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The Long-Term Impacts Of Study Abroad On Oxford Eurospring Alumni: A Phenomenological Study

Karmen Pfeiffer Sorenson

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THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF STUDY ABROAD ON OXFORD EUROSFRING
ALUMNI: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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2017

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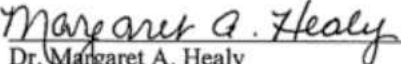
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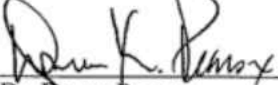
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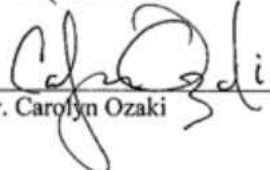
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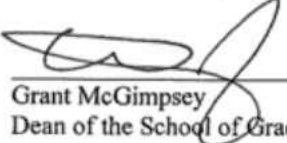


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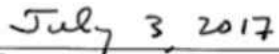


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This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.



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 A Phenomenological Study

Department Educational Leadership – Higher Education

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Karmen Pfeiffer Sorenson

6/17/2017

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative, phenomenological study examines the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of alumni who participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program through two Midwest regional universities at some point from 1981-2001. Adding to the existing literature on overall impacts of study abroad, this study investigates the phenomenon of the long-term impacts of study abroad experience on the lives of alumni since their time abroad – using a conceptual framework of personal, professional, civic, and global impacts.

This study utilizes phenomenological methods and analysis in tracing the lives of study abroad alumni since their time abroad to understand how their lived experiences since studying abroad impacted their current lives. Additionally, this study addresses a gap in the current literature, utilizing qualitative inquiry to gather data through multiple in-depth interviews with thirteen Oxford Eurospring study abroad alumni, to better understand the long-term impacts of study abroad on their lives, after 16-36 years had elapsed since their study abroad experiences.

The findings indicate positive, long-term, transformational, and intergenerational impacts on the lives of Oxford Eurospring study abroad alumni. The findings also indicate three additional themes consistent with all participants: Perseverance in

achieving study abroad goals, exploration and a love for travel, and lifestyle choices that were reflective of their study abroad experiences.

The results of this study provide evidence of the positive transformational and intergenerational impacts of study abroad. They also support outreach to and expansion of study abroad programs to first-generation college students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Study abroad was a life-changing experience for me.”

This was a common theme among participants when they returned home from their academic travels abroad. The study abroad literature confirmed that students experienced “life-changing” events while they studied abroad – in areas of personal and professional impact, as well as with regard to civic and global impact. For example, study abroad programs had a positive impact on personal growth and development (Sandell, 2007; Franklin, 2010). Participants reported increased levels of independence (Dwyer & Peters, 2004), self-confidence (Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2014; Scheib, 2014), and maturation (Sindt, 2007). Further, students from rural communities found the experience to be “personally liberating” (Doyle, 2009, p. 149).

While the research on the short-term impacts of study abroad reported in the literature was extensive, the research on long-term impacts was scarce. Students reported strong impacts once they returned home from their study abroad experience, yet it was unclear if the impacts had lasting effects on these students’ lives (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004).

An ERIC search was conducted on the terms “study abroad” and “long-term” and “outcomes or benefits or effects or impact” published in the past ten years and only three

articles appeared. Of these three articles, one directly addressed the long-term impacts of study abroad. Of these articles, all three were quantitative in nature, mostly long-scale survey studies. The two notable works that focused on the long-term impacts were by Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josić, and Jon (2009) and Murphy, Sahakyan, Yong-Yi, and Magnan (2014). Chapter II elaborates further on the participant size and research methodology of these long-term impact studies.

Paige et al. (2009) and Murphy et al. (2014) considered long-term impacts specifically related to global citizenship and civic engagement. In these examples, the phrase “long-term” was used when more than six years had elapsed since the study abroad experience. The aforementioned long-term impact studies asked quantitative questions, but they were not deep, broad examinations of the long-term impacts on the lives of study abroad alumni and what meaning they made of their experiences.

Based on the scarcity of literature addressing the long-term impacts of study abroad, the need to examine these impacts after a significant amount of time had elapsed since the experience abroad was obvious – to see if they were consistent with the short-term impact studies or if additional impacts emerged. By examining the long-term impacts of study abroad, this study was able to address the extended efficacy of these programs, their impact on higher education and society, and, looking forward, make recommendations regarding steps to encourage and enable institutions and organization to foster more opportunities for study abroad experiences.

The research on the short-term study abroad experience also had a positive impact on careers in terms of helping students build competencies and skill sets that support educational advancement and persistence to graduation, as well as provide assistance in

job searches (Franklin, 2010). Not surprisingly, completing a study abroad experience led many to be interested in internationally-oriented careers (Orahood, Kruze, & Pearson, 2004; Paige et al., 2009). This new orientation was understandable, given that study abroad programs enhanced students' worldviews (Black & Duhon, 2006) and increased their international perspectives and levels of engagement on a global level (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; McCabe, 1994; Douglas & Jones-Ridders, 2001; Paige et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2014). More specifically, study abroad participants reported an increased interest in foreign language and travel (Ringer 1996) and an increased knowledge of cultures that differed from their own (Langley & Breese, 2005; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012).

These benefits were representative of short-term impacts of study abroad, defined for purposes of this study as anything immediately following the study abroad experience to five years after the experience had been completed. This current study addressed that specific weakness exist in the literature. It examined the long-term impacts of study abroad through multiple, in-depth interviews of alumni who participated in study abroad programs more than fifteen years ago. Because there was not a lot of research on the long-term impacts of study abroad, this study was designed to conduct a qualitative study.

Qualitative studies allow for a better understanding of how someone makes meaning from their experience in a way that is “interpretive, experience based, situational, and personalistic” (Stake, 2010, p. 31). In contrast, quantitative studies require an *a priori* knowledge of what constructs are being examined, leading specifically

to research regarding the number of these constructs experienced by the participants (Creswell, 1998).

Since there were so few studies on the long-term impacts of study abroad, it was apparent that not all of the relevant and important constructs might have been identified. Therefore this study was designed to conduct a qualitative study examining the study abroad experiences within a holistic experience at least 15 years after alumni returned from their study abroad – and to provide participants with the opportunity for open-ended responses. This allowed the opportunity to determine if new constructs overlapped with what was in the literature or contributed to it.

Positioning Study Abroad in the Higher Education Landscape

Study abroad is increasingly relevant for students today. They must possess global competencies to compete in modern society. Nolan (2009) argued that “building a society capable of responding to the challenges of this century” and “learning to work with differently minded others across the globe to create positive and sustainable responses to the issues and opportunities we all face” was the key purpose (p. 267). This perspective aligns well with a primary purpose of higher education: preparing future generations for success in a globally connected society.

Higher education is influenced greatly by globalization and is increasingly responsible for preparing graduates to compete in a global environment while being responsible citizens, (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). This emphasis, described as global citizenship, includes elements of social responsibility, global awareness, and civic engagement (Perry, Stoner, Stoner, Wadsworth, Page & Tarrent, 2013). According to one author, the main challenge in higher education in the United States today is “helping

our students learn to work together with people of different backgrounds to solve global problems” (Nolan, 2009, p. 269).

Additionally, it has become increasingly important for colleges and universities to ensure their campuses embrace the importance of internationalization, by providing their students with international and multicultural experiences and integrating those experiences into all aspects of their institutions. More than simply being a top priority, embracing internationalization has become a necessity to remain competitive in the global environment today (Brustein, 2007). Study abroad is a link that helps students learn to work together with people from different backgrounds and one way that allows colleges and universities to internationalize their students.

Study abroad is an integral tool for promoting and advancing globalization in higher education. Embedded in study abroad program justifications are mission and purpose statements indicating the institutions’ intention to use the experience to create global citizens and help students develop in one or more ways (Perry et al. 2013). In the past decade, institutions have focused increasingly on providing students educational opportunities to live, learn, and study abroad. In fact, the number of U.S. students who study abroad has more than quadrupled over the past two decades – from a base of approximately 76,000 to just over 313,000 students in the 2014-15 academic year (IIE, 2016a). While the number of students studying abroad continues to increase, it still represents only 1.6% of the total number of students enrolled at U.S. higher education institutions, a low participation rate overall (IIE, 2015a).

The value of study abroad in higher education recently came into focus through the work of the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program,

established by Congress for the purpose of “promoting and democratizing undergraduate study abroad” (p. v) among undergraduate college students, (Lincoln Commission, 2005). The Lincoln Commission has a stated goal of enabling one million undergraduates to study abroad annually by the year 2017. Inspired by the late Senator Paul Simon, who believed that “greater engagement of American undergraduates with the world around them is vital to the nation’s well-being” (p. v), the Lincoln Commission recognized the need for American graduates to be knowledgeable in economic competitiveness, national security, leadership, and international engagement. Study abroad helps students become more knowledgeable in these areas by experiencing living and learning in a foreign country first-hand. Study abroad “encourages the emerging generation of students to engage more fully with the world” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. 31).

With this perspective, study abroad is a highly desirable program for higher education institutions to embrace, especially when coupled with what is known about short-term impacts of study abroad on participants. These impacts include increased levels of civic and global engagement (Paige et al., 2009) and increased interest in international careers (Franklin, 2010). There is a need to understand if these impacts are long-lasting or if they fade away after participants have been home for an extended period of time.

Reasons Students Study Abroad

Students choose to study abroad for a variety of reasons. These include a desire to learn a new language (Wilkinson, 1998), to experience a new culture, to be more competitive in the job market, and to see new places (Allen, 2010). Student intent to

study abroad varies by institutional type, with students from research institutions being less likely to participate than students from smaller, liberal arts colleges (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Higher education institutions want students to study abroad in the interest of supporting and promoting their growth as intellectuals and as global citizens. However, less than two percent of all U.S. students enrolled in higher education actually study abroad (IIE, 2016a), despite the fact that the benefits to students who choose to study abroad are widely known. There obviously is a significant disconnect between the known benefits of study abroad and its practical support within many institutions of higher education. What is unknown is how study abroad impacts participants in the longer term – meaning 15 years or more after they return home.

The following questions are critical to ask and answer:

Do participants sustain personal and professional impacts of study abroad over an extended period of time?

Do they develop as global citizens?

Do they remain civically engaged?

Do they pass on a desire to study abroad to their siblings and/or children?

To better understand how study abroad alumni are impacted by their study abroad experiences over time, there was a need to conduct research that allowed study abroad participants to share their experiences and the long-term impacts. This study addressed a key gap in the current literature, by utilizing qualitative inquiry to gather data through

multiple interviews with study abroad alumni in order to understand better the impacts of their study abroad experiences more than fifteen years after those experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of alumni after more than fifteen years had lapsed since their study abroad experiences. The lives of alumni from one specific study abroad program, Oxford Eurospring, were examined.

Research Question

There was one primary research question that guided this study: What were the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni?

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

No consistent theoretical framework was used in the limited number of existing studies that explored long-term impacts of study abroad. Orahood et al. (2004) used career development theory as their framework in exploring outcomes of global education. Dolby (2008) used scholarship on national identity and Nussbaum's philosophical framework of global citizenship, while Paige et al. (2009) used Gordon Allport's social contract theory to frame their large retrospective study on the impacts of study abroad on global engagement. Doyle (2009) used a holistic model of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimension to examine the study abroad experience. Miller-Perrin and Thompson (2014) considered study abroad outcomes through external and internal changes. Finally, Lawson (2015) examined the impacts of international service learning, using Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT).

Since no singular theoretical framework has been used consistently in the literature studying long-term impacts of study abroad, two frameworks were used to help frame this study of the impacts on Oxford Eurospring alumni: Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2008; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012) and phenomenological theory, a focus on the value of lived experiences.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning is a philosophy of education whereby learners participate in their own learning through an interactive curriculum, thus providing learners with the opportunity to construct knowledge from their own experiences (Dewey, 1916). Kolb built upon the works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget by using what he called the "learning cycle model" (Kolb, 1984) – and his subsequent work on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) identified six characteristics that illustrate the tenets of the learning process.

Kolb developed his learning cycle model, illustrated in Figure 1, as four circles that progress clockwise. This process is easily applicable to understanding the process a student experiences while participating in study abroad. First, the student engages with a new concrete experience. Next, the student reflects on the experience and develops abstract concepts that are tested and utilized in future experiences.

Building upon this process, Kolb articulated six characteristics of experiential learning within which experiential interactions between the individual and the new environment define new learning, leading the individual to the creation of new knowledge. These six characteristics are depicted in text boxes integrated into the process model (see Figure 1). "Experiential learning sends students out of the classroom into a world that is complex and interconnected, challenging their prevailing world view

and their ability to take responsibility for their own learning” (Montrose, 2002, p. 2). Study abroad is a form of experiential learning, creating opportunities for students to interact with a world outside of their comfort zones, while making meaning from these new experiences. From this perspective, ELT serves as an appropriate theoretical framework for inquiry into the long-term impacts of study abroad experiences.

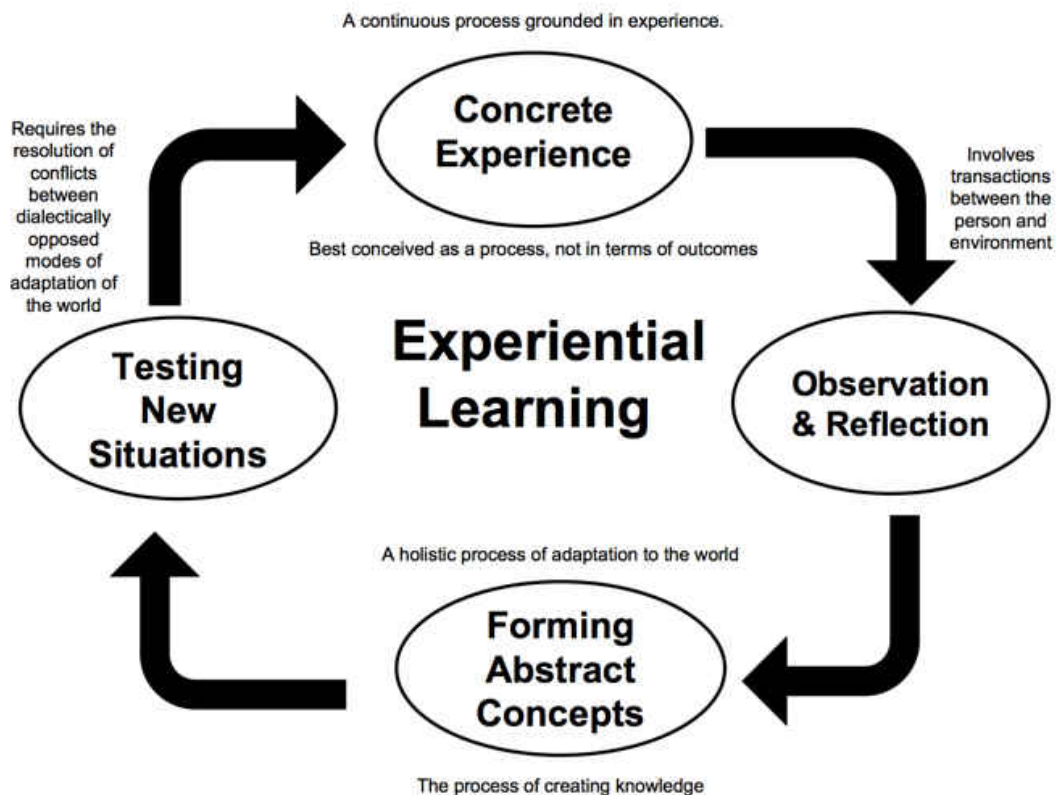


Figure 1: Kolb’s Learning Cycle Integrated with Aspects of Experiential Learning

Kolb’s learning cycle model and characteristics of experiential learning (Figure 1) can be used to understand the process a student encounters while participating in a new experience abroad. Kolb’s ELT was chosen as an essential part of this study’s

framework because of the emphasis on place and the interaction between person and environment that occurs during study abroad experiences. Students who participate in study abroad have the opportunity to interact with a new environment and create concrete experiences. They then observe and reflect upon their experiences, often with the help of curriculum, and develop abstract concepts that they test in new experiences abroad. In ELT, interaction is encouraged, thus creating new knowledge. “And so it is also true of study abroad experiences; it is not the activity of leaving one’s homeland that creates learning, but the subsequent analysis of that activity where the real learning occurs” (Montrose, 2002, p. 6-7).

Using ELT as a framework helps explain the immediate learning process in a study abroad experience, but there are limitations. For instance, ELT does not account for the time and complexity of study abroad, and it does not capture the impacts of study abroad over time. Even if study abroad impacts reported immediately following the experience abroad are positive and “life-changing,” what are the impacts when fifteen years or more have elapsed? While ELT does provide a sound framework for understanding the more immediate study abroad experience, it falls short in framing the longer-term study abroad experience.

An element of the early research that influenced this study was a review of the literature that led to a conceptualization of the long-term impacts of study abroad in four ways: personal impacts, professional impacts, civic impacts, and global impacts. Pilot study participants also identified civic and global impacts of their study abroad experiences in their current lives, a theme that was consistent with findings in existing literature (Paige et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2014). Given the recurring themes, the

constructs of personal, professional, civic, and global impacts served as key components of the conceptual framework for this study. The results of the pilot study are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but it is worth noting here that the pilot study uncovered the fact that some alumni perceived their long-term impacts to be personal and professional in nature, while some participants were unclear about how to categorize their impacts.

Figure 2 is an illustration of the constructs as viewed in relation to this study and as integrated into the theoretical model of experiential learning. The literature indicated that personal, professional, civic, and global impacts resulted from study abroad experiences, which was represented within the circle as types of impacts upon individuals who studied abroad.

