This thesis explores the challenges and triumphs experienced by three students who spent the summer abroad on international internships. Through their individual stories and journals, they shared how they questioned their own values, their nationality, and the value of formal education. They also experienced changing relationships and new career aspirations while finding different support systems to help them through these struggles. This study found similarities between the stories of these students and the experiences student development theorists deem necessary to move students through this process of identity development. By understanding the experience of students abroad through identity development theories, we can begin to understand the support that needs to be provided by student affairs professionals. This study concludes with suggestions for additional types of support that could be useful to students as they process their identity development abroad.
Student Identity Development Abroad: Three Students' Stories

by
Jill Gutzler

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APPROVED:

[Signature]
Major Professor, representing College Student Services Administration

[Signature]
Dean of the School of Education

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

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Jill Gutzler, Author
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

This study seeks to tell the story of three college students who interned abroad. Through these students, we are introduced to stage readings at the London Globe theatre, banana and ginger research at a botanical garden in Costa Rica, and a future pediatrician as he examines his first dead body in Mexico. While their adventures alone tell amazing stories, this study was undertaken to understand the identity development of these students as well as the support they needed while abroad.

These students participated in the IE3 Global Internship Program, an international opportunity offered through the Oregon University System. The IE3 Global Internship Program has placed over 800 interns throughout the world since 1995. Students who participate in the internships are from six of the seven public universities in Oregon: Portland State University, Oregon State University, University of Oregon, Western Oregon University, Southern Oregon University, and Eastern Oregon University. Through consortium agreements, the internships are also available to public universities in Washington and Alaska; and partner institutions in Utah and Minnesota. The internships range from three months to a year and include students from a variety of academic disciplines. Students can receive up to 12 academic credits for their participation in the internship. Once students apply for the internship, the internship
advisor on their home campus interviews them; and then the regional director discusses the students' placement with the internship site.

The internship site then makes a final decision as to whether the student is selected for the internship. Final confirmation of student's placement can be received anywhere from a few months to only a few weeks before their departure. Students are required to come to an all day orientation session where they are introduced to tools they can use for cross-cultural awareness and necessary safety precautions. At the orientation, the interns have the chance to meet past interns and hear their advice for a successful internship. All interns receive an orientation handbook which informs the students of the reporting requirements of the internship, provides tips for working in an international setting, and suggests strategies for cross-cultural adjustment. Past interns and the regional directors discuss the importance of journaling and give each intern a list of questions that can help facilitate their journaling.

The three students in this study interned abroad for three months during the summer of 2003, when the global climate was particularly hostile to Americans. The previous March, the U.S. decided to invade Iraq without the support of the United Nations. America was virtually alone in its decision. "Never was a war waged in such isolation. Never were so many of its allies so firmly opposed to its policies. Never had it provoked so much public opposition, resentment and mistrust" (Zakaria, 2003, p. 20). While anti-war rallies raged in America, millions around the world held their own anti-war rallies. The difference being that the rallies abroad were also deemed anti-American. The U.S. invasion of Iraq set off a wave of anti-American sentiment across the world,
which is important to note in relation to the timing of this study. As the world questioned America’s foreign policies, these interns IE$_3$ were faced with the same questions.

The three students returned to Oregon in September of 2003 and were contacted a few weeks later and asked to participate in this study. Through a series of focus groups in the fall, these three students talked for hours about their experiences abroad and their return home. From the initial focus group, it was obvious these students were excited about this project. They were engaged with one another’s stories and quite willing to be open and honest about their own experiences. They were so willing to share their stories, that Matt and Lucy agreed to read me their journals so I could better understand their experiences.

The purpose of this study was to share these students’ experiences and attempt to understand their process of dealing with the challenges students encounter while abroad. The literature that exists regarding how students change from studying abroad has failed to determine an operational construct that fully captures what the students are experiencing overseas. For example, Carsello and Creaser (1976) found that 61 percent of students who went abroad had a positive increase in self-concept. Carlson and Widaman (1988) found that students who did so increased their level of cross-cultural interest and cultural cosmopolitanism. Kuh and Kauffman (1985) found that such students had increased their interest in the arts, literature, and culture.

While empirical studies are useful to show that students benefit from international experiences, I wanted to understand how these students changed holistically and the role international advisors could play in supporting their challenges. Student development
theories provide a useful paradigm for this understanding. Sanford defined development as “the organization of increasing complexity” (p.47). He saw development as a positive growth process in which the individual becomes increasingly able to integrate and act on many different experiences and influences (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Additionally, Rodgers (1990) defined student development as “the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” (p.27). Student development theory provides both a paradigm for understanding the holistic change for students and a basis for the practice of student affairs professionals. “Knowledge of student development theory enables student affairs professionals to proactively identify and address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth in students” (Evans et al., 1998, p.5).

The student development theories of Sanford (1966), Erikson (1968), Marcia (1980), and Chickering (1993) view development crises holistically; therefore we do not have to operationalize a specific construct that is being affected by their overseas experience. These theories also maintain that challenges are necessary for students to develop, and stress the importance of student affairs professionals providing the needed level of support to facilitate students’ development.

Through understanding the experience of these students, I learned how they found their own support systems and discovered the different types of support they needed from others. From their stories, it was clear they faced similar challenges abroad and upon their return home, however the students resolved their challenges differently. At the end
of this study, I discuss options for providing support to these students. Although the stories of these three students were unique and their experiences were “once in a lifetime,” their honesty and openness give us a window into their lives. We can then use this unique view to increase our understanding of how students develop their identity abroad.

Me as the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I feel it is essential to explore my own biases. For the readers of this study, it is important to know and understand the lens through which I viewed these students’ stories. I have attempted to be truthful and accurate when telling the stories of these students, but my own biases can only be partially controlled, not fully omitted from these narratives. My own experiences overseas propelled me to explore the identity development process students experience while overseas. After studying abroad the spring semester of my junior year, I sought out experiences that would allow me to go overseas again. At the time I first went abroad, I did not understand my own personal development, I only knew I was very happy when I was overseas. More than any other time in my life, I felt energized and excited to be living everyday. When I returned from my first time abroad, I was dismayed at the life to which I was returning.

My decision to study abroad was my own. I saw spending the second half of my junior year in Adelaide, South Australia as an opportunity I should explore. I left the comfortable environment I had created for myself at college for a journey that was completely unknown. I boarded a plane to Sydney with a large backpack and some
brightly colored currency. This was my first time out of the country. I had some fears, but with the support of my friends who had previously gone abroad and the encouragement from my parents, I embarked on the biggest adventure of my life up to that point.

I found myself in a shockingly different environment and was prompted to question many of my long held beliefs. I was forced to see my own life from a new vantage point, and I had never considered the possibility of there being other vantage points. I had never thought about what it meant to be an American, and while there, everyday I was faced with the stereotypes and prejudices of others regarding my own nationality.

With this new environment outside the U.S. came new choices: Who was I going to form friendships with? What were my academic interests while abroad? How did I want to prioritize my activities? I was on my own for this adventure, and I felt very removed from the American society which I understood - an American society that made clear what were the right decisions. I felt free to make any life choice I wanted to.

In Australia, I lived life according to my own wishes and desires. The friendships I formed were based on similar interests and similar mindsets. I was open to new adventures, new challenges, and learned that taking chances, even when there was a possibility for failure, sometimes resulted in amazing opportunities. My study abroad experience was the push I needed to work through some of the identity confusion issues in Erikson’s fifth stage (Erikson, 1968). Without societal expectations, I felt free to experiment and was faced with hundreds of new choices every day. I began to question
who I was and who I wanted to be. In this new setting, possibilities seemed endless and the responsibilities of my real life back in the states seemed trivial. I was also asked to reflect and look introspectively at my own life. My academic coursework forced me to compare and contrast new ideas, not just reformulate arguments that were already given to me.

One of the new ideas I encountered while in Australia was what it meant to be an American. I had never considered my own American identity. Before leaving for Australia, I had never considered the power that the United States had exhibited throughout the world or the privileges I experienced as an American. After meeting many Australians, I began to become aware of their views of Americans. Australians expressed their viewpoints regarding the United States’ role in international conflicts. Australians often saw America’s involvement in world affairs as a yielding of great power for America’s own selfish benefit. I felt tremendous guilt for being an American, and was told by others to act “Canadian.” But I was torn by their advice. This was the first time I was embarrassed about who I was. I became disgruntled with Australians for placing the negative stereotypes of the U.S. upon me. Furthermore, although I was fairly ignorant about America’s foreign policies, I believed the U.S. had played an important role in some world peacekeeping missions.

My feelings matched those of someone struggling with their identity as they work through Chickering’s vectors of developing purpose and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). I was beginning to establish a worldview that extended beyond the U.S., and I worked to develop socially responsible values.
As I became friends with many Australians, I was able to agree with them that some of the actions of the U.S. were selfish in nature. I did not always agree with U.S. foreign policy, and could see how Australians would have the same views. As time went on, I came to realize that I had fallen into the trap of viewing America as superior. My undergraduate education did not include classes in cross-cultural studies, U.S. foreign policy, or even foreign language study. I too had taken the approach that the rest of the world should come to understand America, while America had no need to understand its global partners. I made the decision to enroll in internationally focused classes when I returned to my home campus. I was attempting to align my activities with socially responsible behavior. This same behavior is seen in students working through Chickering’s final vector of developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Marcia (1980) would see my experience in Australia as the crisis I needed to move out of the identity foreclosure stage. There were no ready-made plans and no expectations for me abroad. I was on my own and left to my own decisions. In Australia, I was forced to evaluate the aspects of my life I missed while away and the aspects I could live without. Once moving from foreclosure, I believe I found myself in identity achievement, but only for a short duration. I came to discover who I was and what I wanted in my life while in Australia. But as I left the country and returned to my old life, I found myself in identity moratorium. I was very unhappy when I returned home. I had been forced to think about my identity while abroad, but with returning to my old life at my university, my old commitments and obligations to my studies remained. Yes, I had experienced a crisis, but my new commitments did not match my
old life, and I had to rectify the situation. I needed to be in a place where my newfound interests and passions could be further explored.

