

University of Nevada, Reno

**Perceptions of Program Coordinators, Program Advisors, and Resident Directors of Study
Abroad Regarding Their Professional Responsibilities:
A Qualitative Social Constructionist Inquiry**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

By

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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prepared under our supervision by

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Abstract

Internationalization in institutions of higher education has come in many forms, and an ever-increasing number of university leaders have encouraged their students, especially undergraduates, to participate in study abroad programs. Every year almost 4.5 million students study abroad worldwide. As more and more students study abroad, the number and diversity of study abroad personnel located and working throughout the world continues to increase. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that program coordinators, program advisors, and resident directors of an international study abroad organization held about creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students. More specifically, this study focused on their perceptions of their professional responsibilities, the goals and objectives of study abroad, and the needs of college students. To better understand the perspectives of the staff, qualitative data was collected during interviews lasting from 45 minutes to two hours. Throughout the interviews, participants described a balancing act to help students get out of their comfort zones, become self-reliant, manage their emotions, and find themselves. Particularly noteworthy was how similar their responses mirrored Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development which theorize seven vectors students go through while developing their identities. The findings of this study expand the notion that creating a study abroad experience requires carefully orchestrated planning, preparation, and teamwork within the study abroad staff for a higher purpose – in this case, to create engaged global citizens.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction and Rationale

The world has become increasingly interconnected through economic, cultural, political, and social avenues with a growing freedom in the movement of goods, people, and money (Guidry, Kennedy, & Zald, 2000). This movement, also known as globalization, has called for more international and intercultural cooperation and understanding. Cross-cultural training has been advocated in many businesses (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). To facilitate effective cross-cultural interactions, psychologists have begun to implement multicultural competence in all psychological endeavors, making it a defining feature of psychological practice, education, training, and research (Gallardo, Johnson, Parham, & Carter, 2009). Concurrently, employers across fields have begun to seek out applicants with cultural competence skills (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Ward, Wilson, & Fisher, 2011).

In a speech by Dr. Goodman, the President of Institute of International Education (IIE), he emphasized,

The careers of all of our students will be global ones, in which they will need to function effectively in multi-national teams. They will need to understand the cultural differences and historical experiences that divide us, as well as the common values and humanity that unite us. (Open Doors, 2014, p.2)

Noteworthy is that IIE was established in the aftermath of World War I by Nobel Peace Prize winners. They believed that lasting peace could not be achieved without greater understanding between nations and that international exchange formed the strongest basis for fostering such international cooperation and understanding (Open Doors, 2014).

Historically, leaders of institutions of higher education have been at the forefront of international exchanges. They have continually reassessed how to prepare graduates to thrive within a diverse, global workforce and foster increased intercultural understanding (Jackson, 2008). Internationalization in institutions of higher education has come in many forms, from changes in curricula to international service learning projects. Additionally, an ever-increasing number of university leaders have encouraged their students, especially undergraduates, to participate in study abroad programs. Study abroad can be defined as any number of arrangements by which students complete part of their degree program through educational activities outside of their country of citizenship (Purdue, 2015). According to a 2014 report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Education at a Glance, 2014), approximately 4.5 million students studied abroad in 2013 worldwide, with an expected annual growth rate of seven percent. In Europe, between the years 1987 to 2014, roughly 2.5 million students participated in the Erasmus program alone (Erasmus, Facts and Figures, 2014). Erasmus is a study abroad program financed by the European Union, facilitating intra-European student mobility. In the United States (U.S.), the number of U.S. students studying abroad has also increased, doubling in the first fifteen years of the 21st century to almost 300,000 students per year (Open Doors, 2014). In 2014, IIE launched Generation Study Abroad, a national campaign to again double the number of U.S. students who study abroad by the end of the decade.

Study abroad programs have been facilitated by both private and public organizations. Based on the average study abroad program website, they often declare similar mission statements: “To provide the highest quality educational and cultural

exchange programs to enrich the lives of young people throughout the world” (American Institute for Foreign Study, 2018). They often declare they have a unique group of experts and dedicated staff with an unparalleled passion and commitment for study abroad. The staff’s professional responsibilities include managing a portfolio of foreign education programs in geographical areas such as Latin America or Europe. In addition to coordinating logistics with their school's international partners, they monitor education-related developments at partner institutions to ensure academic integrity of the programs under their responsibility (Brunot, 2018). Study abroad staff also oversee student participation from application to repatriation, aiding in student visa compliance, conducting pre-departure orientations, and serving as the main contact for the study abroad program (Brunot, 2018). Furthermore, study abroad staff stay informed about world events that may affect the safety and well-being of their students and have action plans in place in order to react promptly to any emergency.

In order to handle the logistics of the international experience for study abroad students, some study abroad organizations employ staff in Student Advisory Centers, located in the U.S., in addition to resident directors and support staff located in offices overseas. Examples of such study abroad programs include American Institute for Foreign Study, Council on International Educational Exchange, Academic Programs International Study Abroad, Center for International Studies Abroad, Cultural Experiences Abroad, and University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC).

Statement of the Problem

Much of the research related to study abroad has focused on student perspectives; literature regarding the perspectives and experiences of those who design, shape, and

coordinate study abroad programs is scarce (Lucas, 2009). Indeed, researchers in multiple disciplinary fields have suggested that inquiries be directed towards institutional leaders, local educators, and parents on their perceptions and motivations regarding the development of internationalization strategies (Fedorowicz, 2017; Yemini, Holzmann, de Wit, Sadeh, Stavans, & Fadila, 2015). The significance of this recommendation is that as more and more students study abroad, the number and diversity of study abroad personnel located and working throughout the world continues to increase.

A comparison could be made between multinational corporations and study abroad organizations. A primary feature of multinational corporations is that the headquarter is located in the parent country; although the headquarter maintains control of the business activities, the subsidiaries in other countries are given a high level of autonomy in regards to daily operations. Furthermore, these corporations tend to take a polycentric (versus ethnocentric) approach, and hire mostly host country nationals. These host nationals are hired to reflect the respective cultures of the countries and/or regions. Employing a multicultural workforce has been shown to contribute to creativity and innovation thanks to diverse perspectives and experiences (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; West, 2002). A similar description could be applied to study abroad organizations. Staff are located in the U.S. as well as in the various host countries. Like the staff of multinational corporations, study abroad staff must have a deep understanding of the cultural norms and expectations of the host country to effectively provide support to the study abroad students.

Despite the similarity of hiring for cultural acuity, however, there are very clear differences between multinational corporations and study abroad organizations. First and

foremost, multinational corporations are often much larger than study abroad organizations. In general, study abroad organizations have small staffs, often with only two or three individuals working full-time in the host countries. By virtue of their smaller size, study abroad communication networks also tend to differ; there is more reliance on individual study abroad staff members to interpret and implement the mission of the organization in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities at a distance from the central study abroad office.

Another distinction between multinational corporations and study abroad organizations is their focus or *common denominator*. The staff of multinational corporations offer the same goods and/or services throughout the world, but in a manner reflective of the culture of the host country/region. For multinational corporations, the goods and/or services are the common denominator; goods and services can be adapted to reflect the needs of the different cultural groups. In contrast, study abroad programs are designed to provide educational and cultural experiences for U.S. students in the host countries. The student is the common denominator; students participate in study abroad programs to learn about different cultures, however they bring their U.S. cultural orientation to the experience. It is the implied responsibility of the study abroad staff to help bridge the cultural divides that might exist.

One of the possible cultural divides that might exist relates to the fact that study abroad programs are designed for college students who are at a period in their lives when they are transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood. This is of particular relevance because various cultures perceive the stage of adolescence differently. For example, the degree to which adolescents are perceived as autonomous or independent beings varies

widely between cultures as do the behaviors that represent this emerging autonomy (Pala, Gentina, & Muratore, 2010; Helwig, 2006). The range of attitudes on a particular topic embraced within a culture also affect the beliefs, lifestyles, and perceptions of its adolescents. These stances can have both positive and negative impacts on student development (DiClemente & Wingood, 2000; Li et al., 2002).

To summarize, the structure and overall intent of study abroad operations are fraught with potential problems. By virtue of a relatively small number of personnel, dispersed throughout the world, staff members have a great deal of autonomy to interpret the study abroad organizational mission as they structure their daily work-related responsibilities. At the same time, study abroad is designed to foster intercultural competence as a component of a student's overall educational experience. As such, the work of the staff located in the U.S. must be coordinated with that of the staff located in the host country. Study abroad often occurs at a potentially tumultuous time in the students' lives when they are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Furthermore, this stage of life is interpreted differently in various cultures. In essence, the structure of study abroad operations requires professional autonomy, but the intent of study abroad programs requires harmonization, particularly in communication, at a time characteristically described as that of disequilibrium of the focus of the effort: The students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students. More specifically, how did Program Coordinators (PCs), Program

Advisors (PAs), and Resident Directors (RDs) perceive their professional responsibilities? Two questions guided this study:

1. How did staff members understand the goals and objectives of study abroad?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?
2. How did staff members understand the needs of college students?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?

Research Design

A qualitative, social constructionist design was employed to address the research questions. Qualitative methods are often used to examine, comprehend, and clarify the meanings of social phenomena (Merriam, 1998). Directed dialogue within this context was used to explore personal perceptions (Seidman, 1991). Furthermore, both open-ended questions and those with a concluding point were used in order to obtain a better understanding of respondents' viewpoints as they related to the topic (Yi, 1994).

Social constructionism is also used to gain knowledge about individuals' experiences and their interpretation of those experiences (Shank, 2002). Social constructionism provides an opportunity to comprehend the essence of a topic through the participants' social meanings, values, power structure, and rationalization (Weber, 1949). Subsequently, social constructionism was used for this research; the purpose of which was to understand the world of study abroad by means of understanding how participants perceived their professional responsibilities to create a study abroad experience for U.S. college students within their social and cultural environments.

Data Source, Collection, and Analysis

The study abroad program, USAC, was selected for this study because of its diverse network of international site locations and staff. As a non-profit consortium of 33 U.S. universities, USAC operated in 26 countries at the time of the study with two main types of study programs: Partnership Programs and Specialty Programs. Participants for this study were recruited specifically from the Specialty Programs of USAC. Two criteria were established for inclusion in the study. First, all participants had to be employed by USAC; second, participants had to work directly with students either pre/post-departure or in residence in the host country. Seventeen participants agreed to be part of this study: Four Program Coordinators (PC), seven Program Advisors (PA), and six Specialty Program Resident Directors (RD). The PCs and PAs were based in the U.S. USAC office. The RDs were based in international USAC program sites.

Data were gathered through interviews with the study participants lasting from 45 minutes to two hours with an average of one hour. Data analysis was consistent with qualitative design. Extensive memoing at the conclusion of each interview was undertaken to capture initial ideas about the data. Although iterative, four primary steps were followed. All interviews were transcribed and read for a holistic interpretation of the data and identification of initial themes. This was followed by a line-by-line analysis whereby interviews were coded in relation to the initial themes. Themes were adjusted according to the statements of the participants. During this third step, consideration of the specific culture and organizational role the participant held in USAC was considered. Finally, the themes and participant roles were analyzed in relation to the research question.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study can be used by practitioners, administrators, and student affairs personnel to enhance staff trainings. Staff should recognize that they play a critical role in the development of study abroad students and share responsibility (within reason) for the maturation of students' identity (Tessmer, 2012). Leaders of institutions of higher education can also use this information to re-envision their internationalization practices for creating global citizens.

Another way this research can be used is to help understand the field of study abroad from the lens of the people who are designing and shaping it. These voices carry valuable insight into the procedures, hopes, and goals for internationalization and the international exchange process.

Limitations

This research, while enlightening and relevant, was somewhat limited. Qualitative interviews, as well as severe time constraints, prohibited inclusion of a large number of participants. Furthermore, participation in this study was voluntary, and there were some instances where individuals declined to respond to further contact. This was particularly observant in the lack of Asian and African participants who agreed to participate. However, after re-visiting the program offerings, it was evident that there were limited USAC Specialty Programs in these countries. Overall, the study participants seem to be representative of the USAC programs.

Concurrently, the researcher divested private presuppositions and only examined the study participants' descriptions when analyzing data. Prejudgments and biases pertaining to the researcher's personal experiences were avoided. Moustakas (1994)

expanded on this by asserting that it is impossible to completely accomplish the epoché process; however, the researcher's own life stories and experiences were not included in the process of data collection and analysis.

Delimitation

The delimitation of this research is that only one study abroad organization was investigated. There are various organizations and personnel, which may result in different responses. However, different companies also have different organizational cultures and programs. Thus, for this study, by only using one organization, the researcher hoped to avoid confusing organizational cultures with the worker's perceptions of their goals and objectives.

Researcher's Background

Although not typically included in a qualitative study, the researcher's background has been included to help explain the growth and development of the research inquiry.

Before I enrolled in my undergraduate university, I had never considered studying abroad. I had ventured on one school trip to Europe when I was eighteen; at which time, I remember telling my parents, "This is my one and only chance to go overseas." Little did I know or fully understand then the motto of my undergraduate university which was "Not unto ourselves alone are we born." Stories of adventures beyond surrounded me when I arrived at the university; and over half of the student population spent at least one semester overseas. Largely through the support and encouragement of these fellow students, I decided to study abroad for one year. The fall semester of my junior year I spent in London, England. I backpacked through Europe, lived with a homestay family,

and attended classes with fellow students from my undergraduate university and another northwestern university. However, I did not find that life was much different from my life at home. The real difference came during my spring semester on Semester at Sea. During the semester, we sailed from the Bahamas, Cuba, South Africa, Tanzania, India, Korea, Japan, Alaska, to Canada, and disembarked in Seattle, U.S. This was my first exposure to developing and third world countries. I was sick, sleep-deprived, and pawed at by two-year-old beggars in India. Coming from a sheltered, small town in northern Idaho, these experiences were quite a shock to me. I cried for a week straight after I disembarked. After which, I became alive with a new vigor to make a difference in the world.

During Semester at Sea, I made the decision to live overseas. I applied for and received a position as an assistant language teacher with the JET Program in Aomori, Japan. Throughout my tenure, the goals of JET were often repeated: To help the local population learn English, to have foreigners fall in love with Japan, and to have foreigners bring back their love of Japan to their native land. It worked. Planning to live in Japan for two years, I became so enamored with the lifestyle, language, and culture of Japan, I maxed out my contract at five years. I also became deeply passionate about interacting, communicating, and working with the local population. After three years, I was promoted to prefectural advisor where I counseled, mediated, and assisted fellow JETs. I also organized welcome orientations in addition to cultural and professional development seminars.

I returned to the U.S. with a new vigor to learn more about education and other cultures. I received my master's degree in Early Childhood Studies then began my PhD in Educational Leadership. I wanted to help others experience, learn, and grow through

the international process. But how did I learn and grow? What brought about those changes in me? I decided to further explore study abroad during my graduate studies. I joined four more short-term study abroad programs: Two faculty led trips to Turkey and Romania and two USAC trips to Costa Rica and Chile. Being at a different age and mindset than during my first two study abroad experiences, I found myself observing the students more than interacting with them. I was drawn into talking with the staff and homestay families about their work with the students as well as their lives, hopes, goals, and intercultural interactions. I was fascinated by their perspectives. I found all of these interactions to be invaluable in terms of understanding the goals and objectives of students, faculty, staff, and homestay families during study abroad.

I began to mull over my experiences and the experiences of those I had encountered, becoming more and more interested in this aspect of study abroad. These people were passionate about their experiences and recounting their stories, almost as though few people had asked to hear their stories before. Upon more investigation, I discovered there was very little scholarly conversation on the topic of study abroad from the people who design and shape the programs. (In fact, more recently I discovered that this will be the next shift in the study abroad literature field). It was from these experiences that I conceived the idea for this project. I decided to focus on these unheard voices. I wanted to explore the goals and objectives of study abroad as well as the thoughts of U.S. college students from the people who design and shape study abroad programs.

My experiences and the experiences of others inspired me to research study abroad in general. The literature I read motivated me to explore perspectives which

remain uncommon in the field. These influences ultimately shaped the following project. My main interest is in understanding the nuances of creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students and identifying how these ideas connect international staff members around the world. Based on my previous discussions and the limited research I had found, general ideas and beliefs arose that culture would shape the experience and perceptions of the participants, at times causing conflict between organizational staff members. However, when I started this project I did not know nor could not know what I would find about the true implications. This project not only allowed me to explore the perceptions of the designers and shapers of study abroad, I was able to see a much larger picture regarding the field of internationalization and global citizenry. Implications will be provided based on this research. This study comes at a crucial time when international study is increasingly encouraged by leaders of institutions of higher education.

Definition of Key Terms

- *Adolescence*: The transitional period of physical and psychological development between childhood and maturity (Boundless Psychology, 2015).
- *Authoritarian Parenting*: A parenting style characterized by high demands and low responsiveness. Parents with an authoritarian style have very high expectations of their children, yet provide very little in the way of feedback and nurturance. Mistakes tend to be punished harshly. When feedback does occur, it is often negative. Yelling and corporal punishment are also commonly seen in the authoritarian style (Cherry, 2018).
- *Authoritative Parenting*: A parenting style characterized by reasonable demands and high responsiveness. While these parents might have high expectations for

their children, they also give their children the resources and support they need to succeed (Bridges & Moore, 2002).

- *Collectivism*: Collectivism is a moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that emphasizes the significance of groups including their identities, goals, rights, and outcomes (Triandis, 2001).
- *Co-located Team*: Members of the same development team are located at the same physical location where face-to-face collaboration among the team members is possible and practiced (Innolution, 2018).
- *Culture*: Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Culture includes the behavior patterns, beliefs, and all other products of a particular group of people that are passed from generation to generation. Culture can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008; Zimmerman, 2015). Even when people speak the same language, the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures (Japan Intercultural, 2015).
- *Ethnocentrism*: Ethnocentrism is the belief in the superiority of one's own group, and is a natural attitude in every culture. Ethnocentrism causes one to judge others according to their own personal values (Neulip, 2012).
- *Globalization*: "Spatial-temporal processes, operating on a global scale that rapidly cut across national boundaries, drawing more and more of the world into webs of interconnection, integrating and stretching cultures and communities

across space and time, and compressing our spatial and temporal horizons” (Inda & Rosaldo, 2006, p. 9).

- *Homestay*: A homestay refers to private homes in which unused rooms are rented for the purpose of supplementing income and meeting people (Lanier & Berman, 1993).
- *Global Citizens*: “Global citizenship” is a highly contested and multifaceted term (Hanson, 2010; Zemach-Bersin, 2009), however, three key dimensions, at least within the study abroad literature, are now commonly accepted (Morais & Ogden, 2011; Schattle, 2009): (a) social responsibility (concern for others, for society at large, and for the environment), (b) global awareness (understanding and appreciation of one’s self in the world and of world issues), and (c) civic engagement (active engagement with local, regional, national, and global community issues). Schattle (2009) proposes that global citizenship “entails being aware of responsibilities beyond one’s immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly” (p. 12).
- *Intercultural Communication*: A combination of many fields including anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, and communication. Intercultural communication refers to exchanging information between people from different cultures. The term “intercultural communication” was first used in Edward T. Hall’s (1959) book, *The Silent Language*. Hall is generally acknowledged to be the founder of the field (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999).
- *Internationalization*: “Any systematic sustained effort aimed at making higher education more responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the

globalization of societies, economy and labor markets” (Kälvermark & Van Der Wende, 1997, p. 19). More specifically, internationalization entails the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of an institution (Knight, 1994).