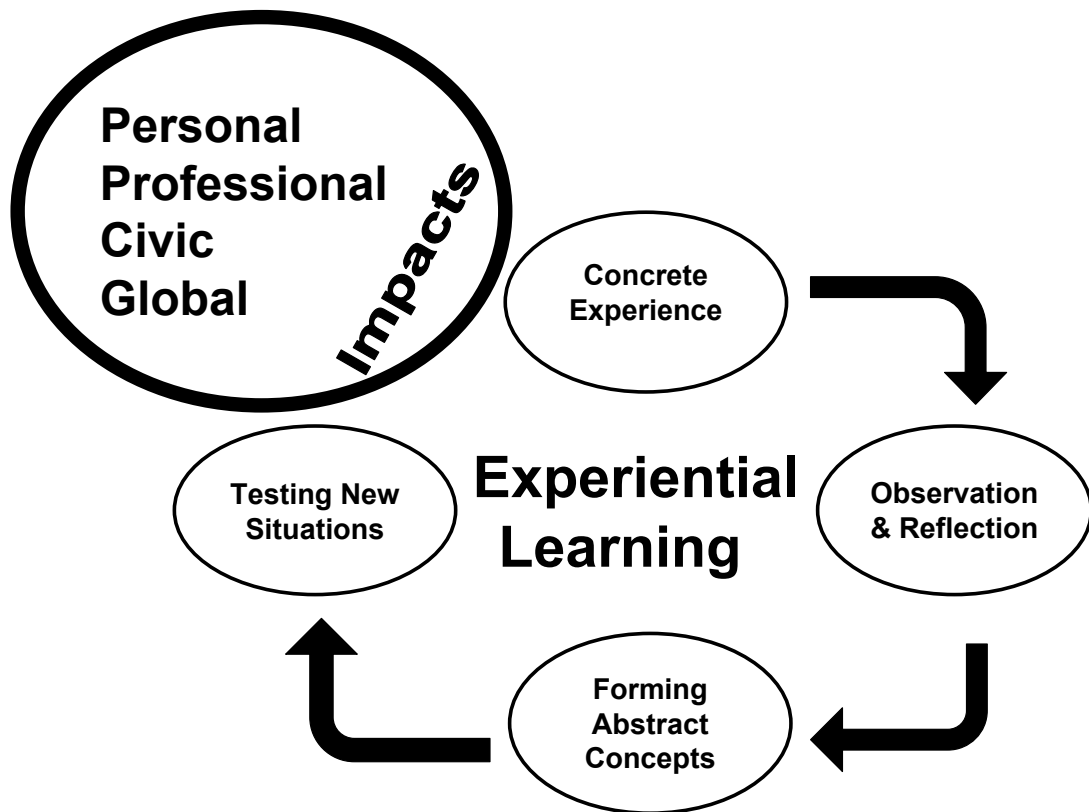


Figure 2: Impacts upon Individuals of Study Abroad

Personal Impacts

Students who participated in study abroad programs reported both personal and professional impacts on their lives (Paige et al., 2009; Doyle, 2009; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). For example, the impact of study abroad was so profound that it changed career paths and ranked, along with collegiate friendships, as the most significant experience in their college years (Norris & Dwyer, 2005; Fry, Paige, Jon, Dillow, & Nam, 2009; Paige et al., 2009). Students also reported personal growth and increases in self-awareness (Franklin, 2010), as well as increases in appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures (Tomlinson, 1991; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012).

Professional Impacts

Professional impacts reported in the literature included the influence of study abroad on career choice and career location. One study examined Kelly Business School students from Indiana University and found that the study abroad experience impacted their career plans and increased interest in working abroad (Orahod et al., 2004). Study abroad alumni also gravitated toward more internationally-oriented careers (Norris & Gillespie, 2005; Paige et al., 2009). Fifty-two study abroad alumni from Dickinson College who had studied abroad ten years earlier were interviewed, with results that indicated the alumni strongly agreed that their sojourn contributed to their professional success, professional development, and professional ethics (Franklin, 2010).

Civic Impacts

In addition to personal and professional impacts, students who participated in study abroad also reported civic and global impacts in their lives (Paige et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2014). The 2016 Merriam-Webster dictionary defines civic as “of or

relating to a citizen, a city, citizenship, or community affairs.” Broadening this basic understanding, civic engagement was defined in one study to include one or more of the following: giving formal talks or demonstrations, organizing or signing petitions, writing letters to the editor, being involved in protests or demonstrations, voting in an election, playing a leadership role in improving quality of life, using the internet to raise awareness about social and political issues, making a purchasing decision based on the political or social values of a company, contacting or visiting a public official, engaging in community service or volunteer work, and practicing voluntary simplicity (Paige et al., 2009).

Global Impacts

Global impacts (anything beyond the borders of one’s perceived “village”) have been measured in recent studies using global engagement dimensions that were conceptualized for the SAGE study that included civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity (Paige et al., 2009). A recent study added a sixth dimension called “internationally-oriented leisure activities”. It found that, compared to the “no study abroad” group, students who study abroad become alumni who engage in internationally-oriented leisure activities, such as: hosting international visitors, attending presentations and talks with an international focus, watching foreign films, and international travel for pleasure (Murphy et al., 2014). These studies showed increased global engagement in study abroad participants, so they were included as part of this study’s conceptual framework.

Key Terms

This section provides definitions of key terms in this study. The terms vary slightly among institutions, organizations, and study abroad offices, so it is important to consider the uniqueness of each study abroad program to better understand the nature of the study abroad experience.

Alumni – students who participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program for academic credit through Minnesota State University Moorhead or Bemidji State University while in college.

Area studies program – a study abroad program “whose primary focus is the study of the host country or region from the perspectives of a variety of disciplines” (Peterson et al., 2011, p. 14).

Civic engagement – “the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future” (Adler & Goggins, 2005, p. 236), including active engagement with local, regional, national, and global community issues (Perry et al., 2013).

Faculty-led program – “a study abroad program directed by a faculty member (or members) from the home campus who accompanies students abroad” and is usually brief in duration (Peterson et al., 2011, p. 14).

Global citizenship – someone “involved locally, nationally, and internationally; is conscientious, informed, and educated about issues; exhibits environmental and social responsibility; advocates alongside the oppressed” (Hanson, 2010, p. 80) and exhibits social responsibility, global awareness, and civic engagement (Perry et al., 2013).

Immersion program – a study abroad program that “integrates students into the host culture to a substantial degree” and includes “integrated university study programs and some varieties of field study programs” (Peterson et al., 2011, p. 14).

Long-term – the time that has elapsed since the study abroad experience of the participant at a significantly lengthy time in the past. For purposes of this study, long-term indicates that fifteen or more years have elapsed since the study abroad experience.

Oxford Eurospring – a short term study abroad program (lasting one semester) offered through Bemidji State University and Minnesota State University Moorhead (formerly Moorhead State University) providing college students the opportunity to study abroad in Oxford, England in a residential setting at Wycliffe Hall or the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies while taking courses for college credit at their respective home institutions.

Short-term – a study abroad program “lasting eight weeks or less” which “may include summer” (Peterson et al., 2011, p. 15).

Sojourn – “a period of time spent living in a cultural setting different from one’s own” (Peterson et al., 2011, p. 15).

Study abroad – often used interchangeably with international education, education abroad, and overseas study; an educational experience undertaken during one’s college years involving study, travel, or internships in a country different from one’s own while working toward an academic degree and earning academic credit (Peterson et al., 2011).

Potential Significance of the Study

Study abroad participation has increased continually over the past decade, yet less than two percent of U.S. enrolled undergraduate students go abroad during their college

years (IIE, 2016a). Additionally, while the short-term impacts of study abroad are widely reported in the literature, there is a need to understand on a deeper level the longer-term impacts of study abroad, potentially better accomplished through qualitative research and better aligned with the design of this study. By improving understanding of the longer-term impacts, this study might help students decide that it is worth their time and effort to participate in study abroad during their college years.

Additionally, this study could be significant for higher education administrators and faculty, by providing documented outcomes of the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of alumni. This matters in an age of accountability in higher education. While the immediate impacts are impressive, as described by the participants themselves, understanding the long-term impacts could provide important data to support increasing institutional support for study abroad, thus increasing the number of participating students.

Overview of Research Design

The goal of this research was to explore the long-term impact of study abroad on the lives of study abroad alumni. This phenomenological study was designed to understand how the participants made meaning of their experiences and how study abroad influenced their lives, using data collected from twenty-three in-depth interviews with Oxford Eurospring study abroad alumni.

Participants from the Oxford Eurospring program who studied abroad between the years of 1977-2001 were interviewed. The Oxford Eurospring program was chosen for this study because of its leadership consistency, curriculum, and student population. The Oxford Eurospring program had been under the continual leadership of Dr. Allan

Chapman since 1977 and had remained relatively unchanged in its curriculum and programming since its inception. The program had served students from Bemidji State University and Minnesota State University Moorhead, both Midwest regional institutions, over time.

Delimitations

Natural boundaries existed as part of this study's research design. For example, this study was bound by a single study abroad program (Oxford Eurospring) and did not include alumni from any other programs. It also was bound by the time elapsed since the study abroad experience, since students who had studied abroad from 2002 forward were excluded.

Summary

This study attempted to contribute to current literature about the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of alumni more than fifteen years after their study abroad experience. While most studies have reported quantitatively on study abroad impacts, there remained a gap in the literature: an examination of the long-term impacts through in-depth interviews of alumni more than fifteen years after their sojourns abroad. Research was lacking on the long-term impacts of study abroad, especially in the area of qualitative research.

Chapter Summaries

This chapter summarized the purpose of this research study, including the research questions, research framework, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 reviews the current literature on the history of study abroad, current study abroad initiatives, and the literature on the personal, professional, civic, and global impacts of study abroad.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings, implications and recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the impacts of study abroad. It examines the literature detailing the impacts of study abroad, as they relate to the personal, professional, civic, and global impacts on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni. The chapter is organized to provide first a broad understanding of the history of study abroad and current study abroad initiatives. It then narrows to discuss the different impacts of study abroad on alumni, specifically the personal and professional impacts. It identifies the gaps that exist in the current literature, giving justification to the study. Lastly, it discusses in greater detail the framework used to guide the study.

History of Study Abroad

Understanding the history of study abroad at colleges and universities and how it has evolved helps frame a proper conversation about study abroad today and the lasting impacts it has on students. Some credit Emo of Friesland as the first study abroad student, because he traveled abroad to study at the University of Oxford in 1190 (University of Oxford, 2016). Over 800 years have elapsed since his study abroad trek to Oxford, and students have been studying abroad ever since.

While the higher education tradition began in Europe centuries ago, the history of study abroad in the United States didn't begin until the late 1800s. In 1879, Indiana

University began faculty-led programs (called Summer Tramps) during summer break for University students to study in Europe (Indiana University, 2016). The Summer Tramps were academic programs, organized and led by faculty in the science and language departments, that included the study of language, culture, and natural history, (Indiana University, 2016).

Beginning in the early 1920s, the University of Delaware developed a study abroad program, primarily for juniors. It was an intensive French language program designed to give students an in-depth experience in one subject area (University of Delaware, 2016). Started by Raymond W. Kirkbride, a Professor of modern languages, and funded by outside donations, this program later became known as the Junior Year Abroad (JYA) – and it still occurs at institutions across the United States today (University of Delaware, 2016).

After the success of the first Junior Year Abroad, the University of Delaware continued to send student groups to France, and the program eventually was expanded to include Switzerland and Germany (University of Delaware, 2016). In total, over 900 students spent their junior year abroad through the University of Delaware program. In 1948, the “Delaware Foreign Study Plan” was discontinued because of post-war conditions in Europe and a new University president who felt that foreign study was no longer a priority (University of Delaware, 2016). This factor (fluctuating institutional leadership buy-in and support) has continued to hinder the practical growth of effective study abroad in the United States.

The Rhodes Scholarship, named after Cecil John Rhodes, began in 1902 with the goal of promoting civic-minded leadership among students by providing an opportunity

for students to study abroad for one year at the University of Oxford in England (The Rhodes Trust, 2016). To date, 7688 Rhodes Scholars have studied abroad at Oxford. While the early forms of U.S. study abroad varied greatly, they shared a common theme: traveling to a foreign location to learn the language and/or culture (or provide a service), while expanding one's mind during formative college years.

Expansion of Study Abroad in the United States

Immediately following World War II, it became impossible for the United States to continue its isolationist approach to the rest of the world, thus creating a climate conducive to increasing the number of study abroad opportunities for U.S. students. Senator J. William Fulbright saw the need for the “promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science” (Fulbright, 2016). The Fulbright program, signed into law in 1946, has been providing educational exchange opportunities for students to travel abroad, fostering mutual understanding between people and their nations ever since.

The introduction of the Fulbright program provided increased focus on the value of study abroad experience. While some Fulbright opportunities and awards are granted annually to faculty, staff, and professional experts, others are focused on college students – providing them with financial resources for studying abroad, with the Fulbright goals in mind.

National Study Abroad Scholarships

Study abroad initiatives and opportunities in the United States continued to grow and flourish. In addition to the inception of the Fulbright programs after World War II, the number of U.S. students studying abroad was enhanced greatly by additional financial

incentives, scholarships, and an increased emphasis on the importance of getting to know America's international neighbors.

The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, established in 2000 and funded by Congress, provides under-represented, graduate and undergraduate students the opportunity to study or intern abroad, (Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017a). This scholarship has provided 22,000 students, with demonstrated financial need, opportunities to gain international experiences while in college, (Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017b).

Unlike other programs, the Boren program provides both U.S. undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to study abroad in areas that are of critical interest or need to the United States (National Security Education Program, 2016). In exchange for a significant scholarship, recipients are required to work in an area of national security upon graduation. There were 165 Boren awards in 2014.

The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (Lincoln Commission) was established by Congress in 2005 for the purpose of "promoting and democratizing study abroad" among undergraduate college students, with a goal of sending one million undergraduates to study abroad annually by the year 2017 (Lincoln Commission, 2005). Inspired by the late Senator Paul Simon, who believed that "greater engagement of American undergraduates with the world around them is vital to the nation's well-being" (Lincoln Commission, 2005 p. v), the commission recognized the need for American undergraduates to be knowledgeable in economic competitiveness, national security, leadership, and international engagement. The latest data reported by IIE's Open Doors Fact Facts indicates that this number has never been achieved, ending

the 2014/15 academic year with a total of 313,415 U.S. students that studied abroad for academic credit, up almost 3% over the previous year (IIE, 2017).

The Schwarzman Scholars program is the latest “prestigious scholarship” (highly selective and competitive) that provides U.S. college students the opportunity to study abroad (Schwarzman Scholars, 2016). Launched in June 2016 and named for its founder, Stephen A. (Steve) Schwarzman, the goal of the program is to provide future leaders from around the globe with knowledge and relationships to better understand and work with China and its people, thus creating future geopolitical stability. The Schwarzman Scholars reside in a residential college in Beijing. The initial class consisted of 111 students from around the world, but the annual participant target is 200 students. Each class of 200 scholars will study at Schwarzman College within Tsinghua University (Beijing) for a one-year Master’s Degree, with 45% of the participants coming from the United States, 20% from China, and 35% from the rest of the world.

Institutional and Individual Study Abroad Initiatives

In addition to national scholarship opportunities, numerous opportunities exist for college students to study abroad with or without the help and guidance of their colleges and universities. Students may choose from among programs that are faculty-led and institution-sponsored, organized by for-profit or non-profit organizations, or self-selected and directed. Faculty–led study abroad programs are designed and led by a faculty member, usually within a specific area or topic of focus. For profit and non-profit organizations package study abroad programs of multiple durations and destinations, and they often are available to students from multiple colleges and universities. Sometimes,

students self-select and direct study abroad programs to match their specific interest and goals.

Generation Study Abroad

As colleges and universities focus on preparing students for careers in an increasingly global economy, developing additional study abroad opportunities for their students becomes increasingly important (Redden, 2014). Generation Study Abroad is an initiative focused on partnering with colleges, universities, and “stakeholders in the public and private sectors to encourage purposeful, innovative action to get more Americans to undertake an international experience” (IIE, 2016b, para, 2). Generation Study Abroad has partnered with more than 400 U.S. colleges and universities on a goal of doubling the number of students participating in study abroad by the end of the decade (IIE, 2017). Generation Study Abroad provides a rallying point for colleges and universities to increase awareness and opportunities for study abroad at the local institutional level, thus helping reach the overall goal of doubling the number of U.S. students that study abroad by the end of the decade - by bringing together “employers, governments, associations, and others together to build on current best practices and find new ways to extend study abroad opportunities to tens of thousands of college students for whom traditional study abroad programs aren't working”, (IIE, 2017, para. 3).

An Educated Citizenry or Employability

One on-going debate in higher education is focused on the true purpose of higher education and its role in the educational life of students. Is it to provide career training to prepare students for the workplace or to provide a well-rounded citizenry through a liberal arts education?

One argument is that the larger purpose of higher education goes beyond workplace preparedness because the “larger public purpose is . . . connecting students with real-world problems and getting them engaged in creative and collaborative problem-solving” which then in turn helps students in the workplace (Sutton, 2016, para. 1). Sutton suggested that public perceptions do not carry the same weight, however, arguing that the value of employability carried far more weight than did civic engagement and community leadership. While “critical thinking, problem solving, working in diverse teams, ethical reasoning, (and) communicating” were desired outcomes of students during their college years, Sutton concluded that the combination of all values made for “good employees and good citizens” (2016, para. 2).

Another argument is that the American perception of the purpose of higher education “has shifted from a public good to a private one” over the past decades (Dorn, 2011, p. 1566). Additionally, Dorn’s findings confirmed, “personal success, as defined by the acquisition of material wealth through preparing for and obtaining a lucrative profession, has become students’ central priority” (p. 1592).

Discussions about the purpose of study abroad echo the debate over the purpose of higher education. Study abroad programs vary in their stated purposes and missions, and they have fluctuated between more humanities-based programs and more career-focused programs (IIE, 2017).

The Impacts of Study Abroad

Many existing studies have highlighted the positive short-term impacts for students who study abroad (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Franklin, 2010; Murphy et al., 2014). When evaluating these studies, it is important to understand what

is meant by “short-term” and “long-term”, because there is not a consistent use of these terms in the literature. Authors define short-term impacts of study abroad as the time that has elapsed since the students’ experiences abroad (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Orahood, Woolf, & Kruze, 2008). Short-term impacts should not be confused with short-term study abroad, which describes the amount of time abroad, not the amount of time that has elapsed since the students went abroad.

