m a slow learner, but I work hard and do the best I can. I came back from Japan with almost straight A’s.
And I usually never get straight A’s. . . . I was going to show them exactly what I could do. Instead of demotivation, I took it as a challenge. Bring it on.

Kitty showed her determination on two fronts. In one regard, she is a very independent person, and expressed often wanting to experience things that no one else has. Her independent spirit has led her far in life, and was a direct motivator to study abroad:

To me, it was a matter of wanting to do something different. You hear all these people doing the same shit, and you know they’re all going to end up right back here doing the same shit. That wasn’t for me. I had to do something different.

When it was finally time to decide what I was doing for college, I instantly knew I was leaving the country, because nobody around here does it. It’s completely unheard of. . . . I feel like I have a different thought process than everybody else, even common sense things. I think that I have a different definition of common sense, or higher standards of common sense. . . . I would definitely say I had very caring parents that were always wanting to be connected, but I was always not so connected. I was never close with my family, I was generally leaving at any possible moment I could to do my own thing, and it’s not reflected in the rest of my family. The rest of my family is pretty close with each other, and I was kind of the odd duck that didn’t really like to participate in family things. So, I don’t know. I think it was more my own personality. I would definitely say my parents were nurturing and very connected; it was just my own personal piss-off attitude, I guess. . . . I was good. “I will go to the other side of the planet and I’m okay with that.” And I think that helped me. . . I knew that I wouldn’t have a problem living far away from everybody, as much as other people might have that problem. Because I didn’t feel that connectedness, I knew I could go as far as I wanted to go, and go even further from there, and not really be too affected by it.

In addition to her natural independence, Kitty also dealt with negativity similar to Emiko, though on a much larger scale. And like Emiko, Kitty’s personality included turning external doubts into challenges:

I had brought it up, I remember, my senior year in high school when I first started thinking about this, and I had this whole idea of the Congo in my head. I started
talking to some of my teachers in high school, my English teacher and one of my
history teachers, and they were like, “That’s insane, and stupid. Why would you
do that?” I basically got shot down at every angle. Then I talked to my mom about
it, and she was like, “You know, I don’t think that’s a very good idea.” The more
I got told that, the more I was like, “Screw you guys, I’m going.” I felt that
nobody seemed to support it. Even my friends, I remember bringing it up to my
friends and everyone said I was crazy even to consider it. . . . [T]he more I got
told this wasn’t going to work out, the more I said, “No, I’m going to make it
work out.” I would definitely say that the more people were telling me, “No,” the
more I was going to prove it was a good idea; “I’m going to prove you wrong.” . .
. But I think that’s generally how my personality has always been. I tend to do
what I’m discouraged not to do.

4.2.3. Flexibility. One student reported that his philosophy of life, “Get in where
you fit in,” influenced him to study abroad. Mack stated that, “If something sounds cool,
I’ll try to pursue it. If something works out . . . that’s how it was with study abroad. . . . I
decided to pursue it and see if it worked out. And it did. I got my tickets to Paris. That’s
how it is. If something sounds cool, I’ll explore it. If it works out, it works out, if not,
then no worries.” He initially tried to register for a program in Copenhagen, then
discovered the program cost was too steep, even with family financial support. So he
changed his plans and took advantage of the less expensive Paris program, instead.
Without his inherent flexible attitude toward life, he would not have participated in a
study abroad program.

4.3. Childhood Experiences

Certain experiences in these participants’ childhoods influenced their ultimate
decision to study abroad. All ten participants reported some kind of experience that had
such an impact on them, which included travel, spending time outdoors, media exposure,
having an interest in history, and/or being raised in the military.

4.3.1. Travel. Nine of the respondents were able to travel, either domestically or
internationally, as children. They reported that these travel experiences influenced them
to study abroad in college. Participants’ responses are discussed at length earlier in this chapter (see Exposure to Others under Family).

4.3.2. Outdoor activities. Seven respondents expressed having spent a significant amount of time outdoors as children, which influenced them or assisted them in studying abroad. Sarah recalled spending a great amount of time outdoors, hiking, camping, and swimming, from the mountains to the beach. Alicia was a Girl Scout up through high school, an organization well known for outdoor activities. Ms. Alam had fond childhood memories of her time outdoors: “I’d spend my summers riding outside, I was very outdoorsy. I would ride, and those were the happiest times. My parents would come, too, and it was wonderful. It was like getting away from that podunk town, and getting to see what the rest of the world was like, and really get an idea of what I wanted to do.” Joe stated, “I was pretty outdoorsy, and I still am. I wasn’t sitting in front of the T.V. much. We went camping, I played outside a lot.” He believed this helped to prepare him for his time abroad, a possible motivation for participating in his particular program: “[I]t made me more tolerant of being uncomfortable without the comforts of home, which, when you go to a third world country, you don’t always have bathrooms and comfy beds.” Stephanie backed Joe’s statement that outdoor experiences prepare people for international travel: “Maybe it’s the ability to adapt to all the changing things that happen when you’re camping. You have to be adaptable when you travel, as well, so it’s probably a good set up for a travelling life, is to start camping.” In retrospect, she also associated her passion for the outdoors with influence to study abroad: “I’m sure it did [influence me] subconsciously. I don’t think I ever connected camping to travelling somewhere else, but I’m sure it influenced me.” Jennifer and Mack both made a direct connection between their time outdoors and cultural curiosity and adventure, which led to study abroad. According to Jennifer:

We were always outside doing something. My mom would kick us out of the house. Being twins in a house, screaming and yelling, she would tell us to go outside. We were always outside. . . . [I]t started something in me. . . . [I]t gave me an appreciation of wanting to see other cultures, be it however I do that. I
could definitely say it sparked a sense of adventure, or curiosity about other cultures, and made me want to see different states and different parts of the world. Mack’s statements agreed with Jennifer’s assessment: “There were plenty of times I was at the beach, and later that day I was in the snow. I got out there, went camping, went to the beach, to the mountains. . . . I think it initiates that excitement to travel. That excitement of getting out of your comfort zone and going to a different place, making an adventure of it.”

4.3.3. Exposure to media. Media, in the various formats of books, television, and movies, influenced seven respondents to travel and participate in study abroad programming. Oft mentioned were the Indiana Jones films, the History Channel, the Discovery Channel, books set in foreign cultures, and schoolbooks including geography and cultural studies. For Ms. Alam, Argentinian artists—writers Che Guevara and Jorge Luis Borges, and actor Carlos Gardel—were specifically influential to her decision to study in Argentina. Sarah was influenced by books, textbooks, and movies; she wanted to:

. . . really study these place and study these things that I had read about for so long in books and read about for so long in classrooms and finally see them in their original context, in their native context. . . and watching movies like Indiana Jones when I was a kid probably just heightened that sense for adventure and exploration. They probably got me interested in learning more about different cultures, beyond American culture. Henceforth, that got me into reading more, reading more books about the ancient world in particular. Ancient Egypt, as I mentioned, was my favorite, and then ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and ancient Mesopotamia. The Levant, other places in the Middle East, were other things I got into as well. That really started that lust, let’s say, for wanting to explore and travel and see other places and see other cultures.

In Joe’s words, “I was kind of a nerd. I loved maps; I had a little map book and a children’s atlas that I would study all the time.” When asked how he learned about cultures different from his own, he replied: “[F]rom T.V. in general. And I learned a little
bit about it in school. But mostly from T.V. . . . I watched the Discovery Channel and the History Channel when other kids were watching Nickelodeon.”

As a child, Mack became interested particularly in his study abroad country from the book and the animated cartoon *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. As a college student, watching French movies further motivated him to go to France:

[W]hen I was taking a French class, they would show a movie every Wednesday for extra credit. I would go to that to get the extra credit, and I think that helped me decide to go to Paris, too, watching these French films. I watched one on my own, a movie called *Paris*, which shows different ways of life of people in Paris. I think that was a big influence, too. Watching those French movies at the time I was thinking of doing study abroad, wanting to go to Denmark but it was too expensive, I think the movies really influenced me to go to France.

Mack was also influenced to travel in general by high school geography classes, travel videos, and particularly a television program called *The Wild Boys*. He elaborates by stating, “I think T.V. helped influenced me. I was really into a show called *The Wild Boys*. Steve-O and Chris Pontius from *Jackass*. They would go to new places and do dumb things in the wild. It was one of my favorite shows in high school, and I always wanted to go out and do different things, go to different places.”

Ji-Hoon’s initial interest in other cultures came from what he was learning in school. He did branch out and read a few fictional books, as well, one of which he recalled clearly:

I started becoming interested in wanting to travel the world. I started getting interested in other countries from what I was learning in school. It became a real interest for me. . . . It was just school textbooks, school mostly. I wasn’t a big reader, but I did read some *Arabian Nights*-type of books. There was one, *Shadow Spinner*, that was Middle Eastern and it really interested me in hearing stories from around the world, reading fictitious stories about things that happened outside in the world. It was something that I was interested in in a fantasy type of way, like a personal magical tale.
Media also played a unique role in influencing Ji-Hoon to study abroad. Rather than an intake of information on his part, he played a role in a video that unintentionally garnered him an invitation to study at the Korean Aerospace University, an invitation that engendered his ability to study abroad. He explained:

“It was in] February of my freshman year when one of the Korean students asked me to help him with a promotional video. He was making a video for his university, we were both in aviation school, and his school is the only aviation school in South Korea. He just wanted me to say four lines, like, “Hello,” here’s my name, “Come to our university,” and, “Welcome to America,” that kind of thing. I was just hearing words from them, but I hadn’t started learning the language. He sent that video to his school, and a person from their school contacted me and said he’d really like to see me that summer. I was invited to their university. I didn’t know if we had a program available, but they had an international summer program at that school that was just starting up. . . . [T]his is when I first started getting interested in it, and started thinking that I could go to Korea.

Kitty had a relationship with television and media that had a direct impact on her desire to travel abroad. In retrospect, she discovered how deeply that relationship influenced her:

I loved the [Indiana Jones] movies. I was totally addicted. There were always those scenes. . . [t]he different cultures you see in the movies, the archaeology aspect. . . . the movies had a really big influence there. I also liked watching the History Channel and the Discovery Channel. Any time there was anything on Ancient Egypt, I was constantly watching it. . . I had this revelation when I watched [Indiana Jones] again in Egypt. I bought the boxed set. My favorite one was The Lost Ark. I went to Egypt, and then I went to Nepal. The beginning of The Lost Ark started in Nepal, and then they go to Egypt. I never realized that that had been my favorite movie growing up, and then those were the two countries I first went to. Never made the connection; I didn’t even know that it started there. . . . Also, when I was in high school, Tomb Raider came out, and had all the same
stuff. I know it’s hilarious, but that came out, and she was going through Egypt with the pyramid and everything. That definitely made me want to go see stuff like that. . . . I had these pictures in my head of what these places looked like. I had pictured places like Egypt, which didn’t look at all what they had made it look like because they don’t film the KFC next to the pyramids. . . whenever I saw a new movie come out that had something overseas, anything abroad, I was immediately interested in it. . . I wanted to go and see all these things and experience these things, and see things.

But perhaps media had the largest effect on Emiko’s desire to study in Japan. In addition to growing up with exposure to Japanese values from her mother, Emiko became absorbed by Japanese pop culture, transferred schools and changed her major due to its influence, and made it into a major part of her life. She explained:

My first exposure (aside from my mother’s stories) was Japanese pop culture that came to America in the early 1990’s. During this time they had two popular animation shows called *Sailor Moon* and *Pokémon* that were voiced over in English. As a kid, I thought it was really cool. I got into it, and then grew out of it a bit in high school. I didn’t get back into that pop culture scene until before I went back to college. It was 8 years after graduating high school when a coworker asked if I knew what *Naruto* was. I asked if he meant the fish cake. He said it was a cartoon that was really popular right now, and I told him I haven’t watched Japanese anime in forever, so he told me to check it out. The first thing I did was go to the Japanese site, where it was subtitled in English. When I first heard the language, I was annoyed by the entire thing. I couldn’t even figure out what they were saying. So I checked out the English version. Not too soon after I tried the English version, I slowly became mortified and told myself to give the Japanese version a second chance. I’m glad I did. The English version to me had taken everything out of the joy of the culture. They took out the accents, the colloquial language and over censored much of the humorous scenes. In my opinion, they totally devalued the entire experience of watching another culture’s work of art. I much prefer the original language. If I can get something in the original format, it
feels more authentic. . . . I returned to work and told my coworker friend, “Congratulations, you’ve got me hooked on this stuff.” I want to say about two weeks after hearing the language, I began to fall in love with it. That’s when I decided to transfer from art college to a community college majoring in Japanese Studies. I just loved the way they speak, what they produce as far as pop culture, music, and drama television, and of course their ethics. I got really curious about the way they lived their lives both in medieval times as well as modern. . . . I wound up going really deep into the pop culture before I settled down and asked myself what it was that drew me, what about the culture I really wanted to learn. And instantly I realized that I wanted to know about all the ancient cultures, the religions/philosophies, the hot springs, the arts, the architecture and festivals. Most people stay in the anime and cosplay sections, but I went beyond that. I wanted to get into things people don’t normally find interesting or don’t hear too much about. . . . But it all started with their pop culture and of course I still love that part of the culture. Shortly after high school, I became a part of the whole Comicon-type scene, but anime style. In 1998, Seattle had their first official convention. It was called Baka-con. After a few years it evolved and became so viral that many different people started getting involved. The convention was then moved to a huge downtown convention center and the name changed to Sakura-con.

She continues to attend the Sakura-con conventions, and admitted she spends a great deal of money on costumes and product. Additionally, Emiko was influenced to travel and learn more about other cultures through print media:

As far as the travel thing is concerned, since I was a child I’ve always wanted to go out and see things and experience things I wasn’t exposed to. I would read all different kinds of books about different cultures, and I hated reading as a child. But when I got these travel books, picture books, storybooks, mostly books about mythology, for example, Greek mythology, I told my mom, “Mom, I want to go to Greece one day!” She said that was good, but didn't know where my motivation came from. But it was because she gave me these books and taught me about
things like Roman and Grecian gods. She would teach me all of this, and then it got to the point where I wanted to know more. So I did. As a kid, I learned all about different cultures, such as British, French, Greek, Egyptian, Turkish and German cultures, and that fueled the flames for the rest of my life. I wanted to see cool shit as an adult and now that I’m grown I’m ready to roll.

4.3.4. Interest in history. As is evident from some of the previous quotes regarding travel and media, several students had an interest in history as children. Six respondents stated having such an interest. Emiko clearly was absorbed by ancient Japan, Rome, and Greece. As she put it, “I’ve been a sucker for old architecture and how ancient civilizations lived for as long as I could remember.” Kitty and Sarah, also, have exemplified their fascination with the ancient world and their obsession with the History Channel in addition to movies and books on the ancient world. Mack mentioned an interest in Paris due to the uniqueness of the town and its history. Ji-Hoon stated that his interest in travel came primarily “from reading books, becoming interested in geography and hearing about history and hearing about this whole world.” And Ms. Alam was captivated by Genghis Khan and the Huns as a child; she had always wanted to see Mongolia, a dream she was finally able to achieve this past summer.