- *Norms*: That which is regarded as normal or typical; a rule that is enforced by members of a community (Boundless Psychology, 2015).
- *Organizational Culture*: Organizational culture, sometimes referred to as corporate culture, is a general term that outlines the collective attitudes, beliefs, common experiences, procedures, and values that are prevalent in an organization. An organization's expectations, experiences, philosophy, and values that hold the organization together, as well as the organization's self-image, inner workings, interactions with the outside world, and future expectations are part of the organizational culture. Organizational culture is based on shared customs and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time (Schein, 2010).
- *Stereotype*: A stereotype is defined as an unvarying form or pattern, specifically a fixed or conventional notion or conception of a person, group, or idea, held by a number of people and allows for no individuality or critical judgment (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1998). Many stereotypes are subconscious and automatic, meaning there is little critical thinking involved when articulated. Stereotyping occurs when observers attribute an individual's behavior and communication to elements of that individual's character. When interacting with strangers one is especially likely to attribute behavior to character, and then to view character as typical of culture, race, or other characteristic. In other words, individuals are

likely to interpret a stranger's behavior in light of their stereotypes, commonly expressed as “those kind of people” (Cross-Cultural Communication, n.d.).

- *Research I U.S. Institutions of Higher Learning:* Research I is a category used by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education to indicate universities in the U. S. that engage in extensive research activity (Carnegie, 2017).
- *Study Abroad:* Any number of arrangements by which students complete part of their degree program through educational activities outside of their country of citizenship (Purdue, 2015).
- *Target Language:* An additional language that one is learning (Pierce, 2014).
- *USAC Program Advisors:* USAC Program Advisors (PAs) are based in the U.S. USAC office. They are responsible for preparing college students to study abroad as well as to be a resource upon the student’s repatriation (USAC, 2016)
- *USAC Program Coordinators:* USAC Program Coordinators (PCs) are based in offices in the U.S. They include the President/CEO and various department directors. As part of their duties, PCs develop relationships with other universities, promote study abroad, set academic policy, create academic calendars, negotiate contracts, and evaluate programs through student feedback evaluations. They also oversee peer advisors and program advisors, decide how each program is to be represented in the catalogue, research field trip options, and address programs weakness while looking for improvements (USAC, 2016)
- *USAC Resident Directors:* USAC Resident Directors (RDs) are responsible for providing support to students while they are studying overseas. The roles and

responsibilities of RDs extend beyond the traditional classroom and include 24/7 involvement. Resident Directors' daily interactions and close living quarters acquaint them with student life and culture inside and outside of the classroom (USAC, 2016)

- *Qualitative Data Analysis:* A search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes taken from qualitative data (e.g. interview transcripts, field notes, videos, audio recordings, or documents). Using a range of processes and procedures, the researcher moves the qualitative data that has been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations being investigated (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction to and rationale for the study. Chapter II provides an overview of study abroad, discusses the role of culture in communication, explores cultural characterizations of adolescence, and addresses college student development theories. Chapter II also establishes the theoretical underpinnings of the study and includes related cultural concepts and existing research. Chapter III describes the methodology of the study. Chapter III also details the participants recruited, clarifies the use of individual interviews and the data collection, and describes the data analysis process. Chapter IV presents the study's results. Finally, Chapter IV addresses the research questions and offers a discussion, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II: Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for United States (U.S.) college students. More specifically, how did Program Coordinators (PCs), Program Advisors (PAs), and Resident Directors (RDs) perceive their professional responsibilities? Two questions guided this study:

1. How did staff members understand the goals and objectives of study abroad?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?
2. How did staff members understand the needs of college students?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?

The review of literature is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of study abroad as a vehicle to internationalize higher education. The second section describes the role of culture in communication. The third section explores cultural characterizations of adolescence. Finally, the fourth section addresses college student development theories.

Internationalization of Higher Education through Study Abroad

The world has become increasingly interconnected through economic, cultural, political, and social avenues (Henthorne, Miller, & Hudson, 2001). The speed of internationalization substantially increased following World War II as governments and businesses shifted to a peace-time economy. During this time, international institutions, such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, were formed. Increasingly evident were issues associated with cross-cultural interactions and communication. Consequently, the Foreign Service Act of 1946 established the Foreign

Service Institute (FSI) to conduct trainings to prepare government employees for posts overseas (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002).

Prior to the creation of the post WWII international order, leaders of institutions of higher education were already critical partners in promoting internationalization. In the aftermath of World War I (circa 1919), the Institute of International Education (IIE) was established by Nobel Peace Prize winners, Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University; Elihu Root, former Secretary of State; and Stephen Duggan, Sr., Professor of Political Science at the College of the City of New York, and subsequently IIE's first President. These founders of IIE contended that lasting peace could not be achieved without greater understanding between nations, and that international exchange formed the strongest basis for fostering such understanding.

Leaders of institutions of higher education have continuously reassessed how to prepare graduates to thrive within an internationalizing workforce (Jackson, 2008). Internationalization tactics in institutions of higher education have come in many forms. Internal changes have been added or strengthened, including more diverse and globalized education curricula, foreign language education, and international cultural studies. Active recruitment of foreign students to American universities have been initiated. Residence abroad, internships overseas, and service learning in foreign countries have also been made available to students (Cushner & Karim, 2004).

Another particularly noteworthy way institutions of higher education have contributed to preparing students to live and work in an interdependent, global economy is through study abroad (Jackson, 2008). Since 1985, IIE's *Open Doors* has conducted surveys on U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit. According to IIE's 2014

Open Doors report, the number of students studying abroad doubled in the first 15 years of the 21st century. In 2014, 289,408 students from the U.S. studied abroad for academic credit. That same year IIE launched Generation Study Abroad, a national campaign to again double the number of students who study abroad each year by the end of the decade. More than 450 partners joined the campaign. These partners included: 298 U.S. colleges and universities from 48 states; 67 higher education institutions and organizations in countries other than the U.S.; 16 education associations; 56 organizations and social network agencies for high school study abroad; and 13 U.S. and foreign government entities, including the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (Open Doors, 2014). Through their combined efforts, various study abroad programs and levels have been initiated.

Five general study abroad program levels have been identified (Engle & Engle, 2003). Level one, the study tour, offers “an experience of greater intellectual and aesthetic density than that offered by simple tourism” (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 11). The duration of the study tour ranges from several days to a few weeks with the entry target-language competence elementary to intermediate. Course work is taught by home institution faculty in English. Cultural interaction or experiential learning are not goals for this program level and the housing is generally collective. There are no guided reflections on the cultural experiences in level one (Engle & Engle, 2003).

Level two, the short-term study, has a duration of three to eight weeks and “allows students a first exposure to language and civilization in its cultural setting while, in theory, acting as a possible springboard for longer and more in-depth overseas experiences” (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 12). The course work is taught in a combination of

English and the target-language and the entry target-language competence is elementary to intermediate. The academic work context consists of in-house instruction or instruction at the local institution. The housing is often collective and/or may include a homestay (i.e., residing with a local family either individually or collectively with fellow students). Due to program duration and/or language constraints, organized and directed forms of cultural interaction or experiential learning are not often possible. However, there is generally an orientation program to handle logistical considerations and provide cultural *dos and don'ts* (Engle & Engle, 2003).

Level three, the cross-cultural contact program, generally lasts a semester. While many cross-cultural contact program participants are “guided primarily by their own cultural norms and draw their most positive memories” from inter-student group contact, certain sojourners move toward positive, meaningful, and memorable exchanges with the host nationals (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 12). The language used in course work is a combination of English and the target-language and the entry target-language competence is elementary to intermediate. Students study with other study abroad student groups or other local international students. The housing is collective and/or homestay and the students engage in more elaborate cultural orientations and simple forms of structured cultural contact. Students are also guided in reflections on their cultural experiences (Engle & Engle, 2003).

Level four, the cross-cultural encounter program, generally lasts a semester to an academic year. “While most participants in such programs adopt ‘third cultural’ behavior—that is, in its norms neither strictly American nor strictly faithful to the host culture—they often make significant progress in the recognition of and adaptation to local cultural

rhythms” (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 12). The language used in course work is predominantly the target-language and the entry target-language competence is pre-advanced to advanced. The housing is individual or homestay and there are optional opportunities to participate in occasional integration activities. There are both initial and ongoing orientation programs to assist in guided reflection on their cultural experiences (Engle & Engle, 2003).

Level five, the cross-cultural immersion program, generally lasts a semester to an academic year. The entry target-language competence is advanced and the language used in course work and all curricular and extracurricular activities is the target-language. Concurrently, the academic work context consists of the local norms, including partial or complete direct enrollment. The housing is generally an individual homestay and regular participation in cultural integration programs is required; this includes extensive direct cultural contact via service learning or work internships. There is an orientation program, mentoring, often a course in cross-cultural perspectives, and reflective writing and research to assist in guided reflections on the cultural experiences (Engle & Engle, 2003). “The mentor or cross-cultural facilitator accompanies the adaptation process with concrete orientation information and guides reflection upon the students’ direct cultural encounters by helping to analyze the cross-cultural dynamic they reveal” (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 13).

Study Abroad Practices

According to Delmas (2013), too many existing study abroad programs limit intervention in any sort of focused and intentional way, to pre-departure and on-site arrival orientation sessions. Delmas argues that regardless of the level of immersion or

length of the program, however, if students continually surround themselves with students from their own country, the students may consider the experience to be a vacation from school and may limit interactions with locals from the host culture; therefore, the study abroad results may be minimal.

Many faculty and study abroad administrators have become increasingly focused on student learning outcomes (Berg, 2009). Prior to the 1970s, study abroad professionals made little effort to intervene in students' experiences abroad, beyond suggesting or arranging for specific courses at the study abroad site or telling students that they were expected to attend lectures and excursions. During the 1970s, only 189 research studies were published regarding study abroad. However, faculty and study abroad professionals at many institutions became increasingly interested in measuring the effectiveness of study abroad. The number of study abroad research studies increased to 675 in the 1990s, and 315 studies appeared in articles, reports, and books during the first 3 years of this century (Comp, Gladding, Rhodes, Stephenson, & Vande Berg, 2007). Even with an increase in literature, Vande Berg (2007) argued that assessment of study abroad relies on student self-reports that the experience "transformed" them as evidence that study abroad programs have been successful. According to Delmas (2013), these self-reported transformations and the increasing number of students going abroad, however, does not necessarily indicate the positive outcomes that international educators intended or that meaningful changes actually occurred in program participants.

Berg (2014) contended that recent theory and research does, however, profoundly influence the way international educators are framing teaching and learning. Staff are coming to understand that students face considerable challenges in enrolling in academic

systems in other countries. The U.S. students enrolled in universities abroad are far more likely to be exposed to straightforward lectures by faculty members who have little or no interest in learner-centered education than they are in their classes at home (Vande Berg, 2007). Student and parent expectations have furthermore become increasingly accustomed to receiving extraordinary levels of support ranging from academic, to social, psychological, and physical. Subsequently, students often have a difficult time adjusting to learning environments abroad, which provide considerably less, or simply different, forms of support. Furthermore, both parents and students often complain to study abroad professionals when they do not get the support they desire (Vande Berg, 2007).

These developments are leading increasing numbers of study abroad professionals to intervene in students' learning. Staff are beginning to work with students to help them understand what and how they learn while abroad. Staff are also working to give students the intercultural tools, conceptual and behavioral, that will allow them to focus on their own learning in new and culturally challenging environments. Vande Berg (2007) argued that resident staff who require students to identify their own learning goals, and review their goals, are able to help students reflect on their own learning. They can then make adjustments in their behavior and actions, making it more likely that they will meet their, and the program's, goals.

Delmas (2013) recommended that staff should provide cultural mentoring, provision of cultural content, reflection, engagement, and intercultural learning throughout the study-abroad cycle. Furthermore, intervention should be continuous. If study abroad's unique potential is to be met, study abroad professionals need to intervene actively in students' learning—before, during, and after their experiences abroad.

According to Berg (2014), well designed and delivered intercultural courses, orientations and workshops can help students learn to interact more effectively and appropriately with culturally different others.

Duke (2014) stated that there must be a balance between supporting students and challenging them. He indicated that bridging the gap means letting students know that they'll learn to the extent that they meet three learning challenges: Interacting with host nationals, moving outside the *student bubble*, and avoiding stereotyping. Berg (2009) further suggested that study abroad involves a well-trained cultural mentor who can help students to develop the intercultural concepts and skills that will allow them to meet these challenges and learn through the internships, field experiences and other experiential activities provided by their programs.

Engle and Engle (2004) developed study abroad programs through a 'reverse engineering' process. They began by identifying the learning outcomes they wanted visiting U.S. students to achieve and then worked backwards to identify and build the specific courses, activities and program features that would presumably facilitate the students' achievement of those outcomes. The Georgetown Consortium study provided significant evidence that most students benefit through enrolling in programs abroad that are intentionally designed to promote their intercultural learning (Berg, 2009). As Hunter elucidated, 'Programs that do not rely on the haphazard chance of student engaging in this process on their own, but instead very intentionally organize learning activities to encourage it, inevitably will be better poised' to teach effectively (2008).

For the past three decades various faculty and study-abroad professionals have been designing programs that aim actively to facilitate student intercultural learning

abroad. In the mid-1970s, Bruce La Brack and his colleagues at the University of the Pacific (UOP) developed the pre-departure and re-entry courses that are still offered today to UOP study abroad participants. Janet Bennett and Milton Bennett designed and delivered systematic interventions for U.S. students going abroad in the 1980s and 1990s. Engle and Engle designed and first offered their AUCP program in the early 1990s. In the late 1990s, Kris Lou and Gabriele Bosley jointly developed the intercultural learning course that both teach to groups of Willamette and Bellarmine university students. Michael Paige, Andrew Cohen and several other University of Minnesota colleagues developed the Maximizing study abroad guides for students, teachers and study-abroad advisers in the late 1990s; in the early years of this decade they developed the intercultural learning course in which some University of Minnesota study-abroad participants now enroll. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) piloted yet another intercultural course, the 'Seminar in Living and Learning', at 12 programs abroad during spring semester 2009 (Berg, 2009).

Challenges Associated with Study Abroad

Throughout the years, reported challenges have accompanied study abroad programs. Coward (2002) studied international students from China, Korea, and Taiwan taking graduate seminar courses in the U.S. She discovered that international students were continuously trying to understand what was happening in class, when they could talk, and what role they should employ. Lin and Yi (1997) added that comprehending the various accents of professors, test constructions, articulating their knowledge on essay exams, and reading text books in a timely fashion were difficult for international students in American universities. Furthermore, international students had difficulties giving oral

presentations and interacting in class discussions (Gebhard, 2010; Han, 2007; Kao & Gansneder, 1995).

Similar findings have been reported by researchers who studied returning American study abroad students. In a study conducted by Goldini (2013), 160 undergraduates from a large U.S. public university were interviewed after studying abroad in Spain. Goldini found that students had difficulties adjusting to a new country and way of life including feeling like an outsider, unwelcomed and uncomfortable in the host community. Students also reported feelings of resentment, hostility, and harassment. They mentioned a mismatch between the assumptions of the host culture values and world views concerning racial and cultural diversity and those of one's own country. Concurrently, they expected the host culture to be more similar to their home culture.

Researchers have found that perceived discrimination can affect psychological adjustment (Cox, Abramson, Devine, & Hollon, 2012; Smith & Silva, 2011) and physical health (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Bandura (1997) emphasized that sojourners abroad lacking social support and confidence were also likely to try to avoid engaging in challenging, novel experiences, such as cross-cultural interactions. On the contrary, efficacious and hopeful sojourners with a strong social support were likely to not only accept, but to seek out such challenging experiences.

Study Abroad and Personal Growth of Students

Throughout the years, there have been many reported benefits of study abroad. Although not sufficient in itself, the sheer amount of time allocated to study abroad has been positively correlated with a variety of performance measures (Karweit, 1989). Participants in mid-term (quarter or semester) programs and long-term programs lasting

longer than five months have demonstrated greater gains in personal resources and cognitive engagement than participants in short-term programs lasting eight weeks or less (Dwyer & Peters, 2012; Engle & Engle, 2003; Kehl & Moris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Zorn, 1996). However, even short-term experiences and service learning opportunities have been shown to positively influence the propensity for development, if carefully designed (Horn & Fry, 2013).

Documented benefits to study abroad include increased international political concern (Carlson & Widaman, 1988), global engagement, including civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, and social entrepreneurship (Paige, 2009). Participants of study abroad have also demonstrated increased foreign language competency skills (Opper, Teichler, & Carlson, 1990) and the ability to see members of different national groups as individuals rather than in association with non-personal attributes such as food or geographical characteristics (Drews, Meyer, & Peregrine, 1996). Additionally, study abroad has been linked to enhanced learning, global awareness, and increased intercultural skills in individuals (McCabe, 2001; Teichler & Steube, 1991; Williams, 2005).

Dwyer and Peters (2012) conducted a survey of 3,400 participants who studied abroad between the years 1950 and 1999, and found that study abroad impacted personal growth, intercultural development, education and career attainment, and internships, as well as provided a lifetime of benefits. They emphasized that “study abroad is a defining moment in a person’s life and continues to impact the participant’s life for years after the experience” (Dwyer & Peters, 2012, p.2). This concept was demonstrated in a comment by a study participant, “Overall, I learned a lot more about myself in that one semester

than I did in the three and a half years in my home school because of the unique space in which I learned, experienced, and spent exploring another culture” (Dwyer & Peters, 2012, p. 2). Other study participants self-reported that they increased their maturity (97%) and their self-confidence (96%) through study abroad. They also reported that study abroad enabled them to tolerate ambiguity (89%) and had a lasting impact on their world views (95%).

“It has been nearly ten years since I was a student in Vienna, but not a single day goes by where its impact is not felt in my life ... My time there fundamentally changed how I view the world and has given me the ability to view the world, and its issues, from several perspectives,” stated another study participant (Dwyer & Peters, 2012, p. 2). Ninety-eight percent of the survey respondents reported that study abroad helped them to better understand their own cultural values and biases while 82% said study abroad contributed to their developing a more sophisticated way of viewing the world.

“My semester [abroad] launched me into a personal and professional involvement with Spain that has already lasted 25 years,” reported another participant (Dwyer & Peters, 2012, p. 3). Respondents stated that study abroad influenced subsequent educational experiences (87%). Study abroad also influenced their decision to expand or change academic majors (63%), attend graduate school (64%), and engage in international work or volunteerism following studying abroad (50%).