Defining Short-term Versus Long-term

While most of the literature on the impacts of study abroad is described as “short-term”, the use of “short-term” varies widely. For example, many of the short-term impact studies look at the time period immediately following the students’ return from their study abroad experiences or at the time between the students’ return and their graduations (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008). Other authors define short-term impacts of study abroad as one to five years after the students’ time abroad (Paige et al., 2009). Paige et al. define near-term impacts as one to five years and long-term impacts of study abroad as lasting six or more years since the time the student participated in the study abroad experience.

This definition variability creates an inconsistency in the literature concerning what are considered long-term impacts versus short-term impacts. Without a consistent definition, it is difficult to compare the literature on short and long-term impacts of study abroad. While the research shows strong impacts on students once they return from their study abroad experiences, it is not clear if these impacts have lasting effects on people’s lives, and if so, what those impacts are and how they are manifested (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004).

Long-term Impact Studies

While the literature offers much insight into the short-term impacts of study abroad, few studies have addressed the long-term impacts that study abroad experiences had on personal, professional, civic, and global growth of participants (Stebbleton et al., 2013). A large study from the University of Minnesota called SAGE (*Study Abroad for Global Engagement: The Long - Term Impact of Mobility Experiences*) included over 6,300 respondents and more than 29% response rate. It examined the impacts of study abroad on global engagement after participants had returned from their time abroad for at least six years.

While still not long-term by the definition of this study, SAGE was a significant contribution to the literature, because it focused on student impacts that went beyond the first few years after study abroad, something few studies did – both previously and since. Using a mixed methods design, the SAGE study examined the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of study abroad alumni in the areas of global and civic engagement, and the educational and career impacts. Data for the study was collected from 22 colleges, universities, and education abroad providers and included a variety of study abroad program structures, such as: shipboard programs, programs with only U.S. students studying abroad, and programs where U.S. students attended classes with host country students. The sample included alumni who studied abroad from 1960-2005, spanning more than 50 years. This study found that study abroad had profound professional, global, and educational impacts on study abroad alumni (Paige et al., 2009). More than half of those surveyed attributed their civic engagement, global engagement,

educational advancement, and their career choice to being influenced by their study abroad experience.

The Institute for International Education of Students (IES) conducted a retrospective longitudinal study from its alumni database of over 17,000 study abroad alumni who participated in IES study abroad programs from 1950-1999 (Norris & Gillespie, 2009). The IES 50-year Alumni Study examined the personal and professional long-term impacts on alumni, including academics, careers, second language and personal development. More than 3,700 IES study abroad alumni participated, which was a 25% response rate to the survey. The findings indicated nearly three-quarters of alumni believed their study abroad experience helped them acquire a skill that directly impacted their career path.

The educational impacts included: a desire to attend graduate school (over 50%) and a commitment to foreign language study (more than 80%).(Norris & Gillespie, 2009). The personal impacts reported included: an increased interest in another language and an increased desire to explore new and different cultures (over 50 in each category). While the median age of all study participants was only 26, the study included an age range of participants of 22-67. With the median age of study abroad alumni being 26, it was impossible to use this study to examine the longer-term impacts on the lives of study abroad alumni.

While these studies addressed the long-term impacts of study abroad, their definitions of long-term impacts spanned only 6-10 years after the participants had returned from the study abroad experience. This was not be enough time to examine fully the long-lasting impacts of study abroad. Additionally, both studies included

participants from multiple institutions, differing study abroad programs and outcomes, and varying lengths of study abroad programs. Lastly, both studies used a quantitative or mixed method approach, which limited their ability to produce qualitative conclusions.

Personal Impacts

The existing literature regarding study abroad described the following personal impacts: personal growth (Tomlinson, 1991; Sindt, 2007; Franklin, 2010; Stachowski, Grant & Stuehling (2015)), maturation, self-confidence, and self-reliance (Dwyer, 2004; Sindt, 2007; Sandell, 2007), gains in self-awareness (Franklin, 2010), increased independence (Stachowski et. al., 2015), personal liberation (Doyle, 2009), and, more generically, a large impact on their lives (Norris & Dwyer, 2005; Paige et al., 2009). In addition, authors also suggested that study abroad helped students gain a more developed worldview (Dwyer, 2004) and an appreciation for and understanding of diverse cultures (Tomlinson, 1991; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012).

Professional Impacts

The literature provided examples of how professional impacts of study abroad positively influenced students' career paths. For example, one study found that 96% of business school students at Indiana University reported upon their return from study abroad that the experience influenced their career plans (Orahood, Kruze, and Pearson, 2004). The authors also reported that the students who participated in study abroad were more open to international careers (Orahood et al., 2004). Another study found that study abroad had long-term professional benefits for those who participated (Franklin, 2010). Further, study abroad alumni gravitated toward or sought international positions more often than their non-study abroad classmates (Sandell, 2007; Franklin, 2010).

The literature also pointed to internationally oriented careers for study abroad alumni (Norris & Gillespie, 2005; Orahod et al., 2008; Paige et al., 2009). A majority of study abroad alumni thought their sojourns abroad influenced their professional ethics and their career choice (Franklin, 2010), and many said they became more flexible and adaptable in their workplaces (Stachowski et. al., 2015).

Civic and Global Impacts

While numerous studies revealed personal and professional impacts of study abroad, there were additional impacts in the literature that did not fit neatly in either personal or professional impact categories. Additional impacts included: development of civic and global competencies, such as increased global awareness (Carley, Stuart, & Dailey, 2011), global-mindedness (Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001), a sense of global citizenry (Paige et al., 2009, Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2013), and citizen engagement (DeGraff & Ditta, 2013).

While these additional impacts are significant, they do not fall neatly into the personal or professional impacts categories, since they might overlap into or intersect with one or both categories. For example, one study found an increased understanding of different cultures and languages and increased global-mindedness among study abroad alumni (Sandell, 2007). However, it is hard to bifurcate the personal and professional impacts of understanding another culture, speaking a foreign language, or acquiring increased global-mindedness.

Negative Impacts

Overall, the literature focused on the positive impacts of study abroad, including both long-term and short-term results. Negative impacts of study abroad were not

frequently reported in the literature and were not represented in the long-term impact studies reviewed (Paige et al., 2009). Selection and confirmation bias might have been a factor. Few participants discussed negative impacts. Further, those who experienced negative impacts might not have volunteered to participate in the studies. Overall, the long-term impacts reported in the literature were positive and impactful; thus, any positive outcomes could have overshadowed any negative impacts, which, over time, simply might have faded away.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the current literature on the impacts and benefits of study abroad. The literature review suggested significant impacts of study abroad experiences on the personal and professional lives of study abroad alumni, and highlighted additional civic and global impacts. The literature review also suggested a need for a qualitative study to explore the long-term impacts of study abroad programs on its participants. A gap in the current literature existed relative to the longer-term impacts of study abroad. The following chapter outlines the methodology used in the design of this research project.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used to examine the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of study abroad alumni. The researcher utilized a qualitative approach to understand how alumni make meaning of their lives, especially since their study abroad experiences were more than fifteen years ago. The perceptions, reflections, and meanings described by the participants, in their own words, were of primary importance in allowing the long-term impacts of study abroad to emerge.

The chapter introduces the research approach and design, discusses the findings of the pilot study, and describes in detail the methods used in recruitment strategy and participant selection. It then explains the data collection process and data analysis, and addresses reliability and validity in design and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion on human subject research and the limitations of this study.

Research Approach

Worldviews help us interpret the world in which we live and the questions we seek to answer through research. “Worldview” is defined as a “belief system...that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 74). The researcher’s worldview impacts the choice of qualitative or quantitative research. A qualitative research approach is the most appropriate research approach for this study, because

qualitative research helps the participants make sense of their study abroad experiences and how “their understanding influences their behavior” years later (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22). Further, a qualitative worldview offers the best opportunity to understand how participants make meaning of their worlds, in their own words.

Qualitative research provides the opportunity to examine how people experience a phenomenon through rich textual descriptions, is flexible in design, and allows the researcher to explore phenomena rather than confirm a hypothesis. Qualitative thinking is “interpretive, experience based, situational, and personalistic” (Stake, 2010, p. 31). “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). This approach varies from quantitative inquiry, through which the framework is established in order to confirm a hypothesis about phenomena using statistical analysis, from a research design consisting of close-ended questionnaires and surveys that do not allow for deeper exploration of the phenomenon.

Qualitative research is the best approach to use when examining the long-term impacts of study abroad on participants’ lives, because these methods allow a deeper, more comprehensive look into the phenomenon of the lived experiences of study abroad participants. The perceptions, reflections, and feelings of the participants, as described by them in their own words, are of principal importance to better understand the larger phenomenon. In this study, a qualitative research approach provides the opportunity to allow alumni to reflect upon their experiences abroad, and, in the process of reflection, make meaning of their lives and choices since their study abroad experiences. Consistent with this study’s conceptual framework, which draws upon Kolb’s learning theory to

describe the reflection process for students, qualitative research methodology (and more specifically phenomenology) asks the participants to reflect upon the study abroad experience to provide further details and thoughts that connect their current lives to the original study abroad experience.

Research Design

There are three different goals that must be considered in the design of a worthy and justifiable study: personal, practical and scholarly goals (Maxwell, 2005). The design of this study met all of these goals. First, the researcher's personal interest and experience in study abroad provided strong interest in the subject matter. Second, a study abroad program that had a forty-year history of consistent program offerings and was located within two hundred miles of where the researcher currently resides provided practical options for recruiting participants. Third, in considering scholarly goals and the current literature about study abroad impacts, there was an opportunity to contribute to the conversation through a qualitative research design, because most of the literature was dominated by quantitative studies.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a way to understand the meaning or essence of a lived experience for a person or a group of people experiencing the same phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Phenomenology is an approach better suited to understanding human issues and perspectives than a Cartesian method that is skeptical about the truth of one's beliefs (Sadala & Adorno, 2002). Phenomenology is a way of "gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences," because it "asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a some-'thing' what it is – and without

which it could not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9-10). This is the essence of the experience, shared with others, and is key to a phenomenological study.

Ultimately the purpose of this study was to explore the heart of the phenomenon of study abroad from the experiences of a particular group of participants. The defining characteristic of a phenomenological study is the assumption that “there is an essence or essences to shared experiences” and “these essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced” among a group of people (Patton, 2002). All of the literature shows that there are common or shared experiences that make up the heart of a study abroad experience; this study searches for those core meanings that lead to mutually understood, long-term phenomena of the study abroad experience.

Phenomenology can be a research philosophy or a research methodology (Patton, 2002). As a philosophy, it was first developed by the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and represented “the study of how people derive things and experience them through their senses” (Patton, 2002, p. 105). Phenomenology as a research methodology “involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” as the researcher “determines the underlying structures of an experience by interpreting the originally given descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs” in a systematic way (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). While Moustakas acknowledges that phenomenology shares similar bonds with other qualitative research theories and methodologies, the differences are manifested in how the qualitative study is designed and the ways in which the data are collected and then analyzed.

Pilot Study Summary

These pilot study findings were used to develop the methods for the formal study, as outlined in the next section. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval to conduct a pilot study in the spring of 2015. Participants were solicited for the pilot study using social media and snowball sampling. While the participant pool was open to anyone who had studied abroad from 1980-2000, those who qualified to participate were from the Eurospring Oxford program at Bemidji State University, exclusively.

Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour. Each interview was recorded, with permission from the participant, and was transcribed after the interview using a professional transcriptionist. Findings from the pilot study were as follows:

1. One interview was not enough to generate sufficient amounts of data. An additional interview was necessary to gain a more in-depth understanding of the impacts experienced by the study abroad participants.
2. Personal, professional, civic, and global impacts emerged but they were defined differently by the participants.
3. Video recordings added to the richness and accuracy of the data, allowing the researcher to see body language and facial expressions of the participants, creating additional data that would not have been available via telephone interviews.
4. Participants exhibited an attitude of gratitude for the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program, as well as increased self-confidence that they attributed to the study abroad experience.

5. The questions in the pilot study were too specific and needed to be written more broadly for the dissertation study.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni. To accomplish this purpose, multiple participants were interviewed about the long-term impacts of study abroad experiences on their lives. The following sections describe the methodological elements that led to the interviews and the steps that occurred following those interviews: the research setting, the participant selection process, the recruitment strategy, the data collection process, and the data analysis plan. Lastly, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants are addressed, followed by a brief description of the protection of human subjects and the IRB.

Research Setting

The Oxford Eurospring program offered the ideal study abroad program for this research study. This program provided study abroad opportunities to students from two Midwest regional universities for almost 40 years. Started by Dr. Allan Chapman of Oxford's Wadham College and Dr. Fulton Gallagher of Bemidji State University, the Oxford Eurospring program was designed to provide American college students at Bemidji State University (and later Minnesota State University Moorhead) an opportunity to study abroad with other American students in an academic environment with a specific programmatic theme, combined with weekend academic study tours to reinforce the classroom curriculum (A. Chapman, personal communication, September 29, 2015). Affiliated with Keble College, Wycliffe Hall, and the Centre for Medieval and

Renaissance Studies, American students also had the opportunity to engage with local Oxford students in meals, sports, and other collegiate activities.

The first Oxford Eurospring program was a partnership between Dr. Chapman of Oxford and Dr. Gallagher at Bemidji State University. It began in 1977, when the Bemidji State University Traveling Choir spent several weeks in Oxford while attending lectures by Dr. Chapman at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (A. Chapman, personal communication, September 29, 2015). The inaugural program continued for the next two years. In 1980, Minnesota State University Moorhead joined Bemidji State University as a participating institution. The Oxford Eurospring program grew to include a five-week study of British society at Wycliffe Hall, where students resided, along with main lectures by Dr. Chapman and elective courses on British history, art, science, politics, and architecture. Lectures were enhanced by educational field trips to the Royal Shakespeare Company, Bristol Bridge, Warwick Castle, and Stonehenge (Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2016; Bemidji State University, 2016). A study tour of key European cities followed the Oxford experience, and students were assigned pre- and post-work to ensure receipt of grades and university credits at their respective Bemidji State University and Minnesota State University Moorhead campuses.

Population

The profile of participants eligible to participate in this study included anyone that completed the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program through Minnesota State University Moorhead or Bemidji State University between the years 1977-2001. Only students from Bemidji State University participated during the first three years, but in

1981, students from Minnesota State University Moorhead joined the Oxford Eurospring cohort.

Neither of the library archives at either institution had records detailing the Eurospring program and its participants. Continued efforts were made to estimate the potential participant pool, in addition to the demographics of that pool, by contacting the study abroad offices at Minnesota State University Moorhead and Bemidji State University for any records that would indicate the number of past Eurospring participants between 1977-2001. Neither institution responded with any information about concrete numbers for the programs.

Lacking concrete numbers, the pool of potential participants was estimated at 250-460. Most study abroad programs require at least ten students to make the program financially feasible, and the housing at Oxford University would have limited participation to no more than twenty students. Over a 25-year period, 10-20 students per year would total 250-500 students, but it is likely the cap was not reached every year. Thus, the best estimate was established as 250-460 students.

Participant Selection

The “purpose selection” of participants, not random selection, was chosen for this study (Seidman, 2006), since “representativeness” of the participants experiencing what is being studied was crucial for this type of examination (p. 89), and “the method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants” (p. 55).

Sample size varies greatly in qualitative research and can be established by recognizing the point of saturation – the point at which additional data collection through interviews reveals no new information (Seidman, 2006). This study included a goal to interview 10-15 alumni of the Oxford Eurospring program who had been out of the program for a minimum of fifteen years. The first interview included thirteen participants; the second interview included ten participants. Three participants did not complete the second interview. All participant data were included in the analysis, and the lower total of participants in the second set of interviews was noted in the analytic memos. While three participants' perspectives are not represented in the second round of interviews, this did not negate the richness of experiences they described in the first round.

Recruitment Strategy

Potential participants were recruited by implementing a recruitment strategy that was comprised of five waves, deployed separately and sequentially. A lack of responses after 72 hours allowed for the deployment of the next wave. After all five recruitment waves were deployed, there were not enough qualified participants so the second and fourth waves were deployed a second time until a total of 13 participants was reached. Table 1 illustrates from which wave each participant was recruited.

A recruitment log was maintained to track participant responses, as well as the specific wave from which each participant was identified. No potential participant was contacted more than three consecutive times in the recruiting process. Five recruitment waves were deployed sequentially, with at least 72 hours between waves.

Recruitment Wave 1: Institutional Contacts

Recruitment wave one was deployed after receipt of IRB approval to proceed with the study (see Appendix A). The researcher contacted the Directors of the Study Abroad offices at Minnesota State University Moorhead and Bemidji State University by phone on September 22, 2016, asking them to forward the recruitment email and flyer to study abroad alumni who met the study criteria (see Appendix B). In addition, they were asked to post the recruitment flyer on two websites administered and maintained by personnel in the study abroad offices. A follow-up email was sent to both Directors on September 27, 2016. This wave produced no participation inquiries.

Recruitment Wave 2: Social Media

The first recruitment wave did not produce any participants after more than a week, so the the second wave was deployed. First, the recruitment flyer was posted on the researcher's personal Facebook page on October 1, 2016. Next, Facebook was searched for people who attended college around the 1977-2001 timeframe and included Eurospring in their public profiles or were tagged on Eurospring Facebook pages. Fourteen potential participants were identified, and they were contacted via private Facebook message directly about their interest in participating in the study.

Next, LinkedIn was searched for public profiles that included Eurospring at Minnesota State University Moorhead or Bemidji State University. The researcher joined LinkedIn Premium for a month in order to send private messages to those with Oxford or Eurospring in their public profiles. Using LinkedIn, 20 potential participants were identified and contacted, with a copy of the IRB-approved recruitment flyer attached to

the private message. Based on their Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, there were 34 potential participants who appeared to meet the qualifications of the study.

As a result of the second recruitment wave, one Oxford Eurospring alumnus who received information expressed interest in participating in the study. This wave was deployed a second time and seven additional participants agreed to participate in the study, a total of eight participants.