4.3.5. Neighborhood. Five participants reported that the neighborhoods they grew up in impacted their desire to travel and influenced them to study abroad. Kitty clearly was influenced to leave her hometown due to her perception of the narrowness of thought of those around her and her need to do something different. Additionally, Joe and Emiko had similar experiences of wanting to leave their hometowns. As Joe put it, he “felt like I was trapped in [city] and I would never be able to leave. . . . feeling trapped made me want to get out.” Emiko experienced a combination of positive neighborhood influence in that she grew up in Hawai‘i which exposed her to a multitude of cultures, but she also lives in a small town “and sometimes it gets dull. When I get to get out and travel, it makes me feel excited to be somewhere different. And now I want to see the rest of the world. Ever since I was 8 years old, I’ve wanted this, and now it seems possible. I want to experience cultures on multiple levels, to go deep.” Ms. Alam grew up on a cul-de-sac that was full of children her age, and “everyone was outside.” She connects this to
the outdoor activities that led to her mind-set to travel. Mack expressed a larger correlation between his neighborhood and his desire to travel. Firstly, he discussed the diversity of the city he grew up in:

I grew up in [town], California, which is a pretty diverse city. There are a lot of different cultures. My best friend growing up, his parents were from Kenya, and I spent a lot of time with him and his family. I’ve just always been around different cultures. My dad’s family is Mexican, and my mom’s more classic American culture. I had a lot of different friends from different backgrounds. I’ve always been curious about different cultures from having been exposed to different cultures. . . . My neighbor, growing up, was from South Africa, another was from Serbia. I’ve always been around international people. Friends of my parents, friends of whoever. . . . Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, everywhere really.

He also equated the dangerous nature of his home city with his learned ability to gauge his surroundings and keep himself safe, encouraging him to go farther afield and travel in areas other people might balk at:

When I tell people that I want to go to different places around the world, some people tell me it’s dangerous, but that doesn’t mean anything to me. . . . I think a lot if it, too, is that [his hometown] is a dangerous city. I’ve been in a lot of neighborhoods growing up needing to be aware of my surroundings, knowing I’m in a dangerous environment. Thinking I need to protect myself, having that feeling of watching my back and reading people, sizing people up, or analyzing threats. I think growing up like that helps. I lived in [town] for a bit, and people would tell me that place is ghetto. But I’ve walked around there, and I didn’t feel threatened like I did in a neighborhood around the corner from where I grew up.

Knowing how to take care of himself and being aware of his surroundings influenced him to travel abroad as it alleviated many potential concerns for his safety.

4.3.6. Military upbringing. Two participants in this study explained that growing up in military culture can have an impact on one’s perception of interconnectedness to others, as well as provide experiences living in different locations and being exposed to new societies. The respondents in this study who lived the military lifestyle while young
were Jennifer, for her entire childhood, and Ji-Hoon, until he was approximately fourteen years old. Ji-Hoon attributed some of his wanderlust to his time moving from base to base: “I jumped around a lot [to various locations] before coming here. I had this taste for a bigger world. I knew there was something else, all these connections in the world. I think I became interested just from moving around so much as a child, wanting to see a world that was bigger, wanting something more from life.” Jennifer supported the concept of a military upbringing being influential for travel: “I was a different case from the beginning because I grew up in the military. Born into a military family, constantly moving and travelling, and seeing different things. . . . I think that makes you more aware of travel and have more of an appreciation for it.” She also saw a connection between military culture and the ability to leave loved ones behind, which she felt influenced her decision to study abroad:

I think it definitely helped. It’s weird when you’re in the military, especially when you go to school on base, it’s almost a numbing factor of how many people every day say goodbye because it’s their last day, they’re moving. It’s not like an off-base situation. I remember going to an off-base school and it was a huge drama when people moved away. On base, it’s casual. “Goodbye, good luck. See you later.” It’s normal. I think that made me develop into the type of person that was used to new situations. When it came time for me to pack up, I didn’t think twice about leaving everyone. I think doing it your whole life, you don’t realize it’s different. Of course you’re going to miss people, but it’s just what you know. You get used to it. It’s kind of sickening how easy it gets to say goodbye to people.

Ji-Hoon experienced this ease of disconnect, as well. When queried about leaving people he cares for, he simply replied: “I never really say goodbye, I just say I’ll see you again.” He believed this assisted his decision to study abroad, much in the same way as it did Jennifer.

4.4. Program

The respondents reported being motivated to participate in their particular program, be it due to the subject of study, the location of the program, the structure of the program, and/or the length of the program.
4.4.1. Subject of program. Nine participants were influenced by the subject of their study abroad program. Ms. Alam studied Spanish in a Spanish-speaking country. Jennifer studied French language and business: “I took French in high school, and I stuck with it in college, so I wanted to go to a French-speaking country to keep up with the language. My major was business, so I wanted to stay with the business program.” Alicia participated in a course entitled Contemporary Australia, which focused on “how the contemporary aspects of it grew out of its history. . . . I was a sociology major because I was doing anthropology, so it all fit together.” Sarah and Kitty were both interested in archaeology and Egyptology, and both enrolled in Egyptology classes for their study abroad. Kitty changed her major later, but initially was motivated to study abroad due to her interest in archaeology: “I went to Egypt in the first place because I swore I was going to study Egyptology. Even though I ended up changing it, but that was one of the things I had decided when I studied abroad, was that I wanted to study archaeology. I had specifically, when I was looking for programs in Africa, I was looking for archaeology programs.” Stephanie, a marine biology major, studied abroad in a program specifically for biology majors: “We weren’t allowed to take any extra classes. That was one thing that was a little disheartening. However, I wanted to do it all, so I was okay.” Ji-Hoon studied aviation at an aviation university. Joe went abroad to take a course that aligned with his public health degree, with a focus on developing countries. And Emiko stated: “[W]hat made me truly jump on that plane and head to Japan was the language and their ancient culture. I wanted to see the old sites and feel a part of history never seen before in my life.”

4.4.2. Location of program. Nine participants reported being motivated by the specific country of study. In this sub-category, we see Kitty and Sarah intersecting again. Because they shared a desire to study Egyptology, they were naturally drawn to study abroad in Egypt. Sarah stated: “As I got older and became interested in archaeology and more specifically Ancient Egypt, that was what really did it for me. Then there was this strong desire and interest to go to Egypt, and to really be there and experience that.” Stephanie, additionally, chose her location due to her major of marine biology, but also because a long-time childhood friend lived in Australia, and this gave Stephanie an
opportunity to spend time with her: “I picked Australia half because of [her friend] and half because of the Great Barrier Reef and all the other awesome marine biology opportunities out there.” Emiko, a Japanese Studies major, studied abroad in Japan. And while Ms. Alam could have studied in any Spanish speaking country, she specifically chose Argentina:

There are lots of little things, but I think I’ve always romanticized Argentina. I think it’s just such a beautiful country, and the dialect, and everything appears to be just so wonderful. I’ve grown up admiring Argentinians, and my Spanish teacher had always spoken very highly of it. The people from Argentina—Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Gardel, Eva Peron, Che Guevara, are from Argentina. It’s just such a wonderful place and it’s so underappreciated it seems. . . . I think it’s just a wonderful country and I wanted to learn more about it.

Alicia had had an interest in Australia for some time before joining her study abroad program: “I always thought Australia was an interesting place to go. It was a totally different location.” Mack was interested in the Paris program due to his aforementioned interest in exploring his ethnicity. Joe, while not specifically interested in Uganda itself, was motivated by the third-world aspect of the program: “I wanted the experience of another culture and being in a third world country.”

Ji-Hoon experienced an intersection of motivations that combined to draw him to study abroad in South Korea. His parents had met in South Korea while both were in the military. They had learned a few key Korean phrases and passed these on to Ji-Hoon. While in college, he had the opportunity to test his Korean on some international students in his dormitory, and they became fast friends. These friends then unwittingly assisted him in obtaining an invitation to study at their home school, which his home university happened to have a partnership with, allowing Ji-Hoon to pay his usual tuition rates while abroad. Additionally, the school in Korea wanted him to attend their program and they were able to offer him a small scholarship to assist with expenses. In his words:

In my college dormitory, I saw two Korean students sitting in the lounge, talking. I knew they were Korean because I saw the dorm door that said they were from South Korea. I thought, “Wow, that’s where my parents met.” My parents know
three phrases in Korean, hello when you answer the phone, “yoboseoyo,” the main greeting, “anyounghaseyo,” and they know how to say, “I want one more beer, please,” “maekju hanjan duh juseyo.” So they know those three phrases, and knowing that, I went up to them and said “yoboseoyo,” and I was excited to meet them. From that point on, we became best friends. They went to the Korean Aerospace University, which is the university I studied abroad at. . . . [His home university] had a partnership, so I could pay [home] tuition and fees and go to the school in Korea, the same as any other exchange. I was able to knock off the fees, the tuition, and it included food and housing. . . . I also received a small scholarship from their university to attend, because the man who invited me saw the video, saw that I was interested in coming, and he really wanted more students from our university to come.

This confluence of influences, from his parents meeting there, to the strong ties of friendship he created with the Korean international students, to the financial aspects of the universities partnership and the scholarship offered, as well as the desire on the part of the Korean Aerospace University for Ji-Hoon to attend their program, created the perfect circumstances for him to study abroad in South Korea.

**4.4.3. Structure of program.** The structure of the program was reported as influential by eight respondents. Two participants stated that experiential learning was important to their decision to go, two interviewees mentioned that homestays were integral to their experience, three respondents reported the professor-led aspect of the program influenced them, and five students were motivated due to the ease and finances of pre-arranged university exchanges.

Alicia participated in a professor-led cultural-based trip, as opposed to a classroom-based program. “[W]e were experiencing the country and doing it not as tourists, but actually trying to experience it as if we lived there. . . . [T]he idea that we could plan it ourselves based on what we what we wanted to learn about and experience was really neat.” Alicia acknowledged that this type of program was more appealing to her than in-university coursework as she is “a hands-on learner.” Ms. Alam found the experiential part of her trip appealing, as well: “It was also the best way to learn—hands-
on, discovery learning—not stuck in a classroom or enormous lecture hall. Personally, I learn better that way.”

Mack was interested in the structure of the program due to the homestay option available in Paris, an option not available in the Copenhagen program he had originally planned to do: “In Paris, I stayed with a homestay. I actually preferred that. That might have a little to do with going to Paris too, the homestay versus the dormitory.” Ms. Alam was also partially influenced by the homestay offered in her program:

I knew I was going to be living with a family and I was super, super nervous about that because when you go to school in California and you’re taking Spanish classes, it’s every day for forty-five minutes and you’re thinking, “Okay, let me go in there and say a few sentences in Spanish and try not to get called on anymore.” I knew I was going to have to sit there and speak in Spanish to my family, and I was really nervous about having to immerse myself in it. . . . I was really nervous but that’s one of the reasons I did do it.

However, she also was drawn in by the professor who led the course and the field trips that were scheduled throughout the program:

I went with a faculty member. . . [who] actually is from Mendoza, and so she has family there. She set up this program. . . . And, while we were there, it was more than just going to classes four days a week, they would take us on trips basically every weekend. We would go all across Argentina. . . basically every weekend we would go somewhere else and visit each diverse part of the country, meet new people, and experience the culture, so it was so much more than just going to class.

Joe’s professor-led program was motivational for him, as well, especially as the professor taught a semester-long pre-departure class that helped prepare students for their time overseas: “We had a class once a week to help us prepare for being abroad. . . . We got to know at least what to expect when we got there.”

Emiko, Ji-Hoon, and Mack used the student exchange programs at their respective universities to make study abroad financially possible. Emiko’s statement was representative of these three participants: “I thought, ‘Yeah, I’m going to do this, as long
as I can afford it.’ That was my major issue. In the end it wasn’t as expensive as I thought. Thankfully my uni has a program where I can pay the same tuition rate while overseas.” Sarah and Jennifer also found the exchange programs between their home and host universities influential to studying abroad. Sarah’s, as explained previously, was more complicated than a typical exchange, but the existence of the exchange allowed her to go abroad; without the relationship between the universities, she could not have studied at AUC. Jennifer’s exchange was straightforward, in which she paid home tuition, had credits pre-approved, and received assistance from the international student offices at both home and host institutions. This was influential for her because, “through my university’s international programs office, there was only one school I could go to. It was a sister school where I wouldn’t need to go through another school. I didn’t want to go through another school because I didn’t want to deal with the paperwork. I didn’t want the hassle of not having people around where I could just run in and ask questions.”

4.4.4. Length of program. Seven respondents were influenced by the length of their program, four due to associated monetary requirements, one due to the flexibility afforded by the time involved, two as it did not interfere with graduation, and two who would have been less satisfied had they gone for shorter periods of time. Ms. Alam participated in a quarter-long program, which allowed her to save money compared to a year abroad, as well as gave her to freedom to participate in additional study abroad opportunities: “[The short-term program] was motivating because it was less expensive. I had also originally planned to come back home and then go to Spain for the summer, so it gave me the flexibility to do another program after that.” She was also able to complete coursework abroad that applied to her major, and actually allowed her to graduate early. Mack was also influenced to participate in the two-month program due to financial constraints. The length of the program allowed him to go abroad at all, as the shorter length—ergo, lower cost—made it affordable for him. However, had he had the capital, he would have preferred to sign up for a longer program: “It would have been awesome to go for a year or so.” Ji-Hoon, also, was influenced to study abroad due to the cost associated with the length of time involved in the summer program he attended. Had it been a longer program, he would not have been able to raise the necessary funds to
participate. Joe, who received a scholarship for the program costs, was still responsible for incidentals while abroad. The length of the one-month program he participated in permitted him to go abroad: “Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been able to go because I was a broke college kid.”

The length of program worked well for Alicia, who participated in a J-term (January term) course. As it was between semesters, it influenced her decision to go: “I was there for the winter term. Three or four weeks,” which did not interfere with her home coursework. Sarah, on the other hand, would have preferred to study abroad for her entire degree: “I remember in high school actually picking up an application for the American University in Cairo (AUC) with the intention of actually studying there for my entire university career. My mother quickly shot that down. She wasn’t ready to let me go there just yet, at least not for my entire university experience.” When it came time for her to study abroad, she did attend AUC for an entire academic year. This was her compromise with her mother; less than this would not have satisfied her. Additionally, as she spent the time and effort on choosing classes that would transfer home, she was able to “receive credit, and to move forward within my university curricula.” Kitty did complete nearly her entire degree overseas, an experience she strongly desired as evidenced by the work she put into finding the right university:

I did my own personal research. Like I said, I had the continent of Africa in my head, and I just went from there. I started researching every university I could find. I found several in the Congo. Unfortunately, they were all based in French, and my French skills were really lacking. I kept researching until I found as many university options as I could, and then I narrowed it down to see. . . I had had the whole archaeology thing in my head, and I knew the general area I wanted to go to, and then it was just making the logical choice from there.