With graduation only a year away, I began to investigate opportunities that I saw as adventures, and that could lead me to being independent and self-reliant. I decided to work in Alaska for the summer in tourism. I knew this new adventure would bring me into contact with people throughout the world. I also knew very little about the position I was accepting, so the sense of adventure and excitement had returned. It was not until I accepted the position to work in Alaska that I was happy again. I needed to be able to see a future that encompassed my new goals and desires.

From this account of my own student development, it would appear that I understood these stages of development as I was moving through them. However, that is not the case. It was not until I studied Student Development theories, including the works of Sanford (1966), Erikson (1968), Marcia (1980), and Chickering (1993) in my graduate coursework, that I came to understand my own feelings over the years. I never knew why I was feeling guilty for being an American. I was embarrassed I had never stepped outside my own American viewpoint. I had no idea why I was so unhappy when I returned to my home university. I wondered why the possibility of an unknown adventure in Alaska was so exciting to me. Prior to going abroad, I had hoped to obtain a job in human resources for a well-established company. After my experience abroad, I was happy pursing a temporary position in Alaska that was fun, full of adventure, and brought me in contact with people from a number of other countries. By understanding
student development theories, I was able to better understand my own personal growth and development from my study abroad experience.

My own understanding brought me to wonder about the personal development of others. As a study abroad and internship advisor, my role is to encourage students to study abroad. I always tell them it is an amazing experience, but mostly I focus on how their credits will transfer and their ability to use their financial aid. But I had to wonder – was my experience unique? In the literature review that follows, studies have found that an overseas experience can change U.S. students’ views of themselves, their home country, and other cultures. But what does that truly mean for the students I advise? What could their stories tell me? Using my own experience as a foundation, I sought to understand the challenges and triumphs of other students as they engaged in experiences abroad.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before embarking on this study, it is important to understand the literature regarding the effects an international experience has on students who participate. The applicable literature extends over a number of decades and uses different methods to understand how students have changed as a result of their international experience. It is also necessary to explore the research of student development theorists to understand the identity development process experienced by students. By understanding the typical process experienced by undergraduates, we can then examine how an international experience influences that process.

In this section, I review literature regarding how an international experience affects college students. The results are varied due to how the researchers have operationalized the terms used in their studies. Next, I review student development theories by Sanford, Erikson, Marcia, and Chickering to view the students’ international experiences holistically instead of being defined by single constructs. The student development theories outline the importance of new situations and opportunities for students, so in the final section of this chapter I attempt to show how participation in an international experience can provide a rich atmosphere in which students can develop their identity.
Effect of an International Experience

An international experience has been found to increase an individual's interest in other cultures. In a study that assessed the changes in attitudes and perceptions by university students who spent a year abroad, students increased their level of cross-cultural interest and cultural cosmopolitanism (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Kuh and Kauffman (1985) found that such students had increased their interest in the arts, literature, and culture. Students who studied abroad were also found to be more likely to conceive of other national groups in terms associated with the characteristics of individuals and less likely to think of national groups in terms food, historical events, and geographical characteristics. This shows that a main effect of students studying abroad is a more personalized view of other national groups. This personalized view was found to extend beyond the countries where the students studied (Drews & Meyer, 1996).

Students also experience personal changes as a result of international experiences. Individuals who are overseas are forced to learn many things about themselves when trying to cope with another culture (David, 1971). Carsello and Creaser (1976) found students to have a positive increase in self-concept and value their relationships with their family members more than before they went abroad. Studying abroad also increases students’ interests in the welfare of others, their self-confidence, and their sense of well-being (Kuh & Kauffman, 1985). Participation in an international service-learning project forces students to realize the importance of one another and of working together to achieve project goals. Also by seeing people in extreme poverty, being able to perceive the world better and one’s place in it, and by seeing one’s own values more clearly
helped students develop lifestyle plans including vocational interests, personal values, and future plans (Pyle, 1981).

Studying abroad has also been found to increase students’ interests in their own country (Carsello and Creaser, 1976). Students develop more mature and objective perceptions of their home country as well as attitudes on a number of other dimensions related to international awareness (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). This new perspective can be both positive and more critical of the U.S. (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). In 2002, Americans studying abroad in Britain established Americans for Informed Democracy. The goals of the group are to ease anti-American sentiments overseas, in part by showing the diversity of views in the U.S., and to make Americans more aware of world opinions regarding U.S. foreign policy (Hoover, 2004).

However, not all studies have shown that students’ views about themselves, other cultures, or the world increased positively as a result of their international experience. In McGuigan’s 1958 study, of the 24 psychological measures studied, only two measures changed as a result of living abroad. Development of higher social values and the development of more submissive social judgment were the only measures to have increased after living abroad for a year. David (1971) stated that in going abroad a second time to a different culture, an individual would face the same cross-cultural challenges even if they learned to adapt their first time abroad. The cross-cultural skills developed are then specific to a certain country, not a reflection of worldmindedness on behalf of the individual.
Negotiating re-entry is also a significant part of an international experience for students. Re-adjusting to one's own home culture may be more difficult than adjusting to the foreign culture (Adler, 1975; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1958). Martin (1986) studied how students' relationships change as they re-enter their previous lives after studying abroad. Students' relationships with their parents changed positively, possibly because parents expect these changes in students (maturity and independence) and see these changes as positive. Relationships with their siblings changed positively as well, but not as significantly as it did with their parents. Students' relationships with their friends changed both positively and negatively, but more negatively as compared to their relationship with parents and siblings. Students were able to maintain a positive change in friendship with their friends who showed an interest in their experience and those who shared similar experiences abroad. Romantic relationships were affected the most. Changes in romantic relationships were less tolerated and adolescent relationships were more fluid, less stable than family relationships.

Alder's (1981) study investigated cross-cultural adjustment for employees. Employees found re-entry in their home country to be more difficult than the initial adjustment to the foreign culture. Re-entry was equally as challenging no matter where the employees had worked overseas. The skills the employees gained abroad were not recognized or used by their organizations when they returned home. Employees saw themselves as most effective when they were integrating the foreign and home country experiences and actively using the skills and experience they gained overseas.
The literature has shown divergent results regarding the effect that participation in an international experience has on students' personal development. These studies have varied widely, based on how the terms are operationalized and the methodology used in each study. Personal development has been defined as world-mindedness, self-concept, or self-reliance to name a few. Studies have used both broad standardized instruments, examining change as whole, and specific instruments, which examined only one aspect of development. Other studies have been conducted letting students self-report on questionnaires, while other studies used interviews. Some studies surveyed the students before their departure, and then upon their return. Other studies had a control group with similar characteristics as the group who went abroad.

This contradictory research is difficult for me as a practitioner and a past participant. When I returned from my own study abroad experience, I had trouble readjusting to my old life because I was different. As a study abroad advisor, I have witnessed changes in the students who have gone abroad. For many of the individuals, I could not label what was different for them. For my students and myself, I do not know if the change could be defined as a new self-concept or more world-mindedness. Experiences abroad make profound differences on students' lives, but more than in a narrowly defined construct. What is missing from these studies is the actual voice of the students who went abroad. Their experience and personal growth cannot always be revealed through a standardized instrument.

To understand students' development without a standardized instrument, it is helpful to rely on theories of student development. These theories are appropriate
because they see the experience of development through a whole-student paradigm. As studies on the effects of study abroad have attempted to operationalize the change in students, student development theories explain growth as a result of many experiences. Student development theories seem a more appropriate framework to understanding the development students experience abroad.

**Student Identity Development Theories**

The student identity development theories of Sanford, Erikson, Chickering, and Marcia are presented here as frameworks for understanding the changes that students experience. By understanding the process that students need to experience to develop their own identities, we can then look to examine how an international experience influences that process.

*Sanford*

Nevitt Sanford (1966) saw students’ development as a constant struggle between two separate entities that are continually striving to restore equilibrium. Students are struggling with differentiation, which he defines as the various parts of personality having different and specialized functions including conscience, basic emotional needs, and other personality characteristics. Differentiation is then in conflict with integration, which is the synthesis and communication among parts so that without losing their essential identity, everything can become organized into larger wholes to serve larger
purposes of the person. Students are seeking to discover who they are, and then balance the new information with their preexisting identity.

Sanford believes that “people do not change unless they encounter a situation to which they cannot adapt with the use of devices already present” (Sanford, 1966, p. 44). It is in these situations where an innovative response is generated. He believes it is the job of the university to present students with challenges, so they will be forced to develop new responses. Students need to be challenged, “jolt them out of their ruts, so that they will revise their ways of looking at things and thus be required to generate new perspectives and systems of response” (Sanford, 1966, p.44). When students are placed in new situations, they are freed from expectations and accustomed modes of behavior forcing them to adapt to new ways. “By creating a little anxiety in him we open him to learning” (Sanford, 1966, p.45).

Challenging needs to be followed by the correct amount of support or the student may not be able to create a new response. There is a delicate balance to force students to develop new responses, but provide enough support that they feel comfortable taking a risk with this new behavior. Too much challenge is overwhelming; too little challenge is debilitating.

Erikson

Erikson’s theory is based on Freud’s theory of Psychoanalysis, but expands upon it taking into account social and cultural influences. Erikson believes that personality develops at eight different stages throughout an individual’s lifetime (Erikson, 1968).
These stages are marked by specific events which cause the individual to make a specific decision. Each stage has a particular time when physical growth, cognitive maturation, and social demands converge – a crisis point. Based on their success or lack of success as they work through these crises in each stage, persons emerge on a continuum between two possible outcomes. One of the outcomes is usually positive, while the other is generally negative. If the individual is not able to successfully deal with the crises of particular stages, the outcomes of those stages manifest throughout the individual’s life until he/she is able to adequately deal with the original crisis of each stage, resulting in a change in personality.

