

“IT'S MORE HOW OTHER PEOPLE PERCEIVE YOU”: SOCIAL IDENTITY FORMATION  
THROUGH STUDY ABROAD

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of the  
North Dakota State University  
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Callie Dominique Karlsson Speer

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major Department:  
Sociology

July 2015

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University  
Graduate School

---

**Title**

"IT'S MORE HOW OTHER PEOPLE PERCEIVE YOU": SOCIAL IDENTITY  
FORMATION THROUGH STUDY ABROAD

---

**By**

Callie Dominique Karlsson Speer

---

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Christina Weber

---

Chair

Christopher Whitsel

---

Newell Wright

---

Approved:

7/7/2015

---

Date

Kent Sandstrom

---

Department Chair

## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigated how study abroad affected students' sense of identity and how interactions between study abroad students and other people shaped their understanding of their identity. While abroad, students taking part in a five-week study abroad program started to recognize having an American self and used behavior and clothing to negotiate their association with this role. The relationships between students and the program leader, other students, friends, and family members were instrumental in the recognition and development of their identity. Students also started creating a study abroad self before departure and used points of discomfort as an opportunity to adjust how they defined this identity. Student responses indicated that study abroad offers them insight into how a sense of identity is related to the context of place and people, as well as an opportunity to negotiate their identity both while abroad and after return.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Christina Weber, for all of her kind help, keen insight, and encouragement throughout my time in this program. Additionally, my sincere thanks goes to my committee members: Dr. Christopher Whitsel, who has been enthusiastically supportive of this topic since my first class at NDSU; and Dr. Newell Wright, who went above and beyond in assisting me during this research project.

Many friends and family have also done so much to make this possible. Thank you to my friends who encouraged me at every step. I am grateful to my grandfather, Einar Karlsson, for inspiring me to never stop learning. I would also like to thank my parents, Peter and Kathy Karlsson, for all of their love and support throughout my life. Without them, I would not have become who I am today. And finally, I want to express my gratitude to my husband, Jeff, for being there for me throughout this process with love, kind words, and never waning support.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Research on Development in Study Abroad.....	4
The Context of Identity.....	8
Life Worlds and Social Reality.....	9
A Social Self.....	11
Identity as a Process.....	13
The Social Construction of Reality.....	15
Locations and Groups.....	17
Communication Beyond Language.....	20
Identity for Study Abroad Students.....	22
The Pluralized Identity.....	23
An American Self.....	25
A Study Abroad Self.....	28
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY.....	29
Participants.....	29
Research Design and Timeline.....	31
Addressing Researcher Bias.....	34
Ethics.....	36

Analysis.....	37
CHAPTER 4. EXPERIENCES AND DISCOVERIES .....	40
Negotiating an American Self.....	41
The Lens of the Leader .....	44
Relationships Abroad.....	48
Appearances .....	55
The Future of the American Self .....	58
From the Foundation of a Pluralized Self.....	63
Relationships Within the Program .....	66
Friends, Family and Objectivation.....	76
Constructing a Study Abroad Self .....	83
The Impact of Discomfort.....	90
Identity in Process.....	95
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	99
REFERENCES .....	102
APPENDIX A. INTRODUCTORY ORAL SCRIPT.....	106
APPENDIX B. PRE-PROGRAM WRITING EXERCISE .....	108
APPENDIX C. PRE-PROGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	109
APPENDIX D. POST-PROGRAM WRITING EXERCISE.....	110
APPENDIX E. POST-PROGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	111

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. List of Study Abroad Program Participants .....	30
2. List of Codes Used in Analysis.....	39

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

During my time as an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to study abroad for a year at Kansai Gaidai University in Japan. When I returned from abroad, I found that my perspective on a variety of aspects of my life including my major, the world around me, and who I was as a person had shifted considerably. Having experienced being in a dramatically different culture, I felt more certain of who I was as a person. After struggling through being illiterate in an unfamiliar country, I felt empowered to deal with the unknown. Overall, I had an increased focus and drive during my senior year, and it felt easier to meet new people than it had before. This motivated me to return abroad after I graduated to teach English for a year so I could experience this development again, and eventually led me to work in the field of international education so I could help others have this opportunity.

Study abroad is a potentially life-changing experience in which students leave their original culture to spend time in another and then return, bringing their experiences and changed perspective back with them. Throughout my career I have heard stories similar to my own experience from returned students: they decided to study abroad in order to see a particular location, to learn more about their major abroad, or some other specific goal for their time away, but they found that their experiences produced a profound shift in their understanding of themselves. These changes did not take place in isolation, coming from both the experience of traveling but also interactions with others within the program and outside it. Comments from family and friends, as well others on the same program, influenced their own perceptions of the experience and of whom they had become while taking part. Repeatedly hearing bewildering and exhilarating descriptions of how people's identities shifted during their time abroad directed my research interest toward investigating what are these changes are and how the complex



conditions of study abroad brought them about. Understanding how these differences come to be is important for understanding how study abroad fits into a student's life, both as a short-term educational opportunity and as a long-term transformative experience.

Study abroad over the last 10 years has grown to be an increasingly important part of the educational experience for many students. A study spanning 50 years of programs by International Education Abroad (IES) found that twice as many students in the 1990s cited study abroad as important to their decision of which university to attend as compared to students in the 1950s and 1960s (Dwyer, 2004). Although this field remains a disparate and varied area of opportunity, there is an increasing focus on these programs as a way for students to differentiate and market themselves as global citizens (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). Students report that the experience of studying abroad has brought about changes in their personality, including 89% indicating that they were increasingly able to tolerate ambiguity and 98% indicating that they had learned something about themselves (Dwyer, 2004). Still, as will be demonstrated, research on study abroad has primarily focused on the educational outcomes in the classroom rather than addressing the question of how these experiences affect students outside of the pedagogical perspective.

Understanding identity formation through study abroad requires identifying two key components, namely the changes in identity and what has caused them. Accordingly, there are three questions that I explored as part of this thesis research:

- 1.) How have international experiences affected study abroad students' sense of self-identity?

2.) How have interactions between study abroad students and people with whom they have interacted—such as fellow program participants, the program leader, friends, family, and locals—shaped their understanding of their identity? And

3.) How does the concept of the American self factor into students' identity development?

To research these questions I interviewed 12 students who participated in a five-week faculty-led program in Europe, gathering both written and oral materials from the students before and after their study abroad program. As the framework for this research, the literature review offers a foundation of the theoretical dimensions of identity and identity formation, as well as insight into where existing research has and has not been applied to identity formation in study abroad. Next, the outline of the project methodology explains how the research questions were investigated and analyzed. The last major section explores the responses from the students and walks through an analysis of three identities developed in relation to their time abroad: the American self, the pluralized self, and the study abroad self. Through understanding the development of these identities, it is possible not only to learn more about the experiences of these specific students but also to discover in general how the experience of study abroad can be such a profoundly moving experience by enabling agency within participants.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to understand the effect of study abroad on how individuals view themselves, it is important to define several foundational pieces of theory. Identity is a highly contextual construct, making the inherently disruptive experience of study abroad an opportunity for insight and change. To begin laying the framework, I will first look at research on the impact of study abroad to assess the need for more research on the topic. Second, I will outline why reality and identity are inherently tied to the people and place where they exist. Third, I will outline the process of change and how travel to another setting can cause a shift in identity. Lastly, I will walk through three areas of identity development that relate to study abroad: the pluralized modern self, the American self, and a study abroad self.

### **Research on Development in Study Abroad**

Research on the effect of study abroad on participants can be broken up into three areas of development: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gillespie et al., 2009). Much of the research focuses on the first area, which includes the educational aspects of study abroad such as the educational value (Dolby & Rahman, 2008), improvements in language skills (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990, pp. 17-24; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Dolby & Rahman, 2008), and the impact of study abroad on their future employability (Opper, 1991). Commonly, the audience for existing research has been within the educational institutions designing and sponsoring the programs, resulting in an interest primarily focused on the pedagogy of the programs. National and international organizations created for professionals within this field, such as The Association for Studies in Internationalization Education (ASIE), NAFSA: The Association of International Educators, and The Forum on Education Abroad, have further encouraged this type of research (Dolby, 2004).

Within cognitive development, the most heavily researched area of the triangle, a number of changes have been demonstrated in students who have studied abroad. Research on the transformative experience of study abroad has identified improvements for students taking part in a semester program abroad in the intercultural proficiency aspects of “cultural pluralism, efficacy, and interconnectedness” (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009, p. 176). Research on short-term programs using the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory identified increased emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy (Mapp, 2012), and research on students who participated in a variety of program lengths demonstrated increased creative thinking when compared to their peers who did not study abroad (Lee, Therriault, & Linderholm, 2012).

The second area of development, interpersonal, has been less researched outside of areas where it overlaps with cognitive development. One study looked at network formation within the context of programs in the Middle East, finding program location and the amount of assistance by programs for forming network connections to be important (Dewey, Ring, Gardner, & Belnap, 2013). Another study found that deliberate intercultural effectiveness training pedagogy resulted in higher post-program scores on the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as compared to those who studied abroad but did not take part in such activities or those who remained on their home campus (Pedersen, 2010).

The third area of the research triangle on development is intrapersonal growth, which looks at the internal world both in terms of starting to understand one’s strengths and weaknesses as well as honing a sharper understanding of one’s self-identity (Gillespie et al., 2009). King and Magolda (2005) define a mature level of development as “Capacity to create an internal self that openly engages challenges to one’s views and beliefs and that considers social identities (race,

class, gender, etc.) in a global and national context; integrates aspects of self into one's identity” (p. 576). This definition is an open one that ties in well with the other two dimensions because it demonstrates how what we know, the cognitive, and who we know, the interpersonal, affect how we understand ourselves in those context. Unfortunately, this definition also leaves the aspects of personal identity that are not tied to physical and economic traits unexplored.

A number of studies look at different areas of intracultural development, which is sometimes intentionally fostered and sometimes a side effect of physical location. One study of research in a loosely related area focused on third culture kids. These children were primarily the children of military and missionary families, who had the experience of growing up in a culture that is different from their family's home culture (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). While this research relates to the concept of a globalized modern identity, it focused on children who were young when taking part in their third culture interactions and who may not have had a well-established and stable home culture from which to depart. This means that although their changes were examples of intracultural development, they are limited in their applicability to students who have had a consistent home culture and have limited or first exposure to new settings and people through study abroad.

Nash (1976) conducted a quantitative study looking specifically at the question of how study abroad affected identity, specifically for a group of students who spent their junior year in France. This study administered questionnaires to a study abroad group and a control group before and shortly after a study abroad program. It found among the study abroad students a statistically significant increase in the reported autonomy; a significant acculturation to French language, food, and international affairs; and a statistically significant *decrease* in self-confidence. It did not find any change in the area of tolerance or flexibility for the study abroad

students. Additionally, the study identified the ability to be objective rather than inflexibly subjective in understanding and judging the world around themselves as another likely area of change, but did not include this area in data collection. A third survey was administered to the study abroad students several months after the second survey as well, and found that many of the changes in identity had not persisted over the summer. Intriguingly, changes in body image resulting from interactions with French culture were the one area that remained.

A more recent study on the effect of study abroad identified re-entry to campus after study abroad as an important but often deficient part of the study abroad experience (Carlson et al., 1990). They found that returnee students reported feeling different from before but lacked the resources to identify or understand how or what this meant. In a long-term survey, they categorized the students as maximizers, who were deeply affected by their experiences abroad; minimizers, who enjoyed their experiences but did not consider themselves to be deeply influenced by them; and negativists, who did not fit in either of the other two categories. Out of 76 participants, 45 were categorized as maximizers because they had roles in international institutions, transnational structures, were independent professionals who used their experiences regularly, used their experiences regularly within larger institutions, or were deeply committed but restrained from utilizing their experiences in their current situations. The other 31 were categorized as minimalists and no respondents were negativists. Lastly, they identified a major challenge in researching study abroad to be that students self-select and may have personal predilections to risk taking or other traits that would make it difficult to compare them to students who remain on campus.

There have also been a few studies that have more deeply explored the topic of identity, often finding students encountering American self abroad. For example, Dolby (2004)

interviewed students who studied in Australia and discovered that the development of an American self was the most significant development for students. Jewett (2010) studied students in Ireland as they wrestled with how their perceptions of being Irish-American clashed with how they were seen by locals. Tian and Lowe (2014) looked at how students in China over time changed from seeing locals as Other and instead came to recognize their individuality, gaining a shared universal identity with them. I will discuss these three studies and their significance to my research questions in more detail later in this literature review.

These different areas of existing research are useful for understanding the opening for researching identity formation within study abroad. To begin the exploration of identity change, first we must understand what an identity is and how it is formed.

### **The Context of Identity**

Defining “reality” is necessary for analyzing how individuals define themselves within it. Reality can be divided into the objective and subjective, the truths they consider to be inherent and those truths they consider to be opinion. In the common epistemological usage, aspects of objective reality are those that are judged independent of opinions, feelings, and other subjective determinants (Searle, 1997). Within this objective reality, it is also possible to further distinguish objective judgments, such as the birth date of a particular historical figure that require an observer to exist, from objective facts, such as the number of electrons in a given type of atom that continue to be regardless of whether they are observed.

On a deeper level, Searle (1997) draws a distinction between these common epistemological uses and the ontological conceptions of objective and subjective. When used in the ontological sense, objective and subjective take on another series of meanings from those described previously. Pain is ontologically subjective because its existence is dependent on being

perceived, while a mountain is ontologically objective since its material existence is not dependent on being observed. Pain can also be considered an epistemologically objective fact because it is based in a real physical existence, while the degree of pain can be seen as a subjective judgment. Assigning these categorizations is a complex and changing process. Even properties intrinsic to the objects, such as mass or chemical composition often breakdown under scrutiny: Colors were at one time considered an intrinsic property whereas scientific advances in physics have caused more people to consider light waves to be intrinsic but colors to be observer-relative.

Thus while we can in some cases identify an objective reality, there is in a very real sense subjectivity in any such definition. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explain that there are a multitude of social meanings in even our attempts to understand reality, saying, “every act of research is simultaneously empirical (it confronts the work of observable phenomena) and theoretical (it engages hypothesis about the underlying structure of relations that observations are designed to capture)” (p. 35). The complexity of these distinctions is described, “The particular difficulty of sociology, then, is to produce a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, wooly reality” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 23). The relationship between the objective and the subjective comes together in the complex construction of a social reality.

### **Life Worlds and Social Reality**

In the light of these overlapping definitions of objective and subjective realities, reality can be described as a relative concept for which the definition is inherently related to whoever defines it. Berger and Luckmann (1967) explain this concept:

Sociological interest in questions of “reality” and “knowledge” is thus initially justified by the fact of their social relativity. What is “real” to a Tibetan monk may not be “real” to



an American businessman. The “knowledge” of the criminal differs from the “knowledge” of the criminologist. It follows that specific agglomerations of “reality” and “knowledge” pertain to specific social contexts, and that these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts. (p. 3)

What a person knows is tied to where they learned it, and understanding what reality is for a person requires understanding the social relationships that established it.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s (1967) work on the social construction of reality comes from a background of sociology of knowledge, and attempts to bridge the gap between the internal understanding and the social meanings that are external. An important foundational concept for this model is that of the life-world, a reality that is “social both in its origins and in its ongoing maintenance: the meaningful order it provides for human lives has been established collectively and is kept going by collective consent” (P. L. Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1974, p. 63). A life-world is an ongoing process that humanity constantly creates and recreates, making for an ever-changing reality (Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, & Kurzweil, 1984, pp. 37-38), but those who are intimately involved in the creation of their reality most often forget that they have had a part in its creation. Hunter and Ainlay (1986) describe this phenomenon:

[T]he social world is in fact reified. That is, because the social world appears to people as such a massive, real, and coercive fact, they tend to invest it with thing-like qualities, as being a reality that presses down on them...For Berger, people are alienated when they forget that the social reality which appears to be so massive is in fact a human creation, is their creation. (p. 17)

The socially created world becomes real to the person inside, making the origin of that world opaque to the very person who had a part in creating it.

In a similar fashion, Schütz (1971) defines social reality as the “world of cultural objects and social institutions into which we are all born, within which we have to find our bearings, and with which we have to come to terms” (p. 53). His definition of social reality is based on intercommunication, an intersubjective and shared understanding. In this way, we understand objects not as their principle characteristics but in terms of their usage and definition within our cultural perspective (Schütz, 1967, p. 79). Individual experiences are built up over time, with subjective meanings being assigned to an increasingly difficult to define objective reality. As these experiences run together, they merge into a stream of consciousness. Schütz (1967) explains, “Every lived experience which enters into the constitution of the total object experience is surrounded by a halo of retentions and of portentions” (p. 79). The information gathered across a series of settings becomes an accumulation of social knowledge that is specialized to those settings but no longer contained within them. This stock of knowledge is not a neat collection of ideas, but one that is inconsistent, hazy and filled with contradictions from its piecemeal construction. The resulting contradictions are often not visible until they are brought into clear comparison and consideration with each other (Schütz, 1970).

### **A Social Self**

Within this complex set of interactions at home and abroad are the individuals who are experiencing, organizing, and learning. Understanding what those individuals see themselves as within this system is important and attempts to define individual identity have stretched for centuries. Gergen (1971) outlined what he considers to be the history of psychological study, starting with how Aristotle described the concept of a soul, an internal self separate from the external, physical person; Descartes, Hobbes, and John Stuart Mills explored this distinction between mind and body; and concluding with how Freud became more recently famous for his

psychoanalytic exploration of the topic. Throughout the work of these researchers, the concept of a single self is often taken as a fact when it should be recognized as a hypothetical construct, built by and for a self. An identity is built as a narrative, with descriptors of the self pulled from the ongoing stream of consciousness. In that sense, there is less a single self as an ongoing process of creating a self (Gergen, 1971). People have ideas of how they think, make decisions, and write articles, but their understandings of this process are dependent on what they have been socially conditioned to think the process should be. Actions are a physical thing, but the meanings that are assigned to those actions are social (Gergen & Marlowe, 1970).