4.5. Opportunity

Each participant in the study reported being influenced by the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program. Emiko shared her thought process on this: “I figured, I was so close, I have this opportunity, and I am going to take it. Why not? It will enrich my views of the world. I can learn something, grow with it, and pass it on to
someone else, whether it’s my godchildren or my friends.” Jennifer knew well in advance of going to college that she was going to study abroad, and she saw the university as an opportunity to make that happen: “I always knew I was going to study abroad, though. Even before college I was trying to think of ways to work abroad, to travel more, or to live overseas for a while. But education helps fund that kind of stuff.” Contrarily, Joe had never thought he could study abroad, and as such, it wasn’t on his radar when he started college. He explained his unexpected opportunity:

The study abroad thing came up because it was an opportunity for me. I hardly had to pay anything for it. I was in a program with a scholarship that paid for my tuition and the study abroad was covered. . . . I was open to new experiences and I wanted to travel, but I never thought I’d have much opportunity at that point. And then it was handed to me on a silver platter.

Ji-Hoon, also, had no expectation of studying abroad in college; his opportunity came when an administrator at his to be host university saw him in a promotional video, invited him to attend, and offered him a partial scholarship. “We didn’t have a lot of money when I was growing up, so it wasn’t really an option for me to study abroad in high school, or even in college. I didn’t even think of that being a possibility, so I struck it away.” After receiving the invitation to the Korean Aerospace University, Ji-Hoon found additional funding to supplement the partial scholarship, and therefore was able to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the host university.

Sarah had wanted to do her entire degree abroad, which her mother would not allow. Then, upon arriving at Boston University, she learned about their affiliation with her preferred foreign university and took advantage of the opportunity this partnership provided: “and so there was my opportunity. Fortunately, when I was at Boston University, I learned that they did have a program at AUC, and I saw that as my second chance to fly the coop, as it were, and to finally get to Egypt.” Stephanie, Alicia, and Mack also saw college as their opportunity to get abroad. Stephanie stated, “In college, I knew I wanted to go somewhere. I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity.” Alicia likewise reported, “I really wanted to go somewhere different, so I thought that [study abroad] would be the perfect opportunity, branch out a little bit.” Her program was
culturally-based, which influenced her to take advantage of what was on offer: “I wanted to have the opportunity to do that . . . learning about the culture.” Mack was more purposeful in his approach to utilizing the opportunities his university provided: “What led me to study abroad was the opportunity to do something, to take advantage of a resource that the university has. It allows you to go to a different place and study; it’s something that’s there. When I went to school, I wanted to take advantage of almost every opportunity that I could explore.”

Ms. Alam’s opportunity was three-fold. For one, the timing of her program allowed her the option to participate in another study abroad immediately after the first. Secondly, the time frame worked out perfectly with her internships:

Another thing was that in fall of 2004 I had gone to a job fair at the Oakland Coliseum for local, professional, and major league sports teams. . . . I went to that and was hired on as an intern for two professional sports teams, which ran from October to March. As a result, . . . I was able to have that experience working in a different field, the field I thought I was interested in, but ended up not enjoying. And I was still able to go study abroad. I literally finished my last day of internship and the next morning I flew out to Argentina.

Further, the courses she took in Argentina gave her the opportunity to speed up her graduation date, allowing her to finish sooner than expected: “And this is why I graduated two quarters early, because I was able to do these summer programs and study abroad that allowed me to finish early. By studying abroad and completing these summer programs I was able to graduate early.”

Kitty, on the other hand, did not go through a U.S. institution, and so she created her own opportunity to study abroad. Driven by a desire to go to Africa, she researched until she found a university that would support her needs: “My whole plan was just to get to Africa, and then I would take it from there. And then it was just a matter of finding universities that provided that opportunity. . . . I decided on AUC because it was U.S. accredited and . . . the fact that, my degree would be easily applicable here.” Though she created the logistical aspect of her opportunity, she still saw college and the opportunity to go abroad as influential to her decision. In her words, it was “having the opportunity of
freedom. . . . It was about that, just doing something that was completely off the beaten track; something that nobody does. Seeing things that nobody gets to see. I was in a position where I had the opportunity to do it, so I said, ‘Fuck it. Let’s do it.’”
Chapter 5
Findings: Non-Unanimous Categories

Eight categories emerged during the coding and analysis stages that were reported by between two and nine participants (see Table 5). The influences and/or motivations of interest in other cultures, academics, career, influential people, language learning, previous international travel, professors, and the study abroad office are discussed in this chapter. These categories did not exist for all participants; however, they were influential, even crucial, to the decision to study abroad for those participants who reported them. They are discussed in descending order of frequency.

5.1. Interest in Other Cultures

An interest in cultures different from one’s own was reported as a reason for wanting to study abroad. Bring able to experience other cultures first hand and live in those cultures was motivating for nine of the ten respondents. From a young age, Jennifer knew she would travel abroad: “I knew I wanted to be involved in the international community. Getting to college, I didn’t even have to think about it. I just knew I was going to study abroad. . . . I honestly wanted to go over there to study language and culture.” Ms. Alam made clear throughout her interview that culture was a driving force for her to study abroad, especially in her destination country as she’d, “always romanticized Argentina.” Alicia, also, was entranced with other cultures since her youth. Study abroad was appealing to her because of, “That idea of being able to go to a different country, being able to meet a different culture . . .” Coming from a family and neighborhood where he was surrounded by different cultures, Mack expressed a natural desire to learn more about people and cultures that differed from him:
Table 5. Motivations and Influences by Participant: Non-Unanimous Categories

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations &amp; Influences</th>
<th>Ms. Alam</th>
<th>Jennifer</th>
<th>Alicia</th>
<th>Sarah</th>
<th>Kitty</th>
<th>Stephanie</th>
<th>Maxwell “Mack” McLendon</th>
<th>Joe Carlin</th>
<th>Emiko</th>
<th>Ji-Hoon</th>
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I’ve just always been around different cultures. My dad’s family is Mexican, and my mom’s more classic American culture. I had a lot of different friends from different backgrounds. I’ve always been curious about different cultures from having been exposed to different cultures. . . . I was interested in Scandinavian culture because my mom has roots in Norway. I was able to find out which village they came from, so I was interested in going to Scandinavia. I used to work on a boat where I encountered some Scandinavians, and I was interested in their culture. The program was just a little too expensive, so I looked at other programs.

After finding the Paris program, he became even more interested as there was a homestay option available. When asked what it was about the homestay that influenced his decision, he stated, “Being exposed to the daily life of the people there. Having more of an intimate connection with people there, instead of just making friends, but being able to live with and eat dinner with them every night. It’s a different experience.”

Emiko had wanted new experiences with cultures and people ever since she was small: “[S]ince I was a child I’ve always wanted to go out and see things and experience things I wasn’t exposed to.” Primarily due to her mother’s influence growing up, she had a strong desire to experience the Japanese culture. Later, she became exposed to and fell in love with the pop culture, as well. Her interest in Japanese culture caused her to change her major to Japanese Studies, so when the option to study abroad became available, it was an easy decision to make: “For a lot of cultures, but Japanese in particular I have a soft spot for. And I don’t know why. Maybe it’s the humbleness and unity that they have. It’s hard to describe. They have this certain spirit where it’s alluring to me. I want to know more.” Joe, also, was drawn to other cultures as a child. While not entirely sure where this intrinsic interest came from, he did know that, “My friends weren’t as interested as I was in other cultures.” Once in college and aware that study abroad was a possibility, he was motivated to enroll in the class because “I wanted the experience of another culture and being in a third-world country.”

Ji-Hoon and Sarah reported that their interest in other cultures came a bit later in life. Ji-Hoon had made friends in high school who piqued his interest: “There were some
international students who came when I was in my senior year of high school, and I became really close friends with them. It was my first interaction with any international students.” Then in his freshman year of university, he met the Korean students who would facilitate his entry into the host university he attended. They were not merely casual acquaintances, but from the moment they met they became extremely close, bolstering Ji-Hoon’s desire to learn more about them and the Korean culture:

I was excited to meet them. From that point on, we became best friends. They went to the Korean Aerospace University, which is the university I studied abroad at. I got an introduction to them, got really close to them, and got to hear some basic words. They taught me some swear words, because that’s the first thing you need to learn in a language, of course.

From these interactions, he began to learn about Korea, and when the opportunity to learn more arose, he took full advantage of it.

Sarah didn’t have a desire to learn about modern cultures until she was already in college. Her driving interest in other countries had always been based in their ancient cultures and archaeology. However, in her freshman year of university, she took a trip to England that opened her eyes to contemporary culture and planted a seed that she was able to grow through her study abroad program:

[I had a] lust, let’s say, for wanting to explore and travel and see other places and see other cultures. But for a long time, it was very much the ancient world I was interested in, and it was only when I first went abroad in the UK that I really got a taste for the modern culture that was going on and I really loved that and wanted to experience more of that. And then living in Egypt really opened my eyes to working with living cultures and modern cultures.

Stephanie did not specifically report that Australian culture was a draw for her, though she obviously had an interest in experiencing the culture, as reflected in her statement that the cultural experience was not what she had been expecting. Also, her interest in other cultures was reflected in her choice of living arrangements:

I had the opportunity to pick which dorm area I was in; our campus was separated a little bit. I chose the international house. Therefore I got to hang out with people
from all over the place, including Australians and whatnot. Other people chose to be surrounded mostly by their UC friends. I was able to get more international flavor there than some of the others. The more I got immersed in Australian culture . . . it was different. It just wasn’t as different as I was hoping for.

5.2. Academics

Nine interviewees expressed being motivated to study abroad due to the specific academic content of the course(s) offered during their respective programs. Emiko studied abroad in Japan in order to take courses in her major, Japanese Studies. Ms. Alam went to a Spanish-speaking country to complete her Spanish major: “It was a wonderful way to take care of all of my advanced electives for my language study. . . . It was somewhere I wanted to go, Argentina, and then knowing that it would take care of those last few classes I had to do in order to complete my major, it was a great incentive to go.” Ji-Hoon attended an aerospace university in order to take courses in aviation. Stephanie, a marine biology major, participated in a program open only to biology majors so she could focus on academics that related to her program of study. Joe went abroad with a departmental program to take a course that related to his major of Food Safety. Sarah stated that her primary motivation was to study courses within her major: “I would say the desire to do archaeology was the driving force.” Jennifer was working on a degree in international business: “The reason why I kept with business . . . was so I could keep on track with graduation. I took classes over there that transferred back to the States. . . . It was international business, and I wanted to do that.”

Alicia’s interest in the contemporary history course she took was rooted in her anthropology major and her preference for hands-on learning. Though officially a history class, Alicia had a different perspective which influenced her desire to participate:

There were learning outcomes, but it wasn’t so structured that it was learning by experience rather than learning in school that happens to be in another country. . . . We read about it before, and then we had a reflective paper at the end, what we learned throughout the program on the history, the experiences we had, and looking back at what we learned in general about the culture. I thought it was an interesting take on the typical history class with dates and events. To me, it wasn’t
a history class, it was more of an anthropology class because you’re learning about the culture.

Mack admits to being less influenced by the academic component of his study abroad, though it did have some sway on his decision to go:

My study abroad program was less about academics. That was the justification for going. I’m interested in sustainability, but we studied the business side of it. I’m more into environmental studies and managing natural resources and conservation . . . but it was still beneficial to learn about European sustainable businesses to some degree. And I enjoyed the French civilization course that I took. It was somewhat justified by the academics, but more that the program got me somewhere else, somewhere new.

Taking this a step further, Kitty affirmed that academics had nothing to do with her decision to study abroad. Though earlier quotes from Kitty would imply that academics motivated her to study abroad, she acknowledged that academics were a necessity to access the university, and so she used academics as a vehicle to achieve her goal of studying abroad in college. She clearly stated: “I can 100% say that the actual decision to go abroad had nothing to do with the academics. That was just the way to go about it.”

5.3. Career

Eight respondents acknowledged a desire to further their careers by participating in their study abroad program. Sarah had, “the goal of putting that experience towards my career and my education, which ultimately, at that point in time, I had planned to be in archaeology.” Ji-Hoon, too, studied courses that would apply to his future career: “I thought that was going to be my career at the time, a pilot in the Air Force. I thought at the time that this could be good for my career, for my future, and possibly it would look good; it would be an investment in my future with the Air Force.” While his plans to join the military changed, he recently graduated with an aviation degree and a possible career with a major airliner. Stephanie planned on using her time abroad to bolster her career options: “I knew it would look good on my resume.” Jennifer took international business courses with the aim of graduating with that degree and using it in her future career. However, she admitted: “Business was just a generic degree. It’s always been about
being somewhere else and travelling. I thought that international business would get me out of the country.” She is currently in the Peace Corps, working in a French-speaking country. Knowing she would use her Spanish degree in her career, Ms. Alam is now a Spanish teacher. She believed “that all language majors, and all language teachers, should definitely live in and study in the country of the language they’re learning or teaching . . . because that’s the only way to master the language” and it better prepares students to teach the language once back home. Emiko is also planning on using her Japanese language skills in her career. When asked if this idea started before or after her study abroad program, whether career prospects motivated her to study abroad or came about afterward, she replied:

It grew. It first started off as a small little seed of thought, but then it blew out of my mind since I was in 101. I was getting ahead of myself. I don’t like to get ahead of myself because I tend to do that a lot. I told myself to wait, absorb, watch, look, learn, and then make a solid decision for the future. . . . I’m applying to the JET [Japan Exchange and Teaching] program, and one other private company to assist with teaching English in Japan. . . . It went from a flame to flambé.

Joe had a specific job in mind when he studied abroad: “At the time, I was hoping to get a job at the FDA, and when you work with the FDA for four years with this position that I wanted, there was opportunity to work abroad to inspect food imports before they come to America. . . . So going into the class, I thought it could help me secure the job later.” Conversely, Mack saw study abroad as a way to bolster his career, but without a definitive career in mind: “Putting that experience down in an official, credible . . . Having that experience to show future employers, and overall to have the experience of different types of jobs and different types of ways of living to help guide myself in desires of what to make out of life.”
5.4. Influential People

Of the ten participants in this study, seven of them reported being influenced to study abroad by their friends, teachers, extended family, and/or co-workers.

5.4.1. Friends. Seven participants discussed friends as influential to their study abroad participation. Seen previously in this analysis, Ji-Hoon’s exposure to and friendships with international students, during his time in high school and college, greatly influenced him to study abroad. Mack, also, was influenced by his friends growing up as he was surrounded by cosmopolitan people of multiple ethnicities. Joe was similarly influenced by meeting international students: “In college, I met a lot of people from other cultures, from around the world, and I think that really opened my eyes.” Emiko mentioned her best friend as being influential and reminding her of her childhood interest in Japan:

My best friend... liked a lot of the old Japanese stuff. For instance, Akira, which was a semi-historical anime. She loved it; she always talked about her love of Japanese stuff because it was so different from what we all know. And that’s when it jogged my brain that my mom used to always talk about it. Then I thought, “Now that I’m older, let’s see what it can do for me.” And that was it, the rest was history.