Students who studied abroad exhibited a greater change in intercultural awareness, including an understanding of the rules and norms from other cultures, after their semester abroad than students who stayed on campus (Williams, 2005). Intercultural awareness was found by Gundykunst and Kim (1995) to facilitate cross-cultural

communication. Rice and Nguyen (2015) found that cross-cultural communication is important within a socially and culturally diverse society and workplace. Cross-cultural understanding has been found to increase general worker efficiency and create unity, especially among global organizations (Organizational Culture, 2007). Indeed, researchers contend that understanding the concept of diversity and communication and how it relates to organizational culture has become an important precondition to organizational effectiveness (Owen & Lambert, 1998; Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly, & Konopaske, 2003). Concurrently, understanding social relationships and the way cultures communicate is the groundwork of successful global business affairs (Rymes, 2008; Williamson, 1996, 2002; Rodrik, 1997; Baldwin & Martin, 1999; Bordo, Eichengreen, & Irwin, 1999).

The Role of Culture in Communication

In business, it is commonly agreed that communication is a primary concern, especially for professionals who work internationally or interact daily with people from various cultures or countries (Kulikova, 2004). Concurrently, study abroad programs, which are inherently intercultural exchanges, are staffed by people who are dispersed around the globe, reflecting various cultures and communication patterns. Effective communication, thus, is required at many different levels. Staff members must communicate with each other, in addition to communicating with U.S. students in order to guide them through the study abroad process and teach them about the expectations of the host country including cultural rules, norms, and communication patterns.

Cross-cultural communication requires being aware of cultural differences; what may be considered acceptable and natural in one culture can be confusing or even

offensive in another culture. Communication breakdowns can result from a lack of cultural awareness and understanding of culture, cultural communication patterns, and cultural dimensions. Culture is defined as the common heritage, joint experience, and shared learning of a group of people (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008; Schein, 2010). Important beliefs, values, and symbols become established in a culture as do the attitudes, norms, roles, rules, and responsibilities of members of the cultural group. Common reactions to events and situations also develop and are communicated verbally and non-verbally (Guffey, Rhodes, & Rogin, 2010).

Hall (1959) contended that through social institutions, culture is passed on from one generation to the next. Hall may have been one of the first researchers to stress the importance of cultural awareness in communication. Prior to the late-1950s the Japanese public believed that once an individual learned English conversation, that person would be an effective international communicator. Hall emphasized that intercultural interaction involves more than the mere exchange of words. Cultural communication includes: Verbals (words and language itself), non verbals (body language, gestures), and etiquette dos and don'ts (clothing, gift-giving, dining, customs and protocol), and even applies to written communication (Wardrobe, 2005). This is one of the primary reasons Foreign Service Institute (FSI) staff has taught culture through macro-level details of specific cultures such as social institutions and kinship structures. Hall (1959) elaborated that one particularly noteworthy difference between cultural communication patterns can be observed between high context and low context cultures.

High Context and Low Context Cultures

High context/low context cultures have been the topic of numerous research investigations (e.g., Hall, 1976; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, 1993; Hall, 1976; Hasegawa & Gudykunst, 1998; Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998; Miyanaga, 1991; Okabe, 1983; Chua & Gudykunst, 1987). First used by author Edward Hall (1959), the labels *high context* and *low context* denote inherent cultural and communication differences between societies; these differences include the degree to which speakers rely on things other than words to convey meaning. Hall stated that in communication, individuals receive more sensory cues than they are able to fully process. Concurrently, cultural members have specific filters that enable them to focus only on what that particular society has deemed important. Most cultures fall somewhere along a continuum, or sliding scale, in their perception of the importance of context (with high and low being the end points of the continuum); however, for purposes of illustration, only these main two categories of high and low context will be described.

According to Hubpages (2007), high context cultures include Japan, most other Asian countries, Arab countries, African countries, Latin America, and Italy. Other examples of high context cultures include tribal and native societies. These cultures retain a strong sense of tradition and history, and change little over time. In these cultures, groups (e.g., family, culture, work) are valued over the individual and one's identity is rooted in these group relationships.

In general, high context communication employs indirect verbal expression and implications embedded in nonverbal communication (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, 1993). Other common characteristics of high context cultures include less verbally explicit

communication and less written or formal communication. People are assumed to be well-informed before they meet and need little background information. Concurrently, close connections are formed over a long period of time and most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other. Decisions and activities often focus on personal face-to-face relationships, and center on a central person who has authority.

Giving and keeping face is also important in high context cultures. According to Ting-Toomey (1988), face is a strategy that protects self-respect, individual identity, and social status. Face-saving strategies in the West are almost exclusively intended to protect oneself from narcissistic injury, irrespective of social context, whereas in the East, they are intended to preserve and maintain strong social relationships (in what is referred to as "face-giving"). The nature of the face-saving/giving strategies employed vary considerably in the East based on one's particular constructed role within the social network. Subsequently, individuals do not interact nor express their disagreements or reservations in public; they often comment more in private. Furthermore, members often have strong boundaries between those who are accepted as belonging versus those who are considered outsiders (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, 1993).

Low context cultures, in contrast, emphasize direct and explicit information exchange and can be observed in Western countries such as Germany, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Canada, and the U.S. (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, 1993; Hall, 1976). In low context cultures, individuals are assumed to know little about what they are being told, therefore need extensive background information. They may have many contacts, but relationships tend to be of shorter duration or for specific reasons.

Cultural behaviors and beliefs may need to be spelled out explicitly and knowledge is more often public, external, transferable, and accessible. Sequencing and a separation of time, space, activities, and relationships are important in low context cultures. They are also often task-centered with decisions and activities focused on what needs to be done and a division of responsibilities. The social structure is decentralized and the responsibility is spread throughout the membership, not solely concentrated at the top of the social hierarchy. Furthermore, one's identity is often rooted in the individual and one's accomplishments (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986, 1993; Hall, 1976).

When individuals from high context and low context cultures collaborate, difficulties can occur during the exchange of information if they are not well-prepared for these cultural differences. Problems can be separated into differences concerning direction, quantity, and quality. For example, in high context cultures, the communication is directed toward group characters and situations. The communication is mainly within in-groups which tend to be of a relatively small proportion. There is also less verbally explicit information as most members are expected to be knowledgeable and well-informed. In contrast, communication in low context cultures is directed toward personal characters and situations (direction difference). They mostly communicate within their out-groups in a broad and diffuse way (quantity difference). Within communication they exchange information just to the extent that work can be done; they do not discuss nor exchange information constantly in their work environment nor with colleagues (quality difference) (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002).

Cultural Dimensions Associated with Communication

Cultural dimensions and differences in communication patterns are not limited to high context and low context cultures; they may also extend to varying cultural perceptions on societal and organizational structure and values. Hofstede (1980) conducted a comprehensive study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture and can subsequently influence cross-cultural communication. Between 1967 and 1973, he executed an attitude survey study of 117,000 employees from more than 70 countries across worldwide subsidiaries of a multinational corporation (IBM). His initial analysis identified systematic differences in national cultures on four primary dimensions: Power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. Hofstede and Bond (1984) identified a fifth dimension, a Confucian dynamism labeled long-term orientation versus short-term orientation to life. Each of these five dimensions is described below.

Power distance index. The power distance index is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980). People in societies exhibiting a large degree of power distance, such as Malaysia and Guatemala, accept a hierarchical order in which everyone has a place and needs no further justification. In societies with low power distance, such as Austria and Israel, people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.

Individualism vs. collectivism. The individualism versus collectivism index explores the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. Societies on the high side of this dimension, called individualism, can be defined as more individualistic;

examples of such countries include the United States and Australia. The individual's life belongs to the person and s/he has an inalienable right to live it as s/he sees fit, to act on his/her own judgment, to keep and use the product of his/her effort, and to pursue the values of his/her choosing (Biddle, 2014). Societies on the low side of this dimension, called collectivism, can be described as more group oriented; examples of such countries include Ecuador and Panama. The individual's life belongs not to him/her but to the group or society of which s/he is merely a part, that s/he has no rights, and that s/he must sacrifice his/her values and goals for the group's greater good (Biddle, 2014).

Individualism and collectivism have also been associated with direct and indirect styles of communication—that is, the extent to which speakers reveal intentions through explicit verbal communication. In the direct style, associated with individualism, the wants, needs, and desires of the speaker are embodied in the spoken message. In the indirect style, associated with collectivism, the wants, needs, and goals of the speaker are not obvious in the spoken message (Hofstede, 1997).

Uncertainty avoidance index. The uncertainty avoidance index relates to the extent to which people in a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. Hofstede (1997) explained that this feeling is expressed through a need for predictability or written and unwritten rules. Cultures high in uncertainty avoidance, such as Greece and Portugal, can be described as active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, security seeking, and intolerant. Students from high uncertainty avoidance cultures expect their teachers to be experts who have and know all the answers. There is a need for rules, precision, and punctuality in the workplace as well as an individual inner need to work hard. Societies that score a high degree in this index opt for stiff codes of behavior, guidelines, and laws.

Cultures low in uncertainty avoidance, such as Singapore and Jamaica, are described as contemplative, less aggressive, unemotional, relaxed, accepting of personal risks, and relatively tolerant. Societies that score a lower degree in this index are often more accepting of differing thoughts and ideas. These societies also tend to impose fewer regulations, are more accustomed to ambiguity, and work in environments that can be described as free-flowing.

Masculinity vs. femininity. Hofstede (1980) labeled masculine cultures as those that strive for maximal distinction between what men and women are expected to do. The masculinity side of this dimension, found in countries such as Japan and Hungary, represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive. On the opposite end of the scale, the femininity side of this dimension, found in countries such as Sweden and Norway, represents a preference in society for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented. In the business context masculinity versus femininity is sometimes also related to as *tough versus tender* cultures.

Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation. The long-term orientation versus short-term orientation index relates to the connection of the past with current and future actions and challenges. Societies that score high on long-term orientation, such as China and Japan, prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms and view societal change with suspicion. Societies that score low on long-term orientation, such as the United States and Great Britain, take a more pragmatic approach:

They encourage education and change as a way to adapt and prepare for the future (Hofstede, 1997).

Additional dimensions. Building on the findings by Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), Smith and Peterson (1995), and Inglehart (1997), the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study was initiated. Through a research project by GLOBE (2004) with 17,300 middle managers from 951 organizations in the food processing, financial services, and telecommunications industries in 58 countries, three additional cultural dimensions were identified. Furthermore, the Collectivism dimension was broken into two sub-sections. The new dimensions include *Humane Orientation*: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others; *Assertiveness*: The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others; *Performance Orientation*: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence; *Collectivism I (Institutional)*: The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action; and *Collectivism II (In-Group)*: The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.

Hofstede's (1980) study and GLOBE defined scholarly understanding and awareness of the differences of culture, cultural dimensions, and accompanying cross-cultural communication patterns (House, 2003). Regardless, cross-cultural misunderstandings still occur, and can have detrimental byproducts to global organizations (Iwan, 2006).

Cross-cultural Communication Issues

Currently English is the predominant language used to communicate with the widest possible audience. There has been a growing interest in communication in English as a foreign language (Firth, 1996; Graddol, 2006; House, 2004; Jenkins, 2007; Nickerson, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2000, 2001). Researchers have found that even when communicating within the same language, misunderstandings can and still do occur during cross-cultural communication. Some of the issues relate to differences in national and cultural dimensions (Cross-Cultural Communication, n.d.; Hofstede, 1980).

Many writers and researchers (e.g., Crystal, 2003; Nickerson, 2005; Seidlhofer 2000, 2001; Skapinker, 2007a, 2007b) have also alluded to what they call the *native speaker* problem, meaning that native speakers of English can often be the cause of miscommunication and misunderstanding in intercultural interactions. Native speakers, when interacting with *lingua franca* speakers, may continue to speak idiomatically or use complicated and obscure vocabulary reflecting their cultural communication norms. For *lingua franca* speakers who do not share the same communication norms with the native speaker, the language can be difficult to understand (Skapinker, 2007a, 2007b).

Potential miscommunications can lead to increased uncertainty in interactions, higher levels of anxiety, and a wide array of possible negative outcomes. These negative outcomes may include damage to self-esteem from feeling confused and out of control, incompetent or exploited, negatively perceived by a stranger, or disapproval from members of one's own group (Cross-Cultural Communication, n.d.). Logan, Steel, and Hunt (2015) found that anxiety-provoking intercultural interactions had a negative impact on one's willingness to interact whether verbally or through online communications.

Remote Communication

The internet has increasingly become part of the social fabric in which people form relationships and engage in social communication for educational, social, and entertainment purposes (Zheng, Burrow-Sanchez, Donnelly, Call, & Drew, 2009). Advancements in telecommunication and information technologies have provided additional opportunities to engage in increasingly common geographically distributed work (Seven Dimensions of Culture, n.d.).

Geographically distributed staff members often rely on written communication. However, in a 2013 survey by Sendmail, Inc., 64 percent of working professionals reported that email communication caused tension, confusion, or other negative consequences in the workplace (Mind Tools, 2015). One of the reported reasons was that when meeting face-to-face, people use body language, vocal tone, and facial expressions to express emotions. When using written communication, without visual and auditory cues, the choice of words, sentence length, punctuation, and capitalization can be easily misinterpreted (Mind Tools, 2015).

Cultural influences further amplify the challenges of online communication. Problems associated with internet communication are consistent with other forms of communication, including face-to-face discussion (O'Dowd, 2001; Rice, 1996). Researchers have found that credibility and culture as well as directness and context were more important than capability in knowledge transfer in international online communications (Kim & Bonk, 2002; Ma, 1996; Gibson & Manuel, 2003).

Hinds and Mortensen (2005) conducted a field study of a large multinational corporation consisting of 43 teams residing in different cities and countries across the

globe. The study examined conflict, its antecedents, and its effects on performance in multinationally distributed as compared to co-located teams. Hinds and Mortensen found that the distributed teams reported more task and interpersonal conflicts than did the co-located teams and often suffered unhealthy subgroup dynamics. The distributed teams reported significant conflict between distant members as team members struggled to come to terms with different perspectives, unshared information, and tensions between distant subgroups. Olson and Olson (2000) also found misunderstandings between distant team members in regard to cultural beliefs on time and cordiality, which created conflict and confusion in the distributed workforce. Similarly, Cramton (2001) observed that conflict erupted as team members made harsh attributions towards their distant colleagues when information was missing or miscommunications occurred. Theory suggests that conflict in these teams is a result of weak interpersonal bonds between sites, unshared context, and poor information sharing (Hinds & Bailey, 2003).

In conclusion, in order to function in a globalizing world with an increasingly diverse and dispersed workforce, understanding culture, cultural communication patterns (e.g. high and low context cultures), and cultural dimensions is becoming increasingly important. This is especially relevant for remote teams and global organizations with a diverse staff working from and in various cultures around the world. Equally important is an increased intercultural sensitivity (Victor, 1992) and a working knowledge of how each society conveys meaning (Hubpages, 2007).

Cultural Characterizations of Adolescence

One aspect of culture that is of particular importance for staff working with college-aged students is their cultural definition of adolescence. College is a potentially

tumultuous time in students' lives as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. After studying ethnographic data from more than 170 pre-industrial societies, Barry and Schlegel (1980) concluded that almost all societies have the notion of adolescence. In many cultures adolescence is known as the rite of passage, from childhood to adulthood and typically ranges from the ages of 11 to 21 or even older in some societies (Rosenthal et al., 2009). Adolescence involves major physical and physiological transitions that include growth spurts, sexual maturation, hormonal changes, and brain development in the prefrontal area that is critical for impulse control (Busso, 2014; Ding et al., 2014). Adolescence can be an especially turbulent period as young people may have sufficient physical maturity to perform adult functions (i.e., work and childbearing), but lack the psychological maturity, social status, or financial resources to perform those functions and responsibilities (Chen & Farruggia, 2002; Steinberg, Cauffman, Woolard, Graham, & Banich, 2009; Dumont & Provost, 1999; Hall, 1940).

Consistent with this theme of turbulence, adolescence represents a period in the life-span during which problem behaviors, such as criminal activity, alcohol consumption, and drug use, rise sharply (Chen, Storr, & Anthony, 2009; Stingar & Goodman, 2009; Fredriksen, Rhodes, Reddy, & Way, 2004; Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2012). Monitoring the Future (MTF) annually assesses various measures of alcohol use among 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students. In 2011, MTF found that about one-quarter of 8th graders, one-half of 10th graders, and almost two-thirds of 12th graders reported drinking alcohol in the month preceding the interview. Binge drinking (i.e., consumption of five or more drinks in a row) was found to be most prevalent among the ages of seventeen and eighteen (Patrick & Schulenberg, 2013).

The development of internalizing problems, particularly depressive symptoms is another common theme during adolescence (Kessler, Petukhova, Sampson, Zaslavsky, & Wittchen, 2012; Merikangas, Nakamura, & Kessler, 2009). When depressive symptoms emerge, they remain quite stable over time (Kessler et al., 2012), and appear to have a substantial impact on adolescent's concurrent and later psychosocial functioning (Allen, Chango, Szewedo, & Schad, 2014).

Through their interaction with social, familial, and cultural environments during this period, adolescents begin to develop unique belief systems (Mitchell, 2005). These belief systems and attitudes affect many aspects of daily life from religion and spirituality, to gender, sexuality, work ethics, and politics (Hutchinson et al., 2012; Mitchell, 2005). The range of attitudes about a particular topic embraced within a culture also affects the lifestyles, beliefs, and perceptions of adolescents, and can have both positive and negative influences on their development (DiClemente & Wingood, 2000; Li et al., 2002; Smokowski, Bacallao, Cotter, & Evans, 2015; Baggio, Studer, Iglesias, Daepfen, & Gmel, 2017). Furthermore, the lifestyle and functioning of an adolescent in a given culture is shaped by the roles and responsibilities he or she is expected to assume (Boundless, 2015; Lenzi, Vieno, Santinello, Nation, & Voight, 2014). For example, the degree to which adolescents are perceived as autonomous or independent varies widely by culture, as do the behaviors that represent this emerging autonomy (Pala, Gentina, & Muratore, 2010; Helwig, 2006; Spear & Kulbok, 2004). Of particular interest for staff working with college-age students are how adolescents are treated and viewed, and the adult/adolescent relationships in each of these various cultures. Some of these variations

in culture are associated with differences in modernity (Modern vs. Traditional), region (East vs. West), and religion (Christianity vs. Islam vs. Confucianism).

Adolescence in Modern and Traditional Societies

The criteria for evaluating the degree of economic development are gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), the per capita income, level of industrialization, amount of widespread infrastructure, and general standard of living. An industrialized country, also known as a modern, developed country, is a sovereign state that has a highly developed economy and advanced technological infrastructure. One fact that must be stressed is that although modern and traditional cultures are often assigned to industrialized and developing countries, even within countries there is strong evidence of modernity and/or traditional cultural variability. For instance, cities in developing countries can often be characterized as culturally modern, while rural communities in highly developed countries such as the U.S. can likewise be characterized as traditional. Even families living in the same community may hold modern or traditional cultural leanings.