Recruitment Wave 3: Key Informants

The recruitment email and flyer were sent to key informants, such as the former director of the Oxford Eurospring program at Minnesota State University Moorhead and Dr. Allan Chapman, Director of the Oxford Eurospring program. They were asked to provide names of potential participants and to forward the recruitment materials to participants they knew. This wave did not yield any participants.

Recruitment Wave 4: Participant Referrals

Those who responded in the first three waves were asked for names and contact information of others whom they knew who might qualify for the study. All who were referred were contacted directly and sent the recruitment flyer. Two participants were obtained in the fourth recruitment wave during the first round, and two more participants were obtained in the second round, a total of four participants.

Recruitment Wave 5: Paid Advertising

Paid Facebook advertising was used to recruit prospective participants by placing a sponsored advertisement on Facebook. The initial investment was \$10 and targeted people living within a 25 mile radius of Fargo and Bemidji, and a 50 mile radius of Minneapolis. The search was limited to men and women ages 36-61 with interests in

areas related to the constructs of the study. The sponsored add ran for seven days, yielded over 300 impressions and nine people liked the post. None of the people that engaged with the advertisement qualified for the study (Appendix C). This recruitment wave was deployed a second time only because there were not enough potential participants obtained after the first four waves.

Table 1. Recruitment Waves Representing From Which Wave Participants Were Identified

Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	
Jay	Wilder Nonie Emma Apollo Dana Jenny Teri Joe		Jane Tristle Bailey Claudia		
1	8	0	4	0	Total per wave

Data Collection

As study abroad alumni committed to participate, individual interviews were arranged. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes, and each participant was interviewed twice, with the exception of three participants. Two of the three did not respond to multiple requests for a second interviews and one participant had to cancel due to a sick child. Prior to the first interview, participants received via email an IRB-approved consent form seeking their voluntary permission to participate in the research project and explaining their rights to withdraw at any time during the study (see Appendix D).

Interviews were conducted via Google Hangout, FaceTime, Skype, and Zoom, with the participants choosing their preferred interview format. Google Hangout was the first suggested medium, but some of the participants were not able or willing to access Google Hangout. In those cases, FaceTime, Skype, and Zoom were suggested, in that order. If none of those media were accessible, a face-to-face meeting was proposed (if geographically feasible), with a telephone interview being the final option.

All interviews were recorded digitally, with participant permission. (A digitally recorded interview was a prerequisite for this study.) After each interview was conducted and recorded, verbatim transcriptions were generated for the upcoming, in-depth data analysis. A professional transcriptionist was hired through Freelancer to assist in the transcription of the recorded interviews, and a confidentiality agreement was signed as a condition of the hiring process. When each transcription was returned, usually within 48-72 hours, it was reconciled to the interview recordings. While the transcriptions were being reviewed for accuracy, analytic memos were generated, as well, to assist in the final analyses.

Interview Questions

The first interview was designed to collect basic demographic information about participants, encourage them to recall their study abroad experience, and focus on their initial impressions upon arriving in Oxford. The second interview recapped their responses and reflections from the first interview and focused on the longer-lasting impacts of their study abroad experience. The challenge in this type of recall was that participants reflected upon both immediate and long-term impacts during each interview, as evidenced in the data. While effort was made to keep the focus on the purpose of the

particular interview (immediate versus long-term), the participants often spoke across both domains. This was a primary reason all of the participant data was included in the analysis, rather than just the data from those who completed both interviews.

First Interview

The first interview was divided into two parts. The first part began with a few short-answer, background questions that helped build rapport with the participants. The answers to these questions helped provide an understanding of basic background information about each participant, such as: the year they participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program, any second language experience, their travel and educational experiences before and after their study abroad.

The second part focused on asking participants to recall their study abroad experiences. This step set the stage for a deeper conversation about each participant's study abroad experience. Through a series of open-ended questions, the participants were encouraged to tell their study abroad stories in their own words. The guiding interview questions and prompts for the first interview were as follows:

Background Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

Prompts: Where were you raised, did you live or travel abroad as child, and did your parents have international experiences?

2. What year did you study abroad on Oxford Eurospring, and through which university did you receive credit?
3. Can you share a little about your educational background? What did you study in college and beyond?

Prompts: Advanced degrees? Major areas of study?

4. Describe any experiences or training you have had in languages other than English.
5. Describe any travel experiences you've had since Oxford.

Study Abroad Experience Recall Questions

6. Tell me about your study abroad experience to Oxford.
 - a. What were your first impressions?
 - b. Where did you live?
 - c. What were your classes like?
 - d. What did you do in your free/leisure time?
7. What are your strongest memories about studying abroad?
8. What did you enjoy the most about studying abroad? What did you enjoy the most about Oxford?
9. What did you enjoy the least about studying abroad? What did you enjoy the least about Oxford?
10. Can you recall a time when you were homesick/wanted to go home? Tell me about that time.
11. What about studying abroad was easier than you thought it was going to be?
12. What about studying abroad was really hard – or harder than you thought it was going to be?
13. Is there anything else we did not cover that you would like to share?

Second Interview

The interview questions for the second interview were constructed based on the information gathered in the first interviews. The responses about their study abroad experiences were recapped, and clarification or expansion was requested, where appropriate. Next, interview questions were asked in order to elicit responses focused on long-term impacts of their study abroad experience. All interview questions were open-ended, allowing the participants to reflect upon and construct knowledge throughout the interviews.

The following were the interview questions concerning impacts of study abroad:

1. During our last talk, you shared your impressions of your study abroad experience with me. Can you talk about what you experienced when you returned to the States?
2. How were you different when you came back from studying abroad?
3. How are these differences evident in who you are today?
 - a. Unscripted follow-up questions to the responses were asked to elicit specificity and to engage further the participant in reflection on her/his study abroad experience. For example, if a participant said, “I see the world a lot differently after my study abroad experience,” a follow-up prompt was used, like, “Tell me more about that.” If someone said, “I am more open-minded,” they were asked, “How did that effect choices that you made?” or, “Can you give me an example?”
4. What actions, steps, or choices have you made in your life that you believe are influenced by your time abroad?

- a. Unscripted follow-up questions were asked to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses. For example, if a participant said, “I chose an international career after my study abroad experience,” a follow-up prompt was used, like, “Tell me more about how you made that choice”.
5. Reflecting back on your life since study abroad, what influences of your study abroad experience do you see in your life choices today?
6. Could you give me some examples of what your lifestyle looks like today and how you spend your free time? (Prompts were things like food, family, travel, entertainment, housing, and transportation)
7. Could you please talk about how your study abroad experiences may have affected your choices regarding the workplace?
8. Can you describe how you are, or have been in the past, connected to your local community?
9. Can you describe any travel you’ve done, globally or domestically, since Eurospring?
10. How do you think your global competency compares with your co-workers, friends and community?
11. The last time we spoke was just before the election. What are your thoughts since the election?
12. Is there anything else that we did not cover that you’d like to share today?

Data Analysis

As described above, immediately following each interview, the interview file was sent to a professional transcriptionist and transcribed verbatim. When the completed

transcriptions were received, they were reviewed and verified, ensuring they matched the recorded interview. A common correction was edits that were made to specific places and names in the transcriptions. Atlas.ti qualitative software was used to assist with the management of the data and analysis.

Data analysis occurred in multiple stages, because the qualitative research method allowed for a back-and-forth movement “between parts and whole, and between the whole and its context, in order to achieve a fuller grasp of its meaning” (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, & McSpadden, 2011, p. 91). After each first-round interview, the verbatim transcripts were uploaded into Atlas.ti, and analytic memos were made as the transcriptions were re-read. Once all the interviews in each round were uploaded into the software program, significant statements were identified – those statements that were directly related to the research question. There were 1860 significant statements in the first preliminary review.

The next step was the first cycle of coding – “those processes that happen during the initial coding of data” (Saldana, 2013, p. 58). For this first cycle of coding, an in vivo coding process was chosen, which included the use of the participants’ own words. In vivo coding is a process of coding data from transcripts using the “actual language found in the qualitative data record” (p. 91). The process of in vivo coding begins by taking each significant statement and reducing it to a five-ten word code, using the participant’s own words to pull out the main ideas of each statement. This first round of coding produced 57 in vivo codes that illustrated categories describing how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Based on this initial result, each code category, as well as its subsequent significant statements, was reviewed in order to identify clusters of

meaning, whereby codes could be collapsed into a larger or broader category. This analysis reduced the core codes into 34 categories, based on commonalities across the original 57 code categories. The data were revised, and the codes were combined, so all data reflected the 34 new code categories. Finally, multiple analytic memos were created through reflection on the codes and categories, and potential themes were identified from this initial process of categorization.

The second cycle of analysis moved into looking specifically for advanced ways to reorganize and re-analyze the previously coded data, in order to discover a higher order of analysis by developing new categories and themes from the previous rounds of coding. For this cycle of analysis, pattern coding was chosen. Pattern coding involves looking at the frequency of the codes, and relationship coding, examining the co-occurrences and code overlap for potential relationships (Saldana, 2013). This type of coding allows for the identification of emergent themes as “they pull together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis” (Saldana, 2013, p. 210).

Atlas.ti qualitative software allowed the researcher to examine saliency of themes through both frequency and intensity of codes. Examining code frequency (how often it appears in the data) and intensity (how consistent it appears across all the data) allowed the researcher to identify some preliminary patterns. The most frequent codes occurring across all the data were listed in Appendix E. To determine intensity, codes were reviewed in the Atlas.ti Code Co-occurrence tables and listed in Appendix F. This level of analysis then led to examining potential relationships among frequent and intense

codes. A list of code reductions, subthemes, and themes are listed in Appendix G. The themes and subthemes are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Long-term Impacts of Study Abroad Themes

Perseverance	Exploration	Lifestyle	Intergenerational
Self Reflections	Initial Impacts	Lifestyle Choices	Personal Impacts
Determination	Free Time Abroad	Community/Civic Engagement	Family Impacts
Financing Study Abroad	Spring Break	Political	Impacts on others
	Oxford	Food Choices Today	
	Grand Tour	Leisure Today	
		Voluntary Simplicity	

The final cycle of analysis involved collecting all the significant statements within each of the co-occurring codes above. These significant statements were then re-read and reviewed for underlying themes – “an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (Saldana, 2013, p. 175) that should capture the nature of the study abroad experience “into a meaningful whole” as an “abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a [patterned] experience” (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362, in Saldana, 2013).

The four main themes that emerged were as follows: Perseverance, Exploration, Lifestyle, and Intergenerational Impacts. These themes are discussed more deeply in Chapter IV. Perseverance included sub-themes of self-reflection, determination, and financing study abroad. Exploration included sub-themes of initial impacts, free time, spring break, Oxford, and the grand tour. Lifestyle included sub-themes of lifestyle choices, community and civic engagement, politics, food and leisure choices, and

voluntary simplicity. Intergenerational impacts included sub-themes of personal and family impacts, as well as impacts on others.

Reliability and Validity of the Data

Clearly defined methods and procedures help the researcher increase the “credibility of your conclusions”, but it does not “guarantee validity” – which creates a need for ruling out validity threats and “testing the validity of your conclusions and the existence of potential threats to those conclusions” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 109). Validity strategies incorporated into this study included member checking after each interview, a documented audit trail including field notes, the use of rich data and thick description to provide the reader with a better understanding of the setting and experience described, and the clarification of bias that the researcher brought to the study.

Member Checking

Sharing the meanings and “essences of the phenomenon” with participants to seek their “assessment for comprehensiveness and accuracy” as part of the member checking process is important (Moustakas, 1990). To accomplish this, the themes of the first interview were shared with each of the participants before the second interview began. The researcher shared with each participant the themes that emerged from their first interview in order to confirm accuracy. This provided the opportunity for participants to confirm or challenge the themes that emerged from the data interpretation. To ensure accuracy, the themes that emerged from the second interviews also were shared with the participants.

Audit trail

The purpose of an audit trail is to document not only each stage of the analysis process but also the decisions made during each step of that analysis. Using software makes identifying the researcher's interpretations during data analysis easily accessible, because it offers systematic accounting of each decision making point. The audit trail allows for outside access and transparency to the interpretation process. Atlas.ti was the qualitative software used for this study.

Rich Data and Thick Descriptions

Rich data and thick descriptions provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the phenomenon that the participants describe. Through verbatim transcripts as data, intensive interviews provide rich data, allowing the reader to have a full understanding of what is happening (Maxwell, 2005). Two interviews with ten participants were conducted, as well as one interview with three participants, for a total of 23 interviews, using open-ended questions to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's lived experiences. These interviews were transcribed verbatim and used as data.

Addressing Researcher Bias

The bias of the researcher must be addressed through a disclosed understanding of how the researcher's background and history influence their worldview and interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The goal of this study was to have the participants describe, through interviews, the meanings that they made from their own experiences. The researcher studied abroad in the past, so it was important to keep her experiences from influencing or shaping the reflections of the participants – and from influencing or shaping the analyses and conclusions about those reflections. To ensure this critical

impartiality, and to be able to see and interpret the phenomenon through the eyes of the participants, the researcher's biases and beliefs were identified and bracketed. A reflexivity statement was written and reviewed regularly to help guard against allowing personal experiences to interfere with the study.

Epoche, a Greek work meaning to abstain, is described as the process of setting "aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" and "allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness" as if to see it for the first time (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Epoche, through the process of bracketing, helps the researcher remain open to their participants' stories. Bracketing is a method used by researchers "to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project" (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81). Bracketing helps guard against preconceptions that "may taint the research process" by acknowledging those preconceptions and personal experiences related to the research topic before the research begins (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 80). To address this potential issue, the researcher kept a journal to record preconceived notions that arose throughout the research process. To ensure the bracketing of personal experiences and allow the participants to tell their own stories, this journal was checked against the researcher's reflexivity statement and reviewed often to guard against bias during the data analysis.

Confidentiality and Anonymity of Participants

To protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, documents and transcripts were made anonymous by assigning pseudonyms to each participant at the initial interview. These pseudonyms replaced any identifiable information in the

transcripts and research documents. Additionally, participants were given the option to not respond to any or all of the questions. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, however none chose to withdraw.

The participants were emailed a copy of the consent form to review prior to the first interview. All participants had the option to review and sign the consent form electronically prior to the interview, and they all did so. No interviews were conducted without a signed consent form.

The research data and consent forms were kept in separate, locked locations and will be retained for a minimum of three years following the completion of this study. The research data was stored on a secure research computer, with a secure login required for access; the signed consent forms were kept in a locked file cabinet in a home office that is separate from the research data.

To ensure further the participants' anonymity, a program was chosen with a large potential participant pool. Participants were chosen from the Oxford Eurospring program between the years 1977-2001, a span of 25 years. The Oxford Eurospring program has been in continued existence for the last 39 years. In addition, Oxford Eurospring participants include students from two institutions, Minnesota State University Moorhead and Bemidji State University, providing a large sample and minimizing the possibility that any individuals could be identified based on their participation in this study.

Human Subjects Research

Prior to conducting this research, permission was sought from the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Dakota to proceed with the study. The nature and methodology of the research, the process of selection of human subjects, the risk

associated with involvement in the research study, and protections provided to the participants was demonstrated to the IRB. Approval also was sought from the IRB for the consent form, which informed participants of the study's intent and their right to opt-out at any time, for any reason.

Timeline

The data collection process began immediately following approval of the proposal and submission to the IRB office. The first round of data was collected and coded in the 2016 fall semester, and the second round of data was collected and coded in the beginning of the 2017 spring semester. Data analysis was conducted in the 2017 spring semester.

Summary

This chapter described the methods used in conducting this qualitative research study that sought to understand the lived experiences of Oxford Eurospring alumni who participated in the study abroad program at some time between 1981-2001.

Upon IRB approval, participants were interviewed twice, field notes were recorded, the interviews were transcribed, and the data was analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of how alumni have made meaning of their lives since their study abroad experiences. Study validity was addressed by incorporating the specific strategies of member checking, rich and thick description use, and researcher bias identification. Finally, participant confidentiality and anonymity were ensured.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring participants. Each of the participants was removed from their study abroad experiences somewhere between 16 and 36 years, providing time to engage actively in life after college and their study abroad experience. The core research question was constructed using a conceptual framework to explore the personal, professional, civic, and global impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni today. Analysis of the research question and the participants' responses yielded four common themes. To illustrate the long-term impacts of study abroad, direct quotes were used to highlight the themes using the participant's own words. All of the participants were introduced, their reflections were recorded, and the central research findings were articulated.

Participant Profiles

The study abroad participants in this study were predominately first-generation college students, many self-funded their college education, and most self-funded their study abroad experience. Most completed their undergraduate degrees in five years or less, including their time studying abroad, and all but one participant had not traveled

abroad prior to their Oxford Eurospring experience. Table 3 below illustrates the participants' demographic data.

Eight of the participants (more than half) were from rural farms or small towns (communities with less than 10,000 people) in North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota. There were five participants from larger communities, with two each from Bismarck and Fargo and one from St. Cloud. The students in this study did not travel far to attend college, and the colleges they attended were regional, four-year colleges – not large state institutions (like North Dakota State University, the University of North Dakota, or the University of Minnesota) or small, private universities (like the University of Mary, Jamestown University, or multiple institutions in the Minnesota Twin Cities region). Finally, all of the participants were raised in relatively close proximity to where they attended college.

Ten of the thirteen participants were first-generation college students. Of the three that were not, in each case, only one of their parents had previously attended college. All but one of the participants had never traveled abroad prior to their study abroad program. One participant was an exchange student for less than a month while in high school.

Twelve out of thirteen participants completed their undergraduate degrees in five years or less, including their study abroad experience. Eight of them completed their degree program in four years or less; two finished in 4.5 years; two completed in five years; often, they accomplished this with a double major or minor, as well as with a semester abroad. It is worth noting that Minnesota State University Moorhead was on the

quarter system for all but two participants. Table 3 provides basic demographic information about the participants in this study.