Erikson’s fifth stage of development usually occurs during adolescence. He identified the college years as an integral development period (Moore & Upcraft, 1990). Individuals are faced with the crisis between a sense of identity versus identity role confusion. They are beginning to think more critically and become aware of societal expectations. Individuals are expected to make educational and vocational choices. Resolution in this stage comes from experimentation, choice, achievement, freedom from anxiety, reflection and introspection.

Marcia

Marcia grounded his research in Erikson’s fifth stage of identity development. Marcia operationalized Erikson’s clinical concepts, which contributed significantly to our knowledge of the identity resolution process. Marcia identified two variables that were critical in identity formation – exploration and commitment (Bilsker, Schiedel, & Marcia,
Exploration being the questioning of values and goals defined by parents; and commitment being an attachment to ownership to pronounced goals and values. Exploration was often referred to as the crisis point, and thereafter a commitment to a decision can be made. Marcia (1980) suggested that crisis and commitment in political, religious, and occupational decision-making are the primary components of identity. Marcia (1980) believes there are four identity states as a result of the two variables of crisis and commitment; they are diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. These statuses are progressive, with achievement being the goal, which comes after a period of crisis in which crucial choices are made and strong commitments are achieved.

Chickering

Arthur Chickering’s theory of identity development elaborated on Erikson’s fifth stage, identity versus identity role/confusion. Chickering’s theory suggested seven vectors, general developmental directions, which lead to the life-long formation of identity. These vectors were developmental tasks, which he chose to label as vectors instead of stages because they have both directionality (positive or negative) and magnitude (can occur to a greater or lesser degree in individuals). The vectors were created to consider the student holistically (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The seven vectors identified by Chickering are developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Chickering believed that students developed intellectual, physical, and
interpersonal competencies. In learning to manage emotions, he theorized students would learn to identify emotions, accept them as valid, express them appropriately, and cope with negative, disruptive feelings in a positive way. In moving through autonomy toward interdependence, Chickering believed students would begin to need less approval from others, become more independent, balance independence with needs of others, and recognize their own responsibilities as members of society. In developing mature interpersonal relationships, an individual would build an understanding about people with different backgrounds, develop social and interpersonal skills, and create positive and lasting relationships. Additionally in this vector, Chickering believed individuals would learn social adjustments and techniques for conflict resolution. As students establish their identity, Chickering proposed individuals would become more comfortable with themselves, increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, and develop a greater level of stability and integration into the environment. When students develop a purpose, they will begin to clarify their educational and career goals, develop a sense of purpose, value, and meaning, and strengthen interpersonal and family commitments. And finally, Chickering believed in developing integrity, the individual would begin to build his/her own belief system (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The Connection Between Identity Development and International Education

An international experience is exactly the challenge that Sanford feels is necessary for student development. He believes that change is only accomplished through a new situation, which requires an innovative response (Sanford, 1966). Sending
students on an international experience changes their physical location, their established relationships, their approach to developing new relationships, and their view on their own culture. Sanford's theory calls for correct amount of support for these challenges. An international experience is the needed challenge, as long as international education advisors can provide the proper amount of support.

An international experience encourages resolution of Erikson's fifth stage of development. While students are abroad, they are free from societal expectations and must make decisions according to their own values. An international experience presents students with many more opportunities than they would have on their home campus for experimentation. As long as students are given enough support to free them from anxiety, and they give themselves sufficient time for reflection and introspection, an international experience could provide a rich atmosphere to resolve Erikson's fifth stage of development.

Marcia's concepts, which explain the resolution of Erikson's fifth stage, regarding exploration and commitment can be seen as the result of an international education experience. By going overseas, students are exploring and questioning their previously held values because they are introduced to new values of the host country. While overseas, students must incorporate these new ideas with their past beliefs and come to a new understanding of their values. Again, an international experience can provide the essential environment needed for the exploration and commitment to understand one's own identity.
Moving through Chickering's seven vectors can be facilitated by an international experience. The competencies developed abroad include new language skills, cross-cultural skills, and additional academic competencies. Students must learn to manage their emotions in this new culture, and cannot let their negative feeling inhibit their ability to cope with their new surroundings. Gaining independence is a necessary component of being abroad. Students can not rely on their past support systems or societal expectations, because their new surroundings are completely different. They will need to rely on themselves and learn to seek support in new ways. An international experience exposes students to people with different backgrounds. Students must develop social and interpersonal skills with people in their new community. They will have to learn to resolve conflicts within this new social structure. Because students cannot rely on their past support systems, they will become more comfortable with themselves and become more confident in their own abilities. By gaining exposure to a new culture, students develop purpose in their career and educational goals. These new experiences take their education out of the classroom, which causes them to define their goals. Chickering states that an individual establishes a worldview in this stage, and in an international experience this worldview is created through first hand exposure. And finally, students develop integrity abroad by being introduced to the views of others, being forced to see their own views from an outside point of view, and then aligning all this new information into their own belief system. If Chickering's vectors represent the needed movement of students toward a life-long formation of their identity, I believe an
international experience is an amazing atmosphere where this development can be fully reached.

The student development theories of Sanford, Erikson, Marcia, and Chickering all address a crisis point where students are introduced to a new situation. In these types of situations, the students must confront their previous held beliefs. These theories do not explicitly address an international experience, but the act of going abroad creates the crisis needed in these development theories. The second part of these theories address the necessary processing students must go through in order to resolve this crisis. Students had to incorporate these new ideas into a values system for themselves. Only through successful processing and incorporation, was identity development achieved. Therefore, in regards to international education, the support students receive to assist them through their identity development is crucial for their success.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how college students’ identity development is affected while participating in an international experience. Their personal experiences and perceptions were examined in hopes of better understanding the identity development process that students experience while overseas. This study sought to answer the following questions:

(1) How does an international experience affect the identity development of U.S. college students?

(2) What support systems need to be in place to assist students through the process of identity development?

Methodology

A qualitative method was selected for this study as the most appropriate to capture the individual stories of the student participants. According to Lofland and Lofland (1995), “face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being and you must participate in the mind of another human being to acquire social knowledge” (p.16). As the goal of the study was to fully understand these students’ development, I attempted to enter their minds. Through their stories, I have sought to comprehend, study, and examine their lives abroad and their lives upon their return home.
Additionally, a flexible and adaptive method was needed to explore the experiences of students. This study does not seek to confirm student development identity models, but rather tell the stories of a few students in hopes of understanding the identity struggles of students participating in an international experience. With this method, the students' previous held beliefs and experiences could be shared, along with their emotions and thoughts while overseas, and finally their reactions to re-entering their lives back in the U.S.

This study was concerned with understanding the behavior of the subjects from their own frame of reference. The research questions used in this study were not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they were formed to investigate a topic in all its complexity. Qualitative research provides this complexity allowing for rich descriptions of people, places, and conversations, which are not easily handled by statistical procedures. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), "[Qualitative researchers] seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables, not processes" (p. 4). The goal of qualitative research is to better understand human behavior and experience which matched the goals of my project. Qualitative research seeks to understand the process by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Therefore qualitative research was selected for this study because it allowed for the voices of these students to be fully heard.
Participants

Participants in this study were students who chose to do an international internship through the IE3 Global Internship Program during the summer of 2003. The IE3 Global Internship Program is one of the Oregon University System’s International Programs. These students spent three months working abroad for international organizations. Their placements were in Latin America and Europe. Each individual applied for a position matching his or her career interests and abilities. The students were seniors from Oregon State University (O.S.U.) and were all 22 years of age.

The IE3 Global Internship Program was established by a grant through the U.S. Department of Defense. The program started in 1995, and since then has sent over 800 interns overseas. Offering international internships was “a way to provide Oregon university students with an improved understanding of global issues and equip them with professional experience and international competence.” (Van de Water, 1999).

Students going abroad through the IE3 Global Internship Program were chosen for this study for a variety of reasons. First, due to the nature of the timeline of this thesis project, I needed to interview students in the fall of 2003. These students were only abroad for one term, and they returned from their internships in September of 2003. Two of the students returned to OSU for fall term, one with one term left and the other with three terms to graduation. For the third student, the internship was her last graduation requirement.

Secondly, these students participated in a very independent international experience. Most of the internship sites take only one or two students; therefore the
students processed their identity development individually. These students did not have the support of a resident director or a large group of other students to ease their identity development or be influenced by others going through a similar process. Their thoughts and feelings were their own without the influence of other students. Additionally, I believe these students were very data-rich because of their significant contact with host nationals.

Thirdly, the IE3 Global Internship Program stresses the importance of journaling while abroad. The program gives students suggested topics to journal on throughout the course of their internship (A copy of the IE3 Global Internship Program journal can be found as Appendix C). Some of the topics the students were asked to journal about specifically address the topic of this study. Before departure, students were asked to reflect upon identify values they appreciated about their home culture and how those were expressed. They were also asked to think about the stereotypes people in the host country would have about their home culture. While abroad, they were asked to reflect on the most frustrating aspect of their own culture for the people they live and work with; talk about the stereotypes they have encountered about themselves; and discuss how their own behavior confirms or contradicts these stereotypes. Because the students on the IE3 program are encouraged to journal while abroad, I hoped their journals would capture some of their feelings throughout the duration of their experience.

Finally, as an advisor for the IE3 Global Internship Program, I assisted these students through their initial inquiries about the internship program, through the application process, and their interviews for these positions. I also helped with their pre-
departure orientation, and emphasized and encouraged these students to journal while they were abroad.