Ms. Alam was encouraged by her friends as well as her college boyfriend. “Even my friends and my boyfriend at the time, he was sad that I was leaving, but he told me that I needed to go, to do it. . . . He had already graduated college and he really wanted me to have those experiences.” Jennifer was likewise encouraged by her boyfriend, who was also in the French department and was considering joining her on her study abroad program: “It probably helped that I was dating a guy in the French department and we wanted to go together.” Stephanie attributed half of her motivation to study in Australia to her childhood friend who lived there:

My friend [omitted] was living in Australia. We had grown up together, and she was able to come over and visit every so often in [hometown], but I had never been able to visit out there. . . . I picked Australia half because of [her]. . . . I think [she] really had a big draw for me to do that. . . . I was still a great distance away.
from where [she] was living, but I got to spend my last few weeks with her after school finished. We explored Sydney and other places.

5.4.2. Teachers. Three respondents attributed teachers with being motivational to their study abroad decisions. Ms. Alam started taking Spanish in seventh grade, and she explained that learning the Spanish language came easily for her because of the teachers she had. However, there was one teacher in particular who influenced her ability to learn Spanish and directly motivated her to study abroad:

When I got to ninth grade, I had a wonderful Spanish teacher, Señora Smith, which isn’t a very Hispanic name. She is actually Italian, which was actually a good influence because it made me realize a non-Hispanic person could learn the Spanish language and master it. And she was with me for all four years in high school and really encouraged me to continue with the language throughout college. She was my mentor during that time and when I became a Spanish teacher. I credit her with encouraging me to study abroad, and follow through with mastering the language. . . . [She even] suggested I go to Mexico during the summer of my junior to senior year to improve my conversational skills. She thought I was one of the students that would really benefit from it. Perhaps she saw something in me and knew I would be a life-long learner and traveler.

Joe was influenced by a high school teacher who taught a cultural class, which engendered in him the concept of travelling to different cultures:

I had one teacher in high school that was from Australia, and she had a class called Around the World in 90 Days. It was a one-semester class that talked about other cultures. Most of the kids in the class were like-minded as me, and that really developed more interest in travelling. . . . It was probably my favorite high school class. We had a lot of discussions, sitting around in a circle and talking. . . . Mostly learning about other cultures. I remember everyone had to bring in for show-and-tell things that were representative of other cultures.

Mack recalled two instances when teachers influenced his desire to travel and learn about other cultures. In elementary school, he had a teacher who shared her passion for French culture: “When I was in third grade, my teacher was really into French culture.
We practiced French vocabulary, how to count in French, colors, and basic sentences.” In college, a teacher arranged for the owner of Kinko’s to speak to the class. This guest lecturer instilled in Mack the importance of experiencing life, which Mack translated, in part, into experiencing other cultures:

Right out of high school, I went to [name] City College. The owner of Kinko’s is from [that town] and he came to our class one time. He said that your twenties are for trying new things, doing as much as you can, finding your passion and skill; your thirties for perfecting your skill; your forties are when you make money off your skill. So your twenties are for doing things, as many different things as I can. Hopefully, experiences will collect and I’ll be able to analyze that data later on.

5.4.3. Extended Family. Mack was also one of two respondents who were influenced to study internationally via their extended family. In his case, he related an aunt with his study abroad location, and thought this helped influence him to go to France: “My aunt took French, and I associate her with the French language. And she’s very artistic, and I associate Paris with art to some degree; I think I had some connections there.” Ms. Alam had a more direct influence in her life, which manifested as her godmother’s love of travel and the excitement of international experiences her godmother had shared with her growing up:

My godmother is one of the most influential people in my life. She’s friends with the Dali Lama, she’s been to Nepal and Tibet to see him. She’s climbed up parts of Mount Everest, she’s been all over the world, and she was always travelling when I was a child. She didn’t have any children, and I was fortunate enough to be her goddaughter, and she would always show me these amazing pictures, and tell me about these trips and send me postcards. She was probably the most influential person in terms of travelling. . . . I think she’s the one who introduced Mongolia to me, and one of the happiest moments was when I got to call her and her husband and tell them I was going to Mongolia, that I was going to do this trip finally.

5.4.4. Co-workers. Two participants reported that their co-workers were motivational to their study abroad decisions. Mack took a job on a yacht, on which he
was the only American. Being surrounded by multiple nationalities in a work environment continued his life-long exposure to international people and cultures, and made him more curious to go abroad. Emiko had a co-worker who influenced her to re-explore Japanese anime, which she acknowledged as a large motivator to major in Japanese Studies. She explained:

[A] co-worker that asked if I knew what *Naruto* was. I asked if me meant the fish cake. He said it was a cartoon that was really popular right now, and I told him I haven’t watched Japanese anime in forever, so he told me to check it out. . . . And so I returned to work and told my coworker friend, “Congratulations, you’ve got me hooked on this stuff.” . . . He’s the one who got me back into the scene and I wound up going really deep into the pop culture before I settled down and asked myself what it was that drew me, what about the culture I really wanted to learn. However, it was her boss whom she credits with directly motivating her to study abroad by introducing the concept to her:

When I first got into my job, I work at a community college, my boss asked what I was studying. I told him I’m a Japanese Studies student, and right then and there he tells me about study abroad. . . . I think the main reason I thought of going to Japan was because my boss told me to try for it. I didn’t know that I was eligible, or that I could afford it, or that there was even a program that could get me there. So I thought, “Why not?” and ended up inquiring to my great surprise.

5.5. Language Learning

Seven participants reported that learning a foreign language was motivational to their decision to study abroad. Though Stephanie studied in an English-speaking country, she had initially wanted to learn a foreign language, and was able to experience some linguistic differences: “I almost felt like a sell-out for going to an English speaking country for my education abroad program. . . . [However,] I met people with different dialects, where I couldn’t understand what was coming out of their mouths. With most of the people, it was easy enough. But understanding the slang, that was fun.”

Ms. Alam, who went to Argentina primarily to study Spanish, strongly believed that:
All language majors should study abroad in a country of the language that they’re studying. . . . I believe you do not, if you’re not a native speaker of the language, fully master the language unless you immerse yourself in it or its culture. . . . [The homestay] was also one of the reasons I was going was to learn and force myself to speak in Spanish, because that’s what I wanted to do. That is what I feel really accelerated my Spanish skills, and that’s why I believe all language majors and Spanish teachers should go abroad and study Spanish.

Jennifer was also motivated to continue the language learning she had begun in high school. “I took French in high school, and I stuck with it in college, so I wanted to go to a French-speaking country to keep up with the language.” She believed that “A language is never a bad thing to have,” which has helped her in her current position in the Peace Corps. She brought up a previous, short-term study abroad she had done as a sophomore on a faculty-led trip. When asked her primary motivation to participate in that program, she recounted:

[I]t was instilled in us that if you want to build a foundation in a language, you have to go overseas. . . . Getting a hold of the language . . . going over there to create a backbone as far as speaking it every day, being immersed in the culture, I wanted to know more about this stuff that I spent hours a day studying and memorizing and beating myself over the head with it and hating my life sometimes. I’m a strong believer in knowing face-to-face exactly what I’m studying, be it anything. I feel the need to put myself in the situation and actually do it. I wanted to be in France, with the French. We stayed with a host family for four of the six weeks. I wanted to see what it was like to be there, day-to-day, to be French.

Emiko was motivated to not only learn more of the Japanese language, but to perfect her pronunciation and accent. She had a head start due to her upbringing, but her need to be precise with the spoken language strongly influenced her decision to study in Japan. She explains:

When I was taking Japanese 101 in Seattle, my sensei told me my pronunciation is very good and asked where I learned it. I said that it helped that I grew up in a
household where I had so many different languages, and the Hawaiian pronunciation of certain sounds and vowels are very similar. As long as I can get the intonation and accent over the tongue, it isn’t hard for me to do. There were some specific parts I had to work on, but it wasn’t as easy for some of my classmates. I guess I should be lucky that I had a small advantage in that department because I grew up with Hawaiian pronunciation. . . . I’ve grown to be picky when it comes to proper pronunciation. . . it’s a really big thing for me. When the American accent botches up Japanese words such as karate and karaoke, I tend to get irked. Maybe it’s a pet peeve, but I prefer to hear the word spoken properly.

After her experience in the U.K. ignited a passion for living cultures, Sarah became interested in the modern culture of Egypt and took Arabic classes while abroad. Ji-Hoon started learning Korean after he was invited to his host university. Being invited influenced him to study the language, which in turn became a motivation to go to Korea: “I started studying Korean on my own before I left, with those two friends, so I could read the basics and learn basic phrases from them.” He is now fluent in Korean and, with his degree in aviation, plans on applying for a job with Korean Air. Mack, also, wanted to study a language. And though he didn’t take a French class while abroad, the thought of daily exposure was motivation enough for him. “I had a little ambition to learn French, and I was taking French here at [university]. When the Denmark program didn’t work out, I thought the Paris program sounded cool because I could practice French. . . . It was really immersive, having to learn at least basic French.” In retrospect, he would have preferred to take a language class while in France, but logistically his schedule did not permit it.

5.6. Previous International Travel

The experience of having travelled abroad previous to studying abroad was influential for seven of the respondents. As a high school student, Alicia traveled to Canada and Mexico, and as a university student went to Europe with her soccer team. She thought these trips influenced her to study abroad:
We did drive up to Canada, though. We went to Mexico, and then we went on a cruise. In the four years during high school, we always went somewhere different. That probably had an influence too, the fact that I was able to travel even beyond the U.S. . . . I [also] did go to Europe that year for a preseason of soccer. . . . I guess that influenced me, too, the opportunity to do a quick pre-trip kind of thing.

Mack spent a fair amount of time in Mexico in high school and then in a job he had shortly after high school. He worked on a boat, and the crew would often sail down the Mexican coast. When he left his position to go back to school, he took two months off and travelled through India: “I went to India for two months. I spent a month trekking in the Himalayas with the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and then I spent a month travelling on my own going from Delhi to Bombay down to Goa and back up to Delhi.” He found these experiences influential in engendering more of a desire to see the world.

Sarah was influenced by a trip to the U.K. the year before her study abroad. It opened her up to the ideas of living culture, which in turn motivated her to learn more about the modern culture of Egypt rather than solely the ancient culture, which had first attracted her. Jennifer, also, had her first international travel experience in college. Though it was a study abroad program she participated in, she didn’t consider it the study abroad program of her university career: “I knew for my major semester-long abroad, I wanted to do it later in my college career. I wanted to get more out of it.” Rather, she saw the short-term trip as a chance to travel abroad, learn the language, and get some life experience. Furthermore, this short-term study abroad trip influenced her to study abroad for a longer period of time in the same country.

Stephanie had been travelling to Mexico since she was a child, and she went to Europe in high school, which she attributed with the influence to travel more: “In high school I had the opportunity to go to Europe with my band and orchestra, so that really set off the international travel bug.” Kitty often traveled to Russia as a child on her father’s tugboat, and she believed this experience, as well as living a drifter-type childhood, influenced her to study abroad: “[W]e crossed the Bering Sea into Russia,
parts of Siberia, with the tugs. That was our job. . . . It was a very nomadic lifestyle as a child. I think that had a lot to do with it.”

Emiko referred to herself as “a complete travel junkie,” and saw her trips, domestic and international, as feeding her need to travel while causing it to expand at the same time. As an example, she shared her experiences travelling to Canada: “I have gone to Canada a lot. Just to go to Victoria B.C. and seeing old English architecture and charm makes me want to go to Europe. To see and experience things I have never seen before gets my blood pumping.”

5.7. Professors

The categories of professors and the study abroad office both influenced and/or motivated some respondents to study abroad, and relate to how knowledge of the study abroad opportunity was obtained. They are treated as discrete categories as the respondents perceived their professors as separate and apart from the study abroad office. Four interviewees stated that their professors directly influenced them to study abroad. Jennifer talked about the motivation that her French professor instilled in her on her first study abroad program, a faculty-led short-term program:

He pushed it. He taught about ninety percent of the French classes, except French 100, and he would talk about it like it was the cool thing to do. . . . [I]f you want to know what he’s talking about as far as these cultural aspects of the French, it helps to go over there and experience one-on-one. And he was straight up and said we would never be able to go to France again for this cheap. He had it mastered as far as group rates and everything. It was a steal. She went on to comment that involving professors directly with study abroad is an important marketing tool: “I would say that the study abroad office needs to get professors of departments related to specific programs to tell students it would look good on an application or a resume, that it’s good experience, that nowadays students need some kind of international experience.”

Joe, Alicia, and Ms. Alam were also directly motivated to study abroad by the professors who ran their faculty-led trips. Joe didn’t even know study abroad was an option for him until the professor brought it to his attention: “The professor who did the
study abroad program was the professor of one of my classes. She was really advertising it in order to recruit enough kids to make it happen. She mentioned that I should have a stipend with my scholarship, so I brought it up with my advisor, and sure enough, I had it.” Alicia had a similar experience with her professor, whose excitement and influence was supported by the accompanying student assistant and his fiancée:

I think what really helped [my decision] was the professor just loves Australia. He’s been there so many times, he’s really knowledgeable about the country. . . . And the different teacher assistants, they had previously gone on his trips with him, too. I think there were only three. . . . The professor, the student assistant, who worked somewhere on the college and was a recent graduate, he went, and his fiancée. They all knew each other and they all had been there before, and that was really helpful. They knew the ins and outs.

Ms. Alam’s professor arranged the program, which was located in her hometown. She had family in the town, was familiar with the language school they attended, and was able to coordinate homestays and field trips that someone foreign to the town and the country might not have been able to arrange. These aspects appealed to Ms. Alam, and her professor’s influence helped her decide to study in Mendoza.

5.8. Study Abroad Office

Two participants reported being influenced by the study abroad office to sign up for an international program. Though Mack couldn’t remember how he had first heard of the study abroad office at his school, he was aware of its existence and because of that was motivated to use the opportunity it provided: “I’d heard of study abroad, but I don’t remember the first time, or where it hit me that I’d want to do it or where I was first exposed to the study abroad program here. It was just always there. When that resource became available, I decided to pursue it and see if it worked out. And it did.” Sarah, on the other hand, remembered how the office specifically drew her to pursue her study abroad dreams:

I recall finding it pretty quickly. . . . I was actually walking in one of the main common areas at the university and I think they had a huge advertisement, a huge study abroad office advertisement like a poster, and that’s what caught my eye. I
think what was on the advertisement was Egypt, a pyramid or something like that, for AUC. I thought, “That’s fantastic. They have a study abroad office, and it looks like they have an Egypt program, I’m going to go find it.” And that’s what I did.

Three other students mentioned that the study abroad office assisted them in being able to study abroad, but were clear that they sought out assistance for programs they were already considering; the office had no influence on their decisions to study abroad. Rather, the offices functioned as administrative and logistical necessities.