In this context, an identity can be broken down into an existential self and a categorical self (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1981). The existential self has an objective reality in which a person comes to understand their physical body, and discover by trial and error what the results of their actions are. Examples include how closing their eyes causes darkness or their fingers can grasp objects and move them. Much of what we define as reality is pieced together at this physical and biological level (Searle, 1997). The social self, the one defined in terms of other people, is the categorical self (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1981). Even infants have a social understanding that includes themselves, other people around them, and how these two pieces relate socially. As children grow and mature, this understanding of a small social world expands and deepens. Through social exploration, individuals learn what their gender, their race, their age, or any number of other categories mean within society. The biological pieces then string together with historical and cultural guidelines to create and propagate habitus, wherein people have internalized sets of behaviors based on place in the world but with their own personal style (Bourdieu, 1977).

This self-in-process is a social knowledge, and the essence of a person is simultaneously a form and a social construction, which Lavie and Swendenburg (1996) explain:

Our discussion of Nature, however, highlights it as a dialectical process of historical composition and decay, endlessly reproduced. Since such Nature can be transcended only in thought, even essence is a social construction. Just as we argue that essence is a social construction, so we argue that a social construction can become an essence—become essentialized. (p. 12)

Not only has the self been created socially, but the process of creating that self was also created socially. Further, these two fundamental truths have become so “essentialized” that this social origin has been hidden from every day thought, and becomes assumed as an immutable reality. A person who is aware of the social self has the potential to be a “looking-glass self” in which they take in the social existence around them and only keep that which is useful or desirable (Gergen, 1981). To explore what control a person can have over their self in this context, I turn next to an exploration of how identity changes within this social construction.

### **Identity as a Process**

Building a social self is an ongoing but often invisible process. The cycle takes place over and over, and personal collections of experiences build up into a “‘stockpile’ of typifications” that a person can then compile into recipes, methods of dealing with new experiences based on our previous understandings (Schütz, 1971). Recipes are a tool but can also serve as prescriptions if a particular method of behavior becomes the expected way of achieving an outcome within the specific social world (Schütz, 1970). Schütz’s description of recipes are not unlike Bourdieu’s (1977) conception of habitus, in which experiences and dialectical relationships bring together a “system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at

every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks” (p. 83, emphasis in original). Bourdieu (1977) explains that the world is one of commonsense assumed objectivity that is built up from an ongoing process of reinforcement of experiences and habitus, the understandings and behaviors developed in this context that allow a person to comprehend and operate in this social reality. Ann Swidler’s (1986) concept of culture as a toolkit is another model based on similar concepts: The collection of cultural “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views” (p. 273) offer differing ways for people to solve problems, as well as build larger picture strategies of action.

As children grow and develop, they also begin to combine individual behaviors into roles, identities and related behaviors that are built based on segmented activities specific to the people with whom an individual is interacting at the time (Norem-Hebeisen, 1981). Roles such as mothers, fathers, doctors, and teachers each give an idea of what behaviors might be appropriate in different situations, but someone assuming one of these roles is able to adjust their actions as well (Coser, 1991). The roles that people play are both assumed by them, but also assigned to them by society as an identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Learning the relativity of rules and roles is an important stage of development for children, one that allows a person to realize their own place in affecting and creating them (Coser, 1991). Adults have a number of complex roles, split into differing times, places, and people. Complex role sets, in which individuals’ own roles and their role partners differ significantly from each other throughout their daily lives, offer a greater set of resources and opportunities for individuals. In this model, increasing the complexity of role sets offers a greater number of recipes or tools for individuals to choose from throughout their lives. Increasingly detailed self-identities are the result of “increasing interaction and integration within an organized network of relationships” (Norem-

Hebeisen, 1981, p. 144), making the interactions a necessary foundation for understanding roles and the options for action that they offer.

### **The Social Construction of Reality**

The method by which the social self is built and changed can be conceptualized using Berger and Luckmann's (1967) work on the social construction of reality. In this model, subjective reality is created through interactions between a person and their surroundings. This dialectical process consists of three steps: externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Wuthnow et al., 1984). Berger and Luckmann (1967) explain the three parts thusly:

Externalization is the ongoing outpouring of human being into the world, both in the physical and the mental activity of men. Objectivation is the attainment by the products of this activity (again both physical and mental) of a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves. Internalization is the reappropriation by men of this same reality, transforming it once again from the structures of the objective world into structures of the subjective consciousness (p. 29).

Stated more clearly, the three parts of the social construction of reality process start with 1.) actions or thoughts by a person, followed by 2.) an external reaction to these actions and thoughts, and concluded by 3.) what the person interprets this reaction to be (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Although sections of this process are objective actions, ultimately, reality is created subjectively.

It is helpful to illustrate this process through an example. A person may give a gift with an intention of congratulating a person on her upcoming birthday. This is an act of externalization that has the objective movement of the item from the hands of one person to another and the subjective intent inherent in the process of giving and sentiment related to the

person and her birthday. The objectivation would come from the reaction of the person receiving the gift or the actions of those around them. Physically taking the gift and speaking words would be an objective action, while the subjective would be in the meaning of the words thank you and identifying the movement of facial muscles as an accompanying smile. Internalization would come from the giver's internalization of this event as a positive one and the continued reinforcement that birthday gifts are an expected and pleasant action for such an occasion. During the internalization process there might be an objective reality wherein the giver's body releases hormones associated with a pleasant feeling, but most of this final step is subjective internal processing.

Between the immense framework of constructing a social reality and the micro-level construction of the individual, there is a unique characteristic to one-on-one interaction. Within the dialectical process both people begin the interaction with a specific role that they have internalized previously for themselves and for the other person, but there is a one-sided dynamic inherent to their ongoing knowledge of each other throughout the interaction. Berger and Luckmann (1967) explain:

It may be argued that the other in the face-to-face situation is more real to me than I am to myself. Of course I 'know myself better' than I can ever know him...But this 'better knowledge' of myself requires reflection...The other, however, *is* so appresented in the face-to-face scenario. (p. 29, emphasis in original).

During this interaction each person acts, externalizing words or behavior, and then receives feedback, or objectification, from the other person. These two steps happen before the person acting can reach the third stage of internalization, processing the reaction. Once both sides of the conversation have had an opportunity to internalize, processing and integrating the new

information into their existing understanding, the acting person will have updated their understanding of their own identity. However, in the interim, the second party will have received as much information about the other as they will ever receive, and so has an understanding of the other that the person has not yet had a chance to interpret about themselves. This process works in both directions: individuals not only build up their understanding from outside input but also take their history of interactions as a way of building up expectations about others and how they might behave. This knowledge is not completely objective as the interpretations of others is based on their previous social reality. This makes their process of learning selective and typified, wherein they may pick what they find more interesting about other people and ignore other aspects (Hunter & Ainlay, 1986, p. 15). However even limited by these expectations, the process of learning about others offers an important opportunity for change.

### **Locations and Groups**

Because of the interlocking relationship between reality and social interactions, physical location is important to how identity is formed and changed. When individuals are outside of their normal social world, they realize how much they rely on their understanding of the social reality that they know. Schütz (1970) explains, “The approaching stranger, however, becomes aware of the fact that an important element of his ‘thinking as usual,’ namely, his ideas of the foreign group, its cultural pattern, and its way of life, do not stand the test of vivid experience and social interaction” (p. 89). Changing a person’s perspective of the self may be accomplished not only by making changes to their behaviors, but also to the social mirror around them. Berger and Luckmann (1967) outline this process and the challenge inherent in it:

Alternation thus involves a reorganization of conversational apparatus. The partners in significant conversation change. And in conversation with the new significant others



subjective reality is transformed. It is maintained by continuing conversation with them, or within the community they represent...People and ideas that are discrepant with the new definitions of reality are systematically avoided. (p. 159)

To understand the connection between individuals and those around them, Bourdieu's (1992) concept of fields is a helpful delineation allowing us to locate individuals "relationally", because it looks at location being tied to sets of relationships oriented around an end such as cultural creation (p. 96). This is a way of organizing the positions of individuals with respect to various fields and beginning to explore how crossing fields both physically and relationally affects the individuals who do so. Physical location is related to social structures and these can be seen as similar concentric circles radiating out from a person, with each of the circles representing social controls such as class structures (Berger, 1963). Schütz (1970) uses the metaphor of a map, explaining that the standard orientation for a person is to put themselves at the center. When in a foreign setting however, the person is forced to realize that they are no longer at the center. At best, they are at the periphery inching in to participate. Over time the stranger is able to translate his own recipes to that of the new reality, but finds that their effectiveness and accuracy in comparison to the reality of the locals is unclear until time and experience increase the level of confidence in the translation.

On a macro scale, globalization is an ongoing competition between local and global—most often American—influences. Berger (2003) discusses James Hunter's concept of "parochial cosmopolitans", travelers who can move easily between cultures but who are untouched by them, instead remaining in their own specific bubble. Traveling to another location does not always mean that a person leaves affected by them. Lavie and Bruner (1996) both make an important distinction between diasporic zones, wherein a person is immersed entirely in the culture outside

their own, and “borderzones”, where two cultures come together and mix. Tourism is an example of a place where borderzones can seem deceptively diasporic. Often tourism is a means for someone from the West to intentionally encounter the Other, whom they avoid at home. “In *our* geography, the elite pay not to see the Other, keeping them distant or hidden, whereas in *their* geography, the Western elite pay for the privilege of viewing and photographing” (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996, p. 160, emphasis in original). Encounters are usually carefully staged by the people of the Third World, working to make maximum profit from the industry, while being careful not to outwardly modernize and decrease their touristic value (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996). In this way, it is clear that physical geography alone isn’t a means of change so much as the interactions with others that is caused by the movement.

Berger (2003) describes how people have control over the degree to which they integrate as they engage in “sacramental” and “non-sacramental” consumption of global culture. Sacramental consumption is that which is highly symbolic, consuming a particular food or dressing a particular way in order to signify that one is identifying with another group, while non-sacramental behaviors are not intended to carry such specifications. Actions that start as sacramental can transform into non-sacramental behaviors when they become more commonplace over time, a normalization that mirrors the social construction of self as the new becomes the incorporated. As an example of the opposite situation, for some of the students in this study clothing from home became a sacramental consumption as they first became aware of how their appearance identified them as American.

Deliberately entering into the challenges of joining a group outside our norm is described by Bourdieu (1977) as the “intentional transfer into the Other” (p. 82). Wacquant (2006), in his research becoming a boxer in South Side Chicago, described the ongoing conversations held in

the off-moments as “hidden curriculum” in which not only were explicit facts imparted to the new members, but also the living history, personal ethics, and style of expected behaviors (p. 40). Although in DeeDee’s gym explicit rankings were not used, there remained an underlying hierarchy that novice boxers worked to climb. It was within this system that all participants served to reinforce and propagate the social order. Wacquant (2006) explained:

The teaching of boxing at the Woodlawn Boys Club is a collective teaching in three respects: it is effected in a coordinated manner, within the group created by the synchronization of drills; it makes each participant a potential visual model, positive or negative, for all the others; and, finally, the most seasoned pugilists serve as so many assistance who relay, reinforce, and if need be substitute for the trainer’s seeming (in)action. In this way, whether he knows it or not, each boxer collaborates in the education of all the others. (p. 113)

Each person the field defined by this gym worked together to maintain roles and expectations, with their actions working to create the shared reality and behavioral expectations. As this example illustrates, language is an important tool for learning in a new field but it is not the only way.

### **Communication Beyond Language**

Although parts of Wacquant’s (2006) acquired boxing knowledge were explicitly spoken, most of the learned behaviors came from mimicking those around him and adjusting as he received feedback. “Every gesture, every posture of the pugilist’s body possesses an infinite number of specific properties that are minute and invisible to those who do not have the appropriate categories of perception and appreciation” (p. 117). This learning is at the level where habitus is ingrained in individuals. Though this process is often described as

“unconscious”, this simply means that the individuals involved have forgotten the how they came to these assumptions (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 78-79). Once homogenized into the field of these group settings, a member becomes comfortable and no longer needs to make intentional effort to behave as expected. The members are then “‘at home,’ that is, they find their bearings without difficulty in the common surroundings, guided by a set of recipes of more or less institutionalized habits, mores, folkways, etc., that help them come to terms with beings and fellow men belonging to the same situation” (Schütz, 1970, p. 82). In this way, travel offers an insight into the hidden social world present around individuals, and gives them an opportunity and the necessity to adapt to the new social reality.

Often study abroad students travel to a location where English is not widely spoken when they do not speak the local language and so are limited in their ability to learn through spoken explanations. Gilbert explains that affect theory is a highly embodied experience, the far corporal end of the scale from the field of cognition. Although affect includes emotion within its realm, it is not only emotion but also includes physical activities and wordless articulations (Gilbert, 2004). Affect is conveyed and experienced through bodily reactions, expressed in such automatic functions as breathing, the feel of the skin, and race of the pulse (Massumi, 1995). Affect spreads through the temporary coming together of pieces into an assemblage, a kind of “desiring machine” that binds and empowers that which is included (Gilbert, 2004, p. 15). An assemblage is a grouping of people, parts, objects, etc. that come together to form a temporary unity, a fictional fixed identity. An illusion of continuity forms, as the pieces move into place for a temporary formation that for the time of its existence appears to be a constant (Puar, Grewal, Kaplan, & Wiegman, 2007). By the joining of the pieces into the assemblage, emotions and

thoughts are able to merge and travel across the pieces, allowing for even complex concepts such as shame or racism to be conveyed wordlessly (Hemmings, 2005).

Affect theory is helpful for understanding study abroad in two areas. First, when traveling to a place where the student does not speak the local language it explains how an emotion and sense of place is conveyed. A feeling of awe might arise from being within a cathedral or excitement from a busy street, both wordless but impactful for the person who experiences them. This can also be viewed one step further, as the person becomes part of an assemblage within the location: the person and the place are one together with the emotion. The other important use of affect theory is how individuals within a group might have a shared emotion even without speaking. Although they may share the ability to speak, they do not necessarily do so at all times nor does the full experience come to be shared by their words. The shared experience in the place of awe or invigorating street makes for a shared experience that transcends language as the group becomes an assemblage together with the place around them, temporarily coming together.

With this foundation of social reality, the importance of interactions to shifts in a constructed reality, the role that physical location plays in the process, and communication on a level beyond language, I next look to three areas where previous research has and has not provided insight into identity formation during study abroad.

### **Identity for Study Abroad Students**

Students who are going to study abroad bring with them a social world of typified understandings about the world and their identity within it, as well as habitus for dealing with this reality. While they are abroad and after returning, students would act in a way consistent with an identity that they likely do not consciously realize they have constructed and then see reactions of others, receiving this objectivation feedback from those around them. This process

has the potential for three effects. First, for a person to leave their regular field and expected means of reinforcement for their identity, causes a significant disruption to their existing identity. Second, by interacting with new people who would interpret their behavior differently, a study abroad student would likely begin to internalize a whole new set of components to their identity. Finally, undergoing these processes may make the traveling student aware for the first time of their particular sense of identity, thereby giving them an insight into their reified life world and the recipes and roles within it that they have taken for granted. It is to the first of these effects that I turn now.

### **The Pluralized Identity**

The social construction of reality is a repeating process of creation and change. Individuals present their self to others, and use the reactions as input and guidance for future behaviors, shaping their sense of self over time. This is not an optional process—individuals need the mirror of the other to both construct a self and to interpret it. The shortcuts described by Bourdieu’s habitus, Schütz’s recipes, or Swidler’s toolkit function not only for day-to-day decisions, but are also the means for people to understand themselves and how they fit within society. These tools are the basis that people have for how they manage their lives, interact with others, and function within society. Hunter (1986) explains how these methods are not only directing but enabling action for people: “The unformed human being cannot cope fully with its environment; it has to be moulded by social forces. Social order transforms a biologically given world-openness into a socially given world-closedness” (p. 18). Again, this is not an optional process. Berger (1974) explains the necessity:

The most obvious [burden] is that most individuals do not know how to construct a universe and become furiously frustrated when they are faced with a need to do so. The

most fundamental function of institutions is probably to protect the individual from having to make too many choices. [...] Social life abhors a vacuum, probably for profound anthropological reasons. Human beings are not capable of tolerating the continuous uncertainty (or, if you will, freedom) of existing without institutional supports. (p. 187)

Further, this process must be continuous or individuals face a breakdown in their understanding of self and the world around themselves. Berger and Luckmann (1967) emphasize that continuous conversational reinforcement is critical to this process because “disruptions of continuity or consistency ipso facto posit a threat to the subjective reality in question” (p. 154). In a worst-case scenario, interruptions in reinforcement can lead to doubt of that socially constructed reality. Berger and Luckmann (1967) posit, “If such conversation is disrupted, the world begins to totter, to lose its subjective plausibility. In other words, the subjective reality of the world hangs on the thin thread of conversation” (p. 17). A person suddenly treated as a convict may at first try to protest their innocence, but then to their dismay find that they are in fact behaving as a convict (Berger, 1963). Since the social being is both built and maintained by these social interactions, leaving their existing social network is thus a way of disrupting their existing sense of self-identity.

The modern pluralized identity does have a different relationship with this disruption, one inherently tied to globalization. The change from a settled life to one of movement and constant communication means that our idea of identity needs to change to fit this new situation (Hall & Gay, 1996). Social reality is rapidly changing from one that was largely isolated in particular towns or cities to one that flows between areas across the globe via planes, phones, or the internet. Even in a local setting, cities are often filled with urbanity, a pluralism of life worlds

that individuals pass between as they travel from home to work, from shopping to entertainment venues, and across a varied collection of mediums of mass communication (Berger & Zijderveld, 2010). Berger, Berger, and Kellner (1974) explain:

Modern identity is peculiarly differentiated. Because of the plurality of social worlds in modern society, the structures of each particular world are experienced as relatively unstable and unreliable. The individual in most pre-modern societies lives in a world that is much more coherent. It therefore appears to him as firm and possibly inevitable. By contrast, the modern individual's experience of a plurality of social worlds relativises every one of them. (p. 77)

As a result, people are often socialized from a young age to view these varied life worlds, with differing rules, meanings, and expectations, to be a relatively normal experience. Younger generations may grow up having an uncertain life-world from childhood. Berger, Berger and Kellner (1974) further describe this phenomenon, "In many cases, pluralization has even entered in the processes of primary socialization, that is, into those processes of childhood in which the very basic formation of self and the subjective world take place...Indeed it may be said that such individuals have never possessed and integrated and unchallenged 'home world'" (p. 68). As a result, while individuals still rely completely on their habitus and social reinforcement, they might be more prepared today than they would have been previously to undergo the challenge of rewriting their recipes and adjusting how they view their identity contextually.