Adolescence in modern society. Adolescence has become a distinct period of the life course for students in modern cultures. For most young people in industrialized societies, the years from the late teens through the twenties are years of profound importance. This is a time of comprehensive identity changes (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006) and can be seen as a formative period of attitudes toward immigrants and foreigners (Gniewosz & Noack, 2015). During this time, many students also obtain the education and training they need to provide the foundation for their incomes and occupational achievements for the remainder of their working careers

(Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995; William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, 1988). In fact, the proportion of young Americans in the U.S. obtaining higher education after high school has risen steeply from 14% in 1940 (Arnett & Taber, 1994) to 25% in 1970 to 40% in 2015 (Institute of Education Sciences, 2016).

Numerous industrialized countries now necessitate a high level of education and training for entry into information-based professions, requiring many students to remain in school throughout their early to mid-twenties (Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995; Noble, Cover, & Yanagishita, 1996). Marriage and parenthood are typically postponed until well after schooling has ended, allowing for a period of exploration of various relationships and other variables (e.g. lifestyle choices; preferred places of residence) before marriage. In addition, adolescents have time for exploration of various jobs before taking on the responsibility of supporting a child financially (Arnett, 2004).

Cultural values of industrialized societies are also represented in parenting styles. According to Arnett (2004) parents in socially complex, industrialized countries are perceived as less warm and accepting, or even rejecting, as compared to parents in more traditional societies. Two possible explanations for this difference have emerged in the literature. First, in industrialized societies, parents tend to spend more time out of their homes working and away from their children than do parents in traditional societies. A second possible explanation is that industrialization has led to individualism. One aspect of individualism is to place the needs of self over the needs of others. Arnett suggested that parents in individualistic societies therefore may not expend as much care and affection on children as parents in traditional, collectivist societies. Subsequently, less strong parental affection and acceptance on the part of parents in individualistic societies

may prepare youths for independence and developing ties with non-familial others.

Arnett stated that industrialized societies are more likely to emphasize the development of certain traits of self-reliance, place less emphasis on one's family status (e.g., marriage), and distinguish less between males and females in defining adolescence status.

Social scientists often argue that social problems such as divorce rates, family violence, youth unemployment, juvenile delinquency, and substance abuse are related to the difficult nature of transitioning from adolescence into adulthood in modern cultures (Arnett, 2004; Steinberg, 2009; Chen & Farruggia, 2002). Other issues associated with adolescents from industrialized societies include mental health issues, earlier expectations of autonomy, preferring to do things with friends rather than with family, and misconduct including smoking and drinking (Arnett, 2004; Atladottir et al., 2015; Mojtabai, Olfson, & Han, 2016).

Adolescence in traditional society. A traditional society refers to a society characterized by an orientation to the past, with predominant roles of custom and habit. Such societies are marked with a lack of distinction between family and business, and a division of labor influenced primarily by age, gender, and social status.

It is important to note that some industrialized countries such as Japan also tend to be culturally traditional. Furthermore, there tends to be a distinct cultural split between urban and rural areas in traditional societies (Arnett, 2004). Young people in urban areas of Latin America or countries such as China or India, for example, are more likely to experience emerging adulthood reflective of modern societies; they marry later, have children later, obtain more education, and have a greater range of occupational and recreational opportunities than young people in rural areas. In contrast, young people in

rural areas often receive minimal schooling, marry earlier, and have limited occupational choices. Therefore, in traditional societies, adolescence is often experienced differently in urban and in rural areas (Arnett, 2004). Regardless of location, however, traditional societies often view adolescence quite differently from modern societies. In traditional societies, adolescence may be seen as a time of increasing responsibilities toward the family (e.g., caring for younger siblings, cousins, or older relatives; getting married; or helping in the family business), and toward the community (e.g., praying, hunting, farming, or selling items at the market) (Fontes, 2008).

Families from traditional societies may also have different views about college and the importance of a college education. In a study by Van Horne (2015), participants emphasized that earning money right out of high school was more important than higher education. Some family members, friends, and other community members who had never attended college often referred to college as a waste of time, placing a higher value on other aspects of life, such as hard work and a strong identification and attachment to family.

According to Steinberg (2009), in traditional societies adolescents participate in adult activities many years before reaching adult status. Adolescents are expected to contribute in meaningful ways to the success of the family by working, planting and harvesting, or preparing food. Particularly important in the agricultural region, the labor of young people is seen as necessary for family survival. Correspondingly, the focus is on informal rather than formal education.

Adolescence in Western and Eastern Cultures

Similar to modern and traditional cultures, migratory patterns can result in the cultures of the West and East residing in the same community. The West is a term very broadly used to refer to a heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, political systems, and specific artifacts and technologies that have some origin or association with Europe. The term is often applied to countries whose history is strongly marked by European immigration, colonization, and influence such as Europe, the Americas, and Australasia. The East refers very broadly to the various cultures or social structures of Asia and the countries and cultures east of Europe.

Adolescence in Western cultures. Adolescence in the West is marked as a period of exploration, self-involvement, and risk taking. Erikson (1968) conceptualized the *identity crisis* of adolescence in the West as a period associated with terms like *restlessness* and *rebelliousness*. Adolescents in the West have been found to have high prevalence rates of risky behaviors, emotional problems (Kim, Thompson, Walsh, & Schepp, 2015), and sexually transmitted disease-associated risk behavior (Sales et al., 2012). Also prevalent in adolescents is self-reported extra-medical drug use (Kandel & Raveis, 1989; Meier, Troost, & Anthony, 2012). Extra-medical drug use refers to alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use, as well as to the use of psychoactive prescription or over-the-counter drugs, when used to get “high” or used outside the bounds of the prescribed purpose (Anthony, Warner, & Kessler, 1994). To address risk behaviors, the mission of many public schools has broadened beyond academics to include substance use, delinquency, socialization problems, and antisocial behavior.

Another major issue with critical implications for adolescence in communities across the U.S. is violence. Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) U.S. high school students are involved in a serious violent altercation each year, and roughly 1 in 6 (16%) reported carrying a weapon at least once per month in 2015 (Kann, McManus, & Harris, 2016).

Outside of risky behaviors, a study by researchers at the University of Kentucky reported that American adolescents were described as selfish, without a social consciousness, lacking integrity, ethical behavior, self-respect, self-assertiveness, and self-esteem (Parales, 1999). Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1998) found that a Western child is encouraged to know oneself, be oneself, and to help oneself. Intertwined with the constant reminder to stand up for their rights, Parales (1999) argued that these messages may pose a conflict for young adults. Consequently, Western adolescents may not know where to draw the line between asserting themselves and respecting others in a society focused on individual personal qualities, self-achievement, and individualism (Brand, 2004).

Adolescence in Eastern cultures. According to Kramer, Kwong, Lee, and Chung (2002), individuation carries little significance in most Eastern cultures. In other words, seeking a definition of self outside of the family is not encouraged. Eastern societies are more collectivist, stressing the priority of group goals over individual goals and the importance of cohesion within social groups (House, 2004). Furthermore, adolescents are expected to conform to the rules and standards of good behavior in their respective communities (Nguyen & Henkin, 1981; Xiong, 2000; Harits, Chudy, Opletalova, & Vicherkova, 2015). Concurrently, adolescents should be properly mannered and abstain from drugs and premarital sex (Kibria, 1993; Chang, Hayter, & Lin, 2014).

For many Asians, young adulthood involves achieving within the context of family expectations which may include filial piety and communal reciprocity (Cooper, Baker, Polichar, & Welsh, 1993; Ho, 1986). Often the obligation to family takes precedence over an individual's choice of career (Poon, 2014). Consequently, choice of a career that is different from that chosen by his or her parents may result in loss of emotional and financial support (Kramer et al., 2002).

From an early age, Eastern adolescents are taught to be obedient, polite, humble, helpful around the house, respectful, and deferential (Zha, Eliason, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2005). Furthermore, they are encouraged to conform to expectations and belief systems which are passed on from one generation to the next (Matsumoto, 1997). One such expectation is to do well in school (Chao, 1996; Kim & Rohner, 2002). Adolescents who do not do well in school are viewed as bringing shame to their families (Hawkins, 1994). Shek and Chan (1999) studied a group of Hong Kong Chinese parents about the qualities they valued in adolescents and found that more than half of the respondents (63.3%) considered academic-related attributes to be the most important.

Eastern and Islamic societies often perceive the role of parents to be firm, restrictive, and authoritarian in order to teach children the value of discipline and social hierarchy. These parents stress that such values will help produce positive results in adolescents' social and academic lives (Alsheikh, Parameswaran, & Elhoweris, 2010). Kramer and associates (2002) conducted a study of Eastern households and found that positive reinforcement and discussion of personal achievements were not common. Parents were seldom forthcoming with affection and praise for fear that such

demonstrations would encourage laziness. Similarly, adolescents were expected to accept authority without question (Chen & Yang, 1986; Hsu, 1981).

Kelly and Tseng (1992) and Wang and Phinney (1998) found that Chinese mothers were authoritarian, not only with the use of corporal punishment, but also with directives and commands. Chinese mothers reported physical punishment and yelling at children as common in the household (Wang & Phinney, 1998). Other values in Chinese households include that children or grandchildren respect and care for their parents or grandparents (Thornton & Lin, 1994). Traditional Asian elders also tend to have full control over family and financial decisions, regardless of whether or not they live with their children (Kramer et al., 2002).

When comparing Western and Eastern cultures, Chao (1996) found that European American mothers were more concerned about building their adolescent's self-esteem, valued academic success less, and used a less directive approach in their adolescent's academic learning. On the contrary, immigrant Chinese American mothers placed greater value on education and played a more important role in their adolescent's academic success when compared with European American mothers.

Adolescence According to Major Religions and Philosophical Beliefs

Religion and philosophical beliefs also play a role in the interpretation of adolescence. Religion is defined as the service and worship of God or the supernatural (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Philosophy is defined as a theory underlying or regarding a sphere of activity or thought (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Religion and philosophical beliefs have the potential to influence many aspects of life, including cultural perceptions of adolescents and their expected lifestyles. Researchers at Joseph Rowntree Foundation

(2008) asked young people and parents in Bradford, U.K., predominantly from Christian and Muslim backgrounds, how their religious beliefs and practices affected their lives. The majority of young people and parents in the study felt that religion was more than a set of behaviors. Religion was a way of life for parents and young people, influencing family relationships, decision making, perspectives, and life choices.

Family and religion are further described as institutions that exercise control by socializing members to adopt conventional norms and values. Individuals abide by these norms and values, in part, because they do not want to jeopardize their bonds to their family and religious institutions (Landor, Simons, Simons, Brody, & Gibbons, 2011). Over time, these norms and values are internalized and self-sustaining, thereby reducing the probability of deviant behavior relative to their belief systems (Hirschi, 1969).

Religion and philosophical beliefs are part of the human experience in both public and private spheres. In countries with secular legal systems, religion may be most evident through the private sphere and parenting. In the Islamic religion, however, there tends to be no division between private and public spheres; thus, Islam can be seen throughout public and private lives. In order to better understand culture, one must also understand religion and philosophical beliefs and how they appear in society's spheres.

Christianity. Although practiced around the world, Christianity is the main religion in Europe and the Americas. The nations in these regions are secular (McIntyre, 2002); subsequently, Christian culture tends to be revealed more in private life than in the public sphere (Lefebvre, 2014). In the private life, Christianity has been integral to the development of America's adolescents by influencing family through cultural norms about parenting (Schreiber, 2011).

Christianity is attached to authoritative parenting (Bridges & Moore, 2002).

Authoritative parenting is characterized by parents' willingness to listen to their children's views with high responsiveness. Reasonable demands, high levels of warmth and affection, and a willingness to exert control over the child when necessary in the context of clearly-communicated, well-defined rules and regulations for child behavior are also often characteristics of authoritative parenting. This approach to parenting necessitates appropriately mature, age-appropriate child behavior, creating consequences for violating those behavior standards (Landor et al., 2011). Furthermore, parents are obligated to give their children the resources and support they need to succeed.

Parents who follow Christian traditions tend to influence their child's social context by encouraging involvement in church and religious activities. During these activities, children are assumed to be exposed to a network of peers who hold beliefs, values, and behaviors consistent with the religious denomination. Involved religious parents may further monitor their child's peer affiliations and develop relationships with the parents of their child's peers (Lynch, 2004; Smith, 2003).

Islam. Although practiced around the world, Islam is the dominant religion in the Middle East and many countries in Southeast Asia. In addition to a religion, Islam is a legal system and social blueprint. Subsequently, Islam can be seen in both the private and public spheres.

Similar to Christianity, most Muslim students attend schools in which the vast majority of other students are also Muslim (French, Purwono, & Triwahyuni, 2011). Unlike secular countries where Christianity is the primary religion, however, Islam may be a required subject in both public and private schools in Islam-dominant countries.

Furthermore, in some countries, such as Indonesia, religious affiliation appears on official identification cards and is listed in demographic databases (French, Purwono, & Triwahyuni, 2011). In the 2000 World Values Survey of youth between the ages of 18 and 24, 100% of the Indonesian sample indicated that religion was very important in his/her daily life (Lippman & Keith, 2006).

Long-accepted behavioral guidelines are explained as derived from religion (Rosenthal et al., 2009). Some of these behavioral guidelines for Islam include an expectation that Muslim adolescents respect parental authority and obey parents' wishes without question (Kulwicki, 2008). In the Middle East, the term adolescence often implies *immaturity* and *imperfection*. Subsequently, adolescents are expected to seek guidance from older family members (Teens in the Middle East, 2003; Rosenthal et al., 2009). In Arab Muslim families, mothers are particularly important (Beitin, Allen, & Bekheet, 2010). Sharia, or Islamic family law, proscribes the mother's primary responsibility as child rearing; they exert considerable influence over their children, even when carrying out the wishes of their husband and extended family (Kulwicki, 2008).

Exhibiting modesty and gender segregation as a means of maintaining family honor is also expected. Often modesty for adolescent girls includes proper dress (e.g., wearing a hijab) and the avoidance of being alone with boys who are not immediate family members. All Muslim adolescents are expected to give time to religious practices and refrain from behaviors that are prohibited by Islam, such as pre- or extra-marital sex (Carolan, Bagherinia, Juhari, Himelright, & Mouton Sanders, 2000).

Confucianism. Confucianism is primarily practiced in China, Korea, and Vietnam. Similar to Islam, Confucianism is a social blueprint in the public sphere.

According to Gao and associates (2012), Confucianism is an ethical-moral system which governs all relationships in society. The Confucius society consists of a hierarchical and vertical structure of superiors and subordinates, such as ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife. The main principles of this social hierarchy are wisdom, responsibility, and benevolence descending down from one's superiors. In turn, obedience, loyalty, and respect are expected from subordinates (Hyun, 2001).

Confucianism focuses on the cultivation of virtue and maintenance of ethics based on the core concepts of Humanness (*ren*), Righteousness (*yi*) and Propriety (*li*). That is, one should act properly within a community and place others' interests above one's own personal needs and desires. To become a moral being is idealized, whereas pursuit of materialistic profit is denounced (Gao et al., 2012).

In a Confucian society, men and women are expected to have distinct social roles; men work to support the family and women stay home to be caregivers. Women are also expected to uphold three subordinations: Be subordinate to her father before marriage, to her husband after marriage, and to her son in widowhood (Hong, Yamamoto, & Chang, 1993). The guiding principle of gender relations in Confucianism is "male as superior and women as subordinate" (Gao et al., 2012, p. 2). In this sense, sons are more valued than daughters, and the production of male progeny is viewed as the continuity of the family line (Hong, Yamamoto, & Chang, 1993).

Summary of Cultural Characterizations of Adolescence

Cultures and cultural viewpoints overlap and differ, influencing cultural norms and perceptions of adolescence with influences from the extent of modernity (Modern vs. Traditional), region (East vs. West), and religion/philosophical beliefs (Christianity vs.

Islam vs. Confucianism). For example, modern societies are based around change and exploration with markedly high levels of substance abuse and juvenile delinquency. These societies often place a high level of importance on higher education; marriage and parenthood are often postponed until an older age. Individualism is stressed and adolescents are seen as independent and developing their own ties with non-familial others. In contrast, traditional societies have an orientation to the past, which is predominantly based around custom and habit as well as collective memories and accompanying rituals. Adolescents often participate in adult activities to support the family many years before reaching adult status, with an increasing responsibility towards family and the community.

Regarding region, family is important and has a role in the development of friendships and relationships in both Western and Eastern cultures. Adolescents in Eastern cultures are community oriented. They are taught to respect their elders whom also tend to play a major role in their career choice. Adolescents are taught to be polite, humble, helpful, respectful, and a high priority is placed on their academic success. In contrast, adolescents in Western cultures are often seen as restless and rebellious and are told to stand up for their rights. They have high levels of individualism and priority is placed on self-confidence and self-esteem.

Religion and philosophical beliefs further influence family relationships, decisions, perspectives, life choices, and perceptions of adolescence. While Christianity is expressed more in the private family life, Islam and Confucianism are expressed throughout the public and private spheres. Regarding cultural expectations of adolescence, authoritative parenting is common in Christianity. Parents try to balance

the responsibility of the child to conform to the needs and demands of others while still acknowledging children have their own rights. Parents tend to adjust their expectations to the needs of the child; they listen to children's arguments, although they may not change their minds. Islam, on the other hand, requires adolescents to respect authority and obey parents without questioning. Muslim adolescents are seen as immature and imperfect and are expected to seek guidance from older family members. On a similar note, obedience, loyalty, and respect are expected from adolescents in Confucianism. An adolescent is expected to act properly within the community and place the community above oneself; this includes male as being superior and women as subordinate. Confucianism is governed by superiors outside as well as inside of the family. Wisdom, responsibility, and benevolence descend from one's superiors.

Each culture partially crafted through modernity, region, and religion/philosophical beliefs can be a site and resource for establishing, sustaining, and negotiating a community's sense of identity and an individual's sense of membership in and identification with a community (Gundykunst & Kim, 1995). These cultural traits are important to understand not only for intercultural relations and communication, but also in regards to adolescent development. With the varying perceptions of adolescents based on culture, the concept of student development can also differ. In the field of higher education, especially in the U.S., adolescent development has been a long, ongoing topic of interest.

College Student Development Theories

As leaders of institutions of higher education in the U.S. promote internationalization, a prominent concern is the development of students. To facilitate

better contributions by college graduates to society as a whole, the American Council of Education (ACE) (1937) advocated for focusing on the development of the *whole student*. A subsequent ACE statement (ACE, 1949) reinforced the whole student perspective and added the importance of recognizing and attending to the needs of diverse kinds of students. Subsequently, various student development theories have been proposed. A student development theory examines the content of development and important issues adolescents face as their lives progress, including, but not limited to how to define themselves and their relationships with others. While there are numerous theories associated with the development of college students, they can be broadly categorized into cognitive, moral development, and identity theories.