Jennifer had a different experience than the other participants in that she was sent away from the office twice before she was able to arrange her program. It was her own persistence and drive to study abroad that kept her going back. She recalls:

I have mild OCD, I’m pretty sure. I remember walking the halls one day as a freshman, way too early to study abroad for what I wanted to do. I remember walking by the office, and going in, wanting to talk to somebody about what I could do to study abroad. I remember them telling me to come back in two years when I was ready to apply. . . . That was my first experience with the study abroad office. Then they moved, and I had to look up where they went. The second I saw the office, I had to go in and find out what I needed to do. They were, “Slow your roll, you need to come back later.”

She eventually was able to register for an exchange, but being turned away twice previously was frustrating for her.

Emiko, on the other hand, sought out the office for assistance with her program and received the support and information necessary to get her abroad: “I was amazed at how helpful everybody was throughout the whole thing.” Ji-Hoon found his study abroad office in order to get the exchange between his home school and the Korean Aerospace University up and running. He had a positive experience, but outright stated the office was not motivational to his study abroad decision:

I ended up going through [the study abroad office] at the end, after I received the invitation from the school in Korea. Then I knew I had to get some help from the study abroad office, but more specifically, it was one person that I had been
introduced to in the beginning of the year. She was in charge of Korea and the Asian programs. I ended up working with her. I never heard from the study abroad office first, but I knew that to get this partnership working, that was who I was going to have to work with.
Chapter 6

Analysis

The categories uncovered in the phenomenological analysis stage of this study revealed an intersection of motivations and influences that both encouraged students to leave America and drew students to their host schools. I refer to these as “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors included those motivations and influences that enabled and drove students to depart the country, while pull factors were those that attracted students to participate in foreign study. Though these factors are discussed separately for the purpose of analysis, they were not discrete entities working independently to influence participants’ decisions to study abroad. Rather, they worked in tandem, interacting and intersecting to increase the likelihood that respondents would study abroad. This is evinced in the narratives of each participant, as no respondent gave only one reason for studying abroad. All participants reported multiple motivations and influences, and they all reported a combination of push and pull factors that led to their decision to go abroad.

No parallels were found in the benefits of study abroad literature to compare to push factors, though pull factors can be aligned with current literature on the benefits of study abroad. This study’s findings on push and pull factors reflect, in part, those of the few studies conducted on motivation to study abroad. Furthermore, push and pull factors can be compared to extant theories of psychological motivation. Using recognized benefits of study abroad, research on motivation to study abroad, and psychological motivation theories to examine the various categories that arose from the analysis of the data aligns the findings with existing literature, which lends support to the findings of this study and widens the generalizability of the findings beyond the ten participants involved.

6.1. “Push” Factors

Push factors are those motivations and influences that engendered a desire to leave the United States and explore other countries and cultures (see Table 6.1). The categories of family, childhood experiences, influential people, previous international travel, personality, and professors were found to encourage this departure. No literature on the benefits of study abroad was found to explicate these push categories. However,
discussed below, the literature on motivation to study abroad and on psychological motivation theory unearthed possible explanations of how these push factors work in relation to studying abroad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1. Push Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childhood Experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influential People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous International Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality: Determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.1. Family, childhood experiences, influential people, and previous international travel. These categories are considered push factors as they contributed to the value systems, state of mind, and determination of cultural norms for each respondent. Jennifer, who travelled across and around the U.S. as a child in the military discussed how travel and exploring new cultures was part and parcel of her upbringing, creating normalized expectations of behavior. With this, she exemplified statements made by all of the respondents in the creation of their values and norms. Joe shared his experience with a high school teacher who expressed the value of learning about other cultures; six other participants echoed similar stories of people influential to creating values and norms. The experience of having travelled abroad prior to studying abroad was reported as value changing and horizon expanding by seven respondents. Sarah, Jennifer, and Alicia had like experiences in their final years of high school and initial years of university, while Stephanie, Emiko, Mack, and Kitty had been travelling internationally for years. Mack illustrated the mind-set of these participants in his statement that having travelled internationally engendered more of a desire to see the world.

These categories of family, childhood experiences, influential people, and previous international travel drove these respondents to consider, and eventually participate in, study abroad programming. This is hardly surprising, as the experiences we have as children help to shape and guide us as we grow. These participants were all
exposed to and encouraged to travel when young, a pursuit that has followed them throughout their lives. Family support via parents and siblings is clearly present for these participants, as is the influence of close friends and significant others.

**6.1.2. Personality: Determination.** Personality has been categorized as both a push and pull factor, based on a distinction between the different sub-categories. The determination sub-category acted as a push, illustrated best by Emiko and Kitty. These two respondents shared similar personality traits in that they refused to be bullied into staying home. Kitty and Emiko both were discouraged from studying abroad by those around them; yet, their personalities took this paradigm of deterrence and shifted it to one of challenge. Thus, they were further driven to study abroad due to their response to opposition and their determination. Ji-Hoon, also, overcame obstacles such as bullying through his determination, which enabled him to follow through on his drive to study abroad when the time came. Joe, Ms. Alam, and Sarah exhibited determination which engendered their drive to study abroad. As Joe put it, study abroad was “one way to prove to myself that I can get by in a totally new environment.” These participants evinced personality traits that made them more likely to choose study abroad over alternative college experiences.

**6.1.3. Professors.** Professors were also considered both push and pull factors. Evidence was uncovered that professors directly encouraged students to go abroad, as in the cases of Jennifer, Ms. Alam, Joe, and Alicia. In each case, the professors advertised, marketed, talked up the program, and persuaded these students that study abroad was an opportunity not to be missed. These successful efforts to convince participants to study abroad are firmly positioned as push factors.

**6.2. Push Factors and Benefits of Study Abroad Literature**

I did not find any literature on the benefits of study abroad that parallel the push factors unveiled in this study.

**6.3. Push Factors and Study Abroad Motivation Literature**

Discussed in chapter two, studies on motivation to study abroad have been conducted, though few in number and primarily quantitative in nature. In this section, I compare the push results of this qualitative study with the results of these previous
studies. Similar findings were uncovered relating to the categories of family, influential people, and personality: determination (see Table 6.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Study Abroad Literature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Explore Ethnic Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential People</td>
<td>Study Abroad Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality: Determination</td>
<td>Need for Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Experiences</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous International Travel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Carlson et al., in their pre-test survey conducted for the SAEP, found that exploring ethnic heritage overseas was a motivator to study abroad (1990). Van Der Meid (2003) also found that exploration of one’s cultural heritage was influential. This is in line with Mack’s desire to explore his French heritage, which this study categorized under family. Van Der Meid (2003) discovered the sharing of experiences by Asian American study abroad alumni influenced Asian American students in his study. Kasravi’s (2009) study on students of color who studied abroad additionally found the influence of study abroad alumni. This agrees with Jennifer’s explanation of returned students in the French department influencing her decision to study abroad, as well as Alicia’s explanation that the teaching assistant and his fiancée, who had both participated in the trip to Australia previously, motivated her to enroll in her program. A final parallel to the study abroad motivation literature comes from Schroth and McCormack’s (2010) study on personality dimensions in study abroad students. Their finding that students who study abroad indicate a higher need for achievement aligns with this study’s finding of the determination sub-category of personality. Several instances in the data revealed these respondents’ need to achieve, which can be directly attributed to their determination. Kitty and Emiko exemplified this trait with their need to accomplish that which they were told was not possible; Sarah illustrated her need for achievement when facing down mountains of paperwork that were unnecessary for other programs; and Ji-Hoon highlighted his determination and need for achievement by essentially creating the exchange between his home school and the Korean Aerospace University.
6.4. Push Factors and Psychological Motivation Literature

Comparing this study’s findings to the literature on motivation theory elucidates how the categories acted as influential and motivational to the participants in this study. The sociocultural approach to motivation was used to examine the push categories of family, childhood experiences, personality, influential people, previous international travel, and professors (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3. Push Factors Aligned with Motivation Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Literature</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Approach</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childhood Experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personality: Determination</td>
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<td>Influential People</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Previous International Travel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professors</td>
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</table>

6.4.1. Sociocultural approach. The sociocultural approach is comprised of theories of motivation that focus on social context. Micro- and macro-level social groups are considered, including peer groups, family, cultural norms, and societal values. Motivation is driven by relationships and a sense of belongingness; identification with and incorporation into these social milieus is at the root of this approach. The categories of family and influential people are forms of micro- and macro-level social groups, while cultural norms and societal values are developed through childhood experiences, previous international travel, and personality.

6.4.1.1. Zone of proximal development. Much of sociocultural theory is based on Vygotsky’s (1978; 1926/1997) zone of proximal development. Defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers,” the zone of proximal development indicates the amount of learning an individual is capable of at any given time (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This zone is not static; as an individual’s knowledge base expands, the zone of proximal development expands outward to indicate the next level of potential learning. Embedded in this theory are the assumptions that knowledge is created
and shared in interaction with others, and participation in social processes is required for an individual to internalize those processes. Though a theory of learning, not of motivation, contemporary researchers have built upon Vygotsky’s work to develop and explain sociocultural motivational theories.

6.4.1.2. Co-regulation model. Following from the zone of proximal development, sociocultural theories assume that knowledge originates in and is expanded through cultural activities and social interactions. These theories also assume that motivation is a product of the relationships inherent in social activities. From participation in social activities and reinforcement through relationships, the individual internalizes social norms, behaviors, and motivation (McCaslin 2006, 2009; Walker, Pressick-Kilborn, Sainbury, & MacCallum, 2010). According to McCaslin (2006), “[Motivation] is the product of student dispositions toward participation in school and engagement of learning opportunities” (p. 485). The co-regulation model presented by McCaslin (2009), a direct outgrowth from Vygotsky’s work, focuses on the interplay of identity development and student motivation. McCaslin defined co-regulation as “the relationships among cultural, social, and personal sources of influence that together challenge, shape, and guide (co-regulate) identity,” and claimed the process of identity formation is grounded in “participation and validation in social and cultural relationships” (2009, p. 137). These co-regulation relationships were seen in the participants’ responses on several occasions. An example of this was Jennifer’s discussion relating to her family’s travel experiences as a child, driving across country rather than flying to her father’s next assignment, and being encouraged to become excited and involved in the travel experience. Participating in the family travels as more than a passenger helped form her identity as a traveller, which led to her desire to see more of the world.

The co-regulation model has three fundamental components of motivational dynamics that inform identity: struggle, negotiation, and opportunity. Struggle involves the aggregation of circumstances and personality that lead to choice or denial of opportunity, which then further informs motivation and adaptation. In the case of Kitty, her struggle was clearly with the people who surrounded her, including friends, family, and teachers. They could not appreciate her desire to go abroad and were vocal opponents
of her choice. Negotiation refers to the roles of compromise and conflict resolution. While Kitty did not negotiate, she resolved the conflict by ignoring it completely, a sign of her determination. Another example of this was Ji-Hoon, who struggled with bullying through his academic experience. After mental negotiation with himself, he opted for self-confidence and proceeded to ignore those oppressing him, leading to opportunities he otherwise would not have had. Opportunity is absorbed into the components of struggle and negotiation, as the availability or lack of opportunities will lead to differing outcomes of struggle and/or negotiation. In Ji-Hoon’s case, the internal struggle and ensuing conflict resolution he decided upon—to focus on his needs and desires, thereby becoming friends with the Korean students at his university—led to an outcome of the study abroad opportunity. These two elements influence motivation as they can engender striving or resistance, compliance or noncompliance. This directionality can in part be determined, co-regulated, by the social relationships an individual embraces; sociocultural theories assert that motivation and identity are strongly influenced by the presence or absence of interpersonal support and validation.

The category of previous international travel and the sub-category of personality, determination, uncovered in this study are explained by the co-regulation model, as are the interpersonal support networks of family, influential people, and professors. Determination was attested to in the above examples of Kitty and Ji-Hoon. Previous international travel, family, influential people, and professors were also illustrated by respondents in this study as explained by the co-regulation model. These categories were all represented by comments illuminating the social, cultural, and personal influences that led to identity formation and development of norms and values. Mack’s cosmopolitan upbringing and international travel experiences created his norms and values of international exposure and identity as cross-culturally competent. Ms. Alam’s godmother shaped Ms. Alam’s views of the international world while sharing her personal travel experiences. Alicia’s professor, more distant from family yet still quite influential, instilled the excitement of exploring Australia first-hand, “not as tourists, but actually trying to experience it as if we lived there.” These influences all assisted in shaping norms, values, identity, and motivation as theorized in the co-regulation model.
6.5. “Pull” Factors

Pull factors consist of motivations and influences that drew students to travel abroad (see Table 6.4). They include the categories of personality, program, opportunity, interest in other cultures, academics, career, language learning, professors, and the study abroad office. Literature on the benefits of study abroad, motivation to study abroad, and psychological motivation theories exists to explain these factors pulling students to participate in study abroad programming.

6.5.1. Personality: Traveller’s spirit and flexibility. The sub-categories of flexibility, as exhibited by Mack’s “get in where you fit in” philosophy, and of traveller’s spirit, reported by all ten participants, attracted respondents to study abroad. Exemplified by Emiko’s self-designated “travel junkie” attitude, as well as multiple respondents’ self-proclaimed desires to see the world, experience new topography, flora, fauna, and geography, and immerse themselves in foreign cultures, the sub-category of traveller’s spirit was clearly a draw for participants to travel abroad. Mack’s personality trait of flexibility was also a pull to his study abroad program as he saw living in a foreign country as an opportunity to practice patience, a quality he reported striving for.

6.5.2. Program. The category of program, including all sub-categories of subject, location, structure, and length, was a pull. Participants were drawn to these particulars of each program, be it one or all of the sub-categories.

6.5.3. Opportunity. This category, also, was a pull factor as respondents reported being attracted to the opportunity of study abroad. All ten participants saw the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses by Participant (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality: Traveller’s Spirit &amp; Flexibility</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Other Cultures</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Learning</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad Office</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
opportunity to study abroad as motivational in that it was available and they felt the draw to take advantage of it. Mack’s earlier statement was representative of this idea: “What led me to study abroad was the opportunity to do something, to take advantage of a resource that the university has.”

6.5.4. Interest in other cultures. Studying abroad due to an interest in other cultures is another pull factor. A desire to travel and study abroad in order to learn about and better understand foreign people and cultures directly reflects the concept of being drawn away from America. Emiko’s comments were representative of this; they expressed her desire to spend time in Japan to deepen her cultural and historical understanding of the country. Her strong desire to experience Japan first-hand pulled her to study abroad. Ms. Alam’s idealized romanticism of Argentina, also, was a draw to the country of her program. The desire to become exposed to these countries and cultures drew these participants to study abroad.

6.5.5. Academics, career, and language learning. The academic subjects studied, the career possibilities that study abroad opened, and the ability to immerse themselves in the language of their country of study were also draws for these respondents. Ms. Alam exemplified all three of these categories as she was attracted to Argentina in order to become fluent in Spanish, to complete her academic degree, and to increase her career prospects as a Spanish teacher. Ji-Hoon, also, was drawn to the intersection of academics, career, and language learning at the Korean Aerospace University. These categories drew respondents to the host countries, and as such are labeled as pull factors.