Therefore, my sample was created based on the potential information they could share with me. They were not selected according to statistical considerations (Lincoln & Gupa, 1985). My attempt was to select participants in this study who would be data-rich. My hope was my sample would consist of participants who would be willing to share their thoughts, stories, and emotions. The validity of this study is based on my ability to accurately represent the stories of these three participants, not on this study’s ability to be generalized to a larger population (Bouchner, 1994).

The subjects were contacted in the Fall Term 2003 during the second week of classes. An email was sent to the eight students from O.S.U. who went on three month internships during the summer of 2003. The email asked them to participate in a series of focus groups regarding their identity development overseas. The email also explained the purpose of the study and ensured them their participation would be completely voluntary and anonymous. The students were asked to reply to the email if they were interested in becoming a participant in the study. Three students responded and a series of emails followed to determine a time and place that worked for these three students to all meet. (A copy of email used to recruit participants can be found as Appendix A).

Data Collection

The method used for data collection was a series of focus groups. According to Morgan (1997), “a focus group is defined as a research technique that collects data
through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (p.7). I decided that focus groups would be the best method for data collection because it allowed for interaction not only with me, but between participants as well. The interaction between participants was very valuable because it allowed me as the researcher to see the comparisons the participants themselves made. Instead of all the similarities and differences being determined by me the researcher after the fact, these participants had the ability to find their own commonalities and differences. “Participants in focus groups often say the most interesting aspect of their discussion is the chance to ‘share and compare’ their ideas and experiences” (Morgan, 1997, p. 24). I was also asking the participants to recall their past experiences, so a group format allowed the ideas of one participant to jog the memories of the other two. As one student brought up an issue, it gave the other students a moment to reflect on their own experience to see if those thoughts and feelings resonated within themselves.

A disadvantage of focus groups compared to individual interviews is that in focus groups participants do not have as much time to share their own stories, as they are competing with the other participants for time. However, knowing that the focus group in this study had only three participants, I was confident this disadvantage of focus groups could be overcome. I also believed these students could benefit from hearing one another’s stories. The focus groups provided a space where these past participants could connect with other students who shared their similar experiences. As the previous literature illustrated, students often feel disconnected from their peers when they return to their home campuses (Martin, 1986).
Although a small focus group allowed each individual’s voice to be heard, I was concerned with the size of the focus group because it is often difficult for small focus groups to maintain an active discussion (Morgan, 1997). However, I knew these students would be highly engaged in the dialogue. Having worked with many students returning from overseas experiences, I knew they would want to share their stories and they would be interested in listening to the stories of the other participants as well.

I decided that a less structured focus group would be the most effective type of focus group for my study. By minimizing my involvement in the discussion, I gave the participants more of an opportunity to pursue what interested them (Morgan, 1997). According to Morgan (1997), “if the goal is to learn something new from the participants, then it is best to let them speak for themselves” (p. 40). Initially, I thought I would need to be more directive to sustain a discussion because the focus group contained only three people. However, these three subjects were very engaged in one another’s stories, and my role could be kept at a minimum. This helped reduce participants sharing only what they believed would be interesting to me as the researcher (Morgan, 1997).

I also encouraged the participants to read their journals before coming to the first focus group or to bring them along. I believed their journals would help serve as an elicitation device, helping the students recall certain events and their feelings surrounding them. Using journals to gather data has been used by Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) in their fieldwork procedure they call diary/diary-interview method. The technique uses diaries as observational logs maintained by the person being studied; these in turn are used as basis for intensive interviews. This method of observation helped to solve the
problem that I was not able to have face-to-face contact with these students while they were abroad as they experienced their identity issues. "Because a diary is usually written under the immediate influence of an experience, it can be particularly effective in capturing peoples’ moods and most intimate thoughts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). By using the students’ journals as a source of data, I was able to understand their thoughts throughout their time abroad.

First Focus Group

I attempted to schedule the first focus group the third week of classes, but due to mid term exams, the fourth week seemed to fit the students’ schedules better. We agreed to meet in Office of International Education conference room. All of the students were familiar with the Office of International Education because they had all spent time there while they were applying for their internships. The initial focus group was scheduled for an hour and a half. The students introduced themselves to each other as they entered the room. Right away, they started asking each other about their experiences overseas. I had to interrupt them to explain the Informed Consent document. I asked the students to review the document carefully and then to sign and initial the form if they wanted to participate. I asked them if they had any questions about their participation and reminded them they could leave at any time. I also let them know they could feel free not to answer any of the questions, either posed by me or the other students. I pointed out the section of the informed consent document regarding video recording and reminded them
that the videotapes would only seen by me. (The informed consent document can be found in Appendix B).

The atmosphere during the first focus group was very casual, and the students wanted to share their experiences with each other immediately. I asked them to introduce themselves and give a short background description of their internship. They would often interrupt their own stories to ask the other participants if they experienced anything similar. It was apparent very early in the first focus group that my concerns about the size of group were not going to jeopardize the success of this study. It was also obvious that their own curiosity would lead to interesting and important discussion topics. I asked only a few questions and allowed them to question each other. After an hour and a half of discussion, I told them I was very appreciative of their time and did not want run over our allotted time. However, the participants wanted to stay for another 30 minutes. Before the students left the initial focus group, I asked them to choose pseudonyms so their identity could be protected.

Second Focus Group

The second focus group lasted an hour and a half and met the sixth week of classes in the same conference room. First, I handed the students a transcript of our previous focus group. They all took a few minutes to review our conversation. They were encouraged to make notes on the transcripts where they felt the transcript did not accurately describe their thoughts. The participants made only a few comments. In this second focus group, I asked more questions than I did in the initial focus group. We only
briefly discussed some topics during the first focus group because they were excited to ask one another questions. I brought up some topics we had discussed previously, and made sure all the students had a chance to speak to those areas. We discussed their journals they had kept while abroad. Matt and Lucy kept a journal while they were abroad, however Janie did not. They agreed to share their journals with me at the final focus group.

Final Focus Group

The participants requested we have our third and final focus group at a local Mexican restaurant. Only Matt and Lucy could attend the third focus group, as Janie had found a job in another city. As we snacked on chips and salsa, Matt and Lucy read their journals aloud. They admitted that they looked at the journal questions that were given to them at their pre-departure orientation, but they did not answer those questions. Their journals mostly contained stories of their adventures while they were abroad. Mostly the journals helped them recall certain events, and then they would tell the stories in much more detail. The journals served as an excellent elicitation device, so much so that we were at the restaurant telling stories for two and a half hours.

Since Janie did not keep a journal and was not able to attend the final focus group, I decided to email Janie some questions. I asked her to reflect on them and treat them like journal questions. My questions asked her to tell stories from different time periods while she was abroad: arrival, family life, her job, travel adventures, and her departure. She emailed me her responses one week later.
**Method of Analysis**

All of the focus groups were video or audio taped, and later transcribed verbatim. Videotaping was used for the first focus group because I was not as familiar with the students' voices. The second and third focus groups were only audio taped. The tapes were kept in a secure place, with plans for them to be destroyed once my thesis was completed. I was the only one to listen to the video and audio tapes while the transcription of the conversations was put on paper verbatim. In the transcripts, I used the pseudonyms that each student chose to protect their anonymity.

The transcripts from the focus groups were then analyzed. The process of analyzing our conversations was one of distilling the information down to common elements. Our conversations were long and rather detailed as these students attempted to have me and the other participants really feel and understand their stories. A storytelling approach, focusing on the chronology of the students' experiences was employed to organize the data (Patton, 2002).

The first part of the analysis came from just transcribing the tapes. Because I was the only one to transcribe the conversations and this process was time consuming, I had time to really reflect on the words of the participants. As I listened to their stories multiple times in an attempt to fully understand their experience, I began to realize certain topics the students would continually want to discuss. Also, certain topics evoked more passion from the students than others. Although this study is based on identity theories as outlined in Chapter 2, in an attempt to be systematic about my inquiry, the
approach I utilized was similar to the grounded theory methods detailed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), moving from basic description, to conceptual ordering, to theorizing.

In the second part of the analysis, I read through the transcripts twice without making any notes. I wanted to see the three conversations as part of a whole dialogue. In my third reading of the transcripts, I began to list broad subject areas that the students chose to talk about in the margins of the transcript. In my next reading, I attempted to pull out codes from these subject areas. For each of the subjects, students were communicating a few different ideas. In my subsequent readings, I began to focus the codes. I reviewed the transcript and looked for "which codes were being used more than other and which topics and questions were being treated more than others. That is, one begins a process of winnowing out less productive and useful codes and focusing in on a selected number" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 195). As I narrowed these codes, a few themes began to emerge from the data.

In the chapters that follow, I have presented these students’ stories as re-creations of their journals, written in the first person. Their stories are then followed by a discussion of the emergent themes and their significance.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Case Studies

The following are journal entries that I, the researcher, wrote from the students’ perspective. The journals were written before the students departed, while they were abroad, and when they returned. I have written six to eight journal entries for each student. Before each journal entry, I have identified when and where each entry would have been written. There is a brief introduction to each student before his or her journal entries are presented. Actual quotes from the students are written in italics.

I struggled as to how I was going to convey these students’ stories. As Patton (2002) notes, “no rules or formula can tell a qualitative analyst precisely what balance is right or which voice to use, only that finding both balance and voice is part of the work and challenge of qualitative inquiry” (p. 65). Kushner (cited in Patton, 2002) also speaks to this balancing in terms of owning one’s perspective while authentically communicating the perspectives of those we encounter during our research.