Table 3. Participants of Oxford Eurospring Study Abroad

Participant	School	Year Abroad	Hometown	1st generation	Prior travel	Years to complete
Dana	BSU	1981	Rural MN	no	no	4
Jay	BSU	1984	Rural MN	yes	no	4
Nonie	MSUM	1986	Small Town ND	yes	no	4
Apollo	MSUM	1988	Small Town ND	yes	no	5
Jane	MSUM	1988	Small Town SD	no	no	5
Claudia	MSUM	1990	Small Town ND	yes	no	5
Emma	MSUM	1990	Large City ND	yes	no	4
Joe	BSU	1995	Rural MN	yes	no	>4
Bailey	MSUM	1996	Large City MN	yes	no	4
Tristle	MSUM	1996	Large City ND	yes	yes	>8
Wilder	MSUM	1996	Large City ND	no	no	5
Jenny	MSUM	2000	Small City MN	yes	no	4
Teri	MSUM	2001	Large City ND	yes	no	5

Ten of the thirteen participants still resided within a 250-mile radius of the college town in which they completed their undergraduate degree and the areas where they were raised. Seven participants from Bemidji State University and Minnesota State University Moorhead live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Three participants live in Mankato, Bemidji, and Fargo. Only three participants had careers that took them to states that were different than the ones in which the participants as a whole were raised –

and one of those states was immediately adjacent to the state of their childhood and college education.

The following are brief descriptions of each participant in this study:

Dana

Dana studied abroad in 1981 while attending Bemidji State University. She was the second oldest in a large family and was raised in rural Minnesota. Her father was a teacher; therefore, she is one of the few participants who were not a first-generation college student. She self-funded her college education and her study abroad experience. She has had a long and successful career in business and administration, has served in leadership roles on a national board, is civically engaged, and currently resides in a large, metropolitan area. She speaks of her study abroad experience as ‘full of adventure and risk’ and has had at least four extended-family members study abroad since she did.

Jay

Jay studied abroad in 1984 while attending Bemidji State University. He was raised on a farm in Minnesota and was a first-generation college student. He funded his own college and study abroad, while working hard to put himself through school, and graduated in four years with a 60-credit minor and a semester of study abroad. He works internationally in the computer field, has traveled extensively, and lived abroad with his family on several occasions. His wife is not American, his children have dual citizenship, and all three of his children have studied abroad. He currently resides in a large, metropolitan area.

Nonie

Nonie studied abroad in 1986 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a small town in North Dakota and currently resides in a large, metropolitan city. Nonie attended four colleges in four years, including her self-funded study abroad program. She currently works in the media sector, is engaged in her community, travels globally, and encourages her children to study abroad one day. Nonie says about the impacts of study abroad on her life today, “It really was impactful from friendships, to who I picked as a spouse, to continuing the type of work...because of the Eurospring”.

Apollo

Apollo studied abroad in 1988 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a small town in North Dakota and currently resides in a larger city in North Dakota. Apollo was a first-generation college student and had no international travel experience prior to her study abroad. She is a practicing artist and teacher and attributes her career choice to her Oxford Eurospring study abroad experience.

Jane

Jane studied abroad in 1988 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a small town in South Dakota and currently resides in a large, metropolitan area. Jane is not a first-generation college student and she did not have prior international travel experience prior to her study abroad. Jane is an entrepreneur and assists with the family business. She is actively engaged in her neighborhood community and her children’s lives. She completed college in five years and says this about her Oxford Eurospring experience: “Since I traveled, I speak of travel with my kids and family. I try to express a more global – a worldview – to my kids.”

Claudia

Claudia studied abroad in 1990 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a small town in North Dakota and currently resides in a large, metropolitan area. She is a first-generation college student with no previous international travel experience. She is proud of her German Russian heritage, and her children are participating in a German language immersion program at school. Claudia honeymooned in Scotland after she completed college in less than five years.

Emma

Emma studied abroad in 1990 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a large city in North Dakota and currently resides in a state far removed from her hometown. She has been teaching children since she graduated from college and still loves to travel. She attributes her travel bug to her Oxford Eurospring experience. Her young son is well versed in world geography, and she has established a specific travel savings plan within her family budget for ongoing international travel.

Joe

Joe studied abroad in 1995 through Bemidji State University and was raised in rural Minnesota. He came from a very humble childhood, living in a cabin without electricity or television, and now resides in a large, metropolitan area. As a first-generation college student, he funded his own college education and was able to study abroad through hard work. He completed college in less than four years and is successfully self-employed.

Bailey

Bailey studied abroad in 1996 while attending Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a small city in Minnesota and now resides in a large, metropolitan area.

She was a first-generation college student and had no previous international travel experiences prior to studying abroad. She funded her study abroad and completed her undergraduate degree in four years. Bailey spent her honeymoon in Ireland and worked as a community journalist for most of her career.

Tristle

Tristle, a self-described Anglophile, studied abroad in 1996 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a large city in North Dakota and currently resides in a large, metropolitan area. She was a first-generation college student, self-funded her college education and study abroad, and caught the travel bug when she spent a month on exchange in Germany as a high school student. She later lived in Ireland for four years, while her husband completed his doctorate. Tristle said about her Oxford Eurospring experience, “Having been born and raised in [North Dakota], it was an experience that I never, ever thought that I would have. I just had to say that that laid the groundwork for the rest of my life”.

Wilder

Wilder studied abroad in 1996 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. He was raised in a large city in North Dakota and currently resides in a very large city far from his hometown, working for an airline company. Wilder had no international travel experience prior to his study abroad, but his father studied abroad while in college. Wilder and his family embrace a purposeful lifestyle, which includes homeschooling and a community-focused, neighborhood orientation. He travels now with his young children. He completed his degree in five years.

Jenny

Jenny studied abroad in 2000 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a small city in Minnesota, where she and her husband currently reside. She works from home and is actively engaged in her community, serving on several boards, with a community and arts focus. Jenny is a first-generation college student and had no international travel experience prior to her study abroad. She completed her degree in four years.

Teri

Teri studied abroad in 2001 through Minnesota State University Moorhead. She was raised in a large city in North Dakota and currently works as a university faculty member, teaching and taking students on her own study abroad programs. Teri was a first-generation college student and completed her degree in 4.5 years. She is actively engaged in her community, an entrepreneur, and values diversity and international travel. Her children have traveled abroad at a young age also.

Common Themes

There are four common themes that emerged from this study: perseverance, exploration, lifestyle, and intergenerational impacts. The first theme explored who the participants were when they began their study abroad program. It was the only theme that was not a direct impact of their study abroad experience, but it impacted directly their decision to participate in study abroad. The subthemes that helped construct the perseverance theme included the following: self-reflection, determination, and financing study abroad.

The second theme addressed how the study abroad experience engendered a subsequent love of exploration and discovery among Oxford Eurospring alumni, at the time of their experiences in Oxford and still today – more than 30 years later for some. The subthemes that helped construct the exploration theme included the following: initial impacts, free time abroad, spring break, Oxford, and the grand tour.

The third theme, lifestyle, represented what happened after study abroad alumni returned home and how they continued to make life choices reflective of their time abroad. The subthemes that helped construct the lifestyle theme included the following: lifestyle choices, community and civic engagement, political, food choices today, leisure today, and voluntary simplicity.

The fourth and final theme examined the intergenerational impacts that study abroad had on others in their lives. This impact took time to develop, was something that was passed down to their children, and became part of their legacy. The long-term impacts of study abroad are intergenerational. They impact not only the study abroad participants, but they also touch the lives of the participants' children. The subthemes that helped construct the intergenerational theme included the following: personal impacts, family impacts, and impacts on others.

Looking across these four themes, it was apparent that the long-term impacts of study abroad were both personally transformational and intergenerationally impactful. Personal transformation was a central outcome of the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program for its participants, beginning as they discovered a way to make their study abroad experiences a reality, while persisting to graduation in five years or less.

Next, participants discovered their love for adventure, exploration, and travel while in Oxford. Their openness to exploration continued to be present in their lives today, most prominently with their love for travel, even after 16 to 36 years had passed. Additionally, these Oxford Eurospring alumni made lifestyle choices that were reflective of their time in Europe. They sought diversity in the neighborhoods where they chose to live, engaged actively in their communities (e.g., walking to farmers' markets), and chose purposeful ways of life. Lastly, they passed on their study abroad experiences to others and have influenced another generation to value study abroad. Most of the participants were first-generation college students whose parents did not have the opportunity to study abroad, so this intergenerational impact was part of their legacy.

Theme 1: Perseverance

Participants demonstrated perseverance and commitment while in college to do whatever it took to make their study abroad trip possible. Most of the participants worked hard to accomplish their goal to study abroad. Tristle described how she had to work to put herself through college and study abroad, demonstrating her perseverance.

Yeah, it was a financial setback, I mean, because I was poor. But, you know, being a college student, you don't really live in the lap of luxury. So, it was a big decision.... something that I didn't take lightly. You know, it wasn't like, 'Oh, I'll just take out extra money so I could travel abroad.' No, I had to give some very serious consideration to it, because I was already working full-time, going to school full-time. I knew that it was going to be a financial setback, but I also knew that the experience would be something that.... I mean, I really had to kind of grasp that

opportunity as it was presented to me. I wouldn't have that opportunity ever again. Because I didn't have any help from my parents, I worked full-time, and I went to school full-time. So, I was paying my way through college at the time. I took out an extra \$5,000, so that I could go on Eurospring. And it was worth every single bit!

Tristle demonstrated perseverance to make her study abroad possible. She received no financial assistance from her family for college or study abroad; she worked full-time to put herself through college and borrowed money to go on Eurospring. Tristle had studied abroad briefly while in high school, so she was aware of the value of the experience and committed to working hard to go. She talked about how poor she was, yet how grateful she was to have the opportunity to study abroad. This example of perseverance and financing one's own study abroad was a consistent theme among most of the Eurospring participants interviewed.

Financing Study Abroad

Many of the participants had to find a way to pay for the added cost of studying abroad. They planned for it and demonstrated how they found a way to finance their study abroad creatively. Dana described how she didn't think to ask her parents to help pay for study abroad but, instead, was resourceful in seeking out a student loan.

I just talked to my parents, and, for the most part, I was financing my education, because I'm from a large family, and I was the second oldest, so I knew that there was no way that I'd ask them. But they said, 'Well....' – and up to that point, I hadn't taken out any student loans, so I checked into seeing if I could get a student loan, and I think the program

for me at the time, which included the 16 credits, was like \$2,100. And at that time, it was probably expensive, but we also knew that \$2,100 to go for 8 weeks, including 16 credits, really wasn't a big hit. So, I did take out a student loan for that, which was my only student loan. And it was money well spent.

Dana studied abroad more than 35 years ago, and, because she was financing her own education, she was creative in seeking financing for her study abroad through a student loan – the only student loan she incurred during her years at college. In other words, she valued the opportunity to study abroad so highly that she was willing to incur debt, something she was not willing to do for any other purpose.

Bailey, a first-generation college student from a rural community in North Dakota, always wanted to travel. When she became aware of the Eurospring study abroad opportunity, she was able to use a student loan to assist her in financing the trip, because her father also was attending college (a technical school) at the same time. Bailey explained how she didn't let financing stand in her way.

Yeah, financing college was probably a little bit of an issue, just because, I think at the time I was about to go to school, my dad decided to go back and take some classes around the same time at a vocational technical college. I think I did have to take out a loan for it. But yeah, I was very, very much like, adamant that I was going on this trip...

I'd always wanted to travel and see the world. And I just knew that this was my opportunity to do it, and I could be part of a whole learning experience and actually learning about the culture and architecture and art

and history and everything along with that. So, not just being a tourist but being more engaged and learning about it.

Bailey's perseverance to study abroad in Europe was evident in her interview conversations. She did not let the added cost of the trip stand in the way of her dreams of traveling and seeing the world. She found a way to finance it without asking her family for help. This was another example of the Eurospring participants' creativity and determination to not let anything stop them from taking advantage of an opportunity that they knew fit their educational and personal goals.

Apollo, another first-generation college student from a small town in North Dakota, described how she was determined to study abroad through Eurospring and figure out a way to secure grants to assist with the additional cost of studying abroad.

So, I basically at the time, I paid for half of my degree with student loans and half with grants, but I had to take out an extended grant to go on that program. I just wanted to do it, so that was it!

Apollo and many other participants found resources to assist with the additional costs of study abroad; some used student loans, some received grants, and others worked and saved funds for their study abroad experience.

Determination and Financing Study Abroad

Claudia grew up in a small town in North Dakota, had never traveled internationally, and was a first-generation college student. She knew for a long time that she wanted to study abroad and, therefore, worked extremely hard toward her goal of participating in Eurospring two years after she entered college. The perseverance of Eurospring participants was evident in the goals they set out to accomplish. Claudia

shared how she worked part time for two years to save up enough money to participate in the Eurospring study abroad program.

I knew I wanted to do it (Eurospring), and then I started working, because I knew it was going to be a little more expensive...and I worked, so that I would have the extras that I would need to, you know, enjoy myself! You know, my parents were...it wasn't like, 'Okay, we'll just write you a check,' you know. They were certainly helping me out by paying for university, but it was going to be more expensive than just being at school for the semester. Plus, I couldn't work, which I normally would have been doing. So, you know, it wasn't a total hardship but it was a goal. I knew about two years before I went that this was something that I wanted to do. So, it was a goal of mine. You know, when I was working, where I was putting so much away so that when I go on Eurospring, I have the funds to enjoy myself.

Claudia set a goal for herself to study abroad through Eurospring and worked hard for two years to get there. She didn't refer to this as a hardship, but rather her goal.

I did (save up for two years), and I only worked part time. But I remember one of the jobs I had in my freshman year I didn't like, and so I put a little sticky note (that said), 'Eurospring, you know, LIKE doing it, (because) the money you make is going to help you go to Europe, so just keep chugging along.' It was like delayed gratification, you know, 'and just...it'll be worth it. Just keep going.'

Claudia's explanation about delayed gratification, while working part time for two years in a job she didn't like, illustrated her focus on her goal for half of her college years.

Claudia's description of how she worked hard at school, worked at part-time jobs while in school, and had clear goals she set and accomplished in order to study abroad was another example of perseverance.

Jenny, a first-generation college student who never traveled abroad prior to Eurospring, talked about how she prepared financially for her study abroad trip, another example of doing whatever was needed to ensure participation in Eurospring study abroad.

I knew that I had to prepare for it (financially), especially because, when we went, we didn't have to go to school during the rest of that semester. I didn't have to attend school other than doing our prep work for the trip (from December – early March). And so, I just remember working as many hours as possible and really, really building up my savings, so that I could afford to be on the trip. Otherwise, I mean, I had financial aid through loans and grants that helped pay for the schooling. And then, I mean, I knew I was going on the trip back before Christmas time, so I know that my Christmas presents from my family was in the form of cash for me to save for the trip, because they knew I didn't need a bunch of stuff. So, it was just a matter of really saving and working a lot for those three or four months leading up to the trip.

Jenny talked a lot about how hard she worked and how she picked up extra hours leading up to her study abroad trip, so that she could afford the trip.

Jenny and others talked about how hard they had to work to come up with the money to study abroad. While the overall costs to study abroad were “not that much more” than a semester on campus, everyone had to prepare for the additional expenses and have enough “extra money for fun” while abroad.

I was working every day as much as I could and saved, worked two jobs all summer leading up to it and worked very hard to save money, so that I could go and enjoy myself. I don't remember it being a financial struggle.

While most participants worked extra hours to have spending money for the trip, they often said something like Jenny's comment, “I don't remember it being a financial struggle.” Perhaps their own perceptions were that it wasn't a struggle to work more and save more, but, from the outside, listening to them describe their efforts, it sounded like they worked extremely hard to make the study abroad trip a reality. They sacrificed in multiple ways: borrowing money, taking out student loans and grants, working two jobs, moving home to save money, and planning for up to two years. Perhaps the only explanation was that their anticipation and commitment made the hard work feel like something other than a struggle.

Persevering also included overcoming the challenge of going abroad alone. Jane described how she learned about the Oxford Eurospring program and how, from that moment, she committed herself to the experience, even though she didn't know anyone else who was going.

I signed up by myself...and I was just so excited about it, and I was all prepared to go completely by myself - like I was just driven. From seeing

that poster, I was just doing it. I didn't care if I didn't know anyone; I was doing this.

Jane was from a small town in South Dakota and had not ventured far from home until going off to college at Minnesota State University Moorhead. She explained how this was a very big step, to make the decision to study abroad, and then to do so on her own.

I think it gave me confidence, you know, that I could handle going to Europe on my own, and that when I felt truly driven to do something, which, you know, seeing that poster, that was going to happen. No matter what, I was going to find a way to make that happen...and that you can do that. If you feel driven to something, to go for it. And it truly....it changed my life. It truly did. It's important to go for those things you really want, and not be afraid of it, and figure it out.

Jane described the process of wanting to go abroad, even if she didn't know anyone else participating. She was choosing for the first time to do something completely outside her comfort zone. She had the same friends for years and had never been outside her small hometown before college.

I always had this close handful of friends that I did everything with when growing up. So, to go on this trip for sure without my best friend...that's not something I would normally do at all. Something about this trip; I just had to do it.

Perseverance was described in terms of financing the experience, as well as committing to going on study abroad, even when it was something uncommon for the participants

and their peer groups. Likewise, perseverance also surfaced when participants described how they persisted through to graduation.

Self-reflection and Determination

The theme of perseverance and hard work persisted throughout the interviews. Jay, who grew up on a farm in Minnesota, talked about how he worked throughout college to support himself and pay for his study abroad trip. In the following passage, Jay described the work he did to put himself through college in the early 1980s.

When I went up there, you know, for the orientation or the school tour, they gave me the sheet with lodging and tuition, and it was \$2,200 a year (in 1981). Yeah, so it was very affordable. You know, I made that in a year. I worked part-time at a co-op while I was on the farm...I worked at a co-op in the summer and on the weekends and after school...I did work on the railroad, on a tie-gang one summer. And I did internships and summer jobs. I started programming right off my freshman year. I was programming in the summer for different companies. I took out a few loans, as well. . . . By the time I started (college) to when I graduated in four years, Reaganomics took effect. So it's funny, because I voted for Reagan, and I was really happy he won, but my tuition my first year was \$2,200. And my last year was \$6,800, which was interesting. Because I went on (Eurospring) my junior year... I didn't have any savings left or anything. But at the time, the dollar was very strong against the pound. And, somehow, things hadn't adjusted yet. The UK schooling was still kind of covered by their government. So it would have been less

expensive for me to go (to college in the UK) even the whole year, then to study abroad. And I was weighing going there or Eurospring. I ended up choosing Eurospring because of my credits.