Cognitive Theories

After conducting interviews with male students at Harvard, Perry (1970) introduced one of the first formal cognitive theories of student development called Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development. Perry described how students evolve in their cognitive complexity during the college years. He observed students progressing from simplistic or dualistic views of the world (thinking of the world in terms of *black and white*) to more complex and contextual deliberations. Fundamental to Perry's scheme was a student's nine-stage progression from dualist to relativist epistemologies. Learners moved from viewing truth in absolute terms of Right and Wrong (obtained from "Good" or "Bad" authorities) to recognizing multiple, conflicting versions of "truth" representing legitimate alternatives.

Moral Development Theories

Kohlberg (1984) also interviewed male students at Harvard, asking them to reason their way through various moral dilemmas and noting patterns in their rationales. He then proceeded to develop a stage theory of moral development. Kohlberg characterized the students' moral decision making as representative of three levels of development. The levels moved from focusing on the individual impact of actions to embracing social norms, thus demonstrating obedience to authority. Finally, the students transcended social norms and justified their moral decisions based on a richer understanding of complex moral situations and an appreciation for universal and generalizable principles.

Identity Formation Theories

Erikson (1968) argued that one of the most fundamental developmental tasks during adolescence is defining one's identity. During the transition years of adolescence individuals begin to take ownership of their lives by selecting identity commitments. Kegan (1994) created a stage theory based on resolving evolutionary challenges that emphasize the skill needed to cope with complex modern life. He noted that troubles develop in college settings when students engage in what he termed *the socialized mind*, or *third order consciousness*. Although capable of abstract thinking, students may be swayed by feelings and personal biases and may rely too heavily on designated authorities, such as college teachers, for how to think or believe. In contrast, faculty may have reached *the fourth stage of consciousness*, which Kegan called *the self-authoring mind*. Faculty may then self-regulate and demonstrate independence, but they may also inappropriately expect students to navigate their lives with the same conscientiousness, rather than accept their own role in promoting these challenges in students.

Perhaps the most influential of the early identity formation theories is that of Chickering (1978; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering (1978) conducted comprehensive psychological assessments of students in their sophomore and senior years with the explicit goal of providing guidance to educators to enhance student development. Supporting the whole student philosophy, Chickering and Reisser (1993) identified seven vectors along which development occurs among college students: Achieving competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. He stipulated that student growth is not a linear process and suggested that students may re-cycle through the vectors as their identities develop.

Summary

This review of the literature was divided into four sections. The first section provided an overview of study abroad as a vehicle to internationalize higher education. The second section described the role of culture in communication in global organizations. Cultural characterizations of adolescence were explored in the third section. Finally, college student development theories were presented. In Chapter III, the research methodology will be addressed.

CHAPTER III: Methodology

The central purpose of this research study was to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for United States (U.S.) college students. More specifically, how did Program Coordinators (PCs), Program Advisors (PAs), and Resident Directors (RDs) perceive their professional responsibilities? Participants of the study were recruited from one study abroad consortium located on the campus of a Research I U.S. institution of higher learning.

This chapter is divided into six sections and describes the research methodology used in the study. The first section focuses on the research design, a qualitative social constructionist inquiry. The second section describes the study abroad consortium, University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC), as a background for the study. The third section details the participants recruited. The fourth section clarifies the data source, individual interviews. The fifth section describes the data collection. Finally, the sixth section outlines the data analysis. At the end of this chapter, a summary is provided.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students. A qualitative method was chosen because qualitative research is used most often to examine, comprehend, and clarify the meanings of social phenomena (Merriam, 1998). Pitney and Parker (2009) reported that qualitative research provides an approach to examine questions and develop meaning concerning experiences which individuals have undergone.

Specifically, a social constructionist approach was used in this qualitative study.

Gergen and Gergen (2003) explained:

Perhaps the most pivotal assumption around which the constructionist dialogues revolve is that what we take to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in communal interchange. What we take to be true as opposed to false, objective as opposed to subjective, scientific as opposed to mythological is brought into being by historically and culturally located groups of people. (p. 2)

Mannheim (1936) explained that all knowledge (except natural science) is socially embedded, constructed, and linked to power structures. The constructionist approach provides an opportunity to comprehend the essence of a topic through the participants' social meanings, values, power structure, and rationalization (Weber, 1949). Social constructionism also provides opportunities for individuals to share their perceptions, which may or may not be widely shared by a larger, more diverse population.

In conclusion, social constructionism was an appropriate methodology for this research; the purpose of this study was to understand how participants perceived their professional responsibilities to create a study abroad experience for U.S. college students within their social and cultural environments.

University Studies Abroad Consortium

One study abroad consortium was selected for this study because of its diverse network of international site locations and staff; USAC is a non-profit consortium of 33 U.S. universities, known as Affiliate Universities. The Affiliate Universities issue transcripts for USAC programs and employ a board of directors to approve curriculum.

Students do not need to attend an Affiliate University in order to participate in a USAC programs; in fact, students from more than 800 universities worldwide have participated on USAC programs in its 30+ year history (USAC, 2016).

The mission of USAC as stated on their website is...

To provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in the global society of the twenty-first century. We strive to provide an authentic, quality context in which students may grow into engaged citizens of the world, not only in the classroom but also through field trips, integrated living and academic experiences, sports, internships, and volunteer and service learning opportunities... Our goal is for your USAC experience to be fully rewarding and to expand your knowledge of another culture. (USAC, 2016)

According to the USAC website (2016), participation in USAC programs gives students opportunities to:

- Change Your Life: Explore something different than the routine, grow as an individual, and learn about yourself.
- Gain New Perspective: Experience life outside your borders, make new friends, live with and learn from people of different values, beliefs, and celebrations than your own.
- Discover Your Passions: Get inspired, test your assumptions, let life surprise you.
- Enrich Your Education: Blur the lines between inside and outside the classroom, get a new angle on your major, select courses not offered at your home university, and learn a language.

- **Stay on Track to Complete Your Degree:** Earn university credit, fulfill major/minor requirements, gain experience through volunteering or sign-up for an internship.
- **Distinguish Yourself:** Make yourself more marketable to future employers, enhance your interpersonal skills, and benefit from your unique understanding of a new part of the world.
- **Demonstrate Your Adaptability:** Prove your ability to work with different people, your willingness to communicate across cultural or language barriers, your sense of adventure and problem-solving.
- **Accomplish More Than Imagined:** Develop confidence, succeed in taking risks and stretching yourself, try new things.
- **Prepare for the Future:** Consider new directions, earn credit and experiences in preparation for graduate/professional school or a career, and deepen your knowledge and skills for use in any future situation.

Programs on USAC range from short term study of three to ten weeks to semester, trimester, and year-long options, offering a wide range of courses and class sizes. Language study at all levels of proficiency, from beginning, including those with no language prerequisites, to advanced are offered. A multitude of courses are also taught in English.

A wide array of informal and formal opportunities are provided on USAC programs to enrich students' time abroad and immerse them in the host culture. Internships, field study, and service learning courses offer for-credit opportunities to combine tangible experiences and university credit (USAC, 2016). Directed forms of

cultural interaction are also integral to USAC programs; reflection is encouraged, but not required. Subsequently, based on Engle and Engle's (2003) study abroad levels, USAC would roughly be in line with study abroad levels three to five.

Operating in 26 countries, USAC offers two types of programs: Partnership Programs and Specialty Programs. The Partnership Programs of USAC are not the focus of this study, but are presented as a means of understanding the scope of USAC activities. Partnership Programs are exchange-based agreements in which USAC functions as the intermediary between students and the partner university abroad. The U.S.-based USAC staff provide students with support prior to their study abroad experience; support includes activities such as pre-departure suggestions, housing contacts, and travel tips. Upon arrival at the program site, many services (e.g., orientations and assistance with registration) are offered to students directly by the on-campus International Programs Office of the foreign university (USAC, 2016). Approximately 20 – 25% of USAC students attend one of 28 Partnership Programs, many of which are located in English-speaking countries and all provide at least some instruction in English. Program locations include Australia, England, Ghana, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, and Turkey. Students are registered as a student of the university abroad and the credits earned are transferred back to their home university at the conclusion of their term(s) abroad. As a regular student of a partner university, students are required to assume more responsibility and initiative for their academic and social lives than are students in the Specialty Programs.

The focus of this study are the Specialty Programs in which the majority of USAC students participate. A Specialty Program represents a kind of *extension campus* of the

U.S. Affiliate Universities. It is the responsibility of the U.S.-based USAC staff and USAC employees around the world to design and operate each Specialty Program abroad. There are 24 USAC Specialty Programs operating in Brazil, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Thailand.

A Specialty Program typically offers intensive language study as well as an assortment of courses from disciplines such as economics, political science, and history. Furthermore, programs may offer a concentration of courses in one or more disciplines. Examples include: International business in Shanghai, China, Bilbao, Spain and Torino, Italy; life sciences in San Ramón, Costa Rica; and art history in Madrid, Spain. Courses offered in the specialty programs meet U.S. accreditation standards. Students are taught by local and visiting U.S. professors and attend class primarily with other USAC students. Students are also registered at a U.S. Affiliate University during their sojourn abroad and upon program completion will receive a U.S. transcript from one of the USAC Affiliate Universities.

Specialty Programs are almost always located on the campuses of foreign universities. The university's resources are available to USAC students. The location also provides integration opportunities, such as campus activities and clubs, cafeterias, internet labs, recreational facilities, and language conversation partners.

A great deal of individualized support and attention are provided on Specialty Programs prior to departure and throughout the program term. In addition to domestic PA and PC support, each program site has a permanent, full-time RD, as well as staff and faculty to ensure that the students' needs are met. The RD and/or on-site staff make

housing arrangements for students who request it in advance (including homestays in most locations), oversee academic aspects of the program, and set up language conversation partners, individual internships, and volunteer opportunities. Furthermore, on-site staff organize USAC field trips and optional tours as well as provide general 24-hour support for emergencies.

Participants

There is no specific formula to determine the number of participants in qualitative research. Lichtman (2012) argued that there is insufficient contextual literature available to fully address the issue of sample size selection. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) endorsed an appropriate number of participants in their review of trial size by intensely interviewing 60 female participants from Africa. They ultimately concluded that themes developed and were already evident from the sixth to the twelfth interview. Many qualitative studies, however, tend to use a small sample size, which is often fewer than ten participants. According to Sandelowski (1995), ten participants could be regarded as an adequate sample size.

Seventeen participants agreed to be part of this study. Two criteria were established for inclusion in the study. First, all participants had to be employed by USAC; second, participants had to work directly with students either pre/post-departure or in residence in the host country. Based on these criteria, three categories of program staff were identified: PAs, PCs, and RDs. The PCs and PAs were based in the U.S. USAC office. The RDs were located in USAC program sites in countries around the world. Staff in these three categories were expected to work together to create a seamless study

abroad experience for U.S. college students. Each of these program staff categories and their responsibilities is described below.

Program Coordinators (PCs) include the President/CEO and various department directors, all located in the U.S. USAC office. Four PCs volunteered to participate in this study: All PC participants were female. Most of the PCs started as USAC students before transitioning upwards to peer advisors, PAs, and finally PCs. Their employment with USAC ranged from two to eight years.

Some of the PCs described their duties and responsibilities as vetting, negotiating, acting as a liaison, trouble-shooting, and problem solving. As part of their duties, PCs develop relationships with other universities, promote study abroad, set academic policy, create academic calendars, negotiate contracts, and evaluate programs through student feedback evaluations. They also oversee peer advisors and PAs, decide how each program will be represented in the catalogue, research field trip options, and address program weaknesses while looking for improvements.

Program Advisors (PAs) are located in the U.S. USAC office. They are responsible for preparing college students before they depart for study abroad. They are also a resource during students' repatriation. Seven PAs volunteered to participate in this study: Four male and three female. All but one PA was a prior USAC study abroad student. Their employment with USAC ranged from one to five years.

Some of the PAs described their duties and responsibilities as outreach, planning, networking, creating opportunities for students and alumni, and following up with students. They assist students with documents for housing, flights, and visas, work on scholarships and strategic planning, provide students with arrival information, send out

cultural and reminder emails, and answer cultural questions. They also design webinars, conduct pre-departure orientations, and create study abroad toolkits and handbooks.

When necessary, PAs have candid conversations with students and parents and, as one described, “bridge the gap of student expectations, parent expectations, culture, and staff abroad.”

Resident Directors (RDs) are responsible for providing support to students while they are studying at the Specialty Program site locations. Six RDs volunteered to participate in this study: Four males and two females. The participating RDs lived and worked in communities off the beaten path in Europe and Latin America where students could mingle with the local population and absorb the unique cultures. All RDs had either previously studied with USAC as students, were recruited from other study abroad organizations, or had been USAC professors. Their employment with USAC ranged from six to twenty-two years.

Some of the RDs described their duties and responsibilities as budgeting, administration, planning, communicating, and lending support. One RD commented, "RDs have to know how everything works – budgets, administration, host families." They manage academics, field trips, onsite orientations, internships, volunteer opportunities, and communications at their program sites. They work with host families, often providing them with cultural tips and knowledge of the incoming students including new trends and topics students might discuss. When necessary, RDs accompany students to the hospital and are on call providing 24-hour support for emergencies.

Data Source

Semi-structured interviews provided the data for this study. Aiken-Wisniewski (2010) specified:

Qualitative researchers are focused on answering a question based on the words and actions of people who become participants or respondents for a study. The researcher engages individuals in conversation, observes their practices and behaviors, or gathers relevant objects to gain deeper understanding of a phenomenon or process from a human perspective. Once data in the form of transcripts, field notes, or artifacts are collected, he or she must uncover the meaning of these data for answering the question and contributing to the body of knowledge in the area of interest. (p.18)

A semi-structured interview is an instrument for developing exchanges between interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer provides interview topics for the purpose of obtaining the interviewee's perceptions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Both open-ended questions and those with a concluding point are used in order to obtain a better understanding of respondents' viewpoints as they relate to the topic (Yi, 1994). Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewee to freely express his or her opinions during a directed conversation (Yi, 1994; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003).

The purpose of the interview was to ascertain each individual's personal perceptions related to the objective of the study, as well as the meaning that each examinee ascribed to such perceptions. Relevant first-hand information, including participants' opinions, thoughts, and a general sense of awareness was sought (Tuckman,

1972). Subsequently, semi-structured directed dialogue within this context was an effective method for exploring personal perceptions (Seidman, 1991).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the means for gathering data in this study because they were flexible and more likely to promote prolific, thoughtful responses by the participants (Lichtman, 2012). These conversations were expected to provide further understanding about the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad consortium held about creating the study abroad experience for U.S. college students.

Three broad sections constituted the interview protocol. The first group of questions focused on the background of the participants and what brought them to work for USAC. The second set of questions explored study abroad programs in general. The third and most numerous set of questions focused on the details of the participant's work. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A. The questions themselves were expected to provide a basic structure for the interview, but were not considered to be an exhaustive list of potential topics or areas to be explored for this investigation. The interview was conducted in a conversational style and ideas were probed when appropriate.

Data Collection

Data were collected under the auspices of the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval by the President of USAC, a recruitment email was sent to all PCs, PAs, and RDs working for USAC. Potential participants were instructed to contact the researcher through e-mail if they were interested in participating (see the recruitment email in Appendix B).

When participants agreed to be part of the study, a time and place of mutual agreement was established to conduct the interviews. All of the U.S. interviews were conducted face to face in a private area of the participant's choosing on the university campus. Most were conducted in a private room in the university library. For the RDs, Skype was used. Skype (Microsoft Corp., Redmond, WA) is an online video chat application that does not require the use of a telephone. It is most commonly utilized between computer users allowing both parties to see each other while talking. Because RDs work around the world, the use of this technology helped minimize interview time and costs.

All 17 interviews were conducted within a two week timeframe. Prior to the interview, a follow-up email was sent to confirm the interview time and place. An information sheet describing the study was attached to the email (see Appendix C). Immediately prior to the start of the interview, the information sheet was reviewed and participants were allowed to ask questions about the study. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to two hours with the average being one hour. Memos were written following each interview to record initial impressions about the data.

All interviews were conducted in English and audiotaped. English is the first or second language of most participants. All USAC employees must be fluent in English in order to complete their daily jobs with USAC. Due to the variety of languages that RDs speak, English was the only common language between all participants and the researcher. Subsequently, English was used in these interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the investigator.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the process described by Creswell (2003). Analysis began during the interview process when initial reactions, ideas, and recurring comments were recorded in the form of memos. A more thorough analysis of the data was undertaken with the verbatim transcripts. Once all transcripts were transcribed, they were read to gain a holistic understanding of the data. More memos were written to note potential themes. At this point, the initial theme of emotions was identified.

Following the initial, holistic reading, transcripts were again read line-by-line. During this reading, sections of the transcripts were highlighted and marked with a code for the purpose of organizing the data into more potential categories or themes. Examples of the codes included: Information or the transmission of specific or factual information; emotions, usually related to students; and hopes for the students. At this point, the recurring main themes of how participants perceived their professional responsibilities were identified: (1) Facilitating self-reliance; (2) Managing emotions; and (3) Adjustment through rethinking. All data associated with each initial theme were then analyzed to develop descriptions of the themes and identify sub-themes. This process was not a single step; rather, it was an iterative process of exploring different possible interpretations of the data.

Once the themes were finalized, consideration of the participant's culture and role was included in the analysis. Although there was some logical delineation of roles based on pre-departure and in-country phases, careful attention was also paid to the perceptions that crossed roles and responsibilities.

The data were analyzed on their own merit to develop themes and subthemes. No attempt was made to predetermine the themes or subthemes. The final step was to derive meaning from the data analysis, particularly in light of the research questions.

Bias

It is relevant to note that trying to avoid the researcher's bias is significant. The researcher divested private presuppositions and only examined the study participants' descriptions when analyzing data. Prejudgments and biases pertaining to the researcher's personal experiences were avoided. Moustakas (1994) expanded on this by asserting that it is impossible to completely accomplish the epoché process; however, the researcher's own life stories and experiences were not included in the process of data collection and analysis.

Summary

This chapter has described the research methodology used in the study. The first section focused on the research design, a qualitative social constructivist inquiry. The next section described the study abroad consortium, USAC, as a background for the study. The third section detailed the participants recruited, including PAs, PCs, and RDs. The fourth section clarified the data source, individual interviews. The fifth section presented the data collection. Finally, the sixth section described the data analysis. In Chapter IV, research results and findings are presented.

Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for United States (U.S.) college students. More specifically, how did Program Coordinators (PCs), Program Advisors (PAs), and Resident Directors (RDs) perceive their professional responsibilities? Two questions guided this study:

1. How did staff members understand the goals and objectives of study abroad?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?
2. How did staff members understand the needs of college students?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?

Three interrelated themes in regard to how participants perceived their professional responsibilities were found in the data: (1) Facilitating self-reliance; (2) Managing emotions; and (3) Adjustment through rethinking. This chapter presents descriptions of each of these three themes.