6.5.6. Professors. As a pull factor, professors operated as attractors to respondents when the professors led trips abroad, creating a desire on the part of the participants to travel with the professor. Ms. Alam reported being drawn to her faculty-led trip to Mendoza; it was led by her professor who originally came from that city, and was able to arrange programming options that would have been unavailable to other professors. Joe, also, discussed the faculty-led aspect of his trip to Uganda as influential, especially as his professor hosted a semester-long pre-departure course that assisted in preparing students, among other things, for the rigors of studying in a third-world
country. Perhaps Alicia was most drawn to her program by her professor’s influence and presence in-country; she specifically remarked on his passion for and knowledge of Australia as motivational to her decision to sign up for his professor-led program.

6.5.7. **Study abroad office.** The study abroad office has been identified as a pull, rather than a push, because both respondents who reported being influenced to study abroad by their international programs offices were drawn to the offices through either media, in Sarah’s case finding the poster for the BU Egypt program, or common knowledge, as in Mack’s case of knowing about the office without knowing when or where he’d learned of it. Neither reported this influence as pushing them to go abroad, but rather further attracting them to the idea of programming in which they were already interested.

6.6. **Pull Factors and Benefits of Study Abroad Literature**

Five of the pull categories that emerged from the data can be compared to academic literature on the benefits of study abroad (see Table 6.5). The findings of this study support the draw of the benefits of global awareness, cross-cultural competence, and intercultural sensitivity (i.e. interest in other cultures), increased foreign language skills (i.e. language learning), enhanced academic skills (i.e. academics), and improved career skills (i.e. career). Additionally, the academic literature notes the benefit of personal growth, a category also uncovered in this study in the guise of opportunity; by taking advantage of the opportunity to experience something new, respondents were seeking the ability to grow on a personal level. Participants reported that the ability to explore beyond their lived experiences was a motivator to study abroad; in Emiko’s words: “I figured, I was so close, I have this opportunity, and I am going to take it. Why not? It will enrich my views of the world. I can learn something, grow with it, and pass it on to someone else, whether it’s my godchildren or my friends.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Study Abroad Literature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Other Cultures</td>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-Cultural Competence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intercultural Sensitivity</td>
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<td>Language Learning</td>
<td>Foreign Language Skills</td>
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<td>Academics</td>
<td>Academic Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Career Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad Office</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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### 6.7. Pull Factors and Study Abroad Motivation Literature

Comparing the pull factors of this qualitative study with the results of previous, primarily quantitative, study abroad motivation research revealed parallels relating to the categories of personality, interest in other cultures, language learning, academics, career, opportunity, and program (see Table 6.6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Study Abroad Literature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality: Traveller’s Spirit &amp; Flexibility</td>
<td>Internal Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Other Cultures</td>
<td>Cross-Cultural Experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making Foreign Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining a Better Understanding of a Specific Country</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Live in Another Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Learning</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Courses Not Offered at Home University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Enhancing Career Prospects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Opportunity to Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Location of Host University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Abroad Office</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Aligning with the personality sub-category of traveller’s spirit was Kasravi’s (2009) “Personal Factor” of internal drive (p. 6). This was supported by Schroth and McCormack’s (2010) finding that study abroad students “were serious young scholars who sought experiences not available at home. . . . [The results] suggest that their needs
consist of seeking new experiences through the mind and senses by traveling abroad” (p. 534). This need to have new experiences and encounter new cultures was reported time and again by the respondents in the current study.

The pull of an interest in other cultures was reported by multiple studies. Carlson et al. (1990) found cross-cultural experiences, making foreign friends, and gaining a better understanding of a specific country were influential, and Van Der Meid found cultural exploration an important motivator in his 2003 study. Cultural curiosity and understanding were also uncovered in Allen’s 2010 study. Van Hoof and Verbeeten’s (2005) study reported the number one motive to study abroad was that it was a good opportunity to live in another culture. These findings resonated with respondents in the current study. Jennifer reported: “I knew I wanted to be involved in the international community,” while Mack expressed a desire to learn more about people and cultures that differed from him, especially “being able to live with and eat dinner with them every night.” Emiko reminisced on her childhood desire of exploration: “‘[S]ince I was a child I’ve always wanted to go out and see things and experience things I wasn’t exposed to,’” and international travel was high on her priority list. Alicia was attracted to study abroad because of, “That idea of being able to go to a different country, being able to meet a different culture . . .” Study abroad for the sake of immersion into a foreign culture, living with people from that culture, and gaining a better understanding of other people and cultures, indicators of an interest in other cultures, has been found in multiple studies on motivation to study abroad.

Foreign language learning as motivation to study abroad was uncovered in studies by Carlson et al. (1990), Van Der Meid (2003), and Allen (2010). Amongst other respondents in this study, the desire to learn a language in an immersive environment was indicated by Ms. Alam’s participation in her Spanish language program in Argentina, Emiko’s language study in Japan, and Jennifer’s study of French in France. Academics, illustrated in this study by Ms. Alam’s motivation to graduate early, Emiko’s motivation to further her Japanese studies, Joe’s motivation to take courses related to his major in Africa, and Ji-Hoon’s motivation to take aviation courses abroad, were found to be motivational in previous studies, as well. These include Carlson et al. (1990), who found
that the opportunity to take courses not offered at the home campus was influential to their respondents; Van Der Meid (2003) and Allen (2010) also found academic development to be motivational. Allen (2010) and Carlson et al. (1990) additionally discovered that career aspirations were influential in the decision to study abroad. In fact, Carlson et al. reported, “A substantial number of study abroad students noted that career plans were a significant factor . . . and viewed the upcoming experience abroad as almost essential to their career development” (1991, p. 9). Ji-Hoon’s career aspirations of piloting for the Air Force, Ms. Alam’s desire to become a Spanish teacher, and Mack’s unformed yet definitive plan that studying abroad would assist him in his career path are all indicative of the category of career uncovered in the current research.

Allen (2010) found that his participants were further motivated by the opportunity to travel, also found by Carlson et al. (1990). Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) reported their participants’ second highest-ranked reason for studying abroad was the opportunity to travel, while Van Der Meid (2003) discovered the number one reason that his participants studied abroad was “the desire to take advantage of an opportunity to be overseas” (p. 79). All ten participants in the current study reported being influenced to go abroad by having the opportunity made available to them.

Van Der Meid (2003) further reported that for the Asian American students he studied, program location was an influential factor; more specifically, study in an Asian country motivated students of Asian descent. Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) found the country in which the exchange program was located ranked third in importance amongst their respondents. As seen in the current research, location played a large role in influencing Mack to study in France, Ms. Alam to study in Argentina, Alicia to study in Australia, Emiko to study in Japan, Sarah and Kitty to study in Egypt, Ji-Hoon to study in Korea, Joe to study in Uganda, and Stephanie to study in Australia. Program location clearly acts as an influence on students to study abroad.

6.8. Pull Factors and Psychological Motivation Literature

Motivational theories align with pull factors unearthed in this study (see Table 6.7). The sociocultural approach to motivation was used to examine the pull factors of professors, the study abroad office, and opportunity. The pull factors of academics,
career, and language learning were examined using both social cognitive and cognitive approaches to motivation. Additionally, the pull categories of program, opportunity, interest in other cultures, and the traveller’s spirit and flexibility sub-categories of personality were aligned with humanistic theories of motivation.

Table 6.7. Pull Factors Aligned with Motivation Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Literature</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Approach</td>
<td>Professors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Study Abroad Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Cognitive Approach</td>
<td>Academics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Career</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive Approach</td>
<td>Academics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Career</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanistic Approach</td>
<td>Program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interest in Other Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality: Traveller’s Spirit &amp; Flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.8.1. Socio-cultural approach. Recall that the sociocultural approach is comprised of theories of motivation that focus on social context and that motivation is driven by relationships and a sense of belongingness. In relation to pull factors, the categories of professors and the study abroad office were forms of micro- and macro-level social groups, while context was developed through the category of opportunity.

6.8.1.1. Situative theories. Situative theorists (Greeno et al., 1998; Lave, 1991; Nolen & Ward, 2008; Wenger, 1998) shift perspective from the co-regulation focus on individuals toward a wider contextual consideration of interaction amongst environment, artifacts, and cognitive agents; what Lave and Wenger referred to as “communities of practice.” While situative theorists agree with other sociocultural theories that knowledge originates in social interaction and cultural activity, situative theories contend that knowledge also resides in those areas:

The assumption that the collective and continuing use of those standards and values (to motivate engagement in learning) means that they are constantly being
negotiated in specific learning contexts. If so, the standards and values seem more appropriately characterized as residing alongside the knowledge practices in the contexts where they were constructed. In other words, the context becomes attuned to the standards and values of the collective participants who define that context rather than the other way around. (Hickey, 2003, p. 410)

Situative theorists perceive knowledge to be distributed across technologies, tools, and social rituals that form and reform social and cultural context and knowledge with each subsequent interaction. Knowledge and meaning are rooted in collective experiences; ergo, learning and motivation are contextualized by participation in culture and social activity.

Proposed by Hickey (1997; 2003; 2009) (Hickey & Zuiker, 2005), the “motivation-in-context” model is a further development of the co-regulation model. The motivation-in-context model has three underlying assumptions. The first is the Vygotskian conception that knowledge is internalized through participation in social interaction. The second assumption is that participation in social interaction necessarily changes that knowledge. From these assumptions follows the third postulate: “If participation changes knowledge, participation in any knowledgeable activity (with or without actual collaboration) represents social interaction” (Hickey, 2003, p. 404). This contains important implications for motivation, as learning and motivation are embedded in contexts that include constraints and opportunities which simultaneously bound and scaffold participation.

In relation to the categories unearthed in this study, faculty and the study abroad offices which supported and underscored the values and experiences of cross-cultural interaction worked as socializing agents to pull participants to value and explore these experiences as college students. Furthermore, the opportunities allotted the participants pulled them to study abroad by providing the scaffolding necessary to enable participation in such an experience. This was exemplified by Sarah’s experience of social interaction with the study abroad advertisement for BU’s Egypt program. The opportunity, made apparent through the social medium of a poster, provided the scaffolding Sarah was seeking, leading her to the study abroad office, which then
provided the context for her to participate in the Egypt program she had dreamed of as a high school student. Joe, also, was pulled to participate in his study abroad program via his professor, who provided the knowledge, context, and scaffolding necessary for such an experience, as explained by situative theories.

### 6.8.2. Social cognitive approach.

Social cognitive theories “argue that individuals’ choice, persistence, and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity” (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). These approaches can best be summarized by the equation \[\text{expectancy } \times \text{ value } = \text{ motivation}\], where expectancy is the perceived outcome and value is assigned to the object or outcome by the individual. Contemporary research in this arena adds the costs to accomplish the task or engage in the behavior to this equation, converting it to read \[\text{expectancy } \times (\text{value} - \text{cost}) = \text{motivation}\]. The pull categories of academics, language learning, and career were examined using this approach.

#### 6.8.2.1. Belief-value matrix.

Tolman (1932; 1951/1961) (Ritchie, 1964) introduced the notions of the “sign-gestalt-expectation”—expectations formed from singular concrete situations in which particular responses will lead to specific concrete goals—and the “means-ends-readiness”—readying expectations that similar situations will lead to similar goals. With the influence of Kurt Lewin’s concept of “Topologie”—“a dynamic environmental field . . . in which an organism is conceived to be immersed” (Tolman, 1932, p. 179, italics in original)—Tolman amended his ideas. The resulting theory consisted of “behavior-space” which included a “behaving self and self goals” and the “belief-value matrix.” This was the originating theory of social cognitive approaches, as Tolman acknowledged the individual not only develops expectations, but also is a thinking being that can attach value to outcomes. Further, individuals determine whether the outcome is valued enough to participate in the requisite behavior. And so, from a Gestalt-trained theorist who states, “The ‘percepts’ of Gestalt psychology cannot we are told be analyzed into mere algebraic terms” comes the basis for the equation \[\text{expectancy } \times \text{ value } = \text{ motivation}\] (Tolman, 1951/1961, p. 77).
6.8.2.2. *Achievement motivation theory*. Atkinson (1965; 1965/1978) (Atkinson & Birch, 1978) expanded on the Tolman-Lewin concept and contributed the theory of achievement motivation, which contains three components: motive, expectancy, and incentive value. He posited motive to be internal and of a personal nature, and is based upon the notions of approaching success or avoiding failure. In certain circumstances, individuals engage in behavior in order to successfully accomplish a task for its own sake (learning/mastery goals). Other situations see people accomplishing tasks so as to avoid failure or looking foolish (performance/ego goals). Atkinson viewed expectancy as an individual’s belief of the consequences that follow a specific action—an expected outcome—and incentive value as the relative attractiveness of an expected consequence. Research showed that the tendency to achieve success, graphed against an inverse relationship between expectancy and incentive value, took the shape of a bell-curve.

6.8.2.3. *Approach-avoidance motivation theory*. Atkinson’s ideas were developed further by Covington (1984; 2000) (Covington & Müeller, 2001), Elliot (1999) (Elliot & Covington, 2001), and Elliott and Dweck (1988). Based on Atkinson’s achievement motivation theory, Covington developed a two-by-two matrix of approach-avoidance achievement behavior (see Figure 6.1, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, n.d., Chapter 3). This matrix illustrates four personality types: failure acceptors, failure avoiders, overstrivers, and success-oriented students. Though not discussed in the literature I read, it is important to bear in mind that the four personality types discussed contain within each gradations of personalities and intensities of failure and/or success orientation. It is my belief that Covington was attempting to create a matrix for general understanding and analysis, not to claim there are only four personality types in relation to motivation.

The research on approach-avoidance also takes into consideration learning goals and performance goals. Learning goals are intrinsic and sought for their own ends, and are analogous to high, intrinsically focused, motivation to approach success. Ms. Alam evinced an intrinsic desire to improve her Spanish, one motivator for her enrolling in the Argentinian language program. Performance goals are associated with extrinsic motivations to either approach success or avoid failure. Ms. Alam discussed her desire to
use Spanish in her career, as well as complete her academic major requirements. By doing so while on her study abroad program, she would graduate early, a desire she clearly expressed; failure would require her to remain in school longer. Career goals and academic goals, for Ms. Alam, were extrinsically motivated performance goals.

**Figure 6.1. Covington’s Motivation Matrix**

Failure acceptors are those individuals who expect to fail due to an intersection of low motivation to succeed and low motivation to avoid failing. People in this category are not likely to act, or are likely to find extrinsic excuses in order to preemptively deflect perceived social disapproval. They are not motivated by either learning or performance goals. Due to this, it is not likely to find these personalities attempting to study abroad; this assumption bore out in the current research as no respondents indicated failure acceptor behavior or attitudes. Low motivation to succeed and high motivation to avoid failure creates failure avoiders. These individuals act, though only enough to circumvent negative perceptions of themselves. These individuals are motivated solely by extrinsic performance goals. Failure avoiders are not likely to find the task difficulty and incentive value sufficient to undergo the rigors of studying abroad. Again, the assumption that students in this category are not likely to expend the energy to study abroad or place themselves in a possible position of failure outside of their comfort zone was reflected in the respondents of this study; no participants were indicative of failure avoidance behavior or attitudes.