### **An American Self**

Within study abroad, there are only a few case studies that look at the question of how study abroad students see themselves and how they change while abroad and each of these studies tied into the concept of an American self. For students who took part in a study abroad



program in Australia, their time abroad was the first time that they identified themselves as being specifically American (Dolby, 2004). Only by encountering a differing cultural setting, did the individuals realize their own assumptions about social reality were anything other than universal. Dolby (2004) explained their biggest surprise: “This ‘encounter with an American self’ is the most significant component of these students’ experiences in Australia” (p. 151). While in Australia they wrestled with discovering the existence of this American self-identity, realizing that the Australians had their own idea of what being an American meant and distinguishing that outside expectation from what they came to realize were their own ideas of this identity. “Instead, they encounter a post-national reality, in which “American-ness” is constructed (or authored) as much outside, as inside, the physical borders of the state” (Dolby, 2004, p. 162). This meant that they had come to realize that the idea of an American self was not entirely self-built even in the US, but that the ideas of what an American is partially were built by the interactions between Americans and people from other countries. American students had a variety of reactions to this, with some finding themselves distressed by the idea that their American identity is influenced by those outside their country and outside their control. In some cases students responded by being more aggressively and outwardly American, starting debates with people from other countries over American politics and military actions. Other students responded thoughtfully, expanding their expectation of what an American identity could include and came to adding the perspective of those they met abroad to their understanding of an American self.

In 2010, a group of students traveled to Ireland as part of a faculty-led program (Jewett, 2010). Two of the students described being part Irish as an important part of their identity and had decided to take part in their program to discover their heritage. The larger group of students

had thought the American ideal of multiculturalism to be a universal truth. As travelers they were left with a mixture of overlapping diasporic ties and struggled with the concepts of *self* and *other*, for the first time recognizing that what they thought about themselves was not what others might think. The students with Irish heritage struggled with reconciling the difference between an Irish-American identity and how people in Ireland did not see them as Irish. Additionally, they encountered resistance to the idea of the United States as a place that is unreservedly multicultural, and gained a new insight on how immigration can lead to conflict on both the sending and receiving side of the population movement.

A more recent study looked at the experiences of eight students studying for five months in China (Tian & Lowe, 2014). Working from a theoretical framework focused on cultural identity seen as constructed through an ongoing process of social interactions, the students were seen to have changed through four stages of development: “(a) predeparture perceptions of China, (b) encountering others, (c) adapting, and (d) intercultural identity emergence” (Tian & Lowe, 2014, p. 286). In the first stage students had a limited understanding of China, mostly formed by inaccurate or partial information picked up in passing, and in the second stage their initial interactions with the culture through class and social interactions in some ways reinforced the divide between the students and China as a monolithic other. Many of the students eventually reached the fourth point of adapting wherein they started to get to know locals and began to identify with them as individuals. Those students who started to reach the last stage of developing an intercultural identity had begun to release their need to hold America as superior, while simultaneously recognizing the uniqueness of people across cultural backgrounds. The role of stress in the face of the unknown as a catalyst for these identity changes was emphasized, with

the limitations of personal development coming primarily from students being sheltered from too much stress by being housed together with other supporting international students.

These studies explored a wide variety of topics within the area of identity, the re-entry experience, and the encounter with an American self in Australia, Ireland, and China. However although these studies offer some insight into the effect of study abroad on identity formation, they only partially answer the fundamental question of how students see themselves and how their complex social interactions both at home and abroad have brought about these changes.

### **A Study Abroad Self**

Identity is a complex concept, one that is heavily tied to the people and place that surround a person. When people travel abroad, they have the opportunity to learn new things and interact with new people. These new experiences and social ties lead to ongoing changes in their sense of a social reality and result in a new idea of their identity. After they return to their home, interactions with their friends and family are different as a result of changes in the study abroad student and the passage of time. Understanding how these experiences and interactions come together to shape students' senses of identity requires a careful look at each part of the social construction of reality: the baseline assumptions about a person's identity; interactions before, during, and after the program abroad; and how students interpret this feedback. For some, their sense of self may shift or change as a part of these interactions. Other identities, such being American, may already exist but are not easily recognized until a student leaves their home field and can see these assumptions in a new location. Though looking at each of these aspects in context, the research outlined in this thesis thus explores how study abroad students' experiences affect their sense of identity and whether there is a study abroad self that emerges.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

The research questions of how study abroad affected the students' sense of identity and how their relationships before, during and after the program affected this change are complex ones. Since a person's sense of identity is formed by the social process, it is important to consider that identity and the process of shaping it within a specific time and historical context (Hall & Gay, 1996, p. 4). Qualitative research offers both the opportunity to explore the context in greater depth than quantitative research and allows for new avenues within the research questions to develop as the data is gathered and during the analysis process (Charmaz, 2006). Having selected qualitative methods for my study design, I collected data from students in a faculty-led program at North Dakota State University in two segments, before and after the program. In each portion, I conducted interviews and collected written responses to questions to further add an opportunity for complex responses. The depth of data enabled me to analyze how their individual relationships outside of the program combined with shared group interactions other affect these changes. This chapter provides details on the participants, the data collection process, and the analysis process.

### **Participants**

To research this topic, I worked with a study abroad course offered at North Dakota State University. This was a business faculty-led program, in which a faculty member from NDSU traveled with a group of students from NDSU for the full five weeks that they were abroad in Europe. With the support of the instructor, I invited the 12 students enrolled in the study abroad program to take part in the research project. Students were offered the option of either taking part in this study or completing an alternate writing project for 20% of their grade in one class. All 12 of the students chose to take part in all aspects of the study.

Throughout this thesis I refer to the students by pseudonyms: Andrew, Betty, Charles, Dale, Edith, Foster, Garrett, Harry, Ivy, Jimmy, Kayla, and Lee. The professor is referred to as Dr. Miller. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the participants' details.

Table 1

*List of Study Abroad Program Participants*

Pseudonym	Previous International Travel	Gender	Major
Andrew	Yes	M	Business-related
Betty	Yes	F	Business-related
Charles	No	M	Business-related
Dale	Yes	M	Business-related
Edith	No	F	Business-related
Foster	No	M	Engineering
Garrett	No	M	Business-related
Harry	Yes	M	Business-related
Ivy	No	F	Business-related
Jimmy	No	M	Business-related
Kayla	No	F	Business-related
Lee	No	M	Business-related
Dr. Miller		M	Business Professor

Additionally 11 of the students were ethnically white students from the region near this university. The other student was an international student who had been studying in the United

States for five years before participating in the program. To maintain privacy of this student's identity throughout the analysis, quoted comments related to his or her perspective as an international student will be designated as such and other observations will be named using the pseudonym.

### **Research Design and Timeline**

The research project was structured with two sets of data gathered two different times during the fall 2014 semester. Both a written portion and an interview were collected before the study abroad experience and again five weeks after the conclusion of the study abroad program. The intent of the dual data format was to better allow thoughtful participation from those with different learning styles and help to identify responses that would be consistent or changing over time.

The timing of this research project was heavily tied to the timing of the study abroad program. This particular business study abroad program is set up with a 5-5-5 model, wherein the students spent five weeks taking classes on campus, five weeks abroad in Europe during the dates September 19 to October 22, 2014, and five weeks back on campus through the end of the semester. The proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in late August to allow time to contact students before departure, and IRB approval was received on Friday, August 23, 2014. On Wednesday, September 3, 2014, I attended one of the pre-departure orientation sessions that took place at the start of the semester and introduced myself and the project using an approved script (See Appendix A). At this meeting, students were given the option of participating, and all students completed the Informed Consent Form. Afterwards, students were contacted individually by email to give them a digital copy of their signed Informed Consent Form. Through this communication, I also made arrangements with each

student to complete a short survey (See Appendix B), as well set up a time for the in-person interview (See Appendix C) before their departure. After the program return, I contacted each at the end of November with the follow-up short writing portion (See Appendix D) and set up an interview time (See Appendix E) during the first and second weeks of December. Coming to an understanding of what a study abroad program means to each student is likely a lifelong process, but collecting four sets of data at two different times this study was designed to strike a balance between the experience being fresh in the students' minds and allowing them time to reflect on their experiences as well as communicate with friends and family back home.

The questions were developed based on the literature, with the interest in finding where relationships between people caused shifts in identity. Both the before and after interviews were broken into two segments. The first section was focused on the question of identity and asked students to name three words to describe them from their own perspective, from that of their friends, from that of their parents, and, in the after interview, from the perspective of locals in Europe. The second segment focused more on specific questions about expectations and experiences related to the program and interactions with others. Depending on how in-depth each student's responses were, pre-departure interviews lasted 11-26 minutes and post-program interviews lasted 23-42 minutes. Post-program interviews were longer because of an increased number of questions, student excitement for talking about their experiences, and increased comfort in talking with me. Each student who participated volunteered between 35 and 68 minutes of their time in total for interviews.

It was useful to watch for statements of note from responses before the program that were worth following up on afterwards (Charmaz, 2006; H. J. Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Examples of this included specific thoughts on what might happen on the study abroad program and specific

relationships that contributed to or detracted from their decision to study abroad. In order to do this, I listened to each of the pre-program interviews again the day before conducting the post-program interview. These follow-up questions were asked as a secondary question to the main interview schedule, allowing for participants to first shape their own responses before being prompted in a particular direction. The intent of this structure was to minimize interviewer-directed bias, while promoting a more in-depth exploration of social groups that have affected them.

Throughout the data collection process making participation as easy and comfortable as possible for students was an important aspect of maintaining respect for them as people (Charmaz, 2006; H. J. Rubin & Rubin, 2011). For each of the interviews, I invited the students to select a location that would be most convenient to them. I predicted and did find that there was much more interest in conducting the interviews in Barry Hall in downtown Fargo because the courses that students were taking were hosted in this location. I was able to reserve a second floor conference room for most of the interviews in this building. All but four of the interviews were conducted in Barry Hall, and the remainder took place in my office in the Memorial Union on the main campus.

During the interviews, I used an iPad as a recorder via the Audio Memos app. In my disclosure at the beginning, I explained that I was recording the interview using the iPad. At the start of the interview the screen was on displaying a sound meter, but after 20 minutes the screen locked, switching to a blank and unthreatening face. The commonness of this technology meant that participants were quickly put at ease about being recorded. I have noticed that interviewees only looked at the iPad when I did so, allowing both me and the participant to keep our attention on the conversation rather than focusing on the instrument.



The written portion was designed to allow students to reflect on how they identify themselves before and after the program. The use of a separate questionnaire offered an opportunity to check for differences between how students present themselves when given time to write and when asked a question in an interview (Charmaz, 2006, p. 36). When designing questions on identity, Caughey (2006) recommends using open statements such as “I Am...”, “I am a...”, “I am a person who...” and “I am not a...” to help participants more easily describe themselves. His methodology predicts that respondents would respond using words highly dependent on their home cultures, with a deep and unstated meaning that comes from those assumptions, and that they would be less likely to describe themselves in ways that are considered standard and be more likely to define themselves in terms that they see as differing from the norm. Caughey explains, “Many U.S. citizens do not note the fundamental fact that they are ‘American’ unless they are living abroad or currently caught up in an international situation that emphasizes nationality,” (Caughey, 2006, p. 47), an observation that was valuable to watch for in the post-program responses. This prediction mirrors Dolby’s (2004) research on students coming to recognize their American self while in Australia, an emergent identity that was expected to be reported by students and, as will be discussed, was discovered to be a major theme in student responses.

### **Addressing Researcher Bias**

Since this topic of research is inspired by my personal experiences as a study abroad student and in working with students who study abroad regularly, it was important that the research be designed to avoid researcher bias as much as possible (Maxwell, 2012). My expectations were that students would be likely to mention that their decision to study abroad had been related to knowing someone who had studied abroad, that they would indicate an

increased sense of independence and desire to travel in the future, and that they would believe they had gained more understanding of the world and themselves.

Validity tests this research was designed to include 1.) moderately long-term involvement, with interviews taking place on two different times and separately timed written projects; 2.) rich data collected from in-person interviews, including questions designed to draw out responses related to the topic from a variety of directions; 3.) searching for negative examples that highlight differences between individuals and experiences; and 4.) triangulation by utilizing two forms of data collection for this project (Maxwell, 2012). Even with these methods however it is clear that the results of this study are an in-depth understanding of specifically the participants in this program in this place and time, and needed to be evaluated as such. The study participants took part in the same program together and so some aspects of the program were controlled, but they came from varying locations throughout North Dakota and Minnesota and did have some differing experiences in their free time abroad. Additionally, the similarities in their experience may limit the more general applicability of the study. In the long-term, this study would be best followed up by additional qualitative research projects with different groups or quantitative research aimed at identifying if the identified themes are present for other study abroad students (Maxwell, 2012, p. 129).

It is also important to identify what these research questions do not attempt to answer. First, the proposed research did not analyze the accuracy of the beliefs about their identities. It is possible that students may believe that they can travel the world without assistance, but would not in practice find themselves able to do so. Second, this research focused on the intrapersonal development, and dimensions of interpersonal and cognitive development were analyzed only in the context of how they affect the interpersonal development. Lastly, there was no attempt made

to identify a fixed or long-term identity for these students. Due to the ongoing nature of identity, this research focused on what students perceive as their identity shortly after their return from abroad. A longer study that utilizes interviews over a period of years and encompasses students from a wide variety of programs, times, and study abroad locations would be an area for future study and hold the potential for an even more nuanced understanding.

### **Ethics**

The ethical issues with this research were not as pronounced as they may be with other projects, but it was still important to be aware of them so as not to take advantage of the students who were participating in the study. There were potential issues before, during, and after the study abroad program. In the initial recruitment phase, I was careful to be clear that participation is on a strictly volunteer basis and that if a student did not want to take part they were welcome to complete an alternative assignment for their class. Although I am a staff member in the Office of International Student and Study Abroad Services and my title is Study Abroad Advisor, I did not directly work with the faculty-led programs and had no oversight of their program logistics.

During the interviews, I did not expect significant discomfort to any questions asked because the students are all adults, and the questions are self-reflective and generally not about a painful topic. However, there was always the possibility that a question could have touched on an emotional topic that I could not predict. Throughout the questions, I looked for examples of discomfort and only encountered mild symptoms. These emotions were primarily related to some personality differences that emerged between a few of the students, which will be discussed more in the analysis section.

Additionally, I wonder if participation in the study had an affect on the students' experience on the study abroad trip. By being asked questions related to identity, they may have

changed their expectations or reflections of the experience. Although my questions were formulated to be as neutral as possible, the phrasing of questions could have lead them to think about the program in a certain way. The effect was not necessarily negative, as several students indicated that they found the topic interesting and that they had enjoyed participating in the project. I did also ask two students in passing if they had asked each other questions about what three words they would use to describe each other, but was told that they had not discussed the questions or content of the interviews beyond mentioning that they were easy to complete.

### **Analysis**

After the interviews were completed in early December, consideration of the data started with transcription of the 24 interviews, and then the document was analyzed using coding on a line-by-line basis (Charmaz, 2006). In line with the research questions, the focus was on finding rich descriptions of how the students described themselves before and after their program, as well as how they thought the other students, their family and friends, and those they met abroad viewed them. Initially, I started with a handful of simple codes based on the previous literature and Caughey's (2006) description of likely responses to descriptive identity questions, and additional codes emerged through the coding process. After one pass of coding, I had identified a total of thirty codes, so I grouped the individual codes into six larger categories: 1) expectations, 2) what it means to be or not be American, 3) relationships to others, 4) being open-minded and non-judgmental, 5) business education, and 6) discomfort and growth. Table 2 on page 39 provides a breakdown of the primary and secondary codes. I then did a second pass through the interview text to identify text that was missed in the first round of coding due to the developing nature of the codes during the first round.

Throughout this process, I focused on looking for assumptions that the students held before they went abroad that they then later identified as having held, and changes that they might not have realized they had made. The analysis focused on finding similarities between the different students' observations and also identifying notable outliers in order to identify themes and differences in the students' experiences.

Table 2

*List of Codes Used in Analysis*

Primary Code	Secondary Code
Expectations	Constantly moving/planned for you More than expected This was my only chance Been abroad before Don't want to miss out
What it means to be or not be American	What it means to be American Not like others Dr. Miller said Fun Well-behaved/respectful
Relationships to others	Connection to others (specific) Meeting people (general) Did not meet people Jealousy Supportive Talk about experience a lot/enthusiasm Division within group
Being open-minded and non-judgmental	Change perspective/open eyes Open-minded/non-judgmental
Business education	Future plans Business class/learning
Discomfort and growth	Independent Bravery/confidence/pride Going outside comfort zone Money troubles Appreciation Can't explain or articulate Frustration/discomfort/negative External changes No changes

## CHAPTER 4. EXPERIENCES AND DISCOVERIES

Studying abroad was an opportunity for these students to recognize identities that they already held, such as being an American, and to wrestle with what control they could exercise over these identities. In our modern world, they already had extensive experience with switching between roles as they interacted with a wide variety of people and settings in person and online, but stepping out of their previous fields into a new and unknown setting highlighted how relationships with family, friends, and other students create and sustain these identities. These insights came together as students worked to craft an identity as a study abroad student, starting with expectations before the program, catalyzed through points of discomfort abroad, and then transitioning into not only a variety of interpretations of a study abroad self but also an opportunity to craft this identity as ongoing process in the future.

The analysis here is structured to outline three sets of findings in parallel to with the conceptual framework of Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality (1967). Each area showed one aspect of student identity broken into the three-part construction process: 1.) externalization, when individuals express their understanding of themselves through thoughts and behaviors before their time abroad; 2.) objectivation, or the reactions and feedback that the students received after the expression of their identity; and 3.) internalization, or how the study abroad students have come to interpret that new information about the perceptions of their identity at the time of the second interview. Additionally, habitus, the complex matrix of preexisting understandings and behaviors that people use as tools in day to day life (Bourdieu, 1977), is discussed throughout, because it forms an important bridge between how the individuals see themselves and how their identities are expressed through action. Finally, each

section also looks forward at the challenges inherent in understanding identity and how students worked to use the tools available to them to define their own personal sense of identity.