Facilitating Self-Reliance through Building Community

All seventeen of the interviewed staff members had recognized the need to provide students with information. Despite this commonality, there were distinctions in the depth and the procedure of outlining this information. The PAs provided a list of bureaucratic tasks to be completed pre-departure (such as registering for courses and getting visas), general information on living overseas, and lesser known insight into the culture (such as food or local slang). They provided this information through a six-hour orientation on-campus for local students, online webinars, online communications, and an online arrival guide, "which will show like step by step how to get from the airport to

your program site.” The PAs also sent out cultural information emails, "spurring them [students] on to kind of discover some of those things on their own.”

Similar to PAs, RDs addressed cultural norms, common phrases, how to prepare for cultural adjustment, and how to seek assistance; however, their orientations were more country-specific and in-depth. Through multi-day, onsite, in-person orientations, they provided students with an in-person "kind of practical guide to living here" including information about the country, weather, courses, vacation days, finances, and health and safety. Certain topics, however, were not always easy to cover, as was referenced by one RD, "Something that I don't feel particularly comfortable with, which is everything that has to do with alcohol, drugs, and how to deal with those while they're here.” Resident directors assisted students with in-country cell phones, transportation options, and provided opportunities where students could immerse themselves in the culture (such as volunteer activities, field trips, and local friends). In addition, they initiated participatory activities such as city tours or scavenger hunts to help students become more familiar with their surroundings. The goal of these activities was reflected in a comment by one RD, to “set them [students] on the right foot.”

Particularly noteworthy from the findings was the almost reluctance from all of the participants to provide too much information, and instead to encourage students' self-initiative and in turn self-reliance. Touching on the idea, one PC stated, this is "not necessarily an orientation process, but a cultural preparation process.” The process begins when a student applies to a program and continues throughout the entire study abroad experience. According to some staff, before the student even departs, the student's intention to study abroad can make a difference in the outcome. One PA prompts

discussion by asking students, "Think of your credits, lifestyle, what you want out of the experience... what do you envision for yourself?" The PA added that while some students know why they want to attend a certain program and what they want to get out of study abroad, others simply go at the prodding of a parent or because their roommate is going. Staff mentioned that if students can identify their motivations and purpose for studying abroad, "they will realize different opportunities that might work out better for them."

After recognizing their goals, choosing a program, and gaining pre-departure information, one RD stated that students can still "learn only so much before arriving." They must live the experience. Indeed, participants indicated that regardless of how well the students prepare prior to departure or the information they absorb during the pre-departure and onsite orientations, "the students have many questions throughout" and will have much to learn along the way. Participants insisted that one of the most important things students can learn is how to find answers for themselves. Almost all of the participants agreed that students tend to be more successful in the long run if, instead of turning to others first, students take the self-initiative to find answers on their own.

Throughout the interviews, the participants emphasized the main keys to developing the student's self-initiative are integration and adaptation to the host culture. As one PA put it,

The onsite staff is really great about making it not just about, you know, the American students coming abroad, but how to integrate them [students] into the culture they are living in, as well as other cultures too in the surrounding area.

To accomplish the integration and adaptation process, some RDs initiated group activities in casual settings, "so it's a perfect way, or it's a perfect introduction to the culture to kind of set them up hopefully for success." Another RD mentioned,

I always tell people that studying abroad is not just like traveling, it's not taking a vacation. Um, you actually get to live in one place, experience a culture, practice the language, you learn about different things while you're living in the environment. So a lot of times, the classroom work kind of complements what you're learning outside of the classroom.

Participants described an additional way to help students integrate and adapt was to be personal. Rather than lecture, most of the participants tied in personal information and examples. They talked about themselves and then asked students why they chose the program, country, and city. One RD articulated,

We ask students to introduce themselves, their majors, schools, whatever they want to say about themselves.... Staff does the same – we share our personal experience with students. We all studied abroad, we know the emotions they are feeling, we are here to help.

The goal shared by all of the participants was for the students' self-initiative and in turn, self-reliance to increase as the students integrate into their surroundings.

However, the participants agreed that it is up to the students to make the "best answer or decision for themselves". This sentiment was reflected in the following participant's response:

You know these are all the tools, all the means that we put in your hands. Now you have to decide what you're going to make this experience out of and it's going

to be your decision and we're here to help you, but you have to do something. I cannot tell you what this experience has to be like because that would be totally fake. You have to decide what you want. You're making a big effort, you're devoting time, uh money. You're implied some sort of cost of opportunity as well because there's something you're not doing back home. So, what are we going to do about this, you know, and they decide.

Students go on field trips, meet locals, live with a host family, and take classes they cannot take in the U.S. They meet people they "might potentially work with in the future." In the end, participants all expressed the hope that students would view study abroad not just as travel or a casual trip, but as a chance to immerse themselves in another culture in a safe and supported manner "while still allowing you [the students] the flexibility and freedom to kind of learn more about yourself and decide what you want to do."

Participants stated that throughout the study abroad process, students need to challenge themselves, put in a certain amount of effort, and take advantage of the support and services that are there. One PA emphasized, "It's the ability and the willingness of the student to try to force themselves to do stuff on their own in different things" that will provide the most benefit for students.

Self-Reliance through Challenges and Risks

Challenges are embedded in the study abroad experience and occur from the very start of the program process. As one PA referenced, the process begins right after a student applies: "When they [students] have questions I try not to give them the answer right away if I know that the information is somewhere in the document." Allowing the

students to "figure things out with the resources that they're given before...reaching out for it," this challenge "builds independence in the sense of I can do things on my own – or I can solve problems on my own and I can get through without having to have an authority figure here." As one PA indicated, students can then "blossom into something new ... not who your parents or your friends think you are," but "who they want to be".

During the process of becoming more self-reliant, students may "sort of go crazy." Participants reported that some students appear to feel that because they are paying for the study abroad experience, they can do whatever they want. Participants agreed, however, that students still need to be aware of the written and unwritten rules around them, and that rules still exist everywhere in the world. This concept was emphasized in one PA's statement, "If you are going to live in someone else's country, you need to follow their rules; like it doesn't matter if you don't agree with them."

The importance of following rules fell along a continuum among participants. Some participants felt that a lack of following rules led to chaos and made the work of the RDs and professors ineffective. One example they provided was that if a student gets into trouble with the law, the staff can do very little besides being an intermediary for the students. In addition, one PC iterated,

Study abroad is like um, grassroots you know and being ambassadors of the U.S. or their home country in that host country and so if they're not following the rules, if they choose not to, you know, adapt to expectations in their host country, then they just kind of set a bad example for their home country. So, um, if they truly care about representing their home country they should follow the rules as much as they can.

Another participant concurred, "Students should be clear that life will be different and if they sincerely want to learn and respect that country, they will have to adapt."

In contrast, some participants described rules as guidelines to behavior and that students should figure out where the boundaries are for themselves. This concept was demonstrated in one PA's statement, "Sometimes you do have to break the rules to have fun. But, I think that requires just like moderation too." One PC agreed, "If a student does it the wrong way, they will learn their lesson, and then they will know the right way." A similar sentiment was provided by another PC,

I also feel like a lot of the learning experiences come from maybe not, or choosing to go a different path; and they're like wow either that worked out really well, or dang I should not have done that and next time I won't do that. So, it's some flexibility for learning too I think is important.

Summing up this concept, one PA stated, "Breaking that shell is what is important... Sometimes breaking the rules is what helps you grow." A few participants stipulated if breaking the rules helps the students grow, then the student should do it.

Regardless of their perceptions of rules, staff reported being there to lend a helping hand. This concept was demonstrated in an RD's statement,

For us it's fine, it's quite easy to find a doctor, uh counselor to help them with housing if they got an issue with a landlord. That's, that's something that we find very easy to deal with. We do that every year, every semester, every week. What is normally not so easy is to convince them that they can find us there to help them.

The staff reported being on the lookout for students' behaviors and emotions to help students find and understand their limits. Sometimes this was to help students break issues "up into pieces and remedy each situation and make it better" in order to see if "we can change your outlook." Other times it was to steer students in the right direction and introduce them to safe, guided activities. "Students won't make the best friends on their own," stated some RD staff. In turn, RDs provided an "extra level of security with the local buddies," who "are there to have fun and make sure the student is totally fine."

The staff stated that they continuously encourage students to try other strategies in order to improve their own self-initiative and self-reliance, such as: Being willing to try new things; identifying resources and developing a plan in advance; signing a contract for change; and stepping outside of their comfort zones. Throughout the student's growth process, staff acknowledged that they still need to be observant and willing to lend a guiding hand when needed. This concept was referenced in one PC's statement, "It's all back to reflection, the intentional reflection and the intentional experience and realizing that not all the students are going to go through that on their own."

All participants agreed that the end goal is for students to become self-reliant enough to get the resources they need to succeed. One PA iterated, "Sometimes you [students] just gotta break over the barrier and just reach out." "The students who are open and willing to communicate and look for resources, will be more successful." This concept was articulated in another PC's statement, "If you [the student] embrace the experience, you are going to gain such amazing life skills, intercultural communication, flexibility"; and to accomplish this, "you have to really put yourself out there" and say "I want to learn. I want to meet people." Regardless, the participants agreed, the students are

the “ones who did all the work.” By the end of the study abroad experience, the students will know that “I can get out of my comfort zone” and that “It’s insanely hard, and then it gets easier, and then they realize like, wow, I did all that by myself, my comfort zone is huge, and I can do a lot more... I just have to apply myself.” One participant further described how study abroad contributes to self-reliance and skills development in the following quote:

In different ways – you just travel, you go to a hotel and everything is fine and perfect. When you study abroad you have to deal with different culture, different language, different people, food, you get sick, homesick, everything. So you grow as a person a lot. You get to know yourself too.

As a few participants stated, the students “have to go through it [the study abroad process] to see the big picture.” They “won’t see everything right away, but many years down the road when you [the students] are looking back.” One PA mentioned that before students go abroad they often underestimate themselves, but when they return “they realize they are more capable than they thought they were.” As a few participants stated, this will often “pave the way for anything else you [they] do.”

Managing the Emotions

Participants reported that they do everything possible to help students get abroad, adapt, and adjust to their environments, challenge themselves, and become more self-reliant. The PAs and PCs reported reaching out to students with cultural insight before they packed their bags; RDs disclosed providing meaningful engagement through structured activities and intentional reflection during class assignments once the students arrived onsite. All of the participants emphasized how they desire students to be happy

and safe as they become part of another culture. Regardless of the participants' actions or intentions, however, they divulged many experiences when students were not able to cope, make friends, or digest their experiences. Participants indicated that sometimes the students' expectations were too high or students "nosedived" as they learned what it was to be unsuccessful or to fail. They acknowledged that throughout the study abroad process there are many challenges to adjustment, and that a majority of these challenges deal with emotions.

Beginning from the moment a student applies to a program and continuing well after a student returns home, interviewees reported that much of the study abroad experience deals with emotions. As one PA stated, "Sometimes the students underestimate the pre-departure process and do not realize its length or complexity." This may cause initial frustrations or anxiety. The worry continues for some students as they begin to envision their life overseas, stirring up emotions of nervousness and anxiety about living with a "new family that you've never met before," taking classes, or getting along with others.

Mixed with worries, the students were reported to be excited and "jazzed" about the new experience, "eager and ready to grow and develop as people." Some staff mentioned that they themselves are excited when they meet a new group of students; they want to fulfill some of the students' expectations, to open their minds, and to teach them something new. As one RD stated, "There is a phrase that I like... that in our position we are like missionaries.... like people ... like teaching them a new religion." However, even with all the excitement in the air, many participants agreed that students do not yet understand the message. "In that first week when there's a lot of stress from traveling

physically and stress mentally from having to adjust to this, like just hitting the ground in a new country," students can start to feel disappointed. Disappointment was described as coming in many forms. If students compare their experience to that of other students they heard about or read online, they may be disappointed. One participant shared,

If students expect to come back fluent in the host language, they're gonna be disappointed. If they expect everything to be easy, as easy as they have it at home, they're gonna be disappointed. If they expect, for example, academics to be pretty similar they're gonna be disappointed. If they expect things to not change except they're in this fantastical environment while they're doing their normal life, they're gonna be disappointed, and they're going to have a lot of frustrations along the way.

In fact, participants stated that the longer students spend in the country, the more ups and downs they go through. As one participant concluded, "It's [study abroad is] a heartbeat with its highs and lows – you will feel challenged, stressed, up days, low days."

To deal with this range of emotions and to help students adjust, staff elucidated various strategies they employ. One RD stated, "Sometimes the students just need something from home to connect to." A PA added, "When you're abroad it's easy to just forget to check in with family and friends back home." She recommended for students to exchange phone numbers, email, and set up social media before they depart. "Just because, when students get lonely, I think that's always the best comfort is just being able to chat with, you know, family and kinda bounce things off." Other participants countered that social media and constantly interacting with friends and family from home

"can be a distraction and can increase anxiety and homesickness;" they emphasized that there "must be a balance."

Participants described strategies they employ to assist students who are having difficulties adjusting, including: Using art to express frustrations or sentiments; having students write down their expectations of the culture and then throwing them away; professional help through counseling or psychology; guided reflection; or keeping a journal, blog, or video archive. One PC summed up this concept, "Students should put their thoughts out on a hard day... or a good day."

Numerous participants suggested that USAC peers can be another great source of support, providing assurance and guidance to fellow students. They can help struggling students know that they are not alone, nor are they the only ones having trouble navigating a new system. On the opposite hand, various participants stipulated that relying solely on USAC friends can be problematic in itself; students may not make friends in the local culture, missing out on some of the benefits of study abroad, and in turn not have as much of a "changing experience." In part, to avoid the sole reliance on USAC peers, RDs stated that they provide opportunities for students to get involved in the local community and make local friends. This concept was reflected in a quote,

So when students are feeling like, oh my gosh, this is overwhelming, or I don't know how to navigate this or – the onsite staff is really great about putting them in touch with a local student, even two, so that way they can go and do things together.

Many participants suggested that the best way for students to deal with their emotions is to get into a routine, stay active, and make local friends wherever they go.

This recommendation included after repatriation. Indeed, staff stated that the roller coaster of emotions does not stop at the conclusion of the study abroad experience. One PA emphasized, "Once they get home it's kind of a let-down of like, oh my gosh, no one gets it or reverse culture shock cause they miss kind of those - everything was new, everything was a new experience. It was like this constant adrenaline rush in a lot of ways." Another RD agreed, "Students feel lost when they come home."

In order to assist in the students' repatriation, one PA advocated for PAs and PCs to provide students with "ambassador programs and ways to get involved" or to encourage "the opportunity to talk about the experience and talk with other students with similar experiences." Another PA declared,

That's why we try and do welcome back, you know, webinars or group things with students. We do a lot of alumni outreach too; that way kind of get people engaged to know that, you know, there's still opportunities out there to talk about it, or go back kind of thing.

All participants agreed, they are there to help the students adapt and adjust to a new culture. However, they are still facilitating self-reliance while managing the emotional journey. Ideally, students will understand and work through their own emotions; if a student can do this, participants concurred, the study abroad experience will change them for the better in the long run.

Adjustment through Rethinking

There appeared to be a degree of intentionality underpinning the participants' facilitation of self-reliance and managing the emotions of students; the overall sentiment seemed to be that by being able to think differently, understand others and oneself, and

being able to tolerate and manage differences, students can ultimately adjust to their new environments. The participants described many lessons that students learn along the way: Starting with how to navigate a new education system. As one PA explained, "So this system, this education system is different in this area, so I have to learn this, and then it also clues them in that there's probably many different ways that things could be happening." This point was supported by another PA who provided an example of an academic nuance when insisting that "you don't ask for exceptions from a professor" while overseas. The student has "an added flavor of having a professor being from another culture," there is a "better ratio of professors to students, smaller class sizes," and students get "more attention from their professor." Finally, the interactions "with the staff and seeing those perspectives, it also really kind of enhances their connection to the people who are providing their education" while overseas.

Participants reported various potential benefits from working with locals overseas, including learning tolerance, dealing with ambiguity, and breaking stereotypes. One PA reported that a challenge of studying abroad is being able to think differently and to break away from "the barriers that you have grown up with... those mental barriers that have shaped who you are." He recommended that students work with the same people that were discriminated against by their parents. Some staff did report that breaking chains of thought can be difficult though, and that sometimes students "need to get lost to be found." A PA further stipulated that a little bit of getting lost or "the uncomfortable zone" is a good thing, but not too far. "Students can lose a little bit of themselves in a negative way as well as a positive way."

Through study abroad, students were reported to recognize that “there’s other people outside the United States.” As one PA explained, “It’s a great opportunity ... to really dive into multiple cultures that you probably weren’t even aware of” and recognize “how other people see the world.” Students may begin to “realize that maybe one little problem, or one big problem that is for you is nothing” as compared to problems in other countries. Some students may even discover new academic paths and return to the U.S. to change their majors to international education or international affairs. Furthermore, study abroad was reported to help students “pick up a love of language and living abroad.”

The developing idea of re-thinking also applied to student’s self-awareness. Participants reported that students gain many skills from their intercultural interactions during study abroad. These skills were described as becoming more open to various situations and differing ways of seeing life. The study abroad experience was described as “forcing you [students] to be a certain way; um, and I think that’s just like a social skill that you don’t learn, uh, if you were just at home with, you know, people you’re familiar with, um, with the area you’re familiar with.” Staff emphasized that through study abroad students can learn a language so that they can communicate with more people. They can gain empathy, adaptability, and flexibility. As summed up by one PC, the experience will “improve who you [the students] are by understanding the world and the things happening around you.”

Participants stated that students can use study abroad as a springboard to continue conversations about domestic and world views. A PA elucidated, that when students meet people with different religious or political beliefs, “they won’t shut down.” They will realize “you don’t have to get along with everyone, but you can appreciate everyone and

you can have amazing friendships and relationships with people that have different beliefs, different cultures.”

During study abroad, students learn to compare, but also “don't make comparisons: just understand that there are ways that we do things here that are different.” According to staff, this awareness can help the student become “a better, more tolerant person.” Through intercultural interactions, students were reported to understand crucial elements of other cultures, histories, and societies. Upon repatriation, students were reported to awaken to the reality that the U.S. itself is a much larger, more culturally diverse place than they were previously aware. “I mean even within a country, we're in the U.S., so diverse.” One PA provided an example, “You know a lot of people say oh we live in a bubble, but I think that's changing in the United States. I mean even in just [city] in itself. Like we're becoming more and more diverse as a city.” This awareness was described by participants as a way to help with domestic and intercultural relationships, which are considered important in a diversifying workplace and world.

According to the staff, all of the skills learned in study abroad are valuable professionally, academically, and culturally. This concept was demonstrated in one participant's statement, there is a “connection between their [student's] intellectual development and their future”; the “life skills that you [the student] gain make you a more well-rounded, successful person in all aspects of your life.” In addition, “Just getting over that language barrier with your host family... it gives you a different – like a good learning, uh, lesson. Yeah. And it shapes you to be like a better person I believe.” Many participants observed that upon repatriation, students are often better at following up, asking questions, dealing with bureaucracy, and filling out forms. Outside

of what may be considered *ordinary* growth for many college students, participants described that returning study abroad students also tended to challenge stereotypes and viewed cultural differences as inherently positive. They were more mature, understood the “spectrum of everything” more clearly, were more outgoing and not completely “overwhelmed in American culture”, and learned who they were as a person and an individual. They learned to “manage differences and challenges they’re not used to in their normal environment,” take initiative, and continued to travel on their own in the future.