I had the opportunity of actually hearing from these students: seeing their eyes and feeling their emotions. The stories that they shared with me were amazing and so full of emotion. I wanted readers to be able to feel that passion and really understand these students’ stories. I did not know how that was going to be possible with me simply listing a series of their quotes. So in an attempt to bring you into these students’ worlds, I have written their stories in the first person. Qualitative data, Coffee and Atkinson note in their 1996 study (cited in Patton, 2002), “can be used to relay dominant voices or can
be appropriated to ‘give notice’ to otherwise silenced groups and individuals” (p. 495). And while the students who participated in the present research were not necessarily among “silenced” groups, I did believe that by carefully and respectfully appropriating their voices I could tell their stories more poignantly. My hope is you will feel I have taken the pen from Matt, Lucy, and Janie and written down their thoughts for them. When the students read me their journals, I realized what they had written was not as powerful as their memories they could recall. The following is my attempt at retelling their journals with all the voice and passion they had when they told me their stories.

Qualitative researchers struggle with finding the balance between presenting direct quotations of the participants and summarizing their discussions. “There is a perpetual tension between the richness of the data and the remoteness of the reader from the sources of data” (Morgan, 1997, p. 64). After hearing the powerful stories of these students, I was concerned that presenting a few quotations without the surrounding details would not accurately capture these students’ experiences. Therefore, I chose to present the summarization of the surrounding details as first person narratives. This allows the participants direct quotations to be read as part of a single, connected event. I believe this procedure more accurately tells the experience of these students.

In an attempt to ensure the reliability of this procedure, I emailed the participants the journal articles I had written. All three of the students responded that I had accurately captured their stories. The importance of validating such data by allowing participant review has been noted by Glesne (1999), who argues that such review not only verifies accuracy but may also help the researcher develop new ideas and interpretations. So
although these journal articles have been created using both direct quotations and my own summarization written as first person narratives, the students confirmed that I had accurately described their experiences abroad.

**MATT**

Matt is senior at O.S.U. majoring in Chemistry, with a minor in Spanish. He is from Portland, Oregon. He attended a private Catholic High School where he was active in sports. He values the support that his family has always given him in whatever he has sought out to do. He studied abroad his junior year for four months in Oviedo, Spain. Matt is very passionate about becoming a pediatrician, and that is what attracted him to this internship opportunity. Matt took part in this internship during the summer between his fourth and fifth years at O.S.U.

**Getting Ready to Go**

Two Days Before Departure Oregon

I only seem to keep a journal when I go overseas, so with me leaving in two days, I feel like I better start. It feels great to be getting ready to go abroad again. It is hard to believe that it has been a year since I was in Spain. *I grew immensely as a person while I was there, because it opened up my eyes to many new thing and allowed me to look in on my life here and put things in perspective.* We had such a good time and Carmen, our host mom, was the best. I remember Josh and I crying as we were hugging Carmen goodbye. Us, grown men, just hugging each other and crying. *We were living this one*
life, and then all of a sudden it was gone. This will be a totally different experience though. I am going to Morelia, Michoacan to work at a Medical Dispensaries Clinic. It will be great to be able to speak Spanish again. I should be able to get pretty good at it, since I will be there for three months. And since the majority of the Spanish spoken in the US and the majority of the Spanish people here are from Mexico, it will be so great to learn the form of the language that is used here.

A Day at Work

One Month into the Internship

Mexico

Today was Thursday, and by far the most excited day I had had working with the ambulance company. The first call we got, which was pretty early in the day, was none other than a possible dead body call. I remember feeling my heart beat a little fast and my mind started to race when I started thinking about the possibilities. When we showed up no one was panicking and we nonchalantly walked into the house. We went into one of the bedrooms, and there was an old woman lying motionless on the bed. One of the paramedics asked me to check her vital signs. So I took the stethoscope leaned over her. All I could hear was silence. Nothing. I also check for a pulse on her wrist, and again there was nothing, but her arm was still warm. So that was it, we identified that she was dead and left. It was very surreal. A dead body. Yet none of the family was freaking out. She had died and it was fine. It was really eerie seeing a dead person, but you probably get use to it not after long. I don’t know if I want that though.
Our next call was for a girl who fell 10 feet with a huge bump on her head. From there to a 92 year old man who fell down the stairs. *We showed up and there was a trail of blood leading from the living room area up the stairs.* We took him to the hospital. Then we got a call for an auto accident. A huge truck had t-boned this taxi. They were all hurt and needed to go to the hospital, but we had to stop at two hospitals because only some of them had insurance.

The day was amazing. We were on the go all day, and we saw so many patients. I had never really considered working in the emergency side of medicine. *I could actually see myself working as a paramedic for a year or so if I did not get into medical school right away.*

*A Family Dinner Conversation*

**Two months into the Internship**

Today was a typical Sunday. *I got up feeling pretty good and went to church as usual with my sister and all the little kids.* At first, I felt a bit awkward going with the family to mass. Sure, I am a Christian and all, but there were such strong Catholics. But you could tell it was important to them that I go. They have been amazing, treating me just like I was part of the family. And as a family member you definitely go to church with everyone.

We got in to it last night at dinner. My host mom says the most random things. She asked me what I thought about gay marriages. *I told her that gay people should be able to do what they wanted to do.* I told her I was okay with it, if that is what they
wanted. You could see the look on her face when I said that. Not one of anger, but of sadness. She told me that I could go to hell for saying that. They are so deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition that they thought it was a horrible sin. And then she started talking about how it was just like us, Americans, to be so liberal.

The family just has a totally skewed idea about America. If they could see what it was really like, it would not be nearly as bad as they thought. They hear about all the racism and thing like that. They are scared there would be a lot of racism towards people like them if they came to the U.S. And first of all, my family did not look Hispanic, they looked like they could have been American.

I told them they could come to America wouldn’t be discriminated against. They couldn’t believe how accepting and diverse the U.S. is.

They also think that if they come to America, they are going to make a lot of money. Life if better in the US. But that is complete B.S. Just because they are earning dollars, instead of pesos, they think it will be so much better. It is true that people down there in a week make less than what you could make in a full day earning minimum wage in the U.S. Of course they are going to make more money in the US, but they are going to end up spending more money too.

And then you hear people say they don’t know why people go to the U.S. They say they are happy with their life here. Great, be happy with your life here. They have a lot of great things here. To people here, family is so important. More important than money. And I wish it was like that in the U.S., because it really isn’t. People move so fast and are so into the fast pace of life, and earning money. I see a lot of values here that I want to have in my life at home, but I think that is going to be hard to do.
Oh back to today, Sunday. After church, we did the usual cruise around the block with the kids – play games, eat ice cream, and I played babysitter. That was pretty much the day.

_A Home in Mexico_

_Last day of the internship_  

Well, here I sit, waiting for the airplane to take me back home.... I mean to Oregon. Home, I feel at home here. My family, the people I worked with, the kids at the clinic, just people you meet for a minute treat you like family. Like the guy who just drove me here. I was waiting for Carlos to come. I had met him the week before when I was heading downtown, and we just started talking. _He was kind of embarrassed because he had to pull over because he had to go to the bathroom. We were just chatting for the longest time, and he said if I ever needed a ride to give him a call._ So he was supposed to be there at 9:00 this morning, but he never showed. Sure, I am used to Mexican time by now, but I had a plane to catch. There were other taxi’s going by, so I flagged one down. We had to discuss the price as usual. _I just wanted to get in, but my [host] mom was standing in the doorway shaking her head, “too much.”_ Finally, we agreed on 160 pesos and we took off. We started chatting - people here are so nice. _He knows people from Portland, and has family in Oregon. Thirty minutes later, we get to the airport. He says to me, “whenever you come back, you have a place here.” What? This is guy I just met, and it happens all the time here, all throughout my trip. He gave me his email and all his contact information. And he told me when I come back to look_
him up. Of course, I won't, but for 30 minutes the guy acted like we were the best of friends. It is crazy. Things like that don't happen in the U.S. But I want to be that taxi guy when I get home. Why can't I be the guy that invites you out for a beer after knowing you for 30 minutes? That is what I have learned here – just enjoy life. Let other people enjoy who you are and you enjoy them.

**Back in Chemistry Class**

**One month into school**

I have a midterm tomorrow for chemistry, and I am SO sick of studying. It is just so ridiculous. I don’t want to be a chemist. I never wanted to be a chemist. I am taking all these classes because it looks better when you are applying to medical school to be a chemistry major than a biology major. Ridiculous. *I am taking the hardest classes I have ever taken in college, and I am not into it.* I just want this year to fly by, get it done with. When I was in Mexico, I got to be a doctor. I examined kids. I gave them shots. I was a pediatrician. Exactly what I want to be doing. Not studying for a chemistry class I will never use. *I learned more in that internship in three months, that I am going to use later on in the rest of my life than I ever have in the four/five year of college that I have been doing.* It was so much more interesting. *I got to learn about different sicknesses and how to treat them – all these different things. And I am so excited to be a doctor. It is killing me right now. I just want to get this done with.* It just feels like I am wasting my time some days. I know I need good grades in these classes so I can get into med school, but its hard because I don’t think studying anymore tonight is going to make me a better
doctor. Sometimes I wish I had done a Spanish major and just taken enough science classes to get into med school. But it is too late now — and I can’t worry about it with this midterm tomorrow. Urgh! Okay, back to studying. A few more terms at OSU, and then I can have a real life again.

Drifting Apart

Six weeks into school  Oregon

All the guys went out for Rick’s 21st birthday, and they acted annoyed that I did not want to go. I don’t even know Rick, so I have no idea why it was such a big deal. I mean sure, he is in the house, but we have never really hung out. It is Wednesday night, which is the night I always volunteer at the medical clinic downtown. I am just not into getting drunk with those guys. It was great at one time in my life. And it’s still great for those guys, but I am just not into it. You just kind of grow apart in college. This is what happens. It is not really sad, it just happens. I am different person now, after coming back. And they take it as an insult or something like that. I don’t know. I don’t talk about being in Mexico all that much, I don’t think that is it. I think those guys just wish they would have gone.