### **Negotiating an American Self**

The American self as an identity is the one most often seen in the previous research, and looking at this identity offers an opportunity to look at whether interactions with others did affect their sense of self. Although only some of the students described an American self before taking part, this identity quickly developed over the course of the program through interactions with the program leader, Dr. Miller, and increased in complexity while abroad as a result of some limited contact with locals. Finally, I found that while the students did not have continual opportunities to speak with locals, they used their appearance as a means of negotiating what being American meant on an individual basis and that these differences persisted after their return from the program.

Much of the research on identity for study abroad students focused on the American self. Jewett (2010), Dolby (2004) and Tian and Lowe (2014) found that for their study abroad students the existence of an American identity that was not necessarily defined by Americans was one of the key discoveries of their students while studying abroad. For these students, an American identity included what it meant to be American based on pre-existing expectations and behaviors from within the U.S. that were understood differently while they were abroad. The students' habitus, such as how they dressed, spoke, and generally interacted with others, had developed within the context of the U.S. and only when surrounded by different behavioral norms and assumptions did they come to realize that their behaviors were not universally seen the same way.



In the context of these previous findings, I expected an American self to be integral to the identity development for this group of students as well but I was surprised to find before the program there were a few mentions of the idea of an American and that they had more complexity than I had expected. Charles wrote, “I hope I give off the opposite vibe of the typical ‘loud American’” and Dale wrote, “I think [the descriptors I picked for myself] could mean something different to others if they already have a negative view toward Americans. If I could do something to make others change this negative image, that would mean a lot to me.”

Although the only specific description the students listed was loud, their idea of what it meant to be seen as an American was unpleasant enough that they wanted to distance themselves if possible. Along similar lines, Edith pondered the possible challenges of being an American abroad. She wrote that being seen as quiet and nice would contrast with the American stereotype: “I’m hoping it will be to my advantage, since I usually hear the American stereotype is loud and obnoxious. Being the opposite might help” (pre-departure writing). She also mentioned as one of her potential challenges:

Maybe people not wanting to deal with Americans...? [...T]hen also like people's opinions of Americans and how they, I don't know, I hope they like us. [...] And also how people deal with tourists. I know notoriously in Paris they don't like tourists, stuff like that. (Edith, pre-departure interview)

Edith showed a more developed image of what it might mean to be seen as American as she had not only an idea of the image of an American and how her personality contrasted with this stereotype, but also a clear example of where and when she might encounter the challenges she perceived as associated with it.

More generally, Lee recognized that he would find differences between what Americans do and what people in other parts of the world do: “I'm sure there are lots of things that Americans do very...odd. You know? We think it's normal. So, I think that's going to be very interesting just to see how other, other cultures do stuff like that” (pre-departure interview). This comment demonstrated that he had an awareness of how behaviors and a person's understanding of those behaviors can be contextual to locations and the people there. Later when asked about challenges, Lee wrestled with his pride in being an American and his desire to not stand out abroad because of it:

I guess trying to, well, you know, when you're there you don't want to act, you kind of want to act like them, I mean, you still want to be...like I, I don't want to go there and be like trying to hide the fact that I'm an American but at the same time you don't want to be like sticking out and stuff. [...] So, you know, there's that certain middle ground where it's like, you know, try to fit in with them but at the same time, you know, don't, you know, I mean, I'm an American. I'm proud of that, so you know.... (pre-departure interview)

He went on to explain that he did not want people in Europe to think, “‘oh, look at that obnoxious American over there’ or something, you know?” (pre-departure interview).

In all of these cases the students had a nebulous idea of what being an American might mean in the European context, and how it might impact how people would perceive them abroad. They were wrestling with how their own actions might affect these perceptions of themselves, and also the larger stereotypes of Americans for those people with whom they might interact. To look at how the expectations for these students came to match up with their interactions, I look next at one source of their American self.

## **The Lens of the Leader**

Students taking part in this program frequently mentioned observations by their program leader, Dr. Miller. These comments had clearly set some of their expectations and became a lens through which the students interpreted the world around them. Andrew explained that locals seemed to find the Americans friendly and outgoing, which matched with what he had heard before going:

[My study abroad experience was] kind of what I expected because that's kind of what Dr. Miller told us was going to happen. 'Cause I mean, he's been over there more than he can probably count himself, so he was able to kind of give us the expectation of what we should like, what we should see when we go over there kind of thing. (post-program interview)

Multiple students mentioned also how Dr. Miller's guidance helped them to enjoy the program. When asked what had been easiest about studying abroad, Edith explained that relying on the program leader meant she did not have to make decisions. This offered her the opportunity to experience the program without having to plan it before or during:

Dr. Miller would tell us what to do, and I wouldn't have to make decisions. I'm so indecisive that it's nice for someone to say you either do this or this or just come here at this time. That was the best part for sure. Here's your plane ticket. Thank you. (post-program interview)

On the other hand, Harry, who had traveled abroad previously, brought some suspicion of locals to his time abroad in part because of safety warnings during pre-departure sessions:

Paris really sticks out to me because, of [...] all the theft there. I mean you can see, when you can pick out the people that were there, and maybe it was me [...]. I'm pretty

observant and I could just pick out people that were more of the sketchy character and would be more likely to do something, like steal something from you, than anything else. [T]hat's probably just because of what Dr. Miller told me [that] I was expecting that Paris was to be like. (post-program interview)

Although Harry might have noticed potential thieves regardless of whether he had been warned, how he interpreted those behaviors might have been completely different without the input from Dr. Miller.

This fits within the model outlined as Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality (1967), which explains that the existing perception of the students' reality would interact with reactions of those around them to either reinforce their existing ideas of that reality or to conflict with them and cause change. Another example demonstrates how habitus was constructed around, and in recognition of aspects of the American identity. The qualities of loudness and obnoxiousness emerged in many of the students' discussions as the students started to think about differently as a result of Dr. Miller's comments. Kayla explained how she compared their group with the behavior of the locals around them:

K: Well, we were a lot louder than they were. So I think they might hate us for that but... [...] I don't think we were that obnoxious as a group but...describe us? We're just louder in general. I don't really know what else.

D: Yeah. Is that different from what you would have expected? Or is that kind of what you would have thought?

K: Um, kind of what Dr. Miller prepared us for, but that's about it. (post-program interview)

Their existing habitus of speaking loudly was something that Kayla noticed in large part because

of the framing from the program leader, and as a result she had started to consider their behavior and whether it might be seen as obnoxious by locals.

These individual behaviors at some point became linked together into the concept of the *ugly American*, at least in part because of a comment by the program leader during the program. Garrett mentioned this when asked if he had changed while abroad: “I pretty much stayed who I am and kept my same personality but I always kept in mind not to be an ‘ugly American’ like Dr. Miller told us not to” (post-program interview). Garrett’s comment shows that he does not see those behaviors as a required part of his identity as an American so much as a potential role within that identity, and that by thinking about his actions he worked to avoid these negative aspects. Jimmy also mentioned the specter of the ugly American, implying that the phrase had been used to encourage him to think about his behavior differently from that point going forward. Jimmy described his change in behavior, “After Dr. Miller told us not to be ‘ugly Americans’ I was very careful what I said and how I acted in public” (post-program writing). Neither Garrett nor Jimmy had mentioned an identity as an American before taking part in the program, but after receiving that objectivation in the form of a warning from their program leader, they had started to internalize the ugly American concept into their identity. As a result they had reassessed their behavior in an attempt to disassociate themselves from that set of negatively perceived habitus.

Several students also tried to distance themselves from the ugly American. Charles had been one of the students who had mentioned that he wanted to avoid being a “loud American” (pre-departure writing), and after the program he felt that he had done so:

I guess the [...] the ugly American idea or image that they have you can kind of see within the group like how it gets. And I was, I was always on the opposite side of that. I

was the one noticing, we're really loud. [...] You have to be aware of your surroundings and know where you're at and what you're doing. (post-program interview)

Not only had he tried to separate himself from the ugly American, he had taken on a role of trying to separate the other students from these behaviors as well.

Other concrete behaviors mentioned by Dr. Miller came up as ways that students adjusted their behavior abroad. Betty described one way related to bus etiquette, “We were tried not to talk loud[ly] and put our feet on the seats” (post-program interview). In answer to the question of how Belgians would have perceived him, Jimmy described keeping his feet off the seats as a way he demonstrated his respectful identity:

Dr. Miller told us all about like stuff from, “don't put your feet up on the seats”, [...] how [...] their lifestyle is different than ours, [to] where we might see things as like normal and they think it's like rude. So they'd probably just think I'm respectful to just respect their environment and [...] how their society works compared to ours and kind of adapt to their lifestyles. (post-program interview)

Of course having a certain behavior suggested did not always result in students following the recommendation. Jimmy explained:

J: Well, we told them but I know Dr. Miller was like don't tell anybody you're a study abroad student. Tell them you're travelers or whatever, but...

D: Yup. But you still told them?

J: Yeah, we were just like we're a student. We're studying over here. (post-program interview)

This comment indicates that the students only followed the advice of Dr. Miller when they felt it important. The students did not feel shame in associating themselves with the identity of being a student the way that they did with being an ugly American.

The students who took part in this program had used the lens of the leader as way of understanding their experiences abroad and understanding what their own behavior meant in the European context. Within this struggle to understand, they confronted the ugly American, an identity built from their understanding of behaviors such as being loud, obnoxious, and putting their feet on bus seats. Because they had come to see these behaviors as negatively perceived by the Europeans, the identity of the ugly American became one from which many of the students worked to distance themselves. That this identity was fixed in their minds is clear, but whether this idea accurately reflected the perceptions of the locals in Europe is an important question to which I turn to next.

### **Relationships Abroad**

The most obvious opportunity for challenges to the students' identities while abroad was through interactions with locals. Therefore in order to investigate these relationships, I asked each student:

- Did you get to know any locals while you on the program?
- How did you meet them?
- Did they know you were a study abroad student?
- What do you think they thought of you and the program?

These questions were intended to look for examples of those intercultural interactions and hopefully provide some insight into how they had impacted the students.

Students largely responded that they had limited contact with locals and that primarily

their interactions with locals had been in a formal educational setting. Ivy explained:

Well, our teacher [in Belgium], we got to know him, seen him every couple days so, for a couple hours. Not like super well but [we] got to know him a little bit better than other people. Um, met him through class obviously. Um...I'm trying to think.... We didn't really meet a lot of people. There was like people that that'd you'd meet, that you'd talk to for a couple minutes and then that'd be it. [...] Some of the people were people from the trains, [...] people around would like sometimes join in on your conversation, or stuff like that.

(post-program interview)

The interactions with the locals within an educational setting were primarily focused on specific business-related knowledge. Harry mentioned the tour guide for the diamond district in Amsterdam as being one of the locals he had gotten to know the most because she had been nice and had answered many questions about the diamond market there. He commented that her impression of the group as a whole was that “[She] thought we were stupid” (post-program interview), because Americans do not produce or mine diamonds and so they lacked an understanding of the mechanics of the diamond trade and the complexity of options within it.

Betty and Charles mentioned the bus driver in Ireland as being a meaningful connection. The driver had worked with international travelers for many years and had visited Texas previously, so both students seemed to give his opinion of their group more weight. Betty described what she thought his evaluation of the group had been:

I think he thought that we're a really good group of students and he [said] he has driven Saudi Arabian people, he's driven people from Russia, and like all over the world and he has traveled many, many places and [...] he really appreciate[d] our group and he thought



[...] we're being very good students and didn't cause much troubles. (post-program interview)

Charles thought the driver had fun with them, and noted that their good behavior had meant he did not have any issues with them. In both cases, the two students had seen their good relation with the driver being tied primarily to how well they behaved on the bus, perhaps a reflection of their desire to distance themselves from the ugly American stereotype.

The students did have social interactions with locals, but they were usually short and limited in nature. Garrett described these interactions:

[A] few times when we go out to bars and whatnot you just talk to random people, but it's not like I got to know them on a personal level. It was just kind of [...] side chat, yeah. So short talks like that and I did meet a few Belgian girls and whatnot but [...] at the university, just randomly strike up a conversation, but of course first thing I have to ask is do you speak English? But most people I under the age of 30 do speak some, depending on how fluent they are. But, um, yeah, I mean no close [...] friendships at all, but just side chat. (post-program interview)

Since the program involved extensive and frequent travel, the students did not have the opportunity to make closer friends over time. Instead, they got to know people in passing, using their activities and context as basis for communication. Edith described her interactions:

So people would sometimes even just come up to you and talk to you. Or, you know, it wasn't hard to talk to them either if you're just sitting at the bar or [...] maybe you're even in the grocery store and someone's next to you and you see something on the shelf. It's in French and you're really not sure what it says, [...] maybe you're looking for ham and

cheese to make a sandwich. You can ask someone and you might just start up a conversation that way. (post-program interview)

Although there might have been some insight into the student identities in these smaller interaction, there was not anything memorable enough for students to recall when asked.

One longer conversation was notable because it was mentioned by four students: Foster, Ivy, Kayla, and Lee. The conversation had taken place on the ferry ride from Athens to Santorini and was with two women from Switzerland who were slightly younger than the group. There was debate about the length of the conversation as Foster had described the conversation lasting for three or four hours, while Ivy had either taken part in only part of the conversation or remembered differently:

I guess we talked to them for probably a good hour or so on the boat and, um, they didn't know [about our program]. They were like, “so you're just over here with your teacher? Like this is what you do?” And we're like, “yeah.” [...T]hey thought that was different. [T]hey didn't seem like they heard of that that often to do ‘cause I guess their school's different. They get a couple weeks off every couple months or something so that's what they were doing around their couple weeks. [...] But they didn't really hear about study abroad, so they thought that was really interesting. They were surprised that the group of twelve kids were over with their teacher, traveling around and stuff like that. (post-program interview)

The four students who had talked with the Swiss women expressed pride in what being a part of what they felt was a unique opportunity to travel as an educational group, something the Europeans had heard of in other forms but not for such a large group for such a long time. The Swiss women also talked about their idea of Americans, which both Foster and Lee relayed.

Foster mentioned the description in passing as “Fat and lazy and [Americans] just do the most convenient thing possible and then they [...] were also people that said that the other image was the soccer mom, who was go go go and really fit” (post-program interview). Lee expanded on this description:

What was really interesting is we asked them what...how do they view Americans? You know, like what's their stereotype on Americans? And it was actually really funny because they said they have this view of [...] an overweight guy eating a hamburger from McDonald's, but then they also have this view of this fit mom working out, and eating healthy and stuff like that. And you know it's [...] two completely different ends of the spectrum... [...] And she said like they kinda have both views, you know, like oh, some people in America are like super unhealthy but then some people also really bought like fitness and stuff like that. (post-program interview)

These two ideas of what an American is to the Swiss women illustrate how the images that the students might hear back abroad does not match their expectations neatly. While there might have been some overlap between both of the descriptions of the ugly American stereotype, the locals did not include any of the descriptors they had listed such as being loud and obnoxious. In that way, their identities as an American were not simply reinforced or contradicted, but instead adjusted and shifted.

The limited contact with locals likely curtailed their opportunity to increase complexity in their idea of an American; the reasons for this limited contact were varied. First, it's notable that the language barrier did not come up as a significant issue. The only mention of language in this context was Garrett mentioning that most Belgians under the age of 30 speak English. Instead, one major challenge for students seemed to be their comfort with each other. Dale explained the

motivations for the group to stay together:

[W]hen it's only thirteen people that go, it's really not hard to get to know everybody who's there. And I think part of the reason that we all got to know each other really well is just because...I mean everyone else is different from us. When you're walking through another country, everyone else is different. And it's just easier [...] to talk to and get to know the people that you're with, and it was also a little bit of a, probably a sense of home too. (post-program interview)

By staying together the students felt they avoided discomfort inherent in interactions with locals, and at the same time they were able to solidify their group bond.

Moving another step beyond the question of comfort, some students expressed nervousness or fear. Kayla described two incidents that happened within the first two weeks of the program that affected her later likelihood of interacting with locals:

I'm a little bit more...scared, I don't know. [...] We ran into a crazy person in Belgium and he scared me so I was like, "I'm not going out by myself or anything like that." [...] He was just being... [laughs nervously] He's like talking to [Jimmy] and [...] it was me and five guys and he talked to me, and he was reading my sweatshirt...and...he was like, "this girl is no good for you guys" and saying that I was the devil and stuff, but he was whacked out on something. [...] But I was like "oh, my god, I'm scared he's going to stab all of us or something." But, 'cause we were in the more ghetto-y part of Belgium, so it was like...so I got a little bit more scared of...hm, it's just not something that I'm used to. (post-program interview)

She went on to talk about another incident that challenged her comfort zone:

[O]ne other guy, we were in the laundromat and he came in and he was talking about marijuana and alcohol and just popped open a beer and like right there. It says no beer and I was like people are a lot different there. So I was a little bit more “keep to myself”.  
(post-program interview)

These events were not mentioned by the other students who had been with Kayla, so the situations had a stronger impact on her than on them. This may have been due to a gendered difference in the fear response or other pre-existing expectations that led her to interpret the locals’ actions more significantly than the others.

Another student who expressed a limited interest in getting to know locals was Harry. He had traveled to Europe previously but in this case he explained his reasons for not getting to know people well:

I like to spend time by myself. So I don't really communicate [...]. I don't know the people there and I've been told mainly by Dr. Miller that you have to watch out for people that are going to steal stuff from you. So I didn't really make an extensive effort to try and get to know people over there. But I mean [...] from prior experience of when I went to Germany before, I know a lot of people there are nice. [...] So, I mean if I weren't doing anything maybe I would try and get to know some people but [...] the people that we did actually meet were really nice to talk to. (post-program interview)

During the students’ time abroad, they had limited contact with locals for a variety of reasons, including the structure of the program, discomfort with getting to know locals, comfort within the group, and fear. The one lengthy conversation that was mentioned by four students did offer some insight into their identity as an American, but it did not either confirm or deny their pre-existing idea of the ugly American so much as add more complexity. Even without verbal

discussion on their identity though, the students did engage in an ongoing negotiation of their identity through an important nonverbal means: fashion.