Some participants declared that everyone benefits from the study abroad engagement process. As explained in one RD’s statement, “People want to show you how amazing their countries are, how amazing their homes are, and they want you coming home saying ‘oh, like Spain was incredible’ or, you know, ‘Indian people are so nice’.” Another participant explained, “The host family also learns so much from the students too, especially for those host family who has kids.” One RD described the close bonds that students can create with host families, teachers, and staff. He discussed how past students created long-term relationships, continuously maintained contact, and frequently returned to visit their host families. Participants emphasized their desire that students would continue to be actively engaged in the international community upon repatriation. They hoped that the students would become leaders of international clubs and ambassadors for the countries they visited. In the end, most participants concurred that study abroad can provide opportunities that help students build skills for an “educated citizenry” and “global citizenship.”

In conclusion, the interviews revealed valuable insight into the perceptions of study abroad staff and how they view their professional responsibilities as well as their goals and objectives for study abroad. There was unanimous consent among the participants that students can become more self-reliant, open-minded, flexible, and enhance their resumes if they go overseas, but only if the students are open to the experience. If students go overseas and "simply go to class and their room, they are not really living the experience and won't get much out of it." Additionally, "If they come home and simply say that [the study abroad experience] was a nice one and only intercultural experience, they aren't making the most out of it."

"I just feel people should- the students and especially their parents should be more focused on that aspect of studying abroad and that maturity, you know, and growing into adulthood." "Many people don't understand studying abroad and the depth of it." "I think it's a life changing experience you know. For 99% of our students it's a positive addition for their lives." "Sometimes they fail, sometimes they succeed. Sometimes they make mistakes. But for sure it's like an intense and condensed vital experience that makes them learn." Participants agreed that study abroad can help students learn more about social responsibility, global awareness, and civic engagement on their path to an "educated citizenry" and global citizenship.

Summary of the Findings

In summary, the participants in this study appeared to collectively believe that their professional responsibilities were to create the conditions through which students could become more self-reliant, manage their emotions, and adjust through rethinking. The participants consistently highlighted integration, adaptation, self-initiative, and self-

reliance in their interviews as a path for students to discover themselves and develop their identities. In order to promote these qualities in students, participants discussed how they give students information and support, all the while employing various strategies to encourage students to find information on their own. Staff stressed that while students are learning and living overseas, they are stepping outside of their comfort zones. They acknowledged that this movement and experience does involve risks; for example, some students may “go crazy” or lose themselves. The staff agreed that in order for the experience to be of the most benefit for students, however, students need to challenge themselves, put in a certain amount of effort, and take advantage of the support and services that are available.

Staff reported that students go through a variety of emotions throughout the study abroad experience from pre-departure to repatriation. However, participants concurred that there must be a balance between lending support and enabling dependence. They detailed various strategies, including self-reflection, which they employ to help students become aware of and deal with their own emotions. The desired end goal was that students would have a better understanding of how to deal with and relate to others and themselves.

Participants all appeared to settle on common desires, that throughout the study abroad process, students would develop the following attributes: tolerance of differences, curiosity about differences, and the ability to simultaneously see differences and similarities in self and others. Students would also become more self-reliant, open-minded, and flexible. Finally, participants hoped that students would return to the U.S. more culturally aware and internationally engaged. Participants agreed, in order to get the

most benefit out of the experience, however, students have to apply themselves; if they do, the study abroad experience can be life-changing.

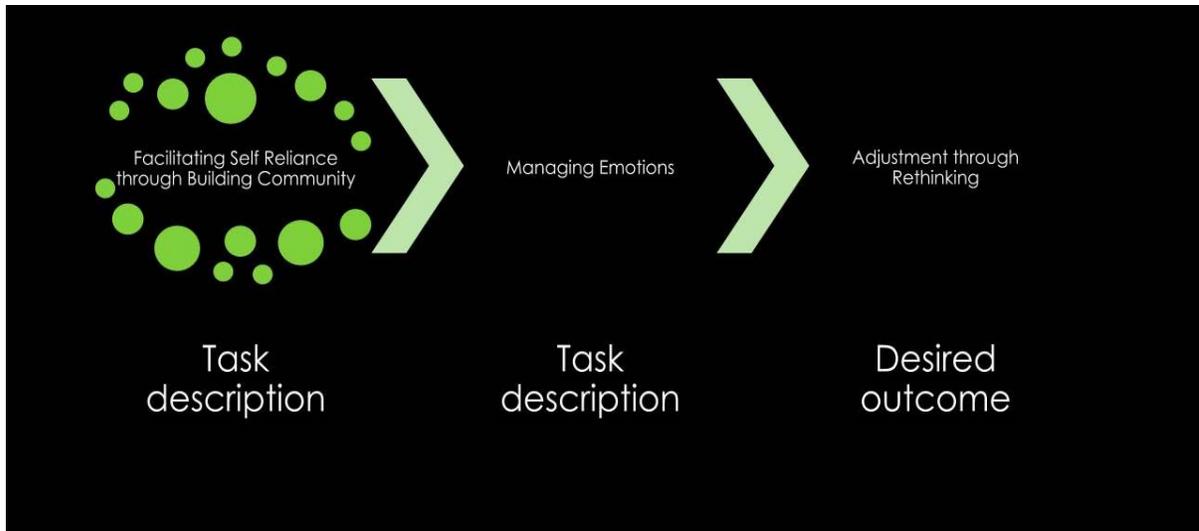


Figure 1. The process participants appeared to be undertaking. This figure illustrates the tasks participants undertook to reach their desired outcome.

In Chapter V, discussion and conclusions are provided.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusion

Leaders of institutions of higher education continually reassess how to prepare graduates to thrive within a diverse, global workforce (Jackson, 2008). In this internationalization effort, study abroad programs have been increasing in popularity as an effective and engaging method of developing foreign language proficiency, cross-cultural awareness, and personal growth (Carley, Stuart, & Dailey, 2011; Goldini, 2013; Hallows, Wolf, & Marks, 2011; Perry, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2012). During the first fifteen years of the 21st century, the number of students studying abroad doubled. Furthermore, the Institute of International Education (IIE) launched a national campaign to again double the number of students who study abroad each year by the end of the decade (Open Doors, 2014). With the increase of students studying abroad, the number and diversity of study abroad personnel located and working throughout the world has also increased.

Much of the research concerning study abroad efforts has been designed to explore student perspectives (Lucas, 2009). Researchers in multiple disciplinary fields have suggested that inquiries be directed towards local educators, parents, and institutional leaders on their perceptions and motivations regarding the development of internationalization strategies (Fedorowicz, 2017; Yemini et al., 2015). The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for United States (U.S.) college students. The program under study was the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC), which was selected because of its diverse network of international site locations and staff. The research focused on how Program Coordinators (PCs), Program Advisors

(PAs), and Resident Directors (RDs) perceived their professional responsibilities? Two questions guided this study:

1. How did staff members understand the goals and objectives of study abroad?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?
2. How did staff members understand the needs of college students?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?

Seventeen staff members agreed to take part in semi-structured interviews which lasted from 45 minutes to two hours with the average being one hour. Participants included four PCs, seven PAs, and six RDs with employment tenure ranging from just hired to 22 years. The focus of the interviews was on the participants' professional responsibilities including their understanding of the goals and objectives of study abroad as well as the needs of college students.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section consists of a discussion of the findings. The second section addresses implications for practice. The third section outlines recommendations for future studies. Finally, the fourth section presents a conclusion of the research study.

Discussion

In the design phase of this study, it was expected that study abroad staff members would have different perceptions about the goals and objectives of study abroad and the needs of college students, and that those differences would be primarily based on culture. It must be noted that Asian and African staff members did not elect to partake in this study. Findings in this study, however, do suggest that the respondent's culture was not a primary factor in their understanding of their professional responsibilities. It was striking

that all of the respondents, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, gave similar statements about their work. The participants' interpretations also blurred between the lines of professional responsibilities (PCs, PAs, and RDs). They all maintained a similar desire from pre-departure to repatriation for the study abroad experience to increase students' self-reliance, emotional management, cultural sensitivity and awareness, adjustment, and personal growth. Each participant even initiated similar activities to enhance the above-mentioned objectives, ranging from encouraging students to find their own answers to providing opportunities for them to interact with others. It could be interpreted that the cultural norms of USAC superseded the national cultural norms of the participants.

The same pattern was found regarding the participants' perceptions of the needs of college students. Although differences in region (East vs. West) and religion (Christian vs. Muslim vs. Buddhist) did not appear to be represented in the participants who self-selected for this study, differences in modernity (Modern vs. Traditional) were in evidence. Many of the USAC sites were located in more traditional areas of their countries and many of the countries could be considered more traditional than the U.S. Reflective of modern societal norms, however, all individuals stated the importance for college students to practice taking initiative and develop self-reliance in order to adapt and integrate into new cultures. It appeared that the participants in this study accepted the students as U.S. adolescents and treated them accordingly, regardless of their own cultural expectations.

Every staff member interviewed expressed a desire for students to interact with locals, explore their new environment, and become involved in the community. Even

though they did teach students aspects about the local culture, participants appeared to use learning about a new culture for a higher purpose. Culture was seemingly used to help students become more self-aware, tolerant of and curious about differences, and to simultaneously see differences and similarities in self and others.

Identity Development

Rather than culture being a determining factor in understanding both the goals and objectives of study abroad and the needs of college students, perhaps the most salient discovery of this study was the degree to which the findings mirrored the framework of one specific college student development theory, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) Theory of Identity Development. This theory consists of seven vectors or tasks, which are: (1) developing intellectual and interpersonal competence; (2) managing emotions; (3) developing mature interpersonal relationships; (4) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; (5) establishing identity; (6) developing purpose; and (7) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Each of these vectors are described below.

Developing intellectual and interpersonal competence. Developing intellectual competence was particularly noted in the findings; however interpersonal competencies were also revealed. Chickering and Reisser (1993) described intellectual competence as building a repertoire of skills to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize. Interpersonal competence was described as “not only the skills of listening, cooperating, and communicating effectively, but also the more complex abilities to tune in to another person and respond appropriately, to align personal agendas with the goals of the group, and to choose from a variety of strategies to help a relationship flourish or a group function” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.46).

Domestic (PA and PC) staff and in-country (RD) staff each promoted intellectual and interpersonal competencies, albeit in a slightly different manner. Domestic staff focused on pre-departure orientations and cultural emails. They asked students questions about what they knew about the country, then provided them with information. They often did not provide enough information to answer all of the student's questions; finding information on their own was part of the responsibility of the students. As one PC explained, "this is not necessarily an orientation process, but a cultural preparation process" used to build on students' intellectual competence but also allowing students to learn on their own. In order to build students' interpersonal competence, domestic staff provided in-person orientations and social gatherings for pre-departure and returning students. During these events, students could interact, discuss, relay information, and relate with fellow study abroad participants.

In-country staff tied in classroom learning with out-of-class learning, solidifying them with intentional reflection, and seemingly blending the development of intellectual and interpersonal competencies. They provided in-country orientations including field trips and scavenger hunts to "set them [students] on the right foot" before students were encouraged to venture out on their own. Staff implemented internships, volunteer opportunities, homestays, and local buddies for students to work together with locals to reach a common goal.

Regardless of job position or culture, a majority of participants in this study concurred that a key to students' adaptation in another culture was to slowly build on their pre-existing knowledge base and not simply transfer information. All of the staff found that prior knowledge affects how students interact with the new learning materials

they encounter, similar to the findings of Moos and Azevedo (2008). Cohen and Levinthal (1990) concurred that prior knowledge is a key to learning new information, catalyzing it, and then applying it to other contexts. Other researchers have also found that good prior knowledge can enhance students' motivation, comprehension, and performance with regard to learning new knowledge or skills (De Jong & Van Joolingen, 1998; Mitchell, Chen, & Macredie, 2005; Yates & Chandler, 1994).

Managing emotions. The second vector of Chickering and Reisser's theory (managing emotions) corresponded to the second theme of the findings (managing emotions). According to the staff, as students try to discover who they are without their family and friends at home, they will go through a range of emotions, and sometimes students will "sort of go crazy." According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), emotions have the power to derail the educational process when they become excessive or overwhelming. One of the staff members summed up this concept by saying, study abroad is "a heartbeat with its highs and lows – you [the student] will feel challenged, stressed, up days, low days." Findings from this study indicated that the primary emotions students experienced through the study abroad process were anxiety, frustration, nervousness, excitement, eagerness, and disappointment. The emotional journey often continued after a student returned home, experienced reverse culture shock, and learned how to re-relate with their loved ones. These findings coincide with the findings of Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015), who revealed that one of the biggest emotional challenges for students is trying to not only adapt to their own changes, but trying to figure out how other people are adapting to the changes within them.

Although not explicitly identified in their job descriptions, dealing with the management of emotions was a key activity of both domestic and in-country staff, albeit addressed in a slightly different manner. Domestic staff tried to “bring students and parents down to reality” with the “nuts and bolts” before the start of the program. They sent emails about culture shock in anticipation of a student’s departure and another email about reverse culture shock weeks before repatriation. Gatherings and social events were also organized for returning and pre-departure students to interact, talk about their experiences, and continue their involvement in the study abroad community.

In-country staff assisted in the process by setting up local buddies to help students adapt to the environment and reflective activities for students to process the experience. The staff stressed the importance of letting students know there was support available to them regardless of the day or hour. When necessary, this support included outside counselors, accompaniment to the hospital, or personal visits directly at the homestay. Staff also continuously looked for signs of trouble and held realistic conversations with students when they felt it was needed.

“The first task is not to eliminate emotions but to allow them into awareness and acknowledge them as signals, much like the oil light on the dashboard” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 47); emotions give insight into what is going on with a student. Staff suggested the use of journaling, blogging, or writing postcards to family and friends at home to express emotions on good days as well as bad days. Most staff agreed that intentional reflection through the use of writing, classroom projects, and art were beneficial elements in managing emotions. These findings correlate with Chickering and Reisser’s recommendation that assignments which invite students to engage emotionally

as well as intellectually can assist them with the management of emotions. Staff also recommended that students stay active, make local friends, and get into a routine in order to work through and manage their emotions.

Additional vectors. Whereas the first two vectors aligned with the first two themes found in the data respectively, the final five vectors (i.e., developing mature interpersonal relationships; moving through autonomy toward interdependence; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity) were revealed throughout the findings, but particularly in the last theme: adjustment through rethinking. Another distinction was that the last five vectors were presented as desired outcomes, often in the future, rather than issues specifically confronted during the study abroad experience. Indeed, the findings of this study generally supported Dwyer and Peter's (2012) theory that study abroad is a defining moment in a person's life and continues to impact the participant's life for years after the experience.

Developing mature interpersonal relationships. The vector of developing mature interpersonal relationships requires the ability to be intimate as well as the ability to accept and celebrate unique differences; this vector is defined as a tolerance and appreciation of others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Tolerance includes the ability to respond to people in their own right rather than as stereotypes or transference objects calling for particular conventions. During study abroad, students work, study, and live with people from different cultures. As one PA revealed, throughout the experience, students begin "looking beyond to why that might be and why cultures are a certain way." They confront the notion that "our way isn't always the right way" and they "learn a whole new way that it could be better for you [the student] by being open to it and seeing

that side.” They might even adopt “something new or adjust one’s original beliefs or practices.”

According to participants, students immerse themselves in the culture while interacting and achieving goals with others who are different. As a result, “students are able to enhance their learning and training by directly experiencing how diverse groups define and experience themselves” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 35). These findings mirror that of Gesinski, English, and Tyson (2010), who found that participation in dialogue with diverse groups of people allowed students to acquire new knowledge. These findings also correlate with Blahusiak (2012) who noted that students became more open and understanding of differences through study abroad. Furthermore, they gained cultural knowledge, were able to abolish previous stereotypes, and developed some form of tolerance and understanding of differences. Finally, these findings complement the study of Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009) which identified that students significantly increased their knowledge and understanding of cultural differences before and after their semester abroad.

According to the participants, students will more readily realize that the U.S. itself is a much larger, more culturally diverse place after their semester abroad. That realization can be their “springboard” to continue conversations about domestic and worldviews. These interactions can also increase “[students] social skills and improve your understanding of the world and the things happening around you.” Through the process, students can realize, “you don’t have to get along with everyone, but you can appreciate everyone and you can have amazing friendships and relationships with people that have different beliefs, different cultures.” As was referenced by one PA, this can

make a student “a better, more tolerant person”, more aware of other cultures and the interconnectedness of the world. According to participants, through these intercultural interactions, students can also gain many other skills including empathy, adaptability, and flexibility. One RD iterated, students might not see these changes in themselves “right away, but many years down the road when you are looking back.”

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence. Chickering and Reisser (1993) presented three stages in the moving through autonomy toward interdependence vector: Emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence. The first stage, emotional independence, begins with a separation from parents and proceeds through reliance on peers and nonparental adults. This stage culminates in the diminishing need for such supports and increased willingness to risk loss of friends or status in order to pursue strong interests or stand on convictions. This first stage of emotional independence was highly emphasized by participants. They stressed the need for students to separate from their families and friends at home both physically and mentally while overseas, including limiting the constant use of social media. This finding was in accord with Bartram (2013) who stated, “Reliance on technology as a way of sustaining remote social networks is noted by several students as something of an obstacle in meeting integrational and adjustment need” (p. 16). By living in the moment and not online, participants stated that students can “find themselves and who they want to be without the influence of outside forces.” Doyle (2009) concurred, “The separation from family allows the students an opportunity to reflect on their important role in managing personal stress and challenges” (p.148).

The second stage, instrumental independence, includes the abilities to organize activities and solve problems in a self-directed way, get from one place to another without detailed directions, and to find the information or resources required to fulfill personal needs and desires. As students are “figuring out how to navigate things on their own and developing confidence,” instrumental development, or the second stage, was revealed. Resident directors reported using classroom activities such as scavenger hunts or assignments that required students to ask locals for assistance or find solutions on their own. Staff hoped that participants would become more self-reliant and comfortable working with others who are different while realizing, “I can do more; I just have to apply myself.” These findings correlate with Hadis’s (2005) finding that study abroad can trigger the development of independence. Most staff emphasized that self-reliance is key. Students should decide what they want out of the experience and avoid turning to others as the first source of resolving problems. Bartram’s (2013) findings support this notion, stating that returning students re-instated beliefs in the importance of personal and social agency, especially when dealing with a range of affective challenges and needs.