The combination of high motivation to avoid failure and high motivation to approach success produces overstrivers. People in this category act as a function of both intrinsic learning goals and extrinsic performance goals. Respondents were found to fit
this area of the matrix; as shown above, Ms. Alam exemplified the overstriver as she was motivated by both mastery and performance goals. Joe, also, demonstrated traits of an overstriver. His study abroad motivation included mastery goals, wanting the experience of being in a third-world country for its own sake, and also performance goals in that he expected to take the knowledge gained from the foreign coursework and use it to obtain a specific job at the FDA.

The intersection of low motivation to avoid failure and high motivation to approach success produces success-oriented students. Exclusively intrinsic learning, or mastery, goals motivate these students. Mack appeared to illustrate the success-oriented student. While he did indicate performance goals in his interview, they were of less importance to his motivation than mastery goals were. He mentioned he had an idea that studying abroad would help his future career, a performance goal, though he did not have a specific career path in mind. As he stated: “Having that experience to show future employers, and overall to have the experience of different types of jobs and different types of ways of living to help guide myself in desires of what to make out of life” was his focus, rather than obtaining a degree to further a specific career. This aligned with the more important mastery goals that motivated his study abroad decision. His “get in where you fit in” philosophy of life indicated his desire to try something new without fear of failing in the attempt, the hallmark of a success-oriented student.

Covington also expanded on the other factors of Atkinson’s achievement motivation theory. The second component, expectancy, is environmental in nature and accounts for the individual’s expectation of success in given circumstances. This component of expectancy of success covaries directly with task difficulty; the harder a task is, the less likely an individual will be to expect success. The final component, incentive value, relates to pride in accomplishment and reflects a direct inverse relationship; the easier a task is, the less pride one will feel for having accomplished it. In line with Atkinson’s bell curve, this theory posits that a task which is moderately (0.5 on a 0.0-1.0 scale) difficult, has a moderate incentive value, and a moderate probability for success will be the most motivational.
As seen in this study, the categories of academics, language learning, and career fell into both intrinsic mastery goals and extrinsic performance goals. Academic courses and language learning to complete a degree were extrinsically motivated, though academics and language learning to master the material was intrinsic; evidence of both was discovered in the data. Ms. Alam was an example of this, as was Emiko in her desire to learn Japanese for her intrinsic mastery of the language and her extrinsic goal of completing her degree of Japanese Studies. Jennifer also exemplified these areas in the desire to learn French as well as complete her business degree. Aside from Mack, participants indicated a desire to further their careers from an external locus of motivation, a performance goal to achieve further ends. Jennifer wanted her business degree to further her career; likewise, Sarah intended to use her newly gained knowledge of archeology to start a career in the field. The social cognitive approach to motivation provided one explanation of the motivational drive behind these participants’ academic, language learning, and career goals.

6.8.3. Cognitive approach. The categories of academics, language learning, and career also aligned with the cognitive approach to motivation. The cognitive approach considers human motivation to derive from active thought processes. People are seen as curious and active, motivated to solve personal dilemmas and seek new experiences. Goals, attributions, plans, schemas, and expectations can all drive behavior. Cognitive theories focus on outcomes and expectancies.

6.8.3.1. Goal-setting theory. Developed within the field of industrial/organizational psychology by Locke and Latham (2002; 2006), goal-setting theory explains motivation as a function of the desire to move from where one is to where one wants to be. Reducing the discrepancy between a current circumstance and an ideal situation drives motivation (Woolfolk, 2014), which aligns with the primary condition of the cognitive approach: individualized thought processes. Locke and Latham stated, “[Goal-setting theory] implies discontent with one’s present condition and the desire to attain an object or outcome” (Locke & Latham, 2006, p. 265). The conditions that must be present for optimized motivation and task accomplishment include goal commitment, ability to attain the goal, and a lack of conflicting goals. Locke and Latham (2006)
claimed performance is a combination of ability and motivation. Provided an individual has the requisite skills and knowledge, the ability, then performance is simply a function of motivation. Using this assumption, goals increase motivation as they direct attention to the task at hand, increase effort to attain the goal, increase persistence to reach the end-product, and foster seeking out new knowledge and strategies when current knowledge is insufficient.

This study unveiled instances of desiring to move from where one was in academics, language learning, and career to where one wanted to be. As seen in the last section, Ms. Alam, Joe, Sarah, Jennifer, Emiko, and Mack all studied abroad in order to accomplish either mastery or performance goals, in both cases attempting to attain a desired object or outcome. Ji-Hoon illustrated this desired shift by attending the Korean Aerospace University to improve his academic and career skills of aviation, as well as Korean language skills. Goal-setting theory offered another explanation of the influences and motivations these participants expressed in relation to academics, career, and language learning.

6.8.4. Humanistic approach. The humanistic approach focuses on individuals’ potentials and abilities, and defines motivation as “the process used to allocate energy to maximize the satisfaction of needs” (Pritchard & Ashwood, 2008, p. 6). There are three basic assumptions in the humanistic approach: That humans should be studied holistically, humans should be studied discretely—the study of lower life forms will not yield results that are applicable to humans—and humans should be studied in terms of importance of problems rather than in terms of rigid methodology.

6.8.4.1. Self-determination theory. Self-determination theory is rooted in “the interplay between the extrinsic forces acting on persons and the intrinsic motives and needs inherent in human nature” (Self-Determination Theory, n.d., Overview). Developed by Deci and Ryan (2000; 2002/2004; 2008) (Deci, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; 2000b), self-determination theory conceives of motivation as stemming from three basic needs: the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness. When people feel competent, able to make their own decisions, and part of a supportive group, motivation is highest. In considering the environmental stimuli and
conditions in which an individual lives, Ryan and Deci noted that when any of these needs are threatened, motivation decreases: “[the maintenance and enhancement of intrinsic motivation] can be fairly readily disrupted by various nonsupportive conditions” (2000b, p. 70). These findings, repeated across time and culture, have shown that these basic psychological needs are universal to the human condition. The theory also takes into account the type and strength of motivation.

6.8.4.1.1. Cognitive evaluation theory. Cognitive evaluation theory is a sub-theory of self-determination theory that was developed to explain the intrinsic side of human behavior. The theory is structured to consider environmental and social stimuli that enhance or negate intrinsic motivation. An assumption of the theory is that intrinsic motivation is organic and will flourish under the proper circumstances. Cognitive evaluation theory focuses on the needs of autonomy and competence. Research has shown that enhanced competence can increase intrinsic motivation, but only when in conjunction with perceived autonomy; competence under controlling situations is not motivational in itself.

All events have two aspects, controlling and informational (Woolfolk, 2014). The more controlling an event is, the lower the motivation on the part of the individual. Conversely, the more informational an event is, the higher the motivation. This autonomous need is central to self-determination theory as when an individual has the authority to determine what is important and actionable, internalization of goals occurs, leading to motivation and subsequent behavior. This is the basic paradigm of the need for autonomy. When an individual is provided with information and left to decide how to respond, motivation to act is intrinsic and heightened. Yet, when one is controlled, told how to behave, motivation becomes external to the individual and weakened in its magnitude.

This study’s categories of program and opportunity were examined using cognitive evaluation theory. The autonomy to choose which type, location, and length of program, as well as the subject of study, was motivational to the respondents in this study. Mack’s ability to choose France as his destination country, Joe’s ability to take a course directly related to his major, Sarah’s ability to study archaeology in Egypt, and
Kitty’s ability to self-determine which university to attend were all motivational to these participants. Opportunity was also key. Participants were provided with the opportunity to engage in study abroad programming, motivating several students to take advantage of such a possibility. Neither Joe nor Ji-Hoon anticipated they would be able to study abroad as undergraduates; the opportunities afforded them were unexpected and incredibly welcome. They both reported that being furnished with the opportunity motivated them to seek out more information and take advantage of it. Sarah saw her opportunity and took swift action in convincing her mother to allow her to spend a year in Egypt. These opportunities pulled respondents to study abroad. The data showed these respondents were presented with information and were then able to make their own choice, meeting the intersection of autonomous and informational decision-making processes described as motivational by cognitive evaluation theory.

6.8.4.1.2. Organismic integration theory. Self-determination theory differentiates various types of external motivation, ranging through a continuum of five stages from amotivation to integration. Amotivation is the extreme end of no intention to act, while integration is an internalized form of extrinsic motivation. The differences in type are dependent upon variations in autonomy. To explain these differentiations, Ryan and Deci (2000a; 2000b) developed the sub-theory of organismic integration theory, which details the types of external motivation and the contextual factors that enhance or hinder an individual’s sense of autonomy. According to the theory, amotivation reflects no sense of autonomy. When amotivated, individuals either do not act or simply “go through the motions” (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, p. 72). This category sits alone in the organismic integration theory taxonomy (see Figure 6.2, Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 61); study abroad would not be likely to draw students from this category for the same reasons failure acceptors and failure avoiders are not likely to be interested in such an experience. The next stage in the continuum is external regulation, the lowest stage of extrinsic motivation. This level is associated with minimal autonomy, and behaviors are undertaken to earn rewards and/or avoid punishments. Here, too, the assumption is that students would lack enough motivation to study abroad; no instances of external regulation were found in the data. Introjected regulation moves a step closer to
integration and intrinsic motivation. In this stage, behavior is motivated to demonstrate ability and/or avoid failure. Some internalization has taken place as feelings of self-worth are at the root of such behavior. However, as action is taken due to the need to satisfy external considerations, introjection is a form of extrinsic motivation. No results were uncovered in this study to support participation in study abroad at this stage.

The next stage in the taxonomy is regulation through identification. An individual feels a stronger sense of autonomy at this stage than those previously identified. This stage involves valuing goals or behavior on a personal level. Sarah reported a valuation at this level with regards to an interest in other cultures as exemplified by her statement that she hadn’t become interested in living cultures until she travelled to England as a freshman in college. She became interested in learning more about the living culture of Egypt prior to going, though her primary intent in studying abroad was to study the ancient culture of Egypt. Emiko, also, illustrated this stage with her interest in learning about Japanese culture. She valued the experience on a personal level, but had not fully integrated the customs and norms of the culture into her lifestyle, evidenced in her discussion of a confusing and frustrating cultural experience she had while abroad:

[W]hen I first got to Japan, I could understand the language as long as people spoke it slowly. Well, I went shopping on my own one day, and I saw a pair of punk rocker boots in a shop that I had to have. I walked in and found the shopkeeper with (what she told me later) was her regular customer. She looked me up and down and told me, in broken English, that nothing in the store would fit me. I was taken aback because I saw on the shelves that she offered plus-sizes. . . . That was probably the worst experience I had there, but I found out later that a lot of these shops have a target demographic, and if you don't fit their image, they’re biased against you and won’t sell to you. Damn it, I just wanted the boots.
Figure 6.2. Organismic Integration Theory Taxonomy of Self-Determination Theory
The final extrinsic stage is integrated regulation. With integration, goals and behavior are fully integrated within the individual, aligning with other personal needs and values. Mack reported a valuation at this level with regards to an interest in other cultures, as illustrated by his upbringing in a pluralistic world. Study abroad, for Mack, was a natural way to expand this multicultural lifestyle. Integration shares many qualities with intrinsic motivation, including a complete sense of autonomy. However, this category of motivation is still considered extrinsic as the individual, though internalizing the relevant values, engages in associated behavior to attain external outcomes rather than for the sake of the behavior itself. This was true for Mack, as he intended to learn more about the culture of his host country, but also had academic and career goals in mind.

Intrinsic motivation is the extreme stage of complete interest and enjoyment for the satisfaction inherent in an activity or behavior. This internalization of motivation was found with all ten participants in relation to the respondents’ shared personality trait of traveller’s spirit, and one participant’s characteristic of flexibility. Expounded upon in each interview, all of the respondents discussed a love and interest in travel, though often they could not identify the reason for their curiosity. When asked why she was so intrigued by travel, Jennifer responded: “That’s something that I can’t pin point. It’s an internal itch to get out. You can’t explain it unless you have that itch.” Sarah replied in a similar vein, explaining that she couldn’t determine the root of her need to travel: “I can’t really say where that stemmed from. I think it’s something that’s always been there.” Mack claimed it was simply part of his personality, while Kitty wanted to do “something that nobody does,” without being able to explain further. These examples speak to the internalized personalities of the respondents in this study, aligning with organismic integration theory’s intrinsic stage of motivation.

Though structured and explained as a continuum, organismic integration theory does not require or suggest that motivation must begin with amotivation and move through the consecutive stages. Ryan and Deci (2000b) stated, “[W]e are not suggesting that it is a developmental continuum in the sense that people must progress through each stage of internalization with respect to a particular regulation” (p. 73). While moving through the various stages is possible, starting points for different goals, behaviors, and
values differ from person to person, and entire stages can be skipped in the process of regulation based on current environmental circumstances and past experiences. Some external goals and behaviors will never become valued or internalized by certain individuals, and will remain in stasis in their originally perceived regulatory stage. However, research has shown that with the passage of time, continued experience, and increased cognitive capacities, there can be fluctuation within the continuum. Were these same participants studied at a different stage in time, different results may have come to light.
Chapter 7
Discussion

Comparing the findings of this study with the extant literature highlights areas and methods for enhancing outreach and marketing efforts for study abroad programs, for expanding and/or creating programming that appeals to students, and for engendering a campus culture that works as a push factor for students. Push and pull factors can inform study abroad offices whom to target with and how to structure outreach and marketing programs. Pull factors can be useful in providing information in restructuring and creating available programming. Push factors can advise faculty on how to restructure campus culture to normalize international study. Limitations of this study are addressed, along with recommendations for future research, and a statement of this study’s contribution to the field.

7.1. Outreach and Marketing

This study revealed motivations and influences examined in the literature. These categories included family, influential people, interest in other cultures, language learning, academics, career, opportunity, program, and participant personality. This study also illuminated categories that were not previously examined, including childhood experiences, professors, and the study abroad office. Each of these categories provides an avenue that is rich in potential for improving study abroad programming and marketing.

As the participants in this study all shared a traveller’s spirit and nearly all spent time outdoors as children, were interested in other cultures, and had previous international travel experience, it would appear that these categories lend themselves in one fashion or another to study abroad. University study abroad offices would be wise to create outreach programs that extend to courses and on-campus student groups with these themes. Targeting international interest groups and outdoor-related clubs such as camping, hiking, and horseback riding clubs may procure interest in study abroad from groups that appear to share similar characteristics with participants of this study. For the same reason, language learning classes and extracurricular clubs should be prime targets for outreach and marketing efforts. These efforts should include a full explanation of the opportunities to study abroad, but also the requirements and procedures for enrolling in
programs. The data from this study indicated a dearth of disseminated information on how to study abroad, causing students such as Emiko, Ji-Hoon, Joe, Sarah, and Jennifer to seek this information on their own. Were this material communicated to students, those who lack the determination seen in the respondents of this study may be more likely to follow through with the enrollment process.