### **Appearances**

Fashion was mentioned repeatedly as a physical representation of the difference between the American students and locals, both from pre-departure warnings from Dr. Miller and from student observations while abroad. Charles discussed how those expectations matched up with what he saw in Europe:

Dr. Miller told us that there [...] they were really a stylish place and I didn't think that it'd be like that crazy but literally everyone is like...I don't understand it...it didn't make sense. [...] Like if I dress my best every single day maybe I can slip in and be unnoticed but not in the clothes I packed for five weeks across Europe. (post-program interview)

Charles felt that the way that the group dressed not only identified them as American, but also clearly demonstrated a difference in behaviors that he could not understand or fulfill:

Well, I think the Belgians thought we were pretty unstylish. [Laughs] 'Cause, I mean, [...] we all packed for not very heavily and it's all just like a lot of shorts and sneakers. And everyone there is just ridiculously stylish it seemed. All the old people, anyone, any age, every, oh, it was ridiculous. That was the most out of place that I think I was feeling, just 'cause [...] you stick out like a sore thumb wearing basketball shorts and a t-shirt. (post-program interview)

The fashion that had been selected for comfort at home in Europe had served as a marker of their outside status. With what the students had they did not have a way of overcoming this separation, leaving them clearly marked as Americans.

Clothing mattered more as a marker of being American to some students than others. Foster had not mentioned stereotypes of being American before going abroad, but after returning he talked extensively about the negative concept of an American in the context of behavior and fashion. When asked the questions of whether he changed his appearance or actions to fit in better with local community, Foster wrote, “Yes, I dressed the same, but I tried to be a little more quiet. Americans are a little louder compared to Europeans” (post-program interview). In response to the question of whether some of his identified characteristics are perceived differently abroad, Foster wrote, “I think they didn't think I would be so interested to get to know them. I also think I broke the mold Europeans put Americans in (the mold of loud, fat, and lazy)” (post-program writing). Recognizing these negative stereotypes and using them as a bridge to get to know people was one topic Foster had clearly given much thought:

Most of the people that I talked to there, they see Americans as lazy, overweight, and what was the third...? And like very poor dressed. Those are the three like big, big things that they mentioned. But then, you know, I would kind of tell them about me and I would be like I'm very studious. I'm very active...um, my dress was still subpar to their standards but at least for those two dimensions I think I kind of broke the mold of what they have like as an American in their head. (post-program interview)

In that way, Foster continued to demonstrate an American identity through dress because he had not felt that negative stereotype significant, while at the same time developing an identity that contrasted behaviorally with the ugly American.

For others fashion was a more important marker of identity. Before the program, Harry had theorized that he might adapt his choice of clothing while abroad to meet European style:

Oh, yeah, I think I will have changed. Um, maybe...I don't know, like I dress pretty casually now. [...] I dress for comfort rather than style. That might be one thing that changes a little bit. Um, just because I dress a lot nicer over there. So that might impact me a little bit. (pre-departure interview)

Afterwards, clothing choice was one of the two things that Harry identified as something his friends would have noticed about him as having changed:

I feel like I dress a little bit nicer now. I mean I bought some clothes over there and I had bought some before I went. [...] I mean if I go to those classes sometimes I dress a little nicer and sometimes I won't if I don't feel like, think about them. That's probably the biggest thing. I mean nobody's really commented about that. I mean...I mean, if anything, I might think a little bit more before I say anything. Just so I don't make people mad. I don't know. That's maybe the biggest difference I've noticed about myself. So, those two. (post-program interview)

In addition to feeling that he had become more thoughtful socially, Harry was adapting to the European fashion as a way to mark himself as having taking part in the program.

Garrett also took pride in how he was able to partially adapt:

They knew I was an American [...] but out of everyone, like myself out of the twelve total of us, like they all kind of joked around with me that I was the only one that fit into Europe because like the way I look, my haircut, and stuff like that. [...] I know, like most people, they would come up to me and start speaking Dutch [...] in Belgium, but I was like, oh, sorry English. [Laughs] [...] They thought I was Dutch. [...] It was kind of fun. (post-program interview)

Stereotypes of the American identity were something that Harry and Garrett were attempting to



defy. When asked what Europeans would have described him, Garrett responded, “Probably American. I had a typical American accent” (post-program interview). This showed that he recognized how the American identity defined him in one aspect. At the same time he said he did not fit with the typical Belgian perception of Americans: “[A] few people that I met, they go oh, wow, why aren't you like fat and huge and I'm like oh, not all of us are. So, there's that. Which is sad to think about” (Garrett, post-program interview). This quote implies that by dressing more fashionably Garrett was not attempting to disassociate himself from the American self so much as was attempting to shift the stereotypes about Americans to one that was less negative.

How people dressed was clearly an important marker of the American identity. Charles recognized that how he dressed exposed him as an American and felt uncomfortable with the attention but did not feel he had the means to change with the wardrobe he had with him. Foster, on the other hand, felt he defied negative stereotypes about Americans in other ways and so did not feel the need to change his outward appearance. Harry had enjoyed changing his outward appearance as a marker of having taken part, and Garrett took pride in using his own fashion as way of changing negative stereotypes about Americans in general. Fashion was not a simple American identity; it was adapted for different purposes by different students. This variety of reactions to a similar marker of identity did not end with their return either: these divides in their relationships with the American identity continued as the students looked back at what they had learned and looked forward at what they wanted to do in the future.

### **The Future of the American Self**

Within the group there was a noticeable divide between students regarding their American identity after returning. For some students, the experience had solidified their appreciation of being an American. Before taking part, Kayla had written what she expected to

get out of the program: “This trip is a once in lifetime experience. I already feel so blessed that I get to be a part of this. It will open my eyes and appreciate my life here in American much more.” (pre-departure writing). After the program, her only written comment on how she had changed was, “Yes, I appreciate being American 100% more” (post-program writing). In the interview, she explained more about why she had gained appreciation for America:

I think it will better my experience in everything and I got to experience different world cultures and like that way, but... otherwise, like I said and wrote, I appreciate America a lot more. [...A]fter those plane rides on the way home I was just like, “oh, my god”...but...I don't know, like the bag thing and bulk buying and [...] just stores in general. [...] They walk everywhere to go get their groceries and they buy it every day in like, where we're like pull up [...] with our big trucks and we load all of our stuff up in there for two weeks and... [...] I definitely like America. I could never live in another country. (post-program interview)

For Kayla, the experience of traveling abroad was a distinct accomplishment and once over it was complete. She had mentioned this during the interview when talking about being enthused about the program:

Because I would get so excited about seeing new things. And I'm like, ‘cause realistically I'm never going to come here again, ‘cause I want to have kids and take them to Disneyworld instead of to Europe. (post-program interview)

Lee shared Kayla’s enthusiasm for the American way of shopping:

[I]t's like we've made things so...efficient for the consumer. Where over there it seems they're more [...] trying to make things easier for [...] the business [...]. Where here, we're just so much about the ease of I can go and I can buy up an entire gallon of milk

and I can go and buy the biggest ranch bottle there is that'll last me for the rest of my life. [...] Because you [...] can't...buy that much volume as far as one package. If you buy a little package of sandwich meat, well, there it's so small. Where here you can get [...] big packs with stuff like that. (post-program interview)

Lee also had come to the conclusion after the program that he appreciated his life in America much more for amenities such as the convenience of car travel and personal space. He concluded:

I just feel [traveling] makes you appreciate what you have. Or at least what I have here in America and just like all the things that you like missed so dearly over there. [...] I think it makes you more appreciative of the stuff you do have where you are. I'm sure someone could go somewhere and they're like oh, I actually want to go live there. Like after being in Europe, I could back but I would never want to, um, live there, I don't think. Maybe in Ireland, cause that's uh, culturally that's a fairly similar country. But overall, just I guess I feel, and I don't know if everyone else feels this way, but I feel like it makes you just overall more appreciative of what you have. (post-program interview)

Both Lee and Kayla had maintained and polished their idea of an American self while abroad. Through their experiences with grocery shopping they had reinforced their preferences for the American shopping habitus, and by extension their identity as an American. Their experiences abroad were not something that they felt had redefined their identities so much as had reinforced them.

Other students felt more comfortable abroad. Andrew had traveled abroad before, but was still surprised by his comfort while in Europe:

[I]t was different 'cause like I thought I was going to still feel like I was just on a vacation, like just there and I was coming back but [...] I kinda felt like we actually lived there and [...] I would feel comfortable going back and being able to get myself around Europe with the public transportation or going through this airport or that train station, just because we learned so much about how to travel, how to live, where to go, where not to go, what streets to follow, where the grocery store was, the movie theater was, the convenience mart, the shopping malls, kind of thing. Um, it was kind of what I expected, but at the same I felt more at home than I thought I would. (post-program interview)

Still, Andrew felt that he was not as affected as other students might have been because he had traveled previously:

[I]t just kind of, it opens your eyes to bigger things and opens your eyes to the world. And makes you more accepting of other things maybe. Other cultures and ways that they do things compared to how we do them here in the states. And even things just like what they eat or what they, how they drink, like what they drink compared to here, like it's just different. And sometime to get used to and something to think about cause a lot of people might be closed-minded to how life is here and don't really think about it, especially if they've never been outside the country. I mean I've been out three times before this, so I kind of already had a little bit more of an open mind going into this trip but I think there was one person, this trip was the first time they ever flew. [...] And so that was something that I'm sure truly expanded their wildest imagination of what life outside of North Dakota was like. (post-program interview)

Andrew felt that all of his traveling abroad had opened his eyes and used his travel as a way of reaffirming that identity as someone with a larger perspective on the world.

As an example of someone who had not traveled much, before leaving Edith talked about what her family thought of her deciding to study abroad:

They probably think I'm crazy. Like, my family is very much just like we've always been from Fargo. We always are in Fargo and no one really travels. Um, the first time I was on a plane was last year. So, they, they're excited for me, but I think they're kind of like "wow," like it took a lot of kind of, I don't know, not courage but just it took a lot of ambition to actually go through with it. (post-program interview)

Before the program Edith had discussed apprehension about potential challenges, including converting money, perceptions of Americans, driving on the other side of the road, and pickpockets. After the program, Edith's nervousness had changed completely:

[M]ostly because I kind of figured out, because I wasn't homesick, I feel like now I can move on. I don't know, that was a big thing for me. I was worried about leaving home since I am from Fargo. I go to school in Fargo. I've always lived in my same house that I grew up in so, I was like it might be hard. But it wasn't so. I feel like after I graduate I can look at other cities for jobs and stuff like that. So that's a big thing, I think. (post-program interview)

The concerns that Edith had talked about before the program had likely developed in conversation with her family who had not traveled before. Once she had experienced being abroad, that part of her identity that included being tied to Fargo had shifted into one where she could see herself moving somewhere else and being comfortable.

For these students, their program abroad was an opportunity for them to develop a sense of their identity as an American and also to confront the negative stereotypes of the ugly American. Looking at how their existing habitus, such as being loud and dressing casually, might

be perceived differently while abroad caused many of the students to adjust their behaviors in order to distance themselves from those stereotypes they found distasteful. Their understanding of the ugly American came largely from their leader but was complicated by their interactions with locals while abroad. They were then able to use this deeper understanding of their American identity to start negotiating how they wanted to be seen through fashion while abroad and then to look forward at what this identity would mean for their future.

The American self, while important, is only one piece of how the students negotiated their identity. Next I turn to look at how their interactions with others before, during and after the program affected their greater sense of identity.

### **From the Foundation of a Pluralized Self**

The American self is clearly an identity that each of the students wrestled with to one degree or another, with some students ending the program with different levels of identification with this identity. A person's sense of identity is much more complicated than a single identification with their nationality though, and understanding how study abroad affects students requires a closer look at these additional aspects.

Berger, Berger and Kellner (1974) posited that modern selves are pluralized in a way that people of the past had not been, and so they are prepared to deal with the multitude of rules, behaviors and expectations that previous generations would not have been. Within the interviews, I did find that some of the students had traveled previously and thus believed themselves to be more prepared for traveling abroad and navigating their identity in the European context. To return to the example of Andrew, he had traveled to Spain in high school, so when asked what his parents thought of his plans to study abroad he explained:

I know a lot of people that it might kind of scare them, like their families are a little scared that they're going to leave for that long and they're going that far away, and I mean I have talked to my mom and she goes I'm not, not really worried. I mean you've done it so many times—like and I've gone all over the country too, so... [...] without my family, so yeah, I'll miss them but I think I'll be okay. (pre-departure interview)

Later in this interview, Andrew explained that he worried about getting tired and how he might balance studying and traveling. He largely focused, though, on the difficulty that he had in trying to sleep on an airplane. His primary expectation for what he might get out of the program was a greater understanding of differences between cultures and to gain ideas of what he might want to do after he graduated. After the program, he then described his experiences:

[I]t was kind of what I expected. [...] I've been over there once before so I kind had, I went to all new places with this trip compared to the last one I was on, but um, I felt [...] it was different cause like I thought I was going to still feel like I was just on a vacation, like just there and I was coming back but, [...] I kinda felt like we actually lived there and [...] I would feel comfortable going back and being able to get myself around Europe with the public transportation or going through this airport or that train station, just because we learned so much about how to travel, how to live, where to go, where not to go, what streets to follow, where the grocery store was, the movie theater was, the convenience mart, the shopping malls, kind of thing. Um, it was kind of what I expected, but at the same I felt more at home than I thought I would. (post-program interview)

In this way, Andrew, whether accurately or not, felt his experiences before the trip had prepared him for the time abroad. The differences from his expectations were simply that he felt more at home, and so presumably the experience was less stressful for him than he had expected

previously. This expectation, thus, matches Berger, Berger and Kellner's (1974) prediction that previous experiences with a multiplicity of cultures would make it easier to cope with a wide variety of interactions in the future.

Dale also felt that his previous travel had prepared him for this program: "I guess the way I was brought up [...] we were always traveling so it's always been something I've been, I've enjoyed doing, so that definitely helps" (pre-departure interview). Later when asked about what challenges he expected, Dale responded:

Well, they always talk about like culture shock. And there might be, yeah, there might be a little bit of that, but I mean with the exception of Greece all the countries that we're gonna be, well, Greece and Ireland—I've never been to either of those but the rest of the ones we're going to I've been to before. So I at least have a decent understanding, you know? Idea of what it's going to be like over there but I think living out of a suitcase might be a little bit of a challenge at first. (pre-departure interview)

After taking part in the program, Dale said that living out of a suitcase was not as difficult as he had feared but that an unexpectedly difficult aspect of the program was limited contact with home. Instead of the option of being constantly in communication, he was only able to connect with them while at the hotel:

Uh, one thing that was kind of difficult was not being able to be in touch with people back here. [...] Family and friends and...uh, girlfriend too. That was, that was a little tough at times 'cause you could only communicate over wi-fi. And, uh, wi-fi wasn't always that great wherever you were. And then you spend a lot of your time out and about and you usually only had wi-fi wherever you were sleeping at night. (pre-departure interview)



He had found that the experience of being abroad to be as predicted, but had missed the contact with his connections at home in a way he had not expected.

Dale's comment brings up an important aspect of the modern self: Berger & Zijderveld (2010) observed that the modern self is used to negotiating a variety of life-worlds and may in fact not be linked to a single life-world to start, but they are still reliant on their continuous connections to others to maintain their identities. Berger and Luckmann (1967) describe the critical reliance on continuous confirmation of those around a person for maintaining a sense of self. Although students may have had experience fulfilling a multitude of roles, they are still dependent on those around them to keep that continuity of self. These students had grown up with technology giving them the opportunity to stay in nearly constant contact with their family and friends, but while traveling their contact was largely limited to at their hotel in the evening. This program then served as a time of disruption to those sustaining social connections and that carefully maintained sense of self. In the place of these former confirmations, the group of students themselves formed a close bond, with these relations offering a new opportunity for reinforcing and reinventing identities within the program.

### **Relationships Within the Program**

Most of the students did not know each other before the start of their fall semester and instead planned to make friends on the program. Betty, Charles, and Dale did not know anyone else on the program when they initially signed up, while Foster, Ivy, Harry, and Lee signed up without realizing that they knew anyone else taking part and then realized in the first meetings that they did know someone after all. There were connections between Andrew and Edith, Andrew and Harry, Foster and Lee, and Ivy mentioned knowing two people in passing but did not mention their names and she was not named by others.

Within the group, there was a smaller subgroup who had all known each other before signing up for the program. At the center of this group, Andrew had known Jimmy and Kayla, who had been dating before signing up for the program and were still dating at the time of after interviews, as well as Garrett. Andrew felt that this accidental gathering was one of the easiest parts of the program for him:

The fact that I ended up knowing a lot more people on the trip than I thought. I was going to go whether I knew a lot of people or not but knowing over half, just happening to know over half the people, just by coincidence that everybody signed up to go on this trip, was kind of nice. (post-program interview)

Along similar lines, although Garrett knew Jimmy, Kayla, and Andrew, he said: “I mostly view it as just time to you know, make friends over there and then, uh, have fun and it's mostly traveling” (pre-departure interview). With the program comprised of so much travel, the students recognized that they would be spending significant time on buses and planes together, which would give them the opportunity to get to know each other.

After the program the students almost universally described their group as having grown close while abroad. Andrew explained this transition well:

[O]ur first five days was in Ireland, and it was still kind of like the awkward, like we don't really know each other [...] I was the only one that knew most of the people on the trip. Um, so I mean I wasn't too worried about it but then there, it was still kinda like a... “Oh, like what do we, who are you?” Like, “What are you, what's your name? Where are you from?” [S]till the basic trying to get to know each other, but as the program went on, we bonded and every flight we would take we'd sit next to someone or [...] we'd sit next to someone and we'd just walking down the street, we'd have a 10-minute walk to, from

our hotel to dinner. (post-program interview)

The reasons for becoming close extended past just being the result of proximity though, as Charles discussed:

I mean we're all going through the same thing together, so it's like that kind of brotherhood thing where you're under a lot of stress and a lot of change that you kind of have to, I mean nobody else has experienced that you all can relate to what you're going through. So that, I mean, we all shared that experience, so we're all closer in that way and then you see how they react to all the different interactions we had and all the different types of things we had to go through. So you kind of see how they are under pressure and how they have fun and all the other things you really start—I mean I know a lot of them a lot better than I had planned on knowing them. I'm sure they feel the same about me. So yeah, I, I think I know them all pretty well after spending that much time together. (post-program interview)

Their shared experiences and challenges served as bond, pulling the students into a close relationship relatively quickly over the course of the program.