Jay was another example of the work ethic of the Eurospring study abroad participants. He was keenly aware of the cost of his education and remembered the exact costs more than thirty years later. He talked at length about the opportunity to study abroad at Oxford for one year, but, due to his focus on computer science, he was not able to study for the whole year, because Oxford did not offer enough courses toward his degree. Jay chose to attend Eurospring instead, because all his credits would transfer back to Minnesota State University Moorhead, thus allowing him to graduate in four years and start working immediately upon graduation. Of direct relevance to his earlier desire, Jay returned to Oxford to earn his MBA almost thirty years after attending Eurospring. Further, all three of his sons also studied abroad, one of them attending Eurospring nearly thirty years after Jay did.

Determination

Jay, a first generation college student, graduated within four years, inclusive of his study abroad semester, and earned a minor in addition to his major. He also funded both his undergraduate education and his study abroad program.

I never changed my major. I was in and out in four years. And I studied abroad... actually I had the sixty credit minor, as well, in computer business, and I studied abroad.

The National Education Center for Statistics reported that only 51.7% of students who started college at a four-year public institution graduated within six years (U.S.

Department of Education, 2017). In stark contrast, all but one of the Oxford Eurospring alumni in this study (92%) complete their undergraduate education in five years or less.

Theme 2: Exploration

The theme of exploration was illustrated consistently by all participants, and was most evident during their time in Oxford and during their time on spring break. Although the exploration during the study abroad trip did not constitute long-term impacts, it inspired many of the participants to continue such exploration long after the study abroad program ended.

The Oxford Eurospring program consisted of two major, academic parts: a five-week residency at the Oxford University campus and a three-week historical tour of major cities in Europe. One unexpected finding disclosed by most participants was their choices of how they spent their Spring Break time, which occurred while they were in Oxford. Participants had three-seven days off over the Easter holiday to do whatever they wanted. Some chose to connect with pen pals, cousins, or friends they knew previously that were living in Europe. Others got together and traveled freely to other countries or within England. The experiences and memories of spring breaks were as impactful for them as the Oxford academic experience and the European tour.

Spring Break and Free Time

Teri discussed her willingness to travel to an unknown place with people she didn't know during her spring break at Oxford. It was not required, somewhat impromptu, and something that almost all participants referenced.

Everyone was going to Ireland or the Norwegian countries (Scandinavia, Norway), and we were like so sick of the rainy weather, the three of us

were like, we want to get to a beach. Like, we're done with this rain, right? So, I had never met them until the trip, but we decided – the three of us – we walked into a travel agency and said, “Get us to a beach.” And so we bought this package to go to Forte Ventura, which is a little island off the coast of West Africa and like south of Spain, and we went there for a week for spring break. It was awesome, yeah. Really fun!

Not only did she go on spring break to a place to which she had never imagined traveling prior to her study abroad trip, but she did so with two girls she didn't know. This example of trying new things, exploring new opportunities, and traveling with new people to new places, provided insight into how study abroad participants started to explore new things.

So that was fun, because you need to do stuff like that, because you don't get out of your comfort zone, first of all, and second of all, realize there are other ways to live, right? So, it was fun.

Teri and others used spring break to set out on their own, see new places, and try new things on their own terms. They described how this was a great way to explore with new friends from the Oxford Eurospring program.

Spring Break was one of the first opportunities in their lives for many of the participants to explore on their own, adding to their sense of independence. For Wilder's spring break, he traveled with Bailey to Belfast to reconnect with some Irish students they had met briefly before they departed on their study abroad trip. Their Spring Break free time gave them the opportunity to travel together to meet up with their new acquaintances in Ireland.

And we had an Easter Break, and we could go anywhere we wanted at that point...well, wherever we could get to and back within like three to four days. And so we went to Ireland for that short time...So, we just took a train and a ferry over to Ireland...and so we spent a couple of days with them, and they took us all over. We went up to Northern Ireland where they were in Belfast; they took us around and they were just...I can't believe the hospitality. I mean, they were just college kids themselves. And you know, gave up their rooms for us and took us all over, and so, that was probably one of my favorite parts.

Wilder's reference to his spring break trip to Ireland as the highlight of his experiences illustrated the impact of the spring break experiences in inspiring participants to get outside their comfort zones and travel freely, on their own, to new places.

But that experience of hanging out with our own peers, in their context, and really spending some time with them in a place that wasn't traditionally touristy – that experience really – it came through in my writing about it. I really enjoyed that experience more than probably anything.

The freedom to explore, outside the curriculum and schedules, provided real world insight into the lives of others that has remained with Wilder and Bailey ever since.

Like some students who traveled to Ireland, Nonie described how she and some friends took a trip to Dover during their Spring Break. “For Easter break, Jenna, Kay, and I went to Dover and spent the weekend there at a B&B, and so we felt really independent and courageous to get on a bus and do something different.”

For most of the participants, Oxford Eurospring was their first time abroad – the first time to explore independently. Many students learned quickly how to take the coach bus to London and beyond. All the participants were from communities that didn't have large public transportation systems, so the freedom that came with access to public transportation was liberating.

Oxford and Free Time

Like many other participants, Wilder hopped on the London Tube when there were no classes and went to London for the day. He said simply, "I loved going to London. I spent a lot of time there and wandered around by myself." The convenience of inexpensive transportation opened opportunities for these Midwest college students to expand their horizons and explore new places.

Oxford

In addition to the freedom that took place over Spring Break, the theme of exploration was evident throughout their time in Oxford. From their first day in Oxford, all the participants spoke of using their free time to explore on foot the city and colleges of Oxford, in addition to pubs and parks.

Bailey, a first-generation college student without any previous international travel, talked about the feeling she had when she arrived in Oxford.

Yeah, I think it was the first time I just felt like I was really, really free to discover the world, and not only that, by myself! I think - I know I just remember feeling almost like I wanted to just skip down the streets when I got there, because I was just so excited to...you know, it was like the whole world was open to me!

Her words described how many felt upon arriving in Oxford. For most, it was their first time abroad and away from family, and everyone talked about how it felt to explore all that was new around them. Nonie shared a similar response to her new home for the first five weeks.

For us, it was just like, “Let’s keep exploring; let’s keep trying new...”

and I just remember walking; we walked and walked and walked and walked. And I was very grateful for the shoe selection that I brought.

Participants described spending tremendous amounts of their free time exploring the streets of Oxford. Bailey talked about how she would look forward to walking around Oxford at any opportunity when there wasn’t class. She began her exploration on foot in Oxford.

We would just go...like as soon as we were done with class, or whenever we didn’t have any other obligations, we would just start walking. I mean, just walked the whole town, and we were just kind of in awe of the architecture there – the spires and gargoyles, and all that... Yeah, we just walked all over, went into shops and pubs and that kind of stuff.

In the following example, Jane talked about the discovery of her love for adventure, something upon which she was able to expand while in Europe.

It taught me that I love adventure too. You know, my mom is very adventurous, and I love adventure...and to not be afraid to travel, and not be afraid to get out of your little environment, and there’s so much to learn about...there’s more than one way to do things. There’s many, many

different ways to see things and to do things, and if you don't get out of your own way, you won't know that.

She discovered her love for adventure during her study abroad, and it helped her see that there are many different ways to interpret the world.

Exploration Today

Bailey's love for adventure and exploration began by walking around Oxford. As a result of her opportunity to travel to Ireland on spring break, she continued her love of exploring and was able to enjoy her honeymoon almost ten years later in Ireland.

Well, my husband and I actually went on our honeymoon in 2005 to Ireland. And a lot of it was because of how much I loved it when I was there...for that short time...We were there for two weeks...I probably wouldn't have done that if I hadn't already been up there in 1996.

Spring break was a time when exploration became possible, and students took advantage of moving outside their comfort zone on their own accord. For many, the theme of exploration continued into their lives today. Emma talked at length about catching the "travel bug" during her Oxford Eurospring experience and never really losing it.

I definitely think that was the start of my 'travel bug', and that was the first time that I really, like, ventured out on my own since my college...it was with a group but it wasn't with my parents. But that made a big difference... I just think that, I mean, ever since then I just wanted to travel so much and do as much as I can possibly afford to do.

Emma made travel and exploration a priority that continues to the present time. As a teacher, she shared her travels with her students, often inspiring them to travel, also. As a parent, she described how she instilled in her son the love of travel and talked proudly about how her young son could identify global cities on the world map. Below, she described the importance of travel to her family.

Well, I'm going back to what I said about creating a savings account for travel, that we really try and budget our money wisely so that we have that extra money for travel, and we would rather buy experiences for our family than, you know, things.

Emma prioritized travel experiences within her family budget, and she said they plan for two vacations a year, often outside of the U.S. This example highlighted two primary themes with long-term impacts: exploration and intergenerational influence.

Wilder has traveled back to Europe on four different occasions since his time in Oxford on Eurospring. He explained, "We did four European trips I think, Ireland once, England once...and then we had one trip to France and one to Spain." Most of those trips were prior to the births of his young children, and he said he was looking forward to exploring with them as they got older.

All of the participants talked about their continued interest in travel, whether domestic or international, and while logistics and life had not afforded all of them the opportunities yet, they all expressed the desire to continue their travels and exploration of new ideas, places, and concepts.

Theme 3: Lifestyle

People make choices everyday about how to spend their time and money. They choose what to purchase and from where. They choose the communities in which they live, the places they travel, and the food they eat. All the participants discussed their lifestyles today and how many of the choices they make are reflective of their study abroad experiences.

The participants prioritized their lives by what they valued most highly. Their current and past lifestyle choices reflected those priorities, which in turn impacted their communities. The choices participants made regarding where they lived resulted in higher levels of community and civic engagement.

In the following passage, Nonie discussed her purposeful choice to reside within a large metropolitan city, similar to places she visited in Europe.

I think making the choice to live in (a large, metropolitan city) with a more diverse population, and being able to walk to things like we did in Europe, and to be able to go to farmer's' markets that's three blocks from our house, and to get your haircut or your eye appointment, everything is within walking distance, and that feels like what it is in Europe.

Nonie directly connected many of her primary lifestyle choices today back to her experiences studying abroad. Her choice of where to live illustrated a long-term impact on Nonie's overall lifestyle.

Lifestyle and Voluntary Simplicity

Striving to live a more voluntarily simplistic lifestyle reflected the European experience of several Eurospring participants. Wilder explained what he retained from

his European experience regarding living a purposeful life. He talked about his continued awareness of where he was and his appreciation for a quality of life that was purposeful and filled with gratitude. Wilder recently moved his wife and small children from a large, metropolitan city to another large, metropolitan city far from his hometown, and he intentionally chose a home in a diverse neighborhood.

I thought about coming back here after being in Europe, and it's made me more aware that I had to have more of an appreciation and a sense of place. I didn't want to take things for granted. I think of the un-reflected life that is not worth living. I forget exactly what – there is some quote in here, trying to be someone on whom nothing is lost. I know that was in some of my studies over there; that quote came up and that made me very aware, and I didn't want to take anything for granted, even in my surroundings if I'm not traveling. I don't want to just lose myself or not have a sense of place, either. I think that's especially important since my wife and I moved down to (the large city where they now live) and that we're invested in the community here and the kind of culture and history here and don't take that for granted, necessarily. Just to say that it's not all necessarily traveling, but appreciating where you are and that quality of life.

Wilder chose to live a purposeful life by making reflective choices that connected him to a community in which he actively invested and engaged, which he connected to his experiences in Oxford during his study abroad. He values a sense of place, so the investment into his community is purposeful and connected to not wanting to take

anything for granted. He also had an interest and respect for the history and culture of his new community, as well as a sincere gratitude for the experience and opportunity to incorporate it into his life today.

Community and Political Engagement

Teri connected her Oxford Eurospring experience to her current community and political engagement. Teri and her family have participated in community parades, attended campus lectures on national issues, and donated to local causes – all examples of her lifestyle choices today that were connected back to her study abroad experience.

I would say, you know, like locally, we as a family do attend events. We'll attend the Gay Pride parade locally...it's actually really good here. Definitely events on campus. For example, we had Shaun King speak Monday night, which was awesome. I was the only one that went. My husband watched the kids so I could go. And like next month, the founder of the Black Lives Matter movement is speaking on our campus. So, I'm going to try to bring our son...So, it's probably more events, I personally don't have the time, so I just give a lot of money. Yeah, in terms of local events - like the backpack food program, we give to all that, and our son obviously raises a lot of money when they do Jump Rope for Heart. So, I'd say our connection with the community is attending events and just being involved whenever we can, and when speakers come, or rallies. Like, obviously, I went to all of the Hillary Clinton rallies I could.

Teri's choice to actively engage with her community through fundraising, demonstrations, and community activities indicated a social and political commitment to her community that she connected to her study abroad experience. The lifestyle choices that study abroad alumni described in their interviews demonstrated how they viewed themselves and the way they intentionally impacted their communities, and they connected that outcome directly to their study abroad experiences.

Community and Food Choices

Many of the participants demonstrated community engagement by dining locally, participating in community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares, or shopping at their local co-op store. Dana discussed her choice concerning where to eat out, often selecting local establishments over chain restaurants. Dana resided in a suburb of a large, Midwestern city and her family had unlimited dining choices. She provided examples of their recent choices.

Yeah, we'll go if there's a new place. We kind of look for the [local independent ones]. There's one just up the road from us; that's where we went last night...again, that's not a chain. It is its own – it's in a historic building, and you know that anytime you go, you're going to stand in line for twenty minutes. And it's just good food; it's always good. So, we tend to prefer to go to the independent restaurants like that.

Dana and her husband made economic decisions about where to eat out and how often. They sought locally owned establishments and tried not to choose chain restaurants. On reflection, Dana described this decision to eat locally and support independent restaurants in terms of the impacts of her time abroad.

Community and Civic Engagement

Several participants consistently discussed their commitment to their local communities, each describing what that meant to them. One participant served on the multiple community-focused boards and others raised money for community members. In the following passage, Nonie described a community activity that took the money that one normally would spend going out to eat and donated it to people in need within their community. This group pooled their resources and donated to people affected by the recent political ban on immigrants from certain countries.

In our community...tonight, my next-door neighbor is hosting a dinner that we are putting together - whatever we would've spent going out to eat, that we're giving it to some of these charities that we see as helping immigrants, Somalian people in our (city) community that have...been impacted by some of the recent...um...executive orders.

This was another example of how their study abroad experiences were directly associated with activities that supported the local community and were reflective of elements they took away from those experience. Choosing how and where to spend or not spend their money was part of what they learned from their time abroad and continued to impact their lifestyle choices to this day.

Theme 4: Intergenerational Impacts

The final theme revealed how participants plan to carry forward their own study abroad experience in an attempt to impact the lives of their children or family. Participants explained the personal impacts on them, the way they navigated a new culture, and how it influenced them later in life. However, underlying the personal

impact was a desire to carry forward the benefit they received from study abroad to the next generation. An intergenerational impact emerged as a long-term impact of the participant's study abroad experience. In the following quote, Jane discussed her thoughts on the importance she and her husband place on travel with their children.

We both have (traveled) and my husband is pretty adventurous, and he's up for anything. So yeah, we just, we would take the kids to California and Florida and Nevada and Texas, and yeah, we take them all over, and we want them to see that there is a lot of different ways to live, and when you grow up, you get to pick which way works best for you and there are all kinds of adventure out there for you.

For Jane, providing travel to their children allowed them opportunities to see “different ways to live” and encourage them to find a lifestyle that works best for them. The study abroad experience provided Jane the opportunity to see how others live and she in turn saw the value in it to share with her children. The impact Jane described is one that has implications for her family because she actively connects the travel to seeing how people live as an important piece of her children's lives.

Family Impacts

Another participant indicated the importance of encouraging her children to venture out and explore Europe as a young person. The concept of the gap year – the year between high school graduation and the start of college – is popular in Europe, but less so in the U.S. Claudia explained how she and her husband encouraged and supported a gap year for their children.

We're fans of the gap year, we would like our kids to do that, particularly my oldest. He's got a summer birthday so, he's younger than a lot of his friends. I'm like, I cannot see him going to college barely six weeks after turning 18. So yeah, I'd let him roam Europe for a year.

Claudia's children were still in elementary school, yet they planned intentionally to begin discussing international options for their children. Claudia's experience in study abroad was a critical element in her support of a gap year for her children and, therefore, will impact her children's lives in the future.

Additional intergenerational impacts of study abroad on the children of Eurospring alumni included global competence, appreciation for diverse foods, and an overall awareness for diversity in their communities. Teri illustrated below how international travel, a result of her study abroad experience, impacted her children by giving them an appreciation for geography and diversity.

My son, at the age of seven, went to South Africa one year. So, I think that was really impactful of him, like he almost knows every country in the world by name. He can point them out on a map. He's a geography whiz. And I think that definitely comes from, you know, the experience of traveling. I've no doubt he's that way because he, at the age of seven, went to South Africa. I mean, that's just an incredible experience, I think, as a 7-year-old. And then, you know, I think when you see your parents constantly going place, you know, he's like, "Where are you going, what city?" And then we look it up on the map. And so he's really into that geography stuff now, and that has to be because we're traveling so much, and taking students abroad, and that kind of thing.

Teri believed the travel experience to South Africa had already had a lasting impact upon her son. Teri believed in the power of personal experience abroad and valued exposing her children to new places and experiences, resulting in their subsequent interest in and knowledge about world geography. Teri's own study abroad experience was linked to her interest and support of taking her children abroad, which in turn resulted in a belief that her children were more culturally aware.

Like Teri, Nonie described how a common bond of travel brought her and her husband together, and how, because of that experience abroad, they came to expect their children to travel and study abroad. In the passage below, Nonie discussed how she and her husband shared a love for travel, one of the things that brought them together. Her husband previously had lived abroad in France, Yugoslavia, and Japan, while she lived and traveled abroad in England and Western Europe. They continued to travel together internationally and as their young children continued to grow, she described how she intended to include them in future international travel, also.