It is not like that with everyone though. I just seem to get along better with Jeff, Chris, and Kevin. We went out together for dinner last night told stories from our trips. They told me stories from Norway, Germany, and Australia. It is just easier with those guys. They get where I am coming from. Everyone else in the house that never left are still here getting drunk. They are back in their old ways of what I use to be like. And that
is fine. I just wish they would drop the issue about me not going. You drift apart in college. *It’s a natural process.*

**Changing Plans**

**Nine weeks into school**

I met with Professor Green, my pre-med advisor, today. I had not told her yet that I was not applying to medical school. I will, eventually. *I one hundred percent want to be a pediatrician. I love kids. I love that I got to do that in Mexico. But I want to be a paramedic before I go to med school. It is a very important part of medicine. You are helping to save lives because you are doing the medicine before they can get to the hospital and doctors. I think it would be an amazing experience before medical school.* I told Professor Green that I am burnt out on school. I need to take some time off, and be a paramedic for a while. *I found another side of medicine that I want to do first. It’s really exciting; it’s on your toes. It’s something new... I am not sure Professor Green understood, but I am not sure I care.*

**LUCY**

Lucy participated in this internship her fourth year at O.S.U. She is horticulture major, and got her interest in the field from working at her fathers concrete business. She often did the landscaping amongst the concrete. She grew up in a small town, 20 miles from Corvallis. Her mother traveled a lot as a young adult, but her father did not. She
interned at a botanical garden in Costa Rica where she was a gardener, tour guide and researcher. After her internship, she had one more term of classes to complete at O.S.U.

From Lucy's Internship Application

Three months prior to departure

I traveled recently to Guatemala, not for any reason particular, only for the change or view and perspective really, but found much more entirely. The romantic dreams of adventure and exploration were somewhat muted, while the reality of what others knew as truth and life rang out in front of me. I was at times uncomfortable, puzzled, and intrigued by human and political interactions there in that small town where I lived for three months. I thought a lot about the things going on there and how my own interactions were being examined and regarded. I worked as a bartender at a hostel outside of a small town called Poptun. I found the job over the Internet, bought a plane ticket to Guatemala City, found my way there to the hostel and to where my own life would collide with so many others. The collision occurred as you would imagine any other crash, instantly and clouded for some time with haze, then slowly the smoke clears and information is gathered and put into some manageable order. It requires a good amount of time to go back over the experience, filling in the forgotten blanks, and then the experience is logged and is part of you, represented by growth.

Another Adventure

Five days before departure

Well here I sit, one year later from when I last wrote about my time in Guatemala. In five days, I will be off to Latin America, but this time to Costa Rica for my Horticulture internship. It is at the Wilson Botanical Gardens in Las Cruces. Odd how that works out. That is my grandpa's name is Mr. Wilson. I have no worries because just in a name I will find his support when I need it.

I do worry about adjusting to life down there again. I remember my first few weeks in Guatemala were challenging. It wasn’t until I wrote myself that letter, that I
remembered why I was there. And I look back on Guatemala so fondly. Its hard to believe there was a ever a moment that was not perfect. I know there will be an adjustment phase – that is normal. I even have to remember that graphic from orientation with the highs and lows. I am lucky to have this opportunity. That much I know for sure.

Most of the other horticulture students were doing their internships at golf courses in Corvallis. This is just another adventure, one filled that will be filled with plants, flowers, and the Spanish language.

**Welcome to the Garden**

**First day of the internship**

Costa Rica

After the seven-hour bus ride from San Jose to San Vito, I was dropped off at the office of the garden and got my room key. *It was that simple. They knew who I was and just left it at that.* It seemed odd for it to be so simple after two days of traveling by plane and bus, just to be handed a room key where I will be staying for the next three months. On my way to my room, I met Christy. She was from Tennessee and had been here for two weeks and leaves on Sunday. She is a graduate student and very focused on her horticulture research.

*She told me about how she has been feeling about being sad and very lonely, but now she wished she could stay for three months just like I am doing. She said she was often the only person at the dinner table and goes to bed at 8:30 because there is nothing to do.*

I went up to my room and decided to take a nap after the long bus ride. When I woke up, I was confused. I was disoriented and had to remind myself I was in Costa Rica. I was in Costa Rica, all by myself. I doubted why I had come. I was comfortable
being alone, but Christy painted such a dismal picture of things. *She said I hope you do well by yourself, because you are going to be by yourself all the time.* She really worried me. I always liked being alone, just not all the time. But maybe I would love the time just to be with my thoughts in the garden. *I just had to remind myself that I was just tired from traveling.* There is always an adjustment, I know that.

*Finding the Same Level*

**One month into the internship**

I had a neat conversation with Ana Maria today. She is the secretary in the office and has kind of been stand offish to me since I arrived. I kept telling myself that she was just shy, but I don’t know if that was really it. I have always tried to have normal conversations with her, like asking her where she got her jeans and stuff. And has been warming up to me little by little. I went into the office this morning to let Ana Maria know that my dad might call. We just started talking about our families. I think I stayed in the office for almost an hour. She is my age and has a 2 year old son. She lives with her mom, dad, grandmother, and husband. I told her about my family and how important they are in my life. She just lit up when she talked about her son. I told her about my two nephews that I miss very much. I really felt like we had a special connection. We were leading similar lives, just countries apart.

From the day I arrived here, I have tired be to be on the same level as everyone else here.

*I entered into the whole situation pretending like I did not have anything. I just introduced myself, like hey, what’s up? How are you? Really just,*
especially women any age, if they were my age or not, I just gave them the most respect that I could. There was so much physical labor involved with the job, I would just try and do as much as I could. I would let the guys, go on a longer break or something. Or I would not go on my break so I could finish weeding in my area. I wanted to show them that I was just on their level. I didn’t bring hardly anything to begin with. I did not need it. I just had my rain jacket and some boots or whatever. Some of the medical students that came to the station would go out to the bar and bring back a lot of alcohol and be really rowdy. The staff was there, they could see. I just tried to down play the America me. I just tried to be on their level. I did not talk about my research or my university. I didn’t talk about anything like that. I was just a gardener. I was just there working with them. I think that helped a lot. After I got to know them, I would tell them more. But after we had already established we were on the same level.

Bananas and Gingers

Two months into the internship

Costa Rica

My research project is really coming along. It is amazing how it has worked out since I really did not know what I was doing. I thought I was going to be working with someone on my research, but it was not like that. They told me I was a researcher, so I was supposed to have my own agenda, but I did not. I had always been given the methods part, like in basic biology lab. But I had to make my own project, which was a shocker. Since I did not know what else to do, I just started hiking. I had to find these two invasive plant species. I had to map them out, their distributions across the garden. Take their seeds, collect their seeds, and scarify them. Then I set up germination tests. I was able to teach myself as I went. The toughest part was trying to play it off like I knew what I was doing all the time. When I had a question I had to ask it in such a way that it sounded like I knew what I was doing, knew what I was searching for.
Now with my seeds growing, I have so much to do. It is so much better than when I arrived because they did not know what to do with me. That was so frustrating because it was expensive to be staying at the garden. At first I thought I was wasting my money doing this. I was also disappointed how little they would contact me, about my progress. Since I was a researcher, it was my deal. I kind I am glad I never let those emotions out though. I just sucked it up and realized it was a wonderful opportunity.

**Don’t hate me for who I am**

**Three months into the internship**

Central America

I am so frustrated. I met the biggest jerk. He was just a jerk. I have to keep telling myself that. I was waiting for the bus at four in the morning to go to Nicaragua. He came up to me and introduced himself in Spanish so we had a conversation. He clearly was not a native Spanish speaker, but I thought maybe he was trying to practice his Spanish.

*And then later that afternoon, we were still on the bus, I broke into English thinking why not. He told me, if I would have answered me that morning in English, he would have not continued the conversation. He thought I was German. He hated people from American. And here I am, American.*

What a jerk, I am the same person either way, speaking Spanish or English. He asked me about September 11, but his Spanish was not very good so he did not understand what I was saying. He thought I supported the war in Iraq. I was so frustrated. It was all in Spanish and he did not understand. When we got off the bus, I told him that if he wanted to hear what I felt about September 11, then I would tell him in
English because that is the only way I could express my feelings. After he finally understood me, he apologized for making me cry. *But what a jerk. I did not want to talk to him again.*

He made me so angry because he hated who I was without ever knowing me. Sure he liked me when I spoke Spanish, but I am an American no matter what language I speak. I had starting telling people I was from Oregon, instead of from the states. It was easier. People were like – Oregon? Where is that? *At least then they had to put out more effort before they would hate you.* I wanted them to know me as Lucy, not just an American. But whether they know that first or last, I am an American, and to hate me for that is wrong. This is who I am. *This is the person you are going to get. If you are not going to talk to me because I am then too bad for you.* Yes, I am an American, but I am more than that.

**Talkative Me**

**Three weeks into classes back in O.S.U.**

Professor Torres told me today after class that she is really glad I am contributing more to class discussions. At first I was not sure what she was talking about, but then I got to thinking about it.

*I used to never talk in class. I just did not want to. I was an over achiever. I would do my good bookwork, but I would never talk about my own ideas. But now after being in Costa Rica, I want to know other people’s ideas and what makes them who they are. I am much more curious. With speaking Spanish, I would have to go out on a limb and try and communicate. Now that has carried over to my English skills. I am more upfront with people. I have never had that feeling before that you*
need to stand up for yourself when you are out there. I have become more powerful within myself.

I feel like I need to question people about their beliefs. Not to be rude, but to understand where they are coming from. No one ever questioned me before I went abroad. I was an American. *We know everything.* I never thought about what that meant. *I had nothing to compare myself to.* I didn’t fully understand where I was coming from. I am still trying to figure that out, and trying to understand others, and help them understand themselves. I feel like I need to be a better American by understanding others. *I feel like I am a global citizen now, and I need to be more aware of what is going on, more up to date.*

Even though I feel like I need to speak up in class, I don’t feel like sharing my experience with my friends.