Developing autonomy culminates in stage three, interdependence. This stage includes the recognition that one cannot operate alone and that greater autonomy enables healthier forms of interdependence. Relationships with parents are revised. New relationships based on equality and reciprocity replace the older, less consciously chosen peer bonds. The interpersonal context broadens to include the community, the society, and the world. The hope from staff was that students would find themselves, who they want to be while abroad, and see that the U.S. and the world are much larger, more culturally diverse places than they were previously aware. Upon returning home, staff

expressed the desire that students would maintain international friendships, start cultural clubs, continue their involvement with the international community, and/or become cultural ambassadors in their communities and on their travels. The staff also stressed the desire for students to consider study abroad not as a one-time cultural experience, but a continuous journey of cultural investigations.

Establishing identity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) described establishing identity as, “a solid sense of self emerges and it becomes more apparent that there is an I who coordinates the face of personality, who owns the house of self” (p. 49). Participants contended that the experiences and opportunities students are provided help them gain independence and self-confidence. As one PA discovered, the students who were often in the back of the pictures will be in the front of pictures when they return from their study abroad programs. According to another PA, these students will also often become leaders of clubs and ambassadors of the country they visited. “The study abroad experience offers them [students] the opportunity to assess their life situation personally, empowering them with self-confidence, and the understanding that they have matured in meaningful ways” (Doyle, 2009, p. 150). Through study abroad, students have the opportunity to separate from their family and friends at home, challenge themselves, and “discover who they want to become.”

Developing purpose. Staff observed that throughout the study abroad experience, students might learn what it is to be unsuccessful or fail. At the same time, they learn that it is okay to make mistakes and that “there are many ways to do things.” Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated that developing purpose entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist

despite obstacles. Working with local citizens in the local community through volunteer and internship opportunities, RDs provide students the ability to pursue different interests and career paths. Towards mid-semester, some students are even able to develop and implement their own projects including beach clean-ups or “distributing presents to homeless people.”

Participants found that academically, navigating the education system itself can be a learning lesson. Some students discover new academic paths or change their majors to such fields as international education or international affairs when they return home. Students may even “pick up a love of language and living abroad” and apply for professions overseas. These findings are partially supported by Norris and Dwyer (2005) who found that study abroad can “influence choice of college; sparking interest in travel; and current annual gross income” (p. 134).

Developing integrity. Developing integrity is the ability for students to challenge assumptions and to assemble and practice the values that are actually consistent with their own beliefs. Chickering and Reisser (1993) found that students bring to college an array of assumptions about what is right and wrong, true and false, good and bad, important and unimportant. Most of the values are implicit and unconsciously held, assumptions acquired from parents, church, school, media, or other sources, therefore may be hard to identify and explain. Participants expressed the hope that the study abroad experience and intercultural interactions would help students separate from home influences, shed assumptions and stereotypes they came with, and become more open to different ideas as they get a glimpse of “how other people see the world.” Doyle (2009) contended that participants in study abroad programs revised their previous values, which led to the

increase of understanding of the importance of values. Similarly, participants hoped that students' post-study abroad values would include becoming more socially aware and involved within the international community even after repatriation.

Creating Global Citizens

Taken together, the three themes found in the data, facilitating self-reliance, managing emotions, and ultimately student adjustment through rethinking, suggest that the staff who were interviewed for this study interpreted study abroad as a means of creating global citizens.

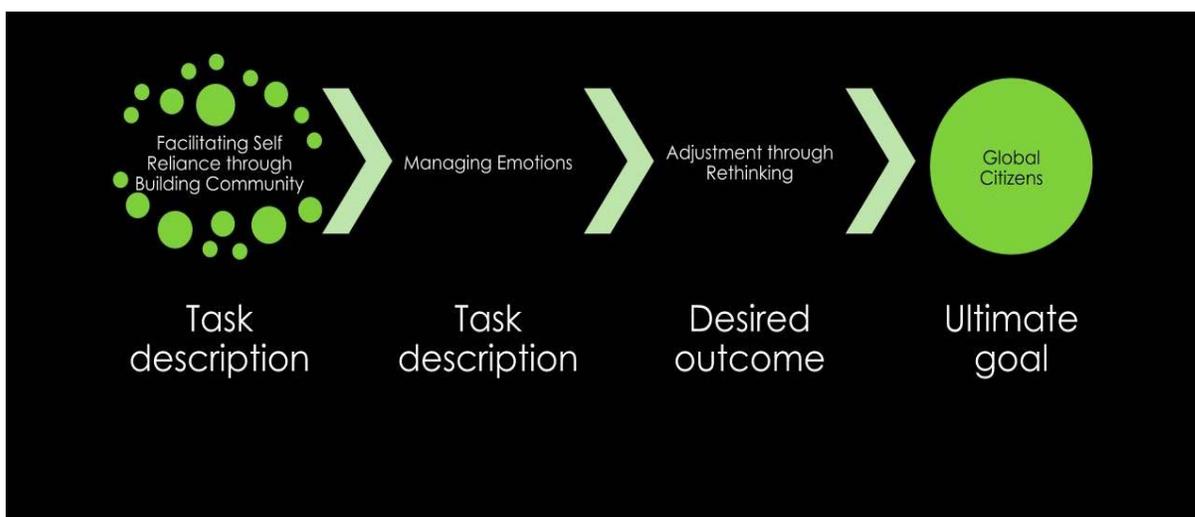


Figure 2. The process participants appeared to be undertaking. This figure illustrates the tasks participants undertook to reach their desired outcome and their ultimate goal.

“Global citizenship” is a highly contested and multifaceted term (Hanson, 2010; Zemach-Bersin, 2009); however, three key dimensions within the study abroad literature are now commonly accepted (Morais & Ogden, 2011; Schattle, 2009): (a) social responsibility (concern for others, for society at large, and for the environment); (b)

global awareness (understanding and appreciation of one's self in the world and of world issues); and (c) civic engagement (active engagement with local, regional, national, and global community issues). In one of the most thorough reviews in the study abroad scholarly field of the global citizenship concept, Schattle (2009) proposed that global citizenship "entails being aware of responsibilities beyond one's immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly" (p. 12).

This finding sheds an explicit light on the formal mission statement of the University Study Abroad Consortium (USAC):

To provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in the global society of the twenty-first century. We strive to provide an authentic, quality context in which students may grow into engaged citizens of the world, not only in the classroom but also through field trips, integrated living and academic experiences, sports, internships, and volunteer and service learning opportunities... Our goal is for your USAC experience to be fully rewarding and to expand your knowledge of another culture. (USAC 2016)

The inference is that cultures, although different, did not necessarily define the staff members' understanding of the goals and objectives of study abroad or their understandings of the needs of college students. Instead, the staff all collectively worked together with a similar goal: To help U.S. college students fit into and engage within a diverse world.

In conclusion, the USAC staff interviewed in this study described their perceptions about their professional responsibilities as well as their goals and objectives for creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students. Particularly noteworthy

was how similar their responses mirrored Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development which theorize the seven vectors students go through while developing their identities. As participants described a balancing act to help students get out of their comfort zones, become self-reliant, find themselves, and ultimately become global citizens, all seven vectors were found amongst the staff's responses.

Implications for Practice

In response to the internationalization phenomenon, leaders of institutions of higher education have reassessed how to prepare graduates to thrive within a diverse, global workforce (Jackson, 2008). One response has been study abroad. Findings from this study indicate that creating a study abroad experience requires carefully orchestrated planning, preparation, and teamwork within the study abroad staff for a higher purpose – in this case, to create engaged global citizens. Participants in this study did not necessarily desire students to simply learn about one culture. Instead, they used culture as a stepping stone to enable students to become more socially responsible, globally aware, and civically engaged in the international community. Staff members of study abroad did this by creating situations and implementing activities where students could become tolerant of others, self-reliant, and accepting of ambiguity.

There are some notable implications for practice found within this study. Primarily, the design of a study abroad program should include activities to help students develop their identities while still supporting student's academic and global success. For example, staff must reflect “an empowering balance of challenge and support” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 43); they should help students adapt and adjust to their new environments while still performing a sort of balancing act. Providing students with

information is critical, however, staff cannot and should not make every decision for the students. Indeed, participants insisted helping the students develop self-reliance and at times, take risks, is critical in the student's study abroad experience and growth. One PC stressed, "We work hard to prepare the students, but it may take away the sense of responsibility that a student has for the experience themselves. [We are] regulating ourselves into a corner and that can detract from the intercultural experience itself."

The management of emotions could be considered inherent in a study abroad experience, therefore, ongoing professional development of staff to support students is also critical. Students will become uncomfortable as they are challenged with new ideals in a new environment, but if staff recognize this as an essential component in the growth process, they can help students navigate their emotions. Through intentional activities and self-reflection, the goal is to help students process the experience while learning about others and themselves. Not all students will go through intentional reflection on their own, thus, reflective activities should also be required in classroom projects. In addition, the students may become homesick; while social media can remedy this at times, too much social media use can make matters worse. Consequently, staff should encourage students to balance media use, for example, suggesting regular social media days (e.g. once a week). Balance is a theme in itself and should be considered when developing and implementing programs.

Ongoing professional development of staff should also be implemented and include issues such as: Drugs, alcohol, and mental health. Furthermore, professional development about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the three themes identified in the findings should be explicit. This is particularly important for staff who

have not had international experiences. These competencies and attitudes should also be considered in the hiring process.

Recommendations from Participants

The participants of this study had their own ideas on how to improve the study abroad experience. Their responses have been divided between recommendations from PCs, PAs, and RDs. The PCs recommended keeping students' interests at heart and not getting caught up in finances. The PAs expressed the desire to make study abroad more accessible and available to all students, including more financial, emotional, and physical support, especially to under-represented groups. Working with younger American students so that they are more aware of what study abroad is and how it works from earlier ages was also mentioned. A few PAs recommended providing students with more training and awareness of the purpose of study abroad and what the programs entail. "It would be ideal to have students be more respectful of the experience and more willing and ready to learn from the experience, the staff, faculty, locals, in class and out – but to not see it merely as 'a trip' or 'travel experience'." Another PA desired staff training on how to reach out to students through the use of technology from current apps to text messages. A few PAs expressed the intent to find ways to condense information in a fun and informative way making it easier for students to digest. One PA recommended making the value of study abroad known not only to all students, but also to all departments, majors, and universities. Finally, a number of PAs expressed the desire to visit program sites overseas and to work face to face with the staff there.

Resident directors also expressed the desire to meet more often in person with the U.S. staff. The reasoning was demonstrated in one RD's statement, "Emails, they can be

very cold or there can be so many misunderstandings. The way that I write English, it can be so different that it might be bad for you when you get my email." Finally, RDs emphasized the goal to increase onsite internships as well as volunteer and extracurricular activities.

One of the key recommendations by all interviewed staff members is to use activities to help students adapt and integrate into the community. These activities begin before a student departs from the U.S., continue throughout the study abroad program, and conclude well after a student returns home. The intentional goal of each of the activities should be to help students move through the process of learning about themselves with the following attributes: Tolerance of differences, curiosity about differences, and the ability to simultaneously see differences and similarities in self and others. One important concept to remember is that global citizenship does not just come from the act of studying abroad itself, but includes the entire study abroad process beginning with the pre-departure work to the re-integration and involvement possibilities at the end.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The inference of this study is that cultures, although different, did not necessarily define the staff members' understanding of the goals and objectives of study abroad nor the needs of college students. As employees of USAC, the staff may be trained to or are required to become open and understanding of other cultures and working with U.S. college students in particular. Therefore, they may be requested to avoid imposing their own culture on a student or requested to comply with U.S. rules of conduct. A future

research study could investigate the rules and trainings of staff, including those on culture and student development.

Although I did not find culture based differences in the participants descriptions of their responsibilities, culture may affect how they approach these responsibilities, what activities they engage in with respect to facilitating self-reliance, managing emotions, and adjustment through re-thinking. More specific quantitative data could be collected on these themes.

Most of the participants in this study had at least one study abroad experience as a student. A future study with the same participants could explore whether the methods they described for their own study abroad program development were intentional. A similar study could also be conducted on other study abroad organizations in order to explore if there are program differences or similarities regarding culture, professional responsibilities, goals and objectives, or perceptions on the needs of students.

This study focused on staff perceptions held about creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students. Further research concerning other parties involved in study abroad is warranted, specifically, the perceptions held by host families, parents, and onsite staff members. These parties are often involved in students' progression to and transition in their study abroad experience and may have a different perception of the goals and objectives of study abroad and college students' needs.

Another potential area of research could focus on students. Students could be interviewed with similar questions to see their own perceptions of staff's professional responsibilities. Questions could also relate to staff-provided activities and information that proved most beneficial to them.

Finally, because creating global citizens appeared to be the more explicit mission of the participants in this study, longitudinal follow-up studies could be conducted to see what happens to students after they return to the United States, including, if and how they are involved in the international community. An additional focus could be on differences longitudinally between where the students went and how involved they are currently in the international or local community. Do they volunteer more after study abroad? Do they lead international groups? What kind of degrees do they get and where do they go with those degrees? Other questions could include: In order to make the most difference in the student's levels of global citizenship, does a student need to study abroad for a certain amount of time? Can similar results be accomplished in a short amount of time? Which study abroad level produces the most benefits? Does the accommodation make a difference? Does the country they visited or the program they attended make a difference in their future involvement in the global community?

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that staff of an international study abroad program held about creating a study abroad experience for U.S. college students. More specifically, how did Program Coordinators (PCs), Program Advisors (PAs), and Resident Directors (RDs) perceive their professional responsibilities? Two questions guided this study:

1. How did staff members understand the goals and objectives of study abroad?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?
2. How did staff members understand the needs of college students?
 - a. What role did culture play in that understanding?

With the emphasis of institutional internationalization and the promotion of study abroad programs, extensive research has been conducted on study abroad. Earlier literature on study abroad programs, however, has focused solely on student perspectives. To this point in time, there have been no comparable studies which have included PCs, PAs, and RDs who have worked for study abroad.

Although participants in this study lived in different parts of the world and were influenced by varying cultures, there was remarkable consistency in their responses. College student development appeared to be considered from a U.S. perspective. Participants reported that living in a different culture created “extreme” situations and risks through which students could create friendships, take self-initiative, and become more self-reliant. While the students adapted and adjusted, the staff were there each step of the way to facilitate self-reliance, manage the range of emotions, assist in adjustment through re-thinking, and help students go through tasks needed to develop their identities. The staff expressed the belief/desire that intentional activities would help students learn about others, tolerate differences, embrace ambiguity, and develop their identities.

In summary, the staff used study abroad as more than just a cultural experience, but a catalyst for students’ identity development. Culture did not appear to have a significant influence on how participants viewed the goals and objectives of study abroad. Instead, individual cultures were used in a transformational process; participants worked together to create an experience through which students seemingly progressed through the tasks in Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Theory of Identity Development on their way to becoming global citizens.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to be part of my study. Before I ask you specific questions about study abroad, I want to get a sense about your work with USAC.

- Tell me a bit about what you do.
- Why did you decide to work for USAC?
- I would like for you to remember back to the time you were preparing to apply to USAC; what did you think it would be like?
- How did you adjust and prepare for your new position?

Now let's get into study abroad programs in general and USAC specifically...

- If you were talking to the son or daughter of a casual friend, how would you describe studying abroad?
- Embedded in the USAC goals is the concept of an "intercultural experience", when I say that, what comes to mind?

Now I'd like to explore the details of your work...

- When you get the student, briefly tell me about your orientation process.
- How do you describe your/the destination country to people who have no background? What about to people who have background?
- What is one thing you hope students will take away from your program?
- If someone asked you, how would you describe the student experience from start to finish in your program?
- If you were trying to advertise your program, what specific things might you mention?

- From your perspective, what are the most effective strategies to help students cope with daily life while abroad? Why?
- What happens if a student can't adjust?
- What happens if a student gets in trouble with the law?
- From your perspective, how does a study abroad experience contribute to the overall student college experience?
- What is the best part of studying abroad?
- What is the greatest challenge of studying abroad?
- On a scale from 1 – 10 how important is...
 - Independence
 - Following rules
- Do you have anything to add about working with or the benefits of study abroad?
- Do you have any recommendations on how to make the study abroad experience better?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Dear USAC Program Coordinators, Program Advisors, and Resident Directors,

My name is Marti Deyo. I am a doctoral student studying in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of Nevada, Reno. Currently, I am seeking USAC program coordinators, program advisors, and resident directors to participate in a study. The purpose of the study is to explore how a relatively small staff employed with a single program, but dispersed throughout the world, perceive their responsibilities regarding creating the study abroad experience for United States college students.

If you agree to participate, you will engage in an interview either in person or through Facetime or Skype. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes to one hour and will focus on your work and preparation of students, study abroad programs in general, and the intercultural experience. This study is considered minimal risk and you will have an opportunity to read the entire dissertation after completion. We hope that the findings of this study will help to strengthen international study abroad programs by improving services students receive during their study abroad experiences. I have attached an Information Sheet that provides more information about the study.

I appreciate your time, consideration, and look forward to your participation. If you would like to participate, please contact me through e-mail: mdeyo@unr.edu

Best Regards,

Marti Deyo

Appendix C

Information Sheet

University of Nevada, Reno

Social Behavioral or Educational Research Information Sheet

Title of Study: Perceptions of Program Coordinators, Program Advisors, and Resident Directors of Study Abroad Regarding Their Professional Responsibilities: A Qualitative Social Constructionist Inquiry

Principal Investigator: Janet Usinger, Ph.D., 775-682-9083

Co-Investigator: Marti Deyo, M.A., 208-651-0016

You are being invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore how program coordinators, program advisors, and resident directors of an international study abroad program perceive their responsibilities and the study abroad experience for United States (U.S.) college students. We are asking you to be in this study because you are a program coordinator, program advisor, or resident director at United Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC).

If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately thirty minutes to one hour. The interview will be conducted at a time and place convenient to your schedule, face-to-face or through Skype or Facetime. The interview questions will focus on your work and preparation of students, study abroad programs in general, and the intercultural experience. In total, your participation should be approximately one hour.

This study is considered minimal risk. The questions are about the goals and objectives of studying abroad and college student development and are not sensitive in

nature. However, if you do not want to answer some of the questions, just say so. There are no penalties for not answering questions. We cannot promise that participating in the study will benefit you, but we hope to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of the staff members of study abroad organizations on their goals and objectives of study abroad and college student development.

We will treat your identity with professional standards of confidentiality and protect your private information to the extent allowed by law. We will do this by assigning a participant code, including a specific two digit number to each participant. In addition, codes in terms of your position (program coordinator, program advisor, and resident director) will be assigned.

We will not use your name or other information that could identify you in any reports or publications that result from this study unless you agree to do so. The researchers, the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board will have access to your study records.

At any time, if you have questions about this study or wish to report an injury that may be related to your participation in this study, contact Janet Usinger, 775-682-9083 or Marti Deyo, 208-651-0016. You may discuss a problem or complaint or ask about your rights as a research participant by calling the University of Nevada, Reno Research Integrity Office at (775) 327-2368. You may also use the online Contact the Research Integrity Office form available from the Contact Us page of the University's Research Integrity Office website.