Travel absolutely brought my husband and I together. That is one of the top five elements that we have in common. It's not the first, because love and children are...but travel is at the heart of bringing that connected piece. He lived in Japan, in Yugoslavia, and in France, and so those experiences that he had, and then my experience with Eurospring, we had common ground when we met. Let's see, because of (my husband's) work, we have the opportunity to do world travel, and so, yes, travel is absolutely there for us, and we absolutely plan to take the kids – or they're going to go through school programs. There is no doubt...we're already planting seeds...it's one of the things that I want to look at

when they're looking at colleges, to say what are the exchange programs or the opportunities for travel...that is what was the most memorable for me in college. Nonie used the metaphor of planting seeds of global travel for her children, while they still were in elementary school, as she talked about what kinds of exchange programs or study abroad opportunities would be available to her children as they got closer to college. Clearly, the study abroad experience had an intergenerational impact, because multiple parents were planning on encouraging and supporting their children, from a very early age, to study abroad, as well. These parents valued international travel and study abroad that highly.

Like others, Wilder described examples of how he was teaching his children to travel and be comfortable in new places, such as airports and different terminals. Although his children were still small, he was preparing them for future trips to Europe by exposing them to travel at a young age. Because he had free travel benefits through his employer, there were fewer barriers to travel, including the overall cost.

Yeah, it doesn't work out the way we sometimes planned, but, more or less, I think we structured our lives to be able to do things like travel a lot. Certainly the fact we go back and travel as much as we can, we do quite a bit. That still counts as giving the kids that experience, and they became very good travelers – in the sense they are great in the airports, very comfortable being in foreign – still it's all domestic but they're comfortable being in that. So yeah, we actually do want to get there (Europe) – they haven't been out of the country yet, so that's next, to get their passports, and, eventually, we will go on a family adventure to Europe, probably. Before that...I think we're going to start flying around and going on

little weekend adventures by ourselves... Washington, New Orleans, some places that are easy to get to by plane.

Wilder described the importance of engaging his children in domestic travel at a very young age, preparing them for bigger travel opportunities as they got older and more mature. He also mentioned returning to Europe with them once they obtained their passports.

Participants overwhelmingly described how they were planning their own children's abroad experiences from the youngest of ages. They identified the value of their own study abroad experience and carried forward that value hoping to impact their children's lives in the same way they were impacted. This thoughtful and early planning for their own children's study abroad experience demonstrated not only the incredible value that participants placed on their study abroad but also their expectation that their children would benefit in the same way.

Impacts on Others

Teri also valued sharing cultural experiences with her children, not only through travel but also food. She talked about exposing them to culinary diversity, but admitted it took time.

My husband is a foodie, so we are all about trying different foods all the time, always. He cooks a ton...and we travel to Minneapolis quite a bit to try to get some different food in our lives. So, I think that's a big part of our life, trying to get the kids to not eat mac and cheese, and try sushi. And it's not going well, but we continue to try. That's a huge part of our life. You know, the different cultures thing.

The intergenerational impacts for Teri's children extended beyond travel to another county, which didn't happen regularly, and included her exposure of her children to diverse culinary options while in their own community.

Teri also illustrated her belief that the abroad experiences she had given her son resulted in his greater awareness of the larger world. She directly linked her son's travel to a greater civic awareness.

My son said to me yesterday in the car he's really sad, because his friend Ernie may have to leave the country if Trump gets elected. And he was really sad about that...and I was just like, that is horrible. So we had a conversation about... not too complex, but what is immigration, and what it means, and why it's so important we don't have people that look like us, and, um... We have five Somali families in my neighborhood, so we talk about why it's important we have diversity, and it makes us stronger, and that kind of thing. I don't know if he would be asking those questions, right? If he hadn't traveled or if he doesn't hear, you know, that Mommy and Daddy are going to China next week. You know, I doubt he'd be asking these things if he didn't know about all the other countries out there. You know. At ten, that's pretty good, that he's asking those kinds of questions.

Teri's comments illustrated a connection between study abroad experiences and a subsequent respect for diversity and its importance. When her ten-year-old expressed concern about his school friend from Mexico and the recent U.S. election, it opened a dialogue and gave his parents the opportunity to discuss issues like immigration and the importance of diversity. Because Teri valued her own study abroad experience, and had

gone on to work in the field and encourage and facilitate others to study abroad, her son also benefitted – by having had an opportunity to travel to South Africa at the age of seven. Teri believed that experience resulted in her son’s better understanding of the importance of diversity.

Family Impacts and Impacts on Others

Intergenerational impacts reached all the children in a family. Jay described a myriad of ways his abroad experience impacted his family, including his choice of a spouse from another country and his encouragement that all three of his children study abroad.

So, it’s carried with me and definitely changed my life. I’m married to someone from another country. I encourage and support others and my kids (to study abroad). The thing I did say to my kids was, “Whatever extra, I will pay for you to go and experience a semester abroad, because it was such a positive impact on my life.” ...I hosted exchange students. [My neighbors then] hosted exchange students. Their son - who would have never flown anywhere, never gone anywhere - has learned Spanish and is an exchange student in Spain right now.

Just as others described family impacts, Jay took a step beyond encouragement to outwardly state he would financially support his kids, as well as others, to study abroad. While he didn’t pay for most of their college education, he did pay the difference for them to study abroad. All three of his children studied abroad, and one of them participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program, almost thirty years after Jay did.

Summary

Analysis of the data collected from thirteen Oxford Eurospring alumni that studied abroad between 1981-2001 revealed four main themes that were both personally transformational and intergenerationally impactful. Personal transformation was an outcome of the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program for its participants, as they discovered their own capacity for perseverance in finding a way to make their study abroad opportunity a reality, both academically and financially, while graduating in five years or less. Next, participants discovered their love for adventure, exploration, and travel while in Oxford. Their openness to exploration continued to be present in their lives today, most prominently with their love for travel. Additionally, Oxford Eurospring alumni made lifestyle choices that reflected their time in Europe. They sought diversity in their neighborhoods, engaged in their communities, and chose purposeful ways of life, reflective of their experiences abroad. Lastly, they passed on their study abroad experiences to others and impacted another generation to value study abroad. Since most of the participants were first-generation college students whose parents did not have the opportunity to study abroad, this was not only an intergenerational impact but a legacy, as well.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

As study abroad continues to expand in growth for U.S. students, so does the need for research. While the current literature has addressed the short-term impacts of study abroad, studies have not examined yet the truly long-term impacts of study abroad, especially through a qualitative lens. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni who studied abroad in college at some point between 1977-2001 and to fill a gap in the literature. In this chapter the study findings are discussed, in addition to limitations, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and research.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring participants. Each of the thirteen participants was removed from their study abroad experiences somewhere between 16 and 36 years, providing adequate time to engage actively in life after college. The core research question was constructed using a conceptual framework to explore the personal, professional, civic, and global impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring

alumni today. Analysis of the research question and the participants' responses yielded four common themes, discussed below.

Theme 1: Perseverance

The first theme described the study abroad alumni as who they were when they discovered the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program. They demonstrated perseverance, which enabled them make their own study abroad desires a reality. They demonstrated this perseverance through their own stories, when they talked about their determination to finance their own education, to study abroad, and to persist to graduation in five years or less. The literature supported the theme of persistence to graduation (Franklin, 2010), as did the findings of this study.

Most of the participants in the study were first-generation college students who had a desire to study abroad, even though their parents had not done so. Their perseverance to do whatever it took to be able to study abroad was not an impact of their study abroad, but it was a reflection of who they were at the time they chose to study abroad and was part of the reason they chose to study abroad. Since their parents did not study abroad, they were not influenced by them to go abroad. Perhaps their parents instilled in them a drive for hard work and perseverance, which then led them to pursue studying abroad once they saw the opportunity. In other words, these Oxford Eurospring alumni might have inherited perseverance from their parents, but they did not inherit the desire to study abroad while in college from their parents, since they were first-generation college students. This was who they were when they started their journey; the journey abroad then impacted them to become who they are today. Previous studies did not focus on the long-term perseverance of study abroad participants; therefore, this finding

contributed to the conversation regarding who might choose to participate in study abroad programs and how they are likely to be impacted by studying abroad.

Theme 2: Exploration (Self-discovery)

The theme of self discovery, adventure, and exploration was something Oxford Eurospring alumni discovered while on study abroad, and it was most pronounced in the stories of each participant describing what they did during their free time in Oxford and on their spring break. The impact of this unstructured, free travel was unexpectedly significant to the participants, as much as their study in residence at Oxford University and the European history tour. This time of being able to explore on their own created a higher level of independent exploration in these participants. The literature found increased independence was an outcome of study abroad, something consistent with the finding of this study (Stachowski et al., 2015). Along with increased independence, students found it personally liberating to explore in their free time, consistent with the literature (Doyle, 2009). They discovered their “travel bug”, and they attributed it to their free time and exploration in Oxford. This independent exploration had a positive impact on the personal growth and development of study abroad participants, which also is consistent with the literature (Sandell, 2007; Franklin, 2010). As a result of their overseas travel through the Oxford Eurospring program, they came to value travel, both domestically and internationally, as a priority in their lives, and they passed that on to their family and children. This theme of exploration was confirmed by their responses to what they did in their free time in Oxford and what they did in their free time today. They still traveled and explored new things, due to the sense of adventure they discovered while studying abroad.

Theme 3: Lifestyle Choices

This theme highlighted the lifestyle choices of study abroad alumni today and how they reflected and connected those experiences back to their study abroad experiences in Europe. This represented the time in their lives from their return from study abroad to their lives today. The participants prioritized their lives by what they valued most highly which included where they chose to reside and their level of community and civic engagement. Several alumni chose to live in large metropolitan areas where they could walk to everything, similar to their time in Oxford. Another chose to live in a gentrified neighborhood with a diverse mix of people, reflective of his time in Oxford.

Many study abroad alumni shared how they developed an appreciation for cultural diversity while abroad, a consistent theme in the literature (Sandell, 2007). Two alumni specifically discussed how they recently got together to support local immigrants in their communities. This finding of their appreciation for and understanding of diverse cultures is consistent with the literature (Tomlinson, 1991; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012).

Additional lifestyle choices included civic and political engagement, another theme consistent with the literature (DeGraff & Ditta, 2013). Several participants described their civic engagement illustrated by their attendance at rallies in support of local and national issues. It is worth noting that the first round of interviews was conducted just prior to the U.S. national election and the second round of interviews was conducted just after the election of Donald Trump as President. Study abroad alumni in

this study reflected back to their study abroad experiences and made multiple connections to how they live their lives today.

Theme 4: Intergenerational Impacts

This theme explored the intergenerational impacts of study abroad in the lives today of the alumni from the Oxford Eurospring program. The literature discussed the personal and professional impacts (Paige et al., 2009; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012) yet those impacts often were immediate and not long-term. This theme represented the true long-term impacts of study abroad, as it took time for the returning study abroad alumni to get settled into their chosen careers, begin their families, and put down roots in their communities. Looking at their lives after more than sixteen years had elapsed since their time abroad provided a glimpse into the truly long-term impacts on their lives. The intergenerational impacts took time to develop and emerge, so this study contributed new information to the literature in this area. The intergenerational impacts were long-term, spanning into the next generation, and included exposing their children to domestic and global travel while instilling in them an appreciation for diversity, geography, different cultures, and global competence. This didn't happen overnight, was an ongoing process throughout their lives, and became part of the legacy the Oxford Eurospring alumni will leave with their children and their families.

Lack of Professional Impacts

The literature discussed professional impacts on study abroad participants. One study found that over 96% of returning study abroad participants reported their study abroad experience influenced their career path (Orahod et al., 2004). However, in this study, Apollo was the only study abroad participant who connected her pursuit of a major

in college and later a career in art to her study abroad experience. Additional studies pointed to internationally-oriented careers for study abroad alumni (Norris & Gillespie, 2005; Orahood et al., 2008; Paige et al., 2009).

This study found this not to be true for most Oxford Eurospring alumni, with the exception being only two participants who chose internationally-oriented careers. Jay began working for an international company after graduation and has continued his international career in the computer industry today, while Teri obtained her doctorate in higher education and began taking students on her own study abroad program. Jay and Teri were the only two participants that have internationally-oriented careers today, a finding that was not consistent with the literature (Norris & Gillespie, 2005; Orahood et al., 2008; Paige et al., 2009).

This might be explained by the demographic makeup of the Oxford Eurospring study abroad alumni, who were mostly first-generation college students with deep, broad, strong ties to the areas near where they were born and attended college. Another explanation for the lack of professional impacts might be linked to the mission of the Oxford Eurospring program, which provided a semester-long humanities program that offered participants 15 upper-division credits and was not linked to specific career or professional outcomes (Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2017).

It also might be explained based on the focus of this particular study abroad program. The focus of this program was the humanities; therefore, students with different majors all came together and studied liberal arts-focused topics at Oxford. In contrast, some study abroad programs take math students to Budapest, Hungary (St. Olaf, 2017) or take occupational therapy students to Guatemala (Lawson, 2015). Perhaps these

more discipline- or career-focused overseas experiences produce a different, more specific long-term impact on career and profession.

This professional versus humanities focus with education mirrors the debate at both the college and high school levels. Is the goal of higher education to get a job or educate a well-rounded citizen? Perhaps the answer lies in the students and their individual focal points. Students from less financially-resourced backgrounds might need to focus on a career, while those who are more comfortable financially might have the luxury of getting their professional training in graduate school. Thus, Eurospring might be a unique program – pairing first generation students with humanities experiences.

Limitations

While the findings of this study contributed new information to the literature on long-term impacts of study abroad, it had limitations. The goal of this study was to examine the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni. The findings in this study might not be able to be generalized beyond the demographics represented by the participants. In other words, this study involved a single study abroad program offered through two Midwest universities and, therefore, might not be comparable to other study abroad programs or other universities in a broader study abroad context.

An additional limitation of this study was the limited access to study abroad alumni going back almost 40 years. Both institutions did not have lists of their study abroad alumni from 1977-2001, so recruitment was difficult and had to be conducted in waves. The five waves had to be deployed twice to reach thirteen participants.

The final limitation was the researcher's inability to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants, due to geographic location. Interviews were conducted and recorded using synchronous technology, such as FaceTime, Google Hangout, and Skype, which, while effective, might have hindered communication to a degree.

Rethinking the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study was chosen based on its ability to examine the personal, professional, civic, and global impacts on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni. After analysis of more than 23 hours of interviews and hundreds of pages of transcribed data, the long-term impacts were identified as described by the participants, but the impacts were not equally distributed across all four constructs. The global and professional impacts on the Oxford Eurospring alumni were significantly less than reported in the literature (Sandell, 2007; Franklin, 2010), while the civic impacts were present in the findings of this study and consistent with the literature (Paige et al., 2009; DeGraff & Ditta, 2013). As expected, the personal impacts were the largest, but they were unexpectedly strong in the area of intergenerational impacts. Figure 3 below illustrates the conceptual framework constructed in relational size to the outcomes of this specific study.

Implications and Recommendations

The following areas represent topics within which implications appeared and from which recommendations were drawn. The recommendations drawn from each topic are provided following the implications from each topic, for the sake of simplicity and continuity.

Focus of Study Abroad Programs

Implications: Study abroad programs have different areas of focus, which appear to produce different long-term results. Much of the literature describes short-term professional impacts for study abroad alumni, which include internationally-focused careers and career choices. This study had a very different result. Few of the participants in this study reported international career impacts or that their study abroad experience influenced their choice of careers.

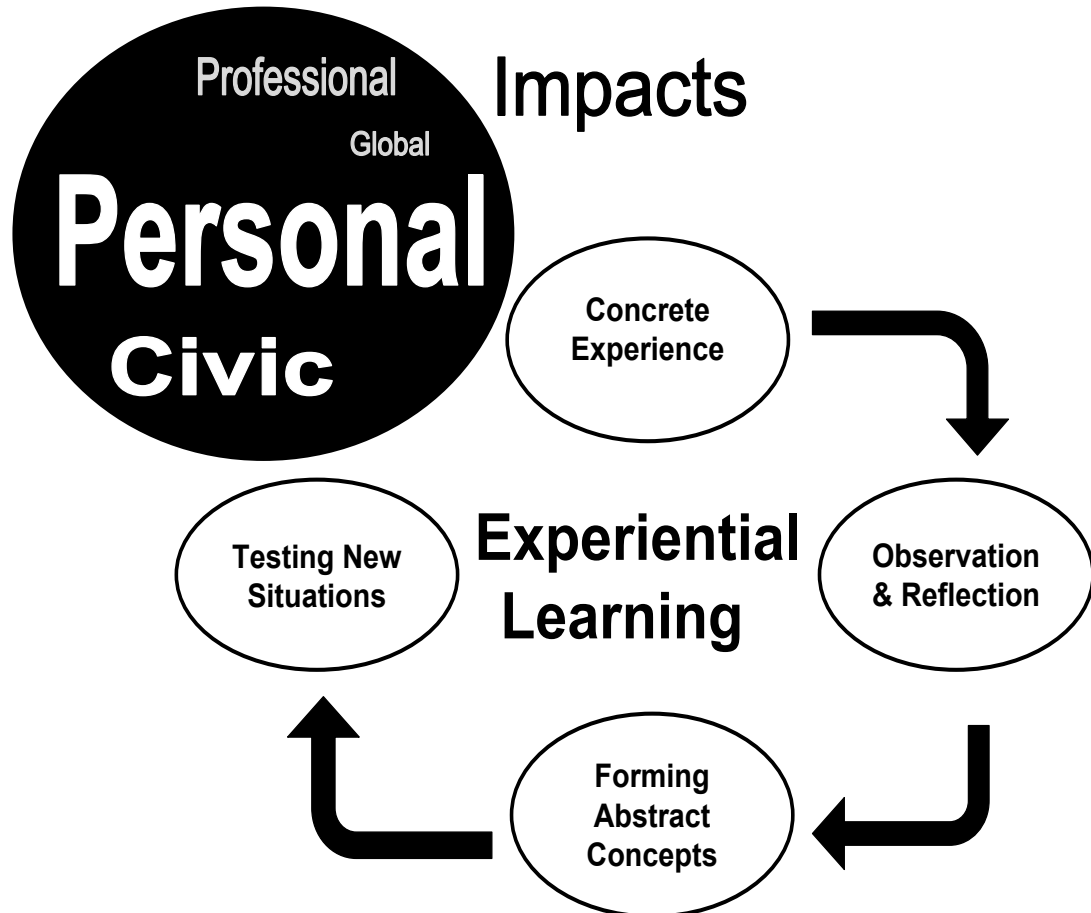


Figure 3: Impact upon Oxford Eurospring Study Abroad Alumni

Eurospring was established to provide outcomes that added to a well-rounded education through humanities courses taught in residence at Oxford University, followed by a three-week study tour of major European cities. The program objectives were not focused on career outcomes and were not connected to any one major. This might explain the lack of professional and global impacts found in this study, but plentiful in the literature (Franklin, 2010; Stachowski et. al., 2015). The mission of Oxford Eurospring aligned with a liberal arts curriculum, and the long-term impacts of the program reflected those goals.