*I haven’t wanted to say I am back, because then I have to admit it is over. I have just wanted to keep this warm fuzzy feeling as long as I can. I am not ready to let it go, be done with it. Kind of like whey you tell a secret, then it won’t come true. I don’t really talk to them about it much. I just want to hold it inside and let it be.*

It is not that I am living in the past, I just want to keep living that life. *Everything was on such a simple level.* Daily life was without all these distractions. *I have tried to bring that back with me.* I moved home, and I am living with my mom. *It is fine. It is just simpler.*
A New Future

End of Fall Term

I got into horticulture because I was thinking I wanted to be landscaper, a landscape artist. My mind has really changed over the time. That is really not important to me anymore. I can install these expensive plants for these expensive houses, and for these people to have even a more picturesque sort of life. I know that is not where my heart is. It is not what I care about. I guess that is how I would get the better paycheck though.

After doing the internship I realized I want to be a researcher. Research was always something that I was scared of because I never knew what it was about. I was like researchers, oh that seems like you would never get a paycheck. I didn’t know how you would get that job. So that is an option now. And also being a part of all these conservation projects. I really want to do that. Just working for non-profit organizations, kind of going out there. That seems like what I am going to try. It seems so right there, like I am right on the verge of being in there, that sort of life. But I will always have landscaping to fall back on. But that is not where I want to be. For now, and maybe I will have a native plant nursery when I am old and gray, but for now I want to explore and research. I love problem solving; being the one with the answers.

I am pretty sure I am going to move to Central America once I graduate. I met some people who were volunteering for WOOFing – Willing workers on Organic Farms. I could start in Mexico and then work my way down to Panama, working at organic farms along the way. It would be good to understand where these local farmers are coming from. Once I understand their ways, I can introduce them to different ways, different pesticides, and work to incorporate some of these new techniques. There are lots of jobs available in nurseries, botanical gardens, and state parks. That is my goal.
JANIE

Janie grew up in a small town in small town in Oregon. Her graduation class was 52 people. She came to Oregon State University not knowing what she wanted to major in. She did not declare a major her freshman year. She had always been involved with the theatre growing up, but considered it a hobby but not a career. Janie studied abroad in London her sophomore year for three months. After her experience there, she decided to major in theatre. She believed it was impractical to major in theatre. However, after her experience in London, she realized “life was too short to do what is practical.” So, she followed her “heart to theatre”. She was the student coordinator for the Peer Theatre class on campus. She loved her Peer Theatre job “because I have brought the joy of theatre into the lives of others.” When applying for the internship, Janie believed she would be pursing a career of teaching theatre to high school students.

Janie’s internship through the IE3 program was two fold; she interned at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon for three months, and then interned with the London Globe Theater for three months. Her internship in Ashland was during spring semester, which completed her graduation requirements. She graduated, moved from Ashland to London, and started at the Globe Theatre in one week.

All So Quick

A day before departure  

Oregon

Well, I leave tomorrow on another adventure. I really like to pack them in. Somehow graduating and finishing one internship did not seem like enough for one week.
I thought I should move to London to begin another internship. I am excited to go to London, don’t get me wrong. What an opportunity! I have been looking forward to this since I read about the internship. I guess I just did not realize what a great time I would have working in Ashland at the Oregon Shakespeare’s Festival. *It was such a family environment there.* I would really like to get a full time job in Ashland, and I am excited for that to happen. But first London. Crazy. I know that London *can tend to be cold and impersonal.*

I still don’t have a place to live, and that is interesting. I am going to be staying with a friend of a friend for a few weeks, but then I don’t know what will happen after that. It is so expensive in London that there is no way I could live on my own. My hope is that once I am there, something will work out. I have emailed with Alicia, the internship mentor at the Globe, and she seems great. Hopefully with her help I won’t be homeless. Well, I still have a lot to do before I get on that plane tomorrow.

*Not Being Homeless*

**Two weeks into the internship**

I have a home. Brilliant! Alicia, the intern mentor, called me up today and asked if I would want to live with Theresa from the box office and her 12-year-old son. I was getting pretty desperate so I said yes immediately. Then Alicia told me that Theresa was excited to have someone there with her and her son, so I would not have to pay rent. Score! A free place to stay in London, unheard of…. Oh, what a weight off my mind.
To think I have been worried about this for so long, and thanks to Alicia, it was no problem at all. I am moving in two days.

So I have finally figured out what my job is.

*I am doing a lot of event planning for the audiences coming in to speak one on one with the actors. Sometimes the actors would come in and set the scene for a play that was coming up. Like if you were going to see Richard the II, a lecturer would come in and kind of set up the scene, help people with the history, help people follow Shakespeare. I will be the stage manager for the Read not Dead series, which are basically staged readings and we had three in three months. So once a month. I will be basically in charge of doing the programs, getting them props, and getting the actors their scripts.*

Alicia helped me with my learning contract, which was something I had to do for IE3. *It was helpful to have to write it all down on paper, and then send it to someone. It helped clarify what I was going to be doing, and what my actual projects were going to be.* The atmosphere at the Globe is so hectic that it had been hard to actually sit down with Alicia and talk about these things. *I am not sure if we did not have to do the learning contract, if I would have ever really known what my responsibilities were here.*

**On My Plate**

Two months into my internship

Oh, today was quite the day at work. I feel like I reached my breaking point, which could have been disastrous, but after my talk with Deb, my supervisor, I think it will all be better. By now the hectic office is no surprise. I am used to the panic and rush of activity about a big event coming on. It wasn’t that, it was that I was doing the job of four interns. I knew it was kind of my fault. *I was too confident in my own abilities, and*
I kept accepting projects that were given to me by other people. *My supervisors and coworkers did not realize how many projects I had on my plate.* I felt like I was not going to be able to complete any of them. *She couldn’t believe I had so many projects for different people.* We worked it out, so now I think there will be communication about what I have going on. Deb also helped me realize that it was okay for me to ask for help. I think I was trying to impress everyone, so I did not want to ask for help. But I am not Superwoman. We also talked about having people help me figure how what the big priorities were. Since I was new, I did not know what was important and what could wait. But even though today started out awful, awful enough for me to talk to Deb about it, I feel so much better now. I think things will be much smoother.

*To See the Final Product*

**Two months into the internship**

England

Today was amazing. Today was probably my favorite day of my internship.

*I got to go and watch the Gosden Globe performance of Romeo and Juliet. It was a year long project that had education practitioners go to the Gosden School, a school for students with disabilities, and had a carnival and songs about Romeo and Juliet. It was great to see the final product because I had helped put it together. Sure my role seemed small at the time, ordering T-shirts and other errands, but seeing the final show was amazing. I felt special to have been able to be a part of it.*

*Americans!*

**Two and a half months into the internship**

England

I was so embarrassed today. I was on the tube, on my way into work, and a few people in front of me were two American girls. They were so loud and were acting like
such Americans. Was I like that? I hope not. They were like “oh my gosh, like the pound is like 2 dollars. It is so confusing.” I wanted to tell them that it really was not that confusing. Everyone on the tube was looking at them. How could they not because they were being so loud. I kind of scrunched up in my seat, hoping to go unnoticed. Normally, I did not feel like an American. I did not feel like I stuck out, but these girls clearly stuck out. It was obvious to everyone on that subway car that these girls were from the USA. They were in London on study abroad trip and they looked young. I guess that could have been me two years ago when I was here. I hoped that I was not that obnoxious. When my stop came, I realized that I tried to say excuse me with a British accent. I wonder if the American girl in me was spotted.

There are definitely some apparent differences between the American and British way of life. London has the same fast paced way of life like it does in the states.” I was told by Londoners that their stereotype of American people is that we are “fat and spend too much. That is one thing that I will try to bring back with me to the states, that everything here is condensed. They try to make the most out of small spaces. And in the U.S., everything is bought in bulk. They would never believe the Costco way of shopping. Oh I need pickles, lets go buy 10 boxes. Instead of going to the grocery store one a week and getting fresh food. No, there is top ramen in the pantry for 10 years. We have all this extra space in America and we have decided to fill it with huge SUVs and food bought by the dozens at Costco.

The stereotypes the Brits have of us are that we are spoiled, pompous, and egocentric.
I don't think I am proud to be an American. I feel ashamed that I am from the states. Just because I don't think I ever got a good rooting in really being proud of where I am from and the privileges we do have. It is odd to see the states from an outside point of view. I have to wonder what we are doing sometimes. Why is it so great to be an American? Being here has raised a lot of questions in my mind.

My own History

Two and a half months into the internship

Living with Theresa and Josh has been great. When I was here before, the family I was living with was definitely into having a student live with them for the money. Which was fine, but it was not a real family atmosphere. But with Theresa and Josh, I definitely feel like part of the family. With just the two of them, I think they like having another person there. But I felt like such an idiot today. Josh was taking a U.S. history class, so he thought I could help him with his homework. Good assumption that I would know U.S. history, but apparently he knew more than me. "Who was the 12th U.S. president?" Are you kidding? I don't know that. I just kind of laughed it off and went and got us some chocolate cake, but I felt really ignorant.

I remember when I was in London before, it was during the election and they had to recount the votes for Florida. Londoners would ask me if American's could not count. I would just say I was not going to get into it. Basically what I found out was that British people knew more about American history than I did. Even Josh, this 14-year-old kid. I am going to make it my goal, that when I get back to the states I am going to become more informed. Without school to get in my way, I am going to read lots of books of my
choice about American history and politics. It is embarrassing to know so little about my own country.