Lee felt the program had meant he had gotten to know others he would not have gotten to know otherwise:

Just, you know, we're all experiencing a completely new thing to us, all together and I guess that just really...I feel like that alone just really brings people together. Even if it's normally a person that you wouldn't really maybe be friends with, you know, here or something like that. I just think that the experience that you're having, that you're, you know, both people are having or what...I think just really brings you together as a group. (post-program interview)

Along the lines of this equitable bond described by Lee, Dale felt that he had formed friendships with everyone in the group:

I don't know that there was really any one person that I would come away from it and be like [...] we go along better than I did with anybody else on the trip. [...] I think we were kind of too small of a group to afford to sort of pick and choose who to get along with. I think everyone made a pretty decent effort to...be respectful and nice to everyone. (post-program interview)

Overall there did seem to be a general fondness the students expressed for each other.

There was still the potential for conflict, but the flexibility within the group helped to avoid much disagreement. Foster described most friction as being rooted in personalities:

I think it was mainly personality differences. I mean there, it always, it depends on the night almost. 'Cause [...] some nights people are going to want to be a little bit more rowdy. A little bit more loud. A little bit more talkative. And other nights people are going to want to be a little bit more laid back, a little bit more relaxed. And it was just kind of a matter of [...] finding the people that are on the same level as you, um, for a given day or a given night. (post-program interview)

The pluralized identities that the students brought offered an opportunity for students to join up others who were inclined to certain kinds of behavior on a particular night. Charles described how physical separation usually served as a way of avoiding conflict:

I mean we were together so much that [...] you learn that you have to roll with what people dish out. So...and it was easy enough that, you know, when people wanted to break up into smaller groups you could 'cause there was always someone that you could go with. So, there was never that many issues. [...] I mean it was just like somebody's

agenda's different from yours. They feel strongly about this. I mean, stuff like that. And then it's just a matter of okay, you go do your thing and I'll go do my thing and that's the end of it so, I mean it was easy to take care of itself. It was easy to get separated from people if you wanted to, so there was never any issues that I had with anybody. It was easy enough to isolate it and it never built up to anything so no problems. (post-program interview)

These shifts and general geniality did not mean that there were not groups within the larger group, at least in the eyes of some members of the program. Edith explained, “[T]here was definitely groups. I feel like I like everyone on the trip. Everyone was so fun. But there definitely was like, I don't know, like three groups that we kind of separated into” (post-program interview). These associations were largely based around interests and what students wanted to see or do in their free time. Charles described his friendship with Foster:

I hung out with...there was one guy [Foster] who went on the trip. [...W]e were like-minded in what we wanted to do and what we wanted to see and how we wanted to do it. So...we ended up going to a lot of places that if, you know, people were being kind of picky about what they wanted to do and we had something that you know, we're here, we want to see this, we'd just go off and do it. [...] We didn't want to wait around for people to make a decision on whether they wanted to do this and that first so we end up just going and doing things that we thought would be fun that other people maybe were just wanted to schedule... (post-program interview)

Spending this time with Foster and taking advantage of the opportunity to do whatever they wanted in their free time had a long-lasting impact on Charles. After the program he explained his identity:

The one change, off the bat, is independent. Moreso. Now obviously because all the things we've been though in Europe a lot of it we were left to our own devices in a foreign country, foreign language all that. And that was a really big thing for us to figure out, you know. (post-program interview)

Through his actions, choices, and friendship with Foster, Charles had shifted his understanding of himself being hardworking, open-minded, and thoughtful to include being independent as well.

In addition to the looser groupings of friendships, the pre-existing relationship between Andrew, Kayla and Jimmy formed a nucleus of friendship that grew to include Edith and Lee. Kayla described the group fondly:

[W]e were like the Fab Five, [...] me, Edith, Jimmy, Andrew, and Lee. So that was fun. [...] We liked to do the same things, as in, like this might bad, but we had an occasional beer or a glass of wine, and other people would not really want to. And so we found that out about each other and [...] just like...relaxing more and, but also doing fun things that...I don't know what really brought us together. But Andrew and Jimmy that I already really knew and Edith and Lee I didn't, but...there were just fun, easy-going people. (post-program interview)

This group of friends seemed more stable than the others, but Andrew still felt it was based in shared interests:

I had people that I would prefer to hang out with over other people on the trip like with, like, I don't know, not, not like we hated everybody else but it was just kind of, there were some of us that we really got along together and it might have been like...I don't know if it's bad—we, it was people, the people who liked to go out, kind of hung out

together and if other people that didn't want to go out they just didn't come out with us, so [...] when [...] we would go out, they would just kind of stay back at the apartment and/or at the hotel and just relax so we kind of, we just spent more time together because we would go out after. (post-program interview)

Going out in the evening was a way that this group of five came to be a coherent group. Edith described the process:

[T]he connection...? Probably drinking for one. We kind of bonded over just having a good time and going out. Whereas the other group kind of wanted to stay in and Skype with their girlfriend or boyfriend or family or whatever and they were just more—just wanted to stay back and relax type. And then there was the couple that, or a couple of people separately, that just kind of did their own thing. Never really knew where they were at. (post-program interview)

Going out to have fun and drink alcohol caused this group of students to grown closer, with their decisions to spend evenings together building up into a tight bond over time.

However the Fab Five's shared experiences out were not always seen the same way from the outside as they viewed them from the inside. The international student in the group commented about the role alcohol played for the American students:

I think most American students, they got really crazy or like on drinking-wise. They just, no, I mean there's no limit, they want to do whatever they want. And sometimes I feel like oh, our conversation, um, it's like surrounds alcohol and then I just really don't like that. So, sometimes I just leave the room when I guess a little too much of talking about [drinking]. And when they, you know, when they drink it just get a little, kinda you don't think much what you say. And sometimes they would be saying things that, you know, I

don't really want to know. (post-program interview)

The international student was not interested in drinking and going out, and viewed these behaviors in a negative light.

Interestingly, the students who liked to drink did not see these behaviors as being associated with the ugly American identity. Instead, they felt that their behavior was a natural part of taking full advantage of being abroad. Kayla described herself as wild before and after the program, clarifying in the after written segment that calling herself wild might be taken to mean obnoxious by others, but “To me wild means adventurous.” She further expanded on this explanation saying:

Like I said, the wild. Like just looking at the time, adventurous. And mature at the same time as being wild. Like, I, I know when to do things and when not to do things.

[...T]here was a lot of immature people on the trip so it was like, uh... Sometimes kind of hard for me to be around but [...the program] was good. (post-program interview)

In this way, Kayla was shaping an identity around her idea of being adventurous, while disassociating with those who might have criticized her behavior by designating their feedback as immature.

Kayla's comment alluded to the largest source of tension on the program, which was an ongoing disagreement between her and Harry. From his side Harry had identified her with negative stereotypes:

[S]he just had an attitude the entire trip like, “yeah, I own this world. This is me.” Like she personified who the American was. I mean, yeah, she's loud and rambunctious all the time. She did what she wanted to do, and she kind of was the leader of all the people [...] who would hang out with her. [...W]hat she said goes. Which is like, okay, I guess she's



the only one that has a voice because nobody's going to do anything [...] except what she says. [...] Okay, well, I don't want to do this. Like she says she wanted to go to Amsterdam on a day that [...] that we had a break, and it was like I don't want to go to Amsterdam. [...] Everybody else went because, well, they didn't want to just not do anything. I'm just like well, I'll just stay here. And I was the only one who didn't go on to Amsterdam, and then I just did laundry that day. Just kind of hung out. (post-program interview)

Harry's description ties Kayla's behavior to the idea of the ugly American, including loudness and lack of concern for those around them. On the other side, Kayla felt that criticism of her behavior stemmed from a people not appreciating her enthusiasm: "Just because I was so excited about everything, they didn't appreciate that or something I guess. [...] I was like, 'oh, that's okay. You can be boring in life and I'll just have fun'" (post-program interview). In this way, Kayla had written the conflict off as being situated on the side of the others, rather than recognizing how her own actions might be impacting the tension and how others perceived her.

Betty also had a small role in the conflict but as someone who reached out to Harry when she felt he had been left out by the others. After the program, she responded to the question of how people on the program had changed by saying:

[F]or one particular person I feel like I've seen some changes. [...] He was more...not say, not say selfish but maybe a little or just he kinda like[d] to just do things his own way. [...] But then sometimes we'll have conversations and then I'll say, "You know, [...] you really shouldn't say that. It really hurts people or it hurts, you hurt me." So I was saying that and then I can really see him changing, [...] he knows that [...] what I'm saying would really hurt someone so. In that first—I think that most people don't really like [...]

to hang out with him. And that just really hurt me seeing that [...]. But then I think at the end of the trip, he's like change[d] a little bit and then, he [could] get more connected to people. (post-program interview)

This was an example of how members of the group could cause changes in behavior by giving feedback over time. Even Kayla's boyfriend Jimmy referred to this change in Harry saying, "It's kind of funny cause [...] at the beginning of the trip there was one person that I didn't really care for and at the end of the trip, like I thought he was hilarious and we like got along really well" (post-program interview).

Before the program, Harry had described himself as outgoing, fun-loving and sensitive, but after the program his description of himself had shifted to a more-nuanced explanation of how the treatment of other affected his behavior toward them:

I guess respect made me kind of realize how different it is to be in a different culture. And that kind of, I don't know... I've always felt I was respectful of people [...] and I still am. But I mean I guess [...] the biggest thing is I respect people as long as they respect me and, I mean, that's always been the same thing, same way. So, I guess that... Um, I'd say I'm easy to get along with. [...] And, uh, I mean, as long as you're nice to me, I'm going to be nice to you. I mean that, granted, sometimes with the people that I went along there I didn't always get along with them just because they weren't the nicest to me. (post-program interview)

In terms of Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality model (1967), Harry began with externalizing his identity of being outgoing, fun-loving and sensitive. After the objectivation of receiving feedback from his conflict with Kayla and his friendship with Betty, he internalized updated aspects of his identity and later qualified his statements about being

respectful of others to include the caveat that he needed people to respect and reciprocate for him to express his affability.

This is similar to Charles having added the self-descriptor of independent after the program, but while Harry's change was based in conflict, Charles's was based in his friendship with Foster and independent activities while abroad. It should be noted that this process of adjusting an identity, while relying on external feedback, is also a matter of subjective interpretation. Kayla's description of herself also changed over the course of the program, coming to include maturity and leadership as a result of what she perceived as a one-sided conflict with Harry and her organizing a trip to Amsterdam during a free day.

The students' pluralized selves were an important foundation for relationships while on the program. Because of the multitude of selves and interests, the students were able to meet and become close to the other eleven members of the program based on their mood on a particular day. Limited contact with those outside the program including friends and family from home, meant that the social connections while on the program were more impactful and for some students caused a shift in their perceptions of their self. One more important part of this process remains: their return home and interactions with the friends and family with whom they had limited contact while abroad.

### **Friends, Family and Objectivation**

The students in the study commonly reported two common reactions from their family and friends: jealousy and being supportive. Often these reactions were dependent on whether those friends and family members had had any travel experiences, and students adjusted how much they talked about their experiences abroad depending on the kind of feedback they received. Before the program started, Foster noted that receiving support from friends and family

played a significant role in his decision to take part:

I would say kind of encouragement from my friends and family. ‘Cause I’d tell them about it and be like, “Yeah, I went to the meeting and I think it’s pretty interesting, [but] I don’t know if I want to do it yet. ‘Cause that might be too big of a step financially. And, uh, like individually, it might be too big of a step.” But they kind of encouraged me to do it. And then I also kind of, uh, prepped myself by saying like, “When am I going to have five weeks where I get to drop everything and have a specifically like toured guide through Europe?” (pre-departure interview)

After he returned from abroad, his family continued to be supportive of his experiences, even while he felt they were jealous that he had enjoyed an opportunity they had not:

[T]hey were glad, but they also a little bit jealous because they have not gotten to Europe yet and it’s really hard for them to set everything down for such a long time if they wanted to do that, unless they wanted to do multiple trips. Um, no, they were really excited that I was able to do it and that I made the choice and the commitment to leave the country. (post-program interview)

Foster appeared to have some mixed feelings about talking about his program. He saw his family as supportive, but at the same time he had thought about the downside of discussing what he had done.

Garrett also felt that family and friends he spoke with were jealous when hearing about his experiences abroad after the program:

Right away they’d ask me, “Oh, how was Europe?” And it would be like good, and I’d just give them the quick like one-sentence summary ‘cause it’s not like I’m going to sit down with them. ‘Cause it’d take forever to explain my whole experience and I don’t

want to bore them. [...] ‘Cause [...] I don't need to brag to people about what I did because no one wants to hear that. (post-program interview)

The concern that others were feeling bored or jealous of his experiences meant that Garrett limited himself to only talking about his time abroad when asked. His only description of talking with family and friends was telling his father about how “awesome” his experience had been, and the feedback he had received about the program was a short, “[T]hey're pretty much all the same: It's cool. Lucky” (post-program interview). These comments are focused on the circumstances of him having been able to take part, rather than being related to any specific parts of his identity and not surprisingly the only aspects of his identity that he described as having changed were being related to a better understanding of how other countries functioned. It is unknown whether he might have felt differently if he had discussed his experiences more, but at the very least it is clear that these expressions of jealousy made some of the students less likely to talk about their experiences with friends and family and thus less likely to open themselves up to feedback that could have contributed to an identity shift.

Kayla tried to talk about her experiences, but found that her friends did not understand the importance of the experience for her:

Actually a lot of my friends didn't even really care about it. Yeah, so, it kind of made me...sad about it. [...] That they didn't really ask about our trip or anything. [...] Like it was a big experience in my life and then they don't really care, so it's like okay... [...] Yeah, so, they really haven't said much about that, but I think that they know that we [...] grew up in ways, like, we look at things way differently than they do and appreciate America a lot more than what normal people do so. (post-program interview)

In attempting to talk about her experiences, Kayla felt that her friends should have been more

understanding of the significance of her time abroad and how she had changed. She was attempting to express her updated identity as someone who had grown up, looked at things differently, and appreciated being American more, but she felt that her friends were not providing the confirmation of the changes she saw in herself that she wanted because they did not understand the significance of her experiences. She was expressing these identity changes that recognized, but not receiving the objectivation that she wanted from her friends. Instead, lacking the context she had, she felt they continued to treat her the same as before the program leading her to feel frustrated with that assumed continuity of her pre-program identity.

When students knew family or friends who had traveled, the opportunity to talk about their experiences had the opposite effect: instead of separating the student from others it allowed them to connect with them through a shared understanding. After going abroad, Foster felt closer to his girlfriend because she had traveled abroad previously:

She was really excited because she actually went to Europe earlier this year in January. [...] So we kind of visited similar places and stuff like that, so. It was kind of cool to talk about what we all did that [...] was the same. So obviously [...] she went to Paris and she visited the Arc de Triumphe and the Eiffel Tower, obviously, and then the Louvre and other stuff like that. And it was kind of cool just to be able to talk about that and kind of relate, which I couldn't really do with my parents 'cause they've never been to Europe.  
(post-program interview)

The comfort that Foster felt in talking with his girlfriend was similar to Lee's experiencing connecting with his mother after he returned: "[W]ith my mom being a Spanish teacher and she's been to Europe before and just it was nice [...] that we were able to like share our experience together, you know? Talk about our different experiences we've had" (post-program interview).

Jimmy also appreciated joining his family in having studied abroad: “[A]ll my family had been over to Europe except for me, so that was kind of nice to be able to share my experiences and we had all been to similar places so I thought that was kind of cool” (post-program interview). For Foster, Lee, and Jimmy, these responses had come to a question of whom they had talked with after returning. Although, having been gone for five weeks, they had likely talked with many people about their time away, the connections that they most remembered were when they connected with others who had had similar experiences. While students had indicated a reluctance to talk about their experiences with family and friends who were jealous, even when those same people had shown support, the students had a positive feeling about talking with those who shared the experiences.

Harry illustrated one reason why students might feel this way. He was another student who felt closer to family who had traveled after returning:

They're really happy for me. My, my sister took an entire semester and studied abroad in Northern Ireland. [...] a couple years ago. So she really, she loved it there. [...] And my mom, actually when she went to college in the early 80s took an entire semester and studied abroad in Denmark. So, we've all done it—Like I said, my cousin studied abroad in Australia so it's just kind of, um, something that the entire family does. And then my dad's always wanted to go over to Europe too but he's never studied abroad so... [...] So it's just kind of something that we've all done and that I've always wanted to do. (pre-departure interview)

For Harry, studying abroad was a way for him to join into a group identity with those family who had traveled. He saw having traveled as an important aspect of what his family does, and now he had shared that identity with them.

Kayla also talked about the importance of study abroad to members of her family. Although her friends had not wanted to discuss her time abroad, Kayla taking part in the program was a something that her family had encouraged because her sister had participated in the same program several years earlier:

[S]ince my sister went on the trip, [my family] pushed me very hard to go on this and I wanted to, but I think that they just saw the, like, such an eye-opener and they want to go and all that and stuff. [...] I don't feel like I changed drastically. I just think I appreciate just in general being able to talk to my mom and [sister]. That kind of stuff. (post-program interview)

Afterwards, Kayla related an important experience that she had abroad that made her feel she had a stronger connection with her sister:

On top of the Eiffel Tower actually, in the bathroom, I found my sister's name written on the [bathroom stall]. There was three different stalls and I'm like how the heck do I find this one? And then I sent her the picture and it was just like I felt much closer to my sister because I'm halfway across the world and she'd been in these same places she'd stayed and like even, I don't know, so that was cool to talk to her about 'cause it was the same trip. (post-program interview)

As a result of finding her sister's name in Paris, Kayla felt like she had strengthened that connection. She had the eye-opening experience that her family had encouraged for her and she wanted her younger sister to have it as well: “[I]t makes you feel older, responsible, and independent. [...] Everyone should do it. So, I will be making my little sister do it” (post-program interview). These experiences abroad, for Kayla, were not something experienced in isolation but in a continuity from her sister having taken part and to be passed on to his younger



sister. She had gone into the experience expecting to understand more because of expectations set by her sister and her family, and had come out of it feeling that she had. Recognizing the power of the program in causing this shift, she had already started advocating for her sister to have the same opportunity.