Media also influenced a majority of these respondents. Hosting free on-campus movie nights to show videos like Indiana Jones or foreign films could be a creative marketing project for study abroad offices to engage in. These movies had an effect on Sarah, Emiko, Kitty, and Mack. Also showing Discovery Channel, History Channel, and National Geographic episodes could appeal to different audiences, such as they did to Joe, Sarah, and Kitty. Further, providing information on study abroad programs that occur in the foreign locations depicted in these films could raise student interest and boost participation.

Requesting entrance to courses in the history, anthropology, and language departments could provide a fruitful route for outreach methods. Participants in this study noted interests in anthropology, language learning, and history as draws to their study abroad destination. In fact, any department for which a study abroad program offers related academic courses should be addressed by outreach programs considering that all but one respondent took courses in their major while abroad. Taking twenty to thirty minutes once per term to discuss possible study abroad programs and locations that relate to material studied in these departments seems sensible. If possible, creating a relationship between the study abroad office and the professors of these departments, who could then advocate for study abroad, would perhaps be even more effective, as four of the ten respondents in this study were distinctly swayed by their professors to go abroad. Marketing within classrooms had a strong effect on Jennifer, Ms. Alam, Joe, and Alicia. Not only were they captive while the professor presented the program idea, but they were also heavily influenced by their professors’ knowledge and attitudes. Encouraging students through faculty-led, group-based programs kept the excitement level high for these students, and would likely have the same effect on others. Study abroad offices need to recruit students to study abroad. Extending recruitment practices to
faculty members to create and market programs relating to their course material could increase student participation.

New marketing techniques and wider exposure across campus could attract more attention to the study abroad office. Sarah happened upon a poster for the program she was already interested in, while Jennifer found the office by accident. Mack knew of it without knowing how, and Ji-Hoon sought it out only after he realized he needed the office to access his program. Making the study abroad office a strong presence on campus, while widely marketing for a breadth of programs, can attract additional students. The results of this study imply that the most influential aspect of the study abroad office is to provide students with information pertaining to the opportunity to study abroad. Students who do not know it is feasible are not likely to pursue it, as evidenced by Ji-Hoon and Joe. It was only after they were offered the opportunity, from outside sources, that they thought to follow up on the possibility. Study abroad departments need to make a strong showing on campus and ensure that the student body is aware of the various opportunities to go abroad. This can be accomplished by becoming a central part of new-student orientation, guest attendances in classrooms, and increasing marketing techniques such as movie nights, campus posters, and listserv e-mails. However, sharing with students only what is presently available might not be enough to attract every potential study abroad student.

7.2. Programming

Providing programming that is interesting and pertinent to students is also imperative to attracting study abroad participants. 100% of the respondents in this study reported that some aspect of the program motivated their enrollment. The subject of study and the location of the program directly influenced nine of the ten interviewees, 80% were attracted to the structure of the program, and the length of the program swayed seven respondents.

As previous experience abroad had a large impact on the participants of this study, universities might consider creating more international programs that are shorter in length than current study abroad experiences. Providing an opportunity to engage in a one- or two-week international project could attract more students to the idea of
international travel. Following up with the students who participate in these shortened program could lead to “repeat customers” who then study abroad for a semester or a year.

Additionally, for every language studied at a university, programs to destination counties that speak these languages should be created. Language learning was seen to motivate eight of the ten participants in this study, and language immersion has been shown to improve comprehension and oral fluency. As such, each language department should be able to offer students the ability to immerse themselves in the corresponding language and culture by studying abroad. Liaisons between the study abroad office and each language department would facilitate creation, feedback, and enhancements of such programs. Further, to enhance the language-learning aspect of these particular programs, homestays should be an available component for those students, such as Mack and Ms. Alam, who desire full immersion.

Respondents also reported being motivated to complete academic requirements and enhance their career skills and resumés. Creating programs to study abroad what might be better learned off-campus—such as Stephanie’s biology studies in the unique environment provided by Australia’s flora and fauna, Jennifer’s international business degree in an international location, and Sarah’s study of archeology and Ancient Egypt in Egypt—can provide students with a multiplicity of opportunities to study abroad, perhaps learning more through their foreign academic programs than they ever could from text books at their home campuses. The unique opportunity to study academics in a targeted setting was shown to be influential in this study, and would likely draw additional students to study abroad.

Listening to the experiences, opinions, and voices of past study abroad participants allows faculty members, study abroad administrators, and international program providers to enhance their program offerings and marketing techniques to match the needs and desires of the people who engage in study abroad programming, thereby providing better services and information to the next generation of potential participants.

7.3. Campus Culture

As mentioned in the section on outreach and marketing, study abroad offices need to make a strong showing on campus. Some suggestions to accomplish this are to become
a central part of new-student orientation, get involved in classroom outreach, and increase marketing techniques such as movie nights, campus posters, and listserv e-mails. However, this presence on campus should serve to do more than disseminate specific study abroad information. As seen in the push factors of this study, explained by the sociocultural approach to motivation, normalizing behaviors and values within a community can lead individuals to internalize those behaviors and values. The respondents in this study were pushed to study abroad by the acculturation and normalization of cross-cultural interactions as exemplified by their families, childhood experiences, influential people, previous international travel, and their professors.

The creation of a campus culture that embraces and encourages cross-cultural interaction can normalize positive attitudes toward people and cultures different from oneself. Once these attitudes and the resultant behaviors are integrated into a student’s conception of their own identity, the idea of studying abroad can become more appealing and realistic. Therefore, universities should put efforts toward turning campus culture into that of a globalized and intercultural community. One suggestion for this is to foster connections between the study abroad office and various departments and professors who share interests in cross-cultural and foreign study. Further, the creation of intercultural courses and extra-curricular groups should be encouraged. Volunteer opportunities working within the school and/or local community could be created to encourage working group relationships; these projects may or may not be offered for credit. As the category of previous international experience acted as a motivator, various departments, student services, or the study abroad office could offer not-for-credit week-long educational or volunteer based trips abroad. The participants of these programs should then be provided with information relating to longer, for-credit study abroad options.

Whichever options a university uses to engender a cross-cultural climate, the most important action is to clearly and freely disseminate information to the student body, in a multitude of ways, about both the importance of intercultural relations and the opportunities available for students to put attitude into action.
7.4. Limitations of the Study

Like all studies, the current research had limitations in design and execution. While some generalizations can be made from the findings, a participant pool of ten respondents is small and limits generalizability. Further, those respondents willing to participate in the study had generally positive experiences while abroad, possibly affecting their recall and perception of the retrospective evidence provided in the interviews. Perhaps the largest limitation of this study was the nascent capabilities of this researcher; this dissertation was my first undertaking of a large-scale qualitative research project. Admittedly, missteps and missed information may have occurred during the processes of interviewing, coding, and analysis.

7.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Instructive to the topics of motivation and influence to study abroad would be further qualitative, narrative inquiry studies. Involving a larger number of participants would permit for more generalizability of findings. While this study used a wide range of participants representing a variety of geographic locations across the U.S., majors, program types, subjects of study, duration, and destination country, the numbers of participants representing each demographic was necessarily limited. A larger research undertaking that includes a wider variety of students may reveal further results. Annells (1996) warned that a singular study conducted by a singular researcher with a small participant pool that lacks in diversity will produce “local and specific constructed realities”; in order to expand the generalizability of a study’s findings, repetitive studies with multiple researchers and a wide and diverse base of respondent perspectives should be pursued (p. 388). The scope of this study produced the former; future research endeavors can be undertaken to increase researcher and participant numbers, diversity, and theoretical sensitivity so this study’s findings can be further validated, modified, and increased in generalizability.

Further, focused research on specific demographics could be informative. For example, studying minority students who have studied abroad, such as Van Der Meid (2003) did with Asian American students, can lead to valuable information about minority participation. Conversely, studying minority students who have not studied
abroad could provide information on barriers that prevent their enrollment, which can then lead to the formation of programs and/or new outreach and marketing strategies to increase participant numbers. Targeting a variety of demographics, not just minorities, on reasons for not studying abroad could inform the research on methods and policies for additional participation. Additionally, studying students who have not studied abroad, ethnic minorities, non-traditional students, male students, majors in the hard sciences, law, and architecture, and other students underrepresented in study abroad can illuminate further research findings that can allow for the adaption of programming to fit student needs.

7.6. Contribution to the Field

This study contributes to academia and the field of study abroad in that it is one of only a handful of studies that take an in-depth, qualitative look into the motivations and influences that lead to student decision-making regarding studying abroad. There is a substantial gap in our knowledge of this phenomenon; this research project was intended to expand on our existing theoretical knowledge as well as determine practical applications from the results. It is my hope that this study encourages other researchers to use qualitative methods, especially narrative inquiry interviews, in continuing research in this field. It is only by giving students the opportunity to expound on their thoughts and give voice to their perspectives and experiences that we can truly understand the phenomenon of study abroad participation from students’ points of view.
Appendix A
Recruitment Flyer

Aloha,

You are receiving this e-mail because you are a returned study abroad student and I am requesting your assistance.

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa working on my dissertation study, American College Students Who Chose to Study Abroad: Life Story Narratives.

In order to conduct my research, I would like to interview American students who have studied abroad as undergraduates. The purpose of this study is to hear directly from students about the reasons they chose to study abroad. I hope to gain a better understanding of why undergraduate students went abroad, and to hear about their experiences.

As a past study abroad participant myself, I have found that my personal reasons for studying abroad are not always recognized by the study abroad field, and I am interested in listening to and publishing responses from other students to increase the knowledge base available to study abroad professionals, campus officials, and policy-makers.

The interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded; the recording will later be transcribed and the recording will then be erased. Interviewees’ identities will be kept confidential by using a pseudonym on the transcripts and in any data reported. Specific information that might lead to identification of a particular participant will be omitted from the transcripts as well as the final results. Once the recording has been transcribed, I will request students read through the transcript of their interview to verify that I have correctly captured their responses and to ensure I have deleted information that could lead to their identification. Participants will be able to edit the transcript so they are satisfied with the record.

Participants are welcome to a copy of my final results.

If you would like to participate in this study, please e-mail me at andreaj6@hawaii.edu or call 206-979-3698 so we may arrange a time and location for the interview. If you have questions regarding the study or about participation in the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mahalo,

Andrea Shearer
206-979-3698
andreaj6@hawaii.edu
Appendix B
Research Consent Form
University of Hawai'i
Consent to Participate in Research Project:

American College Students Who Chose to Study Abroad: Life Story Narratives

My name is Andrea Shearer. I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa (UHM), in the Department of Educational Foundations. As I am pursuing my doctoral degree, I am conducting research for my dissertation. The purpose of my research project is to determine why American undergraduate students study abroad. I am asking you to participate in this project because you completed a study abroad program while obtaining your undergraduate degree.

Project Description - Activities and Time Commitment: If you participate, I will interview you in person or via Skype. The interview will last for about 60 minutes. I will record the interview so I can later type a transcript – a written record of what we talked about during the interview – and analyze the information from the interview. If you participate, you will be one of a total of ten to fifteen students whom I will interview individually. One example of the type of question I will ask is, “Why did you choose to study abroad?”

Benefits and Risks: I believe there are no direct benefits to you in participating in my research project. However, the results of this project might help me and other researchers learn more about the reasons undergraduate students choose to study abroad. I believe there is little or no risk to you in participating in this project. If, however, you are uncomfortable or stressed by answering any of the interview questions, we will skip the question, or take a break, or stop the interview, or you may withdraw from the project altogether.

Confidentiality and Privacy: During this research project, I will keep all data from the interviews in a secure location. Only I and my dissertation chair will have access to data, although legally authorized agencies, including the University of Hawai‘i Committee on Human Studies, have the right to review research records.

After I transcribe the interviews, I will erase the audio-recordings. When I report the results of my research project, and in my typed transcripts, I will not use your name or any other information that could identify you specifically. Instead, I will use a pseudonym for your name. Transcripts of the interviews may be retained for future use in similar studies, increasing the number of student interviews and adding to the growing body of knowledge on this topic. The transcriptions will be securely maintained at all times and participants will not be identified now or in the future. If you would like a
summary of the findings from my final report, please contact me at the number listed near the end of this consent form.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this research project is voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not to participate. In addition, at any point during this project, you can withdraw your permission without any penalty or loss of benefits.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this project, please contact me via phone (206) 979-3698 or e-mail (andreaj6@hawaii.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai‘i, Committee on Human Studies (CHS), by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by e-mail at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

Please keep the prior portion of this consent form for your records.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign the following signature portion of this consent form and return it to:

Andrea Shearer, PO Box 1288, Kailua, HI 96734.

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Signature(s) for Consent:

I agree to participate in the research project entitled, *American College Students Who Chose to Study Abroad: Life Story Narratives*. I understand that I can change my mind about participating in this project, at any time, by notifying the researcher.

Please answer the following question by checking one of the boxes:

I agree to be audio recorded during the interview: ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Your Name (Print):** __________________________________________

**Your Signature:** __________________________________________

**Date:** __________________________________________
Appendix C

Pre-Interview Protocol

This pre-interview protocol is intended to promote initial, unofficial contact to be established; rapport to be built and connections to be made via shared study abroad experiences; demographic exploration to ensure the individual fits this study’s needs; an explanation of what this research project is and how the interviews apply to it; and, an opportunity for respondents to ask questions about the research and researcher to ensure they are comfortable participating in the project prior to any recording devices being employed.

Topics of discussion:

Explain project

• Research process
• Structure of research study
• The interview
  o Their role as interviewee
  o Expectations
    ▪ What they can expect of me – interest, guidance, openness of thought, reflexive questioning, and clarifying probes
    ▪ What I expect of them – share experiences, perspectives on life choices, openness of thought, reflexivity, willingness to converse
  o How the interview informs the overall project
  o Focus is their perspective of own experiences
• Answer questions re: research and researcher

Build rapport

• Share my study abroad experiences
• Answer questions about myself
• Free-flowing discussion

Self-identified demographic data re: study requirements

• Gender
• Ethnicity
• Program type, duration, and location

Anonymity

• Select own pseudonym

Confidentiality

Arrange interview time and method

Other
Appendix D

Interview Protocol

This protocol is for a semi-structured interview. There are no specifically worded questions; rather, the listing below is a notation of topics to cover. I prefer to allow the topics to emerge organically during the course of the interview; those that do not will be introduced in a way the conversation permits or at the end of the interview. Clarifying and explanatory probes will be used to dig deeper into these topics as necessary. Additional topics will be discussed as they arise during the interview.

Topics of discussion:

Family life / influence
- Upbringing, important moments in life regarding identity formation
- Opportunities provided by family to explore world and self
- Family values – how impacted upbringing and future identity

Impactful experiences
- Moments of identity and value formation
- Travel
  - Physical
  - Interest in other cultures
- Outdoors / nature

Outside influences (Contributing & Non-contributing)
- Neighborhood / region
- Friends
- Teachers
- Activities
- Media: Books, movies, television shows, etc.

Barriers to SA / How overcome / Importance of overcoming

Academics

Career aspirations

Language and/or cultural learning opportunities

Knowledge of study abroad / study abroad office

Additional study abroad or other international travel experience

Personality of respondent

Any additional information / motivational influences
References