Recommendation: Study abroad programs with both business and humanities foci should purposefully track and maintain consistent contact with their study abroad alumni. This communication and tracking can provide data on study abroad participants and programs, contributing to research of study abroad and to future long-term impact studies on the benefits of study abroad.

Civic Impacts

Implications: The civic impacts of study abroad alumni appear to continue long-term, irrespective of their demographic classification. First-generation study abroad participants in this study exhibited community and civic engagement, consistent with the literature on short-term impacts. An apparent effect of encouraging or requiring college students to study abroad is to gain transformative experiences in global competencies and global citizenry. This study found that the long-term impacts of study abroad are beneficial to local communities and families, which was consistent with the literature.

Recommendation: Institutions of higher education and other organizations interested in study abroad should fund more study abroad programs, particularly to

ensure more first-generation and economically-challenged students can participate in these transformational and intergenerationally impactful experiences. The value of an engaged, responsible citizenry that is open to ideas and diversity can be an asset to any community in an ever-increasingly global economy and world.

Intergenerational Impacts

Implications: The long-term impacts of the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program on alumni appear to include significant, positive, paradigm-changing intergenerational impacts on their children. First-generation college students who study abroad, according to the findings of this study, are influencing their children to be better global and local citizens, and they are teaching their children how to embrace diversity, be open-minded, and travel outside their comfort zones. This single factor (study abroad experience) appears to be nearly universal in its intergenerational impact.

Recommendation: Due to this powerful, consistent, transformative benefit, study abroad programs should be marketed to first generation college students and their children much more actively and intentionally. Providing information about study abroad opportunities, and doing so as early as possible (including in high school or sooner), could provide increased awareness of those programs and opportunities to prepare for the financial requirements of study abroad programs.

Lack of Institutional Follow-up

Implications: As evident by the difficulty in obtaining information about the study abroad participants in the Oxford Eurospring program, many U.S. colleges and universities are challenged to maintain good records on their study abroad alumni and thus may not be able to track the short- or long-term outcomes of their study abroad

participants as fully as they might wish. This might help explain the lack of literature concerning the long-term impacts of study abroad. This issue was manifested in this study by the difficulty of obtaining access to records about former study abroad participants or program data. If study abroad programs, alumni offices, and institutions do not maintain good data on their participants and programs, it will continue to be difficult to conduct further research on the long-term impacts of their programs and on the lives of their alumni.

Recommendation: Institutions should track participations diligently and maintain contact with their study abroad alumni for many reasons, not least of which is because they are great ambassadors for study abroad and their alma maters. Additionally, research shows they are more invested in their communities and more engaged civically. They also might be potential donors. Further, the intergenerational impacts revealed in this study suggest that alumni are more likely to send their children to colleges and universities with study abroad programs.

Difficulties Facing First-Generation Students

Implications: The fact that financial constraints hinder the ability of many first-generation students to attend college, much less participate in study abroad programs during college, is understood so well in education that it is axiomatic. There is a relative scarcity in the literature focused specifically on first-generation students that study abroad, but just over half of the participants in this study were first-generation college students. This might be due to the recruitment steps undertaken to find participants being more focused on social media and, therefore, more egalitarian than many other studies. All of this implies strongly that children whose parents do not attend college are less

likely to participate in study abroad programs, and are more likely to miss out on the benefits described in this study.

Recommendations: Institutions of higher education and study abroad administrators should focus on building or increasing the capacity of study abroad programs for first-generation students, as well as economically challenged students, since the long-term impacts truly were transformative for these participants. The study participants had strong perseverance in their pre-travel characters, but they also were able to work long hours and/or incur debt to finance their study abroad experiences. Not all first-generation and lower-income students are able to do so.

Those involved administratively in study abroad programs need to encourage and actively support students from rural communities, particularly, to consider study abroad, as well as to finance study abroad experiences more comprehensively, so money is not a barrier to these students. This would bring more of these students into study abroad programs, thus extending powerful, transformative opportunities to many who could not experience them otherwise. Additional outreach and specific marketing to first-generation students and economically-challenged students about study abroad programs would be necessary, and, when done early, would provide additional time for students to plan for and raise funds to study abroad. Financial affordability is not enough. Higher education institutions also need to do outreach and connect proactively with this group of students.

Professional Organizations

Implications: Oxford Eurospring's ability to impact student lives is limited by the size of its administrative staff and its funding. As constructed currently, it cannot do

more than it has done in the past.

Recommendations: A final recommendation is the need for different professional organizations to take an active role in the advocacy for and funding of study abroad programs for first-generation and economically challenged students. First-generation students often attend schools that have fewer financial resources, and this difference is widening with the lack of economic diversity in state schools.

As a result, professional and non-profit organizations need to work together with institutions to expand study abroad opportunities, through scholarships and other funding, thus providing more opportunities for students to engage with study abroad during their undergraduate years. For example, Generation Study Abroad, one such organization, is building partnerships with U.S. and foreign colleges and universities, organizations, educational associations, and foreign governments, with a goal of doubling the number of study abroad participants by 2020 (IIE, 2017). NAFSA: Association of International Educators is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to international education and study abroad, connecting professionals across the globe to work together from the ground up.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of thirteen alumni who studied abroad from 1977-2001. The findings from this study provide opportunities to influence future research regarding the long-term impacts of study abroad. The following future research opportunities are recognized:

1. A comparative study of elite colleges versus regional colleges to examine if the long-term impacts are similar on different types of college students – and to

determine if first-generation and lower-income students who attend elite colleges participate in study abroad programs at a higher, lower, or similar rate than those who attend less prestigious colleges.

2. A study to determine if there is a greater institutional return on investment for first-generation college students to study abroad. Do first-generation college students experience more positive impacts than non-first-generation students, since they otherwise might not have these international experiences?
3. A study of the children of study abroad alumni to examine if they differ in the characteristics described in this study from their demographically-similar peers whose parents did not study abroad.
4. A study to determine if there are additional positive impacts of study abroad programs located in non-English speaking countries. Study abroad participation to an English-speaking country might be different enough culturally to experience the long-term impacts at the same level as in non-English speaking countries, because there is much more to study abroad than a second language component – and a second language might cause students to travel less while on breaks from the academic requirements of their programs. The impact on these regional college students was significant, and they might not have been able to have a more impactful experience in a non-native English speaking country than they did in England. For some students, just going abroad might be enough. A study asking these questions would be an important contribution to the literature.

Conclusions

Study abroad, when affordable and accessible, can have a significant impact on the future lives of its participants, especially first-generation college students and those who are economically non-privileged. The participants in this study were all from non-metropolitan areas in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota and attended one of two Midwest regional universities. They studied abroad in Oxford on the Eurospring program, and the transformational and intergenerational impacts were evident in their lives years after their initial study abroad experience. They all demonstrated perseverance in their drive to study abroad, and, while abroad, they discovered their sense of adventure and “caught the travel bug” through exploration of the new and different. As they continued through their lives, they made lifestyle choices that were reflective of their time in Oxford and Europe, and became engaged in their local communities. All of these impacts culminated in the creation of legacies they are leaving for their families and children that are transformational and intergenerational. Their love for exploration and travel, their openness to new people and ideas, and their perseverance to make what was important to them a reality, not only had lasting long-term impacts on them but on the next generation as well.

This study contributes to a gap in the literature on long-term impacts of study abroad. Findings from this study illustrate that well-structured study abroad programs can have long-term impacts on the lives of study abroad alumni, their families, and their communities. The results of this study provide support to the positive transformational and intergenerational impacts of study abroad and support the outreach to and expansion of study abroad programs to first-generation college students.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of this study on the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni and addressed the limitations of this research. Further, it discussed recommendations for practice and future research.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
IRB Approval



UND.edu

Institutional Review Board
Twamley Hall, Room 106
264 Centennial Dr Stop 7134
Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134
Phone: 701.777.4279
Fax: 701.777.6708

September 19, 2016

Principal Investigator:	Karmen Pfeiffer Sorenson
Project Title:	The Long-term Impacts of Study Abroad on the Lives of Oxford Eurospring Alumni
IRB Project Number:	IRB-201609-065
Project Review Level:	Expedited 7
Date of IRB Approval:	09/18/2016
Expiration Date of This Approval:	09/18/2017
Consent Form Approval Date:	09/19/2016

The application form and all included documentation for the above-referenced project have been reviewed and approved via the procedures of the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Attached is your original consent form that has been stamped with the UND IRB approval and expiration dates. Please maintain this original on file. **You must use this original, stamped consent form to make copies for participant enrollment. No other consent form should be used.** It must be signed by each participant prior to initiation of any research procedures. In addition, each participant must be given a copy of the consent form.

Prior to implementation, submit any changes to or departures from the protocol or consent form to the IRB for approval. No changes to approved research may take place without prior IRB approval.

You have approval for this project through the above-listed expiration date. When this research is completed, please submit a termination form to the IRB. If the research will last longer than one year, an annual review and progress report must be submitted to the IRB prior to the submission deadline to ensure adequate time for IRB review.

The forms to assist you in filing your project termination, annual review and progress report, adverse events/unanticipated problem, protocol change, etc. may be accessed on the IRB website: <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/>

Sincerely,


Michelle L. Bowles, M.P.A., CIP
IRB Coordinator

MLB/sb
Enclosures

Cc: Dr. Deborah Worley

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer

Did you **STUDY ABROAD** in **OXFORD** ?



Actively seeking participants for a research study on the
LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF STUDY ABROAD

- Are you an alumni of the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program through Bemidji State University or Minnesota State University Moorhead?
- Did you study abroad on Eurospring between 1977-2000?
- Would you like to participate in a research study about your study abroad?

“ *Hi, I'm a doctoral student at the University of North Dakota and I'm interested in the long-term impacts of study abroad. I'm seeking to interview study abroad alumni that participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program in college between 1977-2000 through Bemidji State University or Minnesota State University Moorhead.* ”

INTERESTED?

If you are interested and think you might qualify,
let's connect on Facebook, via text at _____ or email at _____

Appendix C

Facebook Advertisement

Boost Post

OVERVIEW EDIT PROMOTION

Targeting: You are targeting men and women, ages 36 - 61 who live in 3 locations, and have 7 interests.
[Show full summary](#)

Duration: This promotion will run for 7 days.

Budget: Your total budget for this promotion is \$10.00.

326	9	\$10.00
People Reached (%)	Engagements	Total Spend (%)

Actions | People | Countries


No one has engaged with your page yet.

By clicking Boost, you agree to Facebook's [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Help Center](#)

[Boost Another Post](#) [Close](#)

DESKTOP NEWS FEED

Eurospring Oxford Research Study [Like Page](#)

Sponsored · 

The Eurospring Study is now seeking participants for a research study on the long-term impacts of study abroad on Eurospring alumni that studied abroad in Oxford between 1977-2000 through Moorhead State and Bemidji State. Like us to learn more!

9 Likes

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)

Appendix D

Consent Form

DocuSign Envelope ID: C3D42D5-D4CE-4380-889F-000F807E8812

1

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: The Long-term Impacts of Study Abroad on the Lives of Oxford Eurospring Alumni
PROJECT DIRECTOR: Karmen Pfeiffer Sorenson
PHONE #
DEPARTMENT: Department of Educational Leadership

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are invited to be in a research study about the long-term impacts of study abroad because you participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program at some point between 1977-2000.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of Oxford Eurospring alumni that participated in the study abroad program between 1977-2000 through Bemidji State University or Minnesota State University Moorhead.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 10-15 people will take part in this study at the University of North Dakota.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will last approximately two to three hours. You will need to be interviewed at least two times but no more than three times. Each interview will take about 45-60 minutes.

Approval Date: <u>SEP 19 2015</u>
Expiration Date: <u>SEP 18 2017</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

You will be invited to participate in two to three interviews to discuss your study abroad experience and your life since you participated in the Oxford Eurospring study abroad program at least fifteen years ago. When discussing your experiences, you are free to skip or ignore any questions that you prefer not to answer. It is expected that these interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes each and you may be interviewed no more than three times at your convenience.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

You may experience frustration that is often experienced when being interviewed. Some questions may bring back memories of your experience abroad, and some of those memories may not be happy or of a sensitive nature, and you may therefore feel uncomfortable as a result. However, such risks are not viewed as being in excess of minimal risk. If, however, you become upset by questions, you may stop at any time or choose not to answer a question.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

Although there are no significant benefits to you for participating in the study, going through the interviews will give you the opportunity to reflect on your time abroad and the impacts it has had on your life thus far. You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study as we learn more about the long-term impacts of study abroad on the lives of alumni.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

If you do not wish to participate, you may return this form unsigned, to the project director and not proceed with the interview. Your decision of whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations at the University of North Dakota.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study. If you participate, you will receive a \$5 Starbucks gift card.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

Approval Date:	SEP 19 2016
Expiration Date:	SEP 18 2017
University of North Dakota IRB	

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the UND Research Development and Compliance office, and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of separating your name and any other identifying information from data collected through the interviews. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. You have a right to review the recordings. All collected data will be kept for the duration of the research study by the principal investigator on a secure external drive. All data collected will be retained for three years following completion of the study, and after which point, the material will be destroyed.

If we write a report or article about this study, we will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Karmen Pfeiffer Sorenson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Karmen Pfeiffer Sorenson at _____ or Dr. Deborah Worley at 701-777-3140 or Deborah.Worley@und.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.

Approval Date:	SEP 19 2016
Expiration Date:	SEP 18 2017
University of North Dakota IRB	

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking "Information for Research Participants" on the web site: <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm>

I give consent to be audiotaped/videtaped during this study.

Please initial: ___ Yes ___ No

I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however I will not be identified.

Please initial: ___ Yes ___ No

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

Subjects Name: _____

Signature of Subject

Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

Approval Date: <u>SEP 19 2016</u>
Expiration Date: <u>SEP 18 2017</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

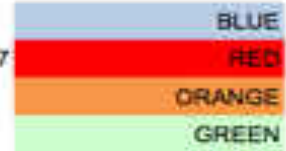
Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

Appendix E

Code Frequencies

Atlas.ti Codes by Frequency

Name	Frequency	
Academic Impacts	26	
Community/Civic Engagement	47	47
Degree Completion	8	
Demographic	90	
Determination	41	41
Dr. Chapman	21	
Entrepreneurship	10	
Eurospring	45	
Family Impacts	74	74
Financing Study Abroad	22	22
Food choices today	22	
Freetime Abroad	42	
Friendships	25	
Future Travel	11	
Global Engagement	55	55
Grand Tour	15	
Gratitude/Humility	25	
Impacts on others	41	
Initial Impacts / Experiences / Observatio	56	
Leadership	7	
Leisure Today	21	
Lifestyle Choices	99	99
Oxford	18	
Personal Impacts	95	95
Political	42	42
Professional Impacts	40	40
Respect for Others	8	
Second Language	14	
Self Reflections	53	
Spring Break	21	
Travel-Domestic	16	
Travel-Global	18	
Values and Beliefs	8	
Voluntary Simplicity	21	



Appendix F

Code Co-occurrence Table in Atlas.ti

	.Corr	.Dete	.Entr	.Eurc	.Fam	.Fina	.Foot	.Free	.Friei	.Futu	.Glot	.Grar	.Grat	.Impi	.Initi	.Leis	.Lifer	.Oxfo	.Pers	.Polit	.Prof	.Resj	.Self	.Spri	.Trav	.Trav	.Valu	.Volu
.Community/Civic Eng	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	14	0	1	14	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	2
.Determination	1	0	1	3	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
.Entrepreneurship	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
.Eurospring	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
.Family Impacts	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	2	3	12	0	1	20	0	2	32	0	13	2	3	0	3	0	3	8	3	3
.Financing Study Abroad	0	11	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
.Food choices today	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	19	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
.Freetime Abroad	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	8	4	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	0
.Friendships	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	9	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	1
.Future Travel	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
.Global Engagement	3	1	1	1	12	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	1	1	7	0	6	12	12	2	5	0	0	7	1	0
.Grand Tour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
.Gratitude/Humility	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	5	0	2	0	5	1	1	0	0	2
.Impacts on others	0	0	0	0	20	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	8	0	5	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0
.Initial Impacts / Obser	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	6	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	1	0	5	1	0	1	0	0
.Leisure Today	4	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0
.Lifestyle Choices	14	1	0	0	32	0	19	0	1	3	7	0	1	8	0	9	0	0	24	3	2	3	3	0	2	3	4	13
.Oxford	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
.Personal Impacts	1	4	1	3	13	1	5	4	9	1	6	0	5	5	6	2	24	0	0	1	4	2	17	2	1	3	1	4
.Political	14	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	3	1	6	0	0	0	1	0
.Professional Impacts	3	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	12	0	2	1	1	0	2	0	4	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
.Respect for Others	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
.Self Reflections	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	5	1	5	2	5	0	3	0	17	6	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	3
.Spring Break	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
.Travel-Domestic	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
.Travel-Global	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	1	7	0	0	1	1	2	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
.Values and Beliefs	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
.Voluntary Simplicity	2	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	13	0	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0

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