People today have that particularly pluralized self that Berger, Berger and Kellner (1974) described as preparing them to deal with a multitude of roles. However their selves are still dependent on maintaining continuous contact with those around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), which for students studying abroad becomes a particular challenge. The students who had traveled previously felt that they were prepared for the program but Dale discovered that having only limited evening contact with family and friends was the unexpectedly difficult for him. Instead the students' connections with each other became much more important as they spent the five weeks in close contact with each other. The close bonds that they formed meant that their interactions had a significant impact on how they saw each other, with the conflict between Kayla and Harry forming a particularly significant nucleus of change.

After returning to their home field, the students reconnected with family and friends. For some of the students, they found the feedback from those at home did not include appreciation for what they had found to be an important and affecting experience. Their attempts to re-align their identities were not supported because some family and friends did not have similar experiences with which to understand the change and provide the objectivation feedback that the students wanted, leaving them feeling isolated and possibly unique. For students who had family and friends who had traveled, their connection to those people and the opportunity to build a shared identity as someone who had traveled was mentioned repeatedly as important in the after interviews. In that way, even though the students were reliant on others to reinforce their

identities, they recognized and made use of the connections with family and friends who would reinforce those identities that they preferred. When faced with family and friends who did not provide this feedback, they were less likely to talk about their experiences. When given the opportunity to talk with those who would share what they saw as a positive traveler identity, the students were enthusiastic about the connection and reinforcing that shared identity. For all of the students, these experiences of interacting with others came together to create a new identity: a study abroad self.

### **Constructing a Study Abroad Self**

Students on the program developed awareness of their identity as an American self while their modern, pluralized self gave them a foundation of how to navigate a multitude of identities. Although the students had only a rudimentary understanding of how their setting and relationships related to their sense of identity, before taking part in the program many of them described a study abroad self characterized by being open-minded, non-judgmental, and friendly, and recognized that taking part in this program was an opportunity to reinforce or develop this study abroad self.

In order to look at how the students caused changes and the relationship between the students' expectations about identity shifts they would undergo versus what they saw having changed afterwards, before the program I asked several questions about their motivations for studying abroad and their expectations for change. This was intended as a way of developing a baseline for comparison, but instead I was surprised to find indications that the students had already started to form a new identity as a study abroad student even before the beginning of the program. In response to these questions, students were overwhelmingly likely to say that they considered themselves to be open-minded, non-judgmental, and friendly. When creating the

questionnaire I had expected responses to the question “When you first meet a person, what do you want them to know right away about you?” to result in descriptions of a person’s background. However, instead of outlining their personal history, major, religion, hobbies, nationality, or any of the many possible identity groups, eight of the students responded that they wanted the other person to know that they were not someone who would judge the other person. Foster described this idea:

[T]he first thing I would like them to know about me is that [...] I’m really open to how people are. I kind of have the concept of you do you, and I’ll be your friend 99% of the time, but I just hope that they don’t think that I’m off with any judgments on them before I meet them. So hopefully something along the lines of nice and respectful would be the first thing that would come to mind. (pre-departure interview)

Foster was envisioning how others might perceive him, hoping to build an externally perceived identity as someone who was not judgmental. Along similar lines, Jimmy described kindness as necessary for openness in interactions, “What do I want them to know about me? I guess kind, so they know they can open up to me and know that they can trust me with stuff” (pre-departure interview). For Foster and Jimmy, being seen as nonjudgmental and kind were important identity markers that would open up the opportunity to get to know people while abroad.

Lee offered another example of this identity. Before taking part in the program, he described what he would most want a person who met him to know:

I guess just that [...] I’m a nice, very unassuming person when I meet people, you know. I’m not [...] a very judging person. I just [...] listen to what they have say and then [...] I guess I like to at least come off that I’m not, you know, making judgments about them

really. [...] I'm trying to very, be very unassuming and just as they slowly tell me stuff. Then, you know, eventually become more [...] knowing stuff about them, to not actually assume certain things just by how they look or act or anything like that. (pre-departure interview)

Once again being non-judgmental was a means for Lee to get to know people more easily and his conception of being non-judgmental seemed to stem from his vision of himself as being seen as a friendly person:

I guess, you know, I always feel kind of weird saying, "oh, I'm friendly". To me it's not something to necessarily to declare on yourself. It's more how other people perceive you, but I think that other people perceive me as a friendly person. And then you know, I'm outgoing. I'll talk to anybody. I'll talk about a lot of things with people. (pre-departure interview)

Lee was being clear that being friendly is a part of his identity and that he holds it specifically because he thinks other people perceive him as being so. Accordingly, being seen as having that non-judgmental friendliness he felt gave him an opportunity to talk to and get to know other people. Although Lee did not mention open-mindedness again in his after interview, he explained that he had gained an empathy for students who had experienced a similar immersion:

I guess...knowledgeable or more knowledgeable. Just more knowledgeable and more...sensitive to...and understanding towards other people and then foreign exchange students that are here now. [...] And students that are at NDSU from other countries and just being more understanding of the situation they're in. (post-program interview)

Along these lines, throughout his after interview Lee talked about having gained an understanding of the challenges faced by international students at NDSU and being able to

connect more with family and friends who had also traveled. This fits with the idea that his concept of open-mindedness was tied to his pre-existing identity as a friendly person, and thus he was expressing that identity as a friendly person afterwards through an increased number of ties to others.

Another student, Dale, also indicated that he considered himself to be non-judgmental before the program in both the written and oral interviews. When asked what he would want someone to know about him, he also cited this as significant, saying, “[S]eeing someone for the first time, I think lack of judgment’s important. [...] I mean if they don't think that you're being judgmental, it's a lot more likely that you can get an open, honest conversation” (pre-departure interview). In addition, Dale listed becoming more open-minded as a possible benefit of study abroad, making it both a requirement and a result:

[H]opefully it'll help to be a little bit more open-minded. Not that I would [...] consider myself to be [...] close-minded at all. But I think [...] a lot of things that happen [...] where people might sort of either look down on other cultures and whatnot is ‘cause they don't understand why. [...] Things look weird and you can say they just do stuff different other places but knowing the why really helps [...] to understand. So I hope that [...] will help out to have a little bit more understanding. [...] Kind of the difference would [be] being like, “well, that's weird” versus [...] “okay, they do this differently because this, this, and this.” You know? (pre-departure interview)

In both the after writing and interview Dale included the concepts respectful, tolerant and non-judgmental in his lists of three words to describe himself, saying that these traits were something he had seen in himself and that had been noticed by friends and family as well. Although he did not explicitly state if being judgmental and looking down on others is part of the ugly American,

he distanced himself from that identity. After the program, he explained the reason for identifying himself this way:

I guess [those characteristics are] just things that I see in myself and sort of noticed that I try to do on a—maybe not always a daily basis—but I mean there's definitely specific instances in my mind that stand out, that those traits stand out. And it's also things I've been told by friends and families well, so... kinda helps reinforce that opinion of myself, I guess. (post-program interview)

Interactions that Dale had before, during, and after the program reinforced the concept of self that he had, with the idealized non-judgmental study abroad student shifting from a role Dale hoped to take on to one that he identified as having based on his own view of his actions and reinforced by his friends and family.

Charles offered further insight into this phenomenon. When asked to list three words that would describe himself Charles said, “Open-minded about this obviously. I have to be open-minded to do this, but you know, not quick to judge people ‘cause there's reasons why everyone does things” (pre-departure interview). Implicit in this statement is an assumption that being open-minded is a prerequisite for taking part in a study abroad program. Later when asked if he thought he might change as a result of the program, Charles expanded on how this experience would affect him:

I just don't see how something this complex couldn't have an affect on somebody, just because, you know, [...] such small things in our daily lives kind of can change us. So something as big as [this], definitely, I'm sure it will open my eyes to new things and just being more open-minded in general. (pre-departure interview)

Here Charles indicates a person needs to be open-minded to study abroad, and studying abroad is

also a means to becoming more open-minded. Additionally, he is recognizing that changing the setting of his daily life is a means to making that change in his identity. When asked about what he would want someone to know first when meeting him, Charles used familiar phrases such as “friendly” and “not judgmental” (pre-departure interview) to convey the importance of being seen that way by others. Unsurprisingly, Charles indicated after the program that he had seen this result:

There's a lot of things that didn't seem like it'd be that cool but you go there and you see it and you see the people and the culture it's really cool. I mean it just opens up. It stops you from judging things without actually trying it. So, it's easier to, I think, see where people are coming from when they do these things, they say certain things. You [...] know you've never experienced that, so going out there and actually experiencing some of the things that you've never experienced before and how it can change how you see things—I think that was big. (post-program interview)

Charles is making a tie between being open-minded and gaining an empathetic understanding of others in a way similar to Lee’s description. When asked about what changes others on the program might have experienced, Charles postulated that he thought that becoming open-minded was one of the changes common for the other students on the program:

I'm sure that they think, [...] how do you judge other people too? Going, seeing these cultures first-hand, seeing how everything's different and the things that you have to deal with [...] I imagine that they're pretty accepting of people, especially in that you kind of have to accept all the group members you're with. Even if you don't like them, you have to deal with them so you learn to see their point of view and where they're coming from and what they've had to deal with so you kind of know why they are a certain way. So

yeah, [...] just based on really the trip itself, I would be willing to bet that's how they've changed, if they have at all. (post-program interview)

Throughout these descriptions Charles is making a dual prerequisite/outcome connection between studying abroad and becoming less judgmental in a similar way to how Dale tied study abroad to being open-minded.

Within these student descriptions there is an assumed scale with the positive traits of being open-minded, non-judgmental, and friendly on one side opposite the negative traits of being narrow-minded, judgmental, and unfriendly. Although only four students (Charles, Dale, Edith, and Lee) had mentioned a concept of Americans before taking part in the program, the negative end of this scale does seem to be at least somewhat related to the ugly American. Dale mentioned this after the program when asked how he compared to the typical perception of Americans in the minds of Europeans he met:

I think in some ways I, I did very well. Americans, [...] they got a lot of opinions.

They're not afraid to share them. [...] I think typically [they] would ask a lot of questions if they get the opportunity. So I think [...] in those ways I did. [...] But there's also some stereotypes like Americans being [...] loud, especially compared to other cultures, where it seems like we're very loud. And I'm typically [...] not a loud person. So I don't think I would have fit that so well. But it also was some narrow-minded[ness] from Americans.

We kind of think that we're the center of the world because [...] we touch a lot of different areas of the world and [...] a lot of other countries are involved with us in one way or another and more involved with us probably than a lot of other countries in the world so we kinda tend to think that we're the center of attention... [U]nfortunately I think I fit into that negative stereotype a little bit too—not understanding how huge and



how important the economy is [and] the scope and the reach of a lot of the countries in Europe are too and they're a lot smaller than we are and they can have [...] a really big impact too. So that was kind of eye opening. (post-program interview)

Still as was already discussed in the section Negotiating an American Self, before taking part in the program most students did not have a clearly developed idea of the ugly American. Instead, the multitude of responses about being open-minded, non-judgmental, and friendly show that the students had started formulating an identity even before the start of the program as a study abroad student that incorporated traits they considered to be positive and they continued to identify themselves with these traits after participating.

When and where the students had connected these ideas with the identity of a study abroad student remains unclear. There would have been numerous opportunities for this image to have developed: as the product of a common cultural conception either locally or more widespread within the US, in early program advertising, or possibly through pre-departure preparations. One question for future study would be where this concept was introduced, and how it might have shaped their experiences abroad. To understand how students used their experiences on the program to tie this identity as a study abroad student to positive traits, I turn to the importance of discomfort while abroad.

### **The Impact of Discomfort**

For students studying abroad, there is generally an expectation that there will be at least some points when they will encounter the unknown. For many of these students, they had started building that identity as an open-minded study abroad student before leaving, knowing that they would come face to face with unexpected situations. After the program, Charles described this mentality: “I think that going into that you have to have that mindset of, you know, I need to try–

you can't just not because something's strange and new” (post-program interview). The reality of encountering the strange and new was not as easy as he had expected though:

The first place was Ireland. [...]t's the most US-similar, like they all speak English now and have Burger Kings and McDonalds. Going into it, you're like, “oh, this is cool.” Like “I can do this! This is easy!” And then you go to the Belgium and everything's Dutch. And we tried grocery shopping and that's all Dutch. And none of the name brands are similar and they're all kind of vaguely familiar...but you're not sure what it is. So, well, that was the main difference is that it was very, very different. [...] I kept saying like we'll go to a big tourist place and it will be Americanized and it will be easier and it never was. It was always, [...] you really had to change your mind to suit every place you were at to try and adjust to how everything's done there. (post-program interview)

The more foreign the situation, the more difficult Charles had found it to adjust his understanding.

Foster predicted that dealing with the unknown would be difficult because of the unpredictable nature of the challenges:

[I]t's hard to put [the possible challenges] into words almost. ‘Cause I feel like there's just going to be challenges that I can't even think of. So maybe one of the challenges will be just the unknown. [...]’C]ause I'm a person that [...] I like to really know what I'm doing, where I'm going. And when I'm doing it, etc., etc. [...]B]ut I don't really know what I'm getting into, so... (pre-departure interview)

Similar to Charles, even having predicted the hardship, Foster still found the experience more uncomfortable than he had expected:

Was it what I expected? Yes, in a sense, and no, in a sense. [...] I thought I was going to

be pretty comfortable throughout the trip because we would have our own little like pack of people and we would just kind of follow the leader and just kind of go along as tourists. But then as we kind of got there, I was not as comfortable as I expected. I was more uncomfortable in the sense that I just didn't know what was happening or where I was or what we were doing or stuff like that. 'Cause I just didn't really know what to expect when I got to Europe. (post-program interview)

Again Foster's difficulty with the unknown was that he did not have sufficient knowledge of the setting to fully understand and be prepared for what was going on around him. Schütz (1971) described how people over time put together a series of behavioral recipes, wherein a person comes to understand that completing a set of actions yields a reliable result. For students like Foster, they find that their existing habitus does not function the same abroad as it had at home. They are put in a position of having to build new habitus, and to learn new ways of creating recipes as they go.

For those students who were working on an identity as a study abroad student, this challenge was something that they took pride in. Andrew described how he thought that locals saw their group:

I think they saw us as very friendly. [...] Outgoing. Willing to go up and just start a conversation with someone, [...] where the Europeans were more like [...] they had their friends and [...] they wouldn't step outside their comfort zone as much as we might be willing to when we would go out or we would just be walking down the street, [...] seeing other people, or trying to meet other people and see what they were up to for an afternoon or for the night. (post-program interview)

Having shown this ability to step outside his comfort zone previously, Andrew identified himself

as someone who was comfortable doing so in the future. Along similar lines, Charles talked about having gained the confidence to deal with new situations after having worked through his initial confusion with Euros:

I feel like I can handle myself better in a lot more situations like that where before, first getting there I had no idea how spend Euros, [...] it didn't make sense to me. But now, [having] worked myself through kind of the problems you run into, [...] it's a lot easier.

So that would be the first one. (post-program interview)

Not only did he feel confident that he could properly make purchases in the future, but he was making the point that he also felt that he could now handle unknown situations. In building new recipes for dealing with one situation, he felt confidence in now being able to create recipes on the fly in the future. The variety of locations within the program forced him to form a new habitus of specifically being able to adapt to these new situations.

One of the biggest challenges was also the most commonly mentioned. Almost all of the group used their free day to travel to Amsterdam, and that experience was listed by Andrew, Betty, Charles, Foster, Jimmy and Kayla as one of the most memorable parts of the program. Foster explained the reason that this part of the five-week program stuck out in his mind:

[W]hat sticks out about it is the very, very different culture that they have there but also that we didn't have a leader there. We did our own planning. It was pretty much all on us. We went to Dr. Miller for advice but for the most part it was all us and we traveled as a group there, then we split off in to separate groups and we came back together at the end and went back together. It was just, it was weird because, we just, we didn't have like a somebody to fall back on in case something went bad. (post-program interview)

For this one day, the students not only stepped out of their comfort zone but also felt that they

were stepping away from the hidden support of Dr. Miller. Charles described his impression of the experience fondly:

On the free days, we went to the Netherlands for a day, just our group, us kids. [...] And you know, we had to take the train and we had to figure out what we were going to do and where we were going to go and what time we were going to be back. And we, we split up a fair amount and did groups of just [...] two or three people. So it was a lot of trying to traverse your way around and plan things out and [...] being able to do that by yourself in a [...] in a foreign country is pretty cool. (post-program interview)

Having navigated an unfamiliar location on this day, Charles had gained the confidence to say that he was “able to do that” and so had added that ability to his identity. Kayla felt especially proud at having largely organized the day:

It's just like yes, we're away and at college and not with our family, but that really pushes it to the next level. And [...] it makes you feel older, responsible, and independent. Like you can do that. [...] We went to Amsterdam one day and [...] we now get it ourself. Dr. Miller wasn't with us at all and it just makes you, I don't know, proud. Everyone should do it. (post-program interview)

For these students discomfort formed an important opportunity for them to see themselves as changed. They had started to form an identity as a study abroad student before the program that called for approaching new situations with an open and non-judgmental mind. While abroad, however, the challenge of finding that their existing understanding and recipes were not sufficient for them to understand everything abroad gave them the chance to build new habitus for adjusting to the unknown. As a result the students shifted their identities as study

abroad students to include confidence to deal with the unfamiliar in the future, and described having gained pride in new aspect of their self identities.

### **Identity in Process**

The students had started forming a concept of a study abroad self even before taking part in the program, and had used periods of discomfort while abroad to widen their self-identities to encompass traits they had hoped to gain. However, even though before the program there had been significant overlap in a concept of the study abroad self as open-minded, non-judgmental, and friendly, the students' final conclusions were more complex. What the students reported as their identity after the conclusion of the program was not a single, uniform concept of an American self or a study abroad self but something that varied from person to person.

Lee, who had hoped to be seen as a non-judgmental person and tied this to an identity as a friendly person, gained insight into how aspects of his habitus stemmed from his place of origin and how that affected how he might be perceived by others:

Overall, [...] American/the Midwest culture is a very friendly culture. So, going over there I just noticed it's not that they're rude, but they're just not as friendly as [...] people from the Midwest are and things like that. So, I don't know if [...] they see that we're like smiling and [...] you walk by and you say hi, [...] if that's kind of overwhelming to them. So, I guess I don't know exactly how they would feel about that but at least that's a big difference that I noticed [...]. I guess, I don't know how exactly they view that. Whether they think, "oh, that's cool. That was really nice." Or if they're like, "that guy's creepy."  
(post-program interview)

Through his experiences abroad, Lee had come to recognize these American behaviors as part of his identity and appreciated them while at the same time recognizing how being perceived as friendly or creepy was only partially in his control.

Dale and Foster both had hoped to build their identities as an open-minded and non-judgmental study abroad student. Dale had traveled previously and did not expect to have many problems with traveling on this program, but had hoped to become more open-minded through participation. After the program he reported that this had happened, saying “I believe I gained a greater understanding of other cultures and a higher tolerance for people with different characteristics than myself. Significant time abroad can alter your predetermined notions of what ‘normal’ behavior is” (post-program writing). Before the program he had already recognized the power of seeing things firsthand and he had successfully leveraged his studying abroad experiences as a way to start seeing himself as having that open-minded perspective he had hoped to gain.

On the other hand, Foster had hoped that people abroad would see him as being non-judgmental and after participating had tempered his self-image of being non-judgmental with recognition of how everyone has some kinds of prejudice:

I have [...] more of a clean slate, I guess, because [...] I feel like everybody, whether they mean to do it or not, always have like a little something like a little prejudice in their mind. And like not on purpose, not anything mean, but, I think I do better with starting, starting fresh, starting clean. (post-program interview)

Recognizing the relationship between expectations and perception, Foster had started to recognize more so the expectations he carried with him, while simultaneously hoping that he had started to actually be more open-minded. Although he had actually stepped back a bit from the

identity of being non-judgmental, he was approaching that concept with a greater understanding of what it might mean in reality. While both Dale and Foster had hoped to build an identity as a study abroad student, they had come to differing ideas of what that identity might be and to what degree they embodied it.

Not everyone even agreed with the idea that change had taken place. Edith, when asked about whether others on the program had changed responded, “I would say everyone's personality is the same, but maybe their perspective is different. We all learned so much and think of things differently but... everyone's personality is very prominent, I think, still as it was in the beginning” (post-program interview). She didn't see changes, or, as she later pondered, maybe just couldn't yet understand what the impact had been. Edith, responding to a final opening to share any thoughts on the topic of identity, stated:

Oof. I don't know myself. [...Y]ou're different but you can't explain why. But, [...] like I said before, I think [...] you learn so much that you can't even explain to people. Even I don't know how much I've learned, I think. (post-program interview)

This final statement was echoed by other students, and is perhaps the most telling about the study abroad student identity. Changes to behaviors and habitus were used by students as evidence of how they had changed when students had hoped to build a certain identity. The concept of the study abroad student was a useful lens for the students to view their experiences through, as it gave them a means of interpreting their experiences and way of formatting their identity. The differences in expectations before the program, their varying relationships and experiences abroad, and the relationships after the program all affected their final interpretations making the question of identity impossible to answer with a single, simple answer. Instead the answer to my research questions is one of process: For these students, studying abroad and leaving their home



field to immerse themselves into a new setting and a new set of social relationships was an opportunity to see that they had taken for granted their identities within this American context and to use the limited tools at their disposal to affect change.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

In exploring the topic of identity formation in study abroad, I had hoped to explore three research questions:

1.) How have international experiences affected study abroad students' sense of self-identity?

2.) How have interactions between study abroad students and people with whom they have interacted—such as fellow program participants, the program leader, friends, family, and locals—shaped their understanding of their identity? and

3.) How does the concept of the American self factor into students' identity development?

Using the social construction of reality model (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), I was able to look at how the interactions that students had before, during and after the program affected their sense of self. Through taking part in this study abroad program, the students began to recognize how their place and the people around them affected how they were seen, exposing the relative nature of their previous identities at home. Traveling not only exposed the existence of their American self, but also gave them an opportunity to start influencing how the American self was perceived through behavior and fashion. Their modern, pluralized self formed an important foundation for recognizing and maintaining multiple identities through interactions with their fellow program participants while abroad as well as with family and friends after returning. The students were not solely passive participants in interactions but they also started directing their development by moving away from interactions with friends and family who did not reinforce the identities they were attempting to form and instead focusing on the understanding that they felt when interacting with those friends and family who had traveled. Finally, the students made

use of the concept of a study abroad self, which they described as being open-minded, non-judgmental and friendly even before leaving, to interpret how their experiences abroad affected them. Points of discomfort became a critical opportunities for change, after which students described having gained an identity that not only was open to experiencing the new but also believed to be equipped to deal with the unknown.

In all of these ways, studying abroad was not a simple transition from one identity to another but a way for them to gain insight into the existence of their identity as a product of their place and interactions. Through travel from one field to others and through many interactions abroad, they not only experienced passive changes to their identities but they also made use of the experience as a whole to affect change in themselves. Identity is a fluid concept, and through this experience of leaving their home field the students did not come to a final, fixed identity, so much as an opening for a new understanding of their potential for change.

These results are useful for future study abroad program planning in several ways. First, having an insight into the process can be helpful because the process of changing a social reality can be deeply confusing for a participant. Although not all students are interested in analyzing their experiences abroad at this level, being offered this framework to understand their experiences would provide a way of acknowledging and possibly coping with the inherent challenge involved in shifting a person's entire reality and self-identity. Even acknowledging that these shifts take place during pre-departure is a way of preparing students to recognize and influence these shifts while abroad. Returning to their home field can also be a challenging experience when students do not receive the objectivation that they are craving friends and family, and understanding this part of their reverse culture shock may help them to adjust more quickly. For program leaders, having insight into the impact of program design and orientation

on identity formation is potentially helpful as well. Although students do not always seem to be listening during the pre-departure sessions, they are clearly retaining information that they think is helpful. The interpretation of this instruction is filtered through the students' existing social reality, but nonetheless information conveyed during this time does affect the way students understand their experiences abroad. Lastly, understanding how the interactions between program participants and locals may also provide additional opportunities for designing impactful experiences abroad.

There is also need for additional research on this topic. These students all took part in a medium-length program, traveling with other students from the same institution. Whether the outcomes would be different for shorter or longer programs or programs that integrate with locals would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the degree to which students can direct their experiences. Additionally, this study focused on the affect of study abroad less than two months after return. Since identity is not a single fixed outcome, a longitudinal study on identity development would be valuable for understanding how interpretations and identities shift over time after studying abroad. Although identity may not be an area of development as easily measured as others, studying abroad does offer an opportunity for profound changes in a person's understanding of who they are within the social context around them and a better understanding this process opens the door to a world of personal growth.

## REFERENCES

- Berger, P. L. (1963). *Invitation to sociology*. Anchor.
- Berger, P. L., & Huntington, S. P. (2003). *Many Globalizations*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality*. Anchor.
- Berger, P. L., Berger, B., & Kellner, H. (1974). *The homeless mind*. Vintage.
- Berger, P., & Zijderveld, A. (2010). *In Praise of Doubt*. HarperOne.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice. (Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique)*.  
*Transl. by Richard Nice. (Repr.)*. Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. University Of Chicago Press.
- Carlson, J. S., Burn, B. B., Useem, J., & Yachimowicz, D. (1990). *Study abroad: The experience of American Undergraduates in Western Europe and the United States*. (E. G. Barber & B. B. Burn). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Caughey, J. L. (2006). *Negotiating Cultures And Identities*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. SAGE.
- Clarke, I., Flaherty, T. B., Wright, N. D., & McMillen, R. M. (2009). Student Intercultural Proficiency From Study Abroad Programs. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 31(2), 173–181.  
doi:10.1177/0273475309335583
- Cohen, A. D., & Shively, R. L. (2007). Acquisition of Requests and Apologies in Spanish and French: Impact of Study Abroad and Strategy-Building Intervention. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(2), 189–212.
- Coser, R. L. (1991). *In Defense of Modernity*. Stanford University Press.

- Dewey, D. P., Ring, S., Gardner, D., & Belnap, R. K. (2013). Social network formation and development during study abroad in the Middle East. *System, 41*(2), 269–282.  
doi:10.1016/j.system.2013.02.004
- Dolby, N. (2004). Encountering an American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity. *Comparative Education Review, 48*(2), 150–173. doi:10.1086/382620
- Dolby, N., & Rahman, A. (2008). Research in International Education. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(3), 676–726. doi:10.3102/0034654308320291
- Dwyer, M. (2004). Charting the impact of studying abroad. *International Educator, 13*(1), 14–20.
- Gergen, K. J. (1971). *The concept of self*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Gergen, K. J. (1981). The Functions and Foibles of Negotiating Self-Conception. In M. D. Lynch, A. A. Norem-Hebeisen, & K. J. Gergen, *Self Concept: Advances in Theory and Research*. Ballinger Publishing Company.
- Gergen, K. J., & Marlowe, D. (1970). *Personality and social behavior*. Addison-Wesley.
- Gilbert, J. (2004). Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect. *Culture Machine, 6*.
- Gillespie, J., Braskamp, L., & Dwyer, M. (2009). Holistic Student Learning and Development Abroad: The IES 3-D Program Model. In R. Lewin, *The Handbook of Practice and Research in Study Abroad* (1st ed., pp. 445–465). New York: Routledge.
- Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (1996). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. SAGE.
- Hemmings, C. (2005). Invoking Affect. *Cultural Studies, 19*(5), 548–567.  
doi:10.1080/09502380500365473
- Hunter, J. D., & Ainlay, S. C. (1986). *Making sense of modern times*. Routledge.

- Jewett, S. (2010). "We're Sort of Imposters": Negotiating Identity at Home and Abroad. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 40(5), 635–656. doi:10.1111/j.1467-873X.2010.00515.x
- King, P. M., & Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2005). A Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(6), 571–592. doi:10.1353/csd.2005.0060
- Lavie, S., & Swedenburg, T. (1996). *Displacement, diaspora, and geographies of identity*. (S. Lavie & T. Swedenburg). Duke University Press Books.
- Lee, C. S., Therriault, D. J., & Linderholm, T. (2012). On the Cognitive Benefits of Cultural Experience: Exploring the Relationship between Studying Abroad and Creative Thinking. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 26(5), 768–778. doi:10.1002/acp.2857
- Lewis, M., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1981). The Self as Social Knowledge. In M. D. Lynch, A. A. Norem-Hebeisen, & K. J. Gergen, *Self Concept: Advances in Theory and Research*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company.
- Mapp, S. C. (2012). Effect of Short-Term Study Abroad Programs on Students' Cultural Adaptability. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(4), 727–737. doi:10.5175/JSWE.2012.201100103
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative Research Design*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Nash, D. (1976). The personal consequences of a year of study abroad. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 191–203.
- Norem-Hebeisen, A. A. (1981). A Maximization Model of Self-Concept. In M. D. Lynch, A. A. Norem-Hebeisen, & K. J. Gergen, *Self Concept: Advances in Theory and Research*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company.

- Opper, S. (1991). Study Abroad: a competitive edge for women? *Oxford Review of Education*, 17(1), 45–64.
- Pedersen, P. J. (2010). Assessing intercultural effectiveness outcomes in a year-long study abroad program. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(1), 70–80.  
doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.09.003
- Puar, J. K., Grewal, I., Kaplan, C., & Wiegman, R. (2007). Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times. *Duke University Press*.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative Interviewing*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Schütz, A. (1967). *Phenomenology of the Social World*. Northwestern University Press.
- Schütz, A. (1970). *Alfred Schutz: On Phenomenology and Social Relations : Selected Writings*. (H. R. Wagner). Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.
- Schütz, A. (1971). *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*. Martinus Nijhoff.
- Searle, J. R. (1997). *The Construction of Social Reality*. Free Press.
- Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 273–286.
- Tian, M., & Lowe, J. A. (2014). Intercultural Identity and Intercultural Experiences of American Students in China. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18(3), 281–297.  
doi:10.1177/1028315313496582
- Wacquant, L. (2006). *Body & Soul*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Wuthnow, R., Hunter, J., Bergesen, A., & Kurzweil, E. (1984). *Cultural Analysis*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Books.



## **APPENDIX A. INTRODUCTORY ORAL SCRIPT**

Hello, my name is Callie Dominique Karlsson Speer; you can call me Dominique. I'm not sure if any of you have seen me around, but I work with Tanya Kramer, the Assistant Director of Study Abroad who works with Dr. [Miller] and with your program. My official title is Study Abroad Advisor, but I haven't worked with your program at all. Instead I'm here for another reason: I am working on my masters in Sociology, and so I wanted to talk with you all today about my research project.

I studied abroad in Japan when I was college, and after I got back I felt like I had really changed from my experience. Wondering what it was that changed and why is what led me to work with study abroad, and later to start my graduate program. The research project is on the topic of social identity formation through study abroad, which is a fancy way of saying I'm looking at how you interacting with other people affects how you see yourself in the context of study abroad.

To explore this topic, I am asking for your help with my project. In an exciting turn, Dr. [Miller] has set up the course so that you can help me out and earn a pass-fail 20% of your grade at the same time. Taking part in this project would mean talking about your expectations for the program before you go and your experiences afterwards. To do this, both before you leave in two weeks and in November after you return, you would complete a short written sheet that would probably take about 5-10 minutes and then bring that to an interview with me. In the interview I would talk with you about a few questions on the topic. I think it will take around 20-40 minutes, with the length depending on how much you have to say.

I'll be keeping everything you write or tell me that can identify you private during the study, and then I'll delete any materials that specifically identify you after analysis is complete.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study so in the final research I will use the aggregate data all together, and there won't be anything that identifies you personally. Also, if you are worried--Dr. [Miller] is part of my committee so he is helping to oversee the full project, but he won't be seeing what you say except in that final aggregate anonymous form. I'll just let him know that you completed each of the parts so he can give you the 20% of your grade.

If you don't want to take part in my research, you can complete an alternative assignment and get the exact same 20% credit. The alternative option is a 3-page written assignment on the topic of international leadership. Don't feel at all bad about doing the alternative project if that is your preference. I don't think there's much risk of discomfort with this project but if you start taking part in this project and then you want to stop for any reason, please don't hesitate at all to switch over to the alternate written assignment. If you ask, I can remove what you'd have already given me from the study too.

I've passed out a copy of the Informed Consent Form for the research project for you to take a look at and see if you want to take part. Take as long as you need to read it and let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!

## **APPENDIX B. PRE-PROGRAM WRITING EXERCISE**

### **Self-Identification Before Program**

1. Why did you sign up for this class?
2. Do you know anybody else going on the trip?
3. Please write down 3-5 descriptors that you feel describe yourself. It might be helpful to answer in the format “I am...”, “I am a...”, “I am a person who...” and “I am not a...”.
4. Some of these characteristics are more visible than others. What do you think other people will assume about you?
5. When you are abroad, do you think that any of these characteristics you listed will mean something different to the people there? Would that impact you and, if so, how?
6. Do you think you will change over the course of the program? If so, how?

## **APPENDIX C. PRE-PROGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Descriptive Questions:**

1. Can you give me 3 words to describe yourself? Can you tell me why you chose these?
2. Can you give me 3 words your friends might use to describe you?
3. Can you give me 3 words that your parents might use to describe you?
4. When you first meet a person, what do you want them to know right away about you?

### **Study Abroad Experience:**

1. How did you first come to consider studying abroad?
2. Why did you decide to study abroad? How did you pick the program?
3. How does your family feel about you studying abroad? How about your friends?
4. How do you feel now when you think about what your study abroad experience will be like?
5. Do you know any of the other students who are going on the trip? If so, how and how long have you known them?
6. Do you know if any of the other students have traveled or studied abroad before?  
What do you think they are hoping to get out of the program?
7. What benefits do you think you get from studying abroad? What challenges do you think you will run into?
8. After you study abroad do you think you will have changed at all? If so, how?

## APPENDIX D. POST-PROGRAM WRITING EXERCISE

### Self-Identification Post-Program

1. Please write down 3-5 descriptors that you feel describe yourself. It might be helpful to answer in the format “I am...”, “I am a...”, “I am a person who...” and “I am not a...”.
2. Some of these characteristics are more visible than others. What do you think other people assumed about you?
3. On the trip did you change your appearance or actions to fit in better with local community?
4. When you were abroad, do you think that any of these characteristics you listed meant something different to the people there? Did that impact you?
5. Do you think you changed over the course of the program? If so, how?

## **APPENDIX E. POST-PROGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Descriptive Questions:**

1. Now that you're back, how would you describe yourself? Can you give me 3 words to describe yourself? Can you tell me why you chose these?
2. Since you've been back, what have your friends noticed about you?
3. Since you've been back, what has your family noticed about you?
4. How would the Belgians describe you? Is that different from what you expected?
5. Did you fit into the typical Belgian perceptions of Americans?

### **Study Abroad Experience:**

1. Was your study abroad experience what you expected? How was it the same? How was it different?
2. Are there any parts of the program that stick out in your mind?
3. What did you find easiest about studying abroad? What did you find the most difficult?
4. When you came home, who was the first person you talked to about your trip? What did you tell them about? How did they respond?
5. Who else have you talked with about your trip?
6. Have your other family and friends made any comments about your experience? What do you think they think about it?
7. Did you get to know any locals while you were on the program? How did you meet them? Did they know you were a study abroad student? What do you think they thought of you and the program?

8. Was there anyone you connected with in the class who was on the trip? What was it that shaped that connection?
9. Was there anybody you did not get along with on the trip? Why do you think that was the case?
10. Do you feel like you know the other students on the program better now? What was it like being on the program with them? Do you think people changed over the course of the program?
11. Do you think that study abroad has affected you as a person? If so, how?