In Transition

Three weeks being back home  Oregon

I am here, back in Oregon at my parent’s house. In order to gain some sense of stability and relaxation after finishing college and two internships without a break, this seemed like a good decision. It was my way of winding down a bit before jumping into the real world. And I just needed some time to think. Because for so long I was going to do three months in Ashland, and three months in London, and that was all I needed to worry about. Here I am now, graduated, and I still have 60 years left to go and I have no idea what I want to do. I feel really lost. I feel like my friends are either in Corvallis with a few terms left, or they graduated in June and have figured out by now what they are doing. And I am here, just wondering what is next.

I have been back to Corvallis a few times, but everyone is so involved with school. We have had a hard time getting together. I feel like they think it is odd that I don’t know what I am doing, but they will see. When I was in school, I just assumed I would get a job when I was done. But it is just not that simple. From these two internships I have learned there are just so many possibilities in theatre. I just need to decide what I want to do.

I am so thankful for my internship in London.
I learned so much in just three months from going out and living in another culture. Being able to do two internships, I was able to learn "more in the six months than in all four years of college. So it makes me wonder why I wasted so much time in college. It is just one of those lose-lose situations. I am really glad I have a degree because you have to have it for anything you want to do. But I wonder if I lost out on a lot of life experiences because I was wasting my time sitting in a class listening to a professor. Our culture has put such a huge emphasis on having a college degree. It seems like life experiences are less important.

As I try to write my resume, I am glad I have a real work experience to put down.

Classroom knowledge can only get you so far.

To the Box Office

One month after being home

I had planned to stay at my parents longer, but I got restless. I moved down to Ashland, and I was lucky enough to find a job quickly. I found a job working in the box office of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. It is not exactly what I want to be doing, but I am happy to be back in Ashland and happy to be back in the world of theater. I think this will be a good place to be as I figure out what I want to do next. Before starting the internships, I was pretty sure I wanted to teach theatre at a high school. But I think I want to be more connected with a company. With both the internships, I was helping put on these amazing performances. I even think I am leaning away from the educational side of programs. It is not exactly what I want to do. But being involved behind the scenes showed me that what I would like to do is more public relations related.
Themes

From the students' stories, definite themes emerged. There were many similarities among the challenges of these students. In this section, six themes are presented: (1) clarifying personal values, (2) questioning their nationality — what does it mean to be an American?, (3) value of a formal education, (4) relationships with others, (5) career aspirations, and (6) support systems. All of these students struggled with each of these issues, either while abroad or upon their return home. Presented with each of these themes are examples from the three students' stories. I have not necessarily used an example from every student for every theme. Instead, I have chosen to include the most demonstrative examples from the three.

(1) Clarifying Personal Values

For these students, when they were abroad they were forced to question some of their long-standing beliefs. The introduction of a new culture with a new value system caused them to reflect on their own beliefs. They had never been asked to defend their beliefs before. They had never seen their own beliefs and ideals in such opposition to others. This was a tremendous growth opportunity for these students as they processed and began to understand their own beliefs, including where their biases came from and what were the foundations of their beliefs. Each of these unique cultures that these students experienced caused separate and individual deliberations on the student's part.

For Matt, his co-workers, his host family, and even the taxi driver caused him to question his value system. As a paramedic, Matt interacted with many families as they
were faced with the health concerns of a loved one. Time and time again, as a family member was dying or even dead, there were no tears or sadness from the family. Matt had a hard time understanding how calm and accepting the family could be in what he thought was a time of crisis. But he learned that the death of a loved one was a natural process that these families accepted. Death did not mean sadness, only that this family member had moved on to another stage in their life. He also appreciated and admired the friendliness he experienced. He felt welcomed into this host family instantaneously and they made him feel like a part of the family from day one. But it was not just his family, the taxi driver who he had met for only a portion of an hour, told him he had a home in Mexico anytime. The sincerity, openness, and hospitable environment that the Mexicans shared with Matt had a lasting impression. He hoped these values would become a part of his life when he returned to the states.

Lucy believed she was at the same level as her co-workers. She came down to Costa Rica with little more than a raincoat and rubber boots. She wanted to be seen as just a gardener, so she took her regular breaks with the other gardeners or worked through her breaks to show her appreciation for their work. She did not go out drinking like the other medical students. But no matter how hard she tried to be the same level as her co-workers, it was impossible to hide all the privileges that she had. Lucy’s calculator, which was of little value to her, was amazing to the cleaning woman. When Lucy gave her the calculator, Lucy could see the appreciation in this woman’s eyes. And Lucy was more than a gardener. She was a researcher with a complicated project underway. This put Lucy on a different level, which frustrated her. No one asked her about her project.
Lucy learned, however, that it was not lack of interest, but lack of knowledge. Her co-workers were gardeners who had never studied or been taught these scientific horticulture techniques. Lucy never saw herself as one with privilege, but she learned that she had been given many opportunities that her co-workers would never have.

Janie was from a small town in Oregon, so cosmopolitan London was a huge transition. For Janie, her values had started to be challenged when she studied abroad in London two years before her internship. In rural Oregon, there was ample space; space to move around and space to store things. But in London, everything needed to be much more compact. Janie learned that excess was not necessary in terms of shopping, cars, and even attitudes. She learned that British people have stereotyped Americans as rich, spoiled, and egocentric. She began to question her own values to see if she fit these stereotypes. As she struggled with her own finances and how she was going to afford this internship in London, she knew she did not match those stereotypes. But she began to question America as a whole. She struggled with how and why a country could create such an image.

(2) Questioning their Nationality — What does it mean to be an American?

Even though all of these students had previously spent at least three months abroad before their internships in the summer of 2003, they were faced with questions about being an American citizen. These students were abroad for their internships during the summer of 2003. The U.S. had invaded Iraq the previous March, and throughout the world, there was a significant anti-American sentiment. The United States decision to
invade Iraq was not backed by the United Nations and some of our strongest allies, including France and Germany, did not support this war. This created a climate overseas where these students were forced to defend the actions of the American government. These students had to critically analyze their own views in comparison to the views of their government. Then they were asked to articulate this to others who were often hostile to the U.S. involvement. Being an American overseas caused these students to really contemplate what their nationality meant to them.

Matt had frequent political conversations with his host family. His hosts were a traditional, conservative Catholic family. They were shocked and dismayed at how open-minded Matt was in regard to gay marriage. His family was not very concerned with America’s war with Iraq. They were pacifists and believed the war was wrong, but they were more worried about their own country’s instability. Their main concern was the large number of Mexicans living in poverty. Matt also had to explain that America was not always the promised land. Many people in Mexico believed that a better life was waiting for them just over the northern border. Matt knew the problems of America, and knew about the large number of Mexican immigrants who did not have better life there.

It was difficult to comprehend that America could be seen as the land of opportunity for everyone. And he was born in this land of opportunity - what sort of privileges did this grant him?

Lucy felt as if she was attacked and wrongly hated for being an America. Her interaction with the Austrian on the bus really shook her. This man had tremendous hate for her because she was an American. He was only willing to start a conversation with
her because he had mistaken her identity. And attempting to maintain this non-American image, caused her to only speak in Spanish, which caused her to grow more frustrated. In the end, she decided that she was going to speak English. She was willing to be the American she was and if he hated her, then that was not her battle to fight. Although she realized this one individual was a “jerk”, his hatred really caused her to reflect on what America had done to deserve this hatred. It was painful for her to be hated for who she was.

When Janie’s eyes wandered throughout the London subway car that day, she knew she identified with these Americans. She had experienced the same feelings as these girls a few years earlier, but she hoped she was not as obnoxious. All the stereotypes she had been trying to dispel were starring right back at her. These Americans did appear to be rich, spoiled, and egocentric. By Janie exiting the train with her British “excuse me, sir” she wanted to be identified with the other Brits, and not these Americans. Janie came back to the states feeling embarrassed about her citizenship. By being abroad, she was able to see the U.S. from another viewpoint and it surprised her. She had never seen the U.S. from this vantage point, and she was not sure she liked what she saw.

(3) Value of a Formal Education

Matt, Lucy, and Janie had completed four years of college before going on their internships. For the previous four years, they had been studying, researching, and taking classes at O.S.U. Before leaving for their internships, they believed their college
education was excellent preparation for their desired careers. However, after interning abroad their views regarding formal education were challenged. They all felt they had learned so much about being professionals in their fields. Repeatedly, they expressed how they learned more in the three-month internship, than they had learned their entire college career. They questioned why America placed such a tremendous importance on a formal education. It was difficult for Matt and Lucy to return to the college classroom, when they believed the real learning took place outside of it. Janie was thankful she was done with her degree, but she wondered if she had wasted four years of her life. Before doing their internships abroad, these students had not questioned why they were pursuing traditional four-year college degrees.

In two weeks time, Matt had to adjust from being a pediatrician in Mexico to being a chemistry student back in the U.S. In one life, he was using a stethoscope to check the irregular heart rates of children. Upon his return, he was studying a textbook for a chemistry midterm exam. Studying for chemistry midterms was nothing new. He had done this for the previous four years, but now he questioned why these classes were part of his education. Yes, he knew he needed these classes to graduate and they were required for entrance into medical school. But did they really prepare him to be pediatrician? Diagnosing children in Mexico was much more applicable. It was his internship, not these classes, which were preparing him to be a doctor. Yet, this internship was not required by the university or by the medical schools he was applying to. This internship caused him to question the value of his formal education.
(4) Relationships with Others

It was surprising to Matt, Lucy, and Janie that their relationships with their friends, family members, and even strangers were different after returning to the U.S. Long-standing relationships were significantly changed in the three months that they were abroad. They struggled to understand why people were treating them differently. With time and reflection, they realized it was not other people, but themselves who had changed in the relationship. Some relationships were challenging as these students felt they had little in common with people they had previously bonded with. And some relationships appeared stronger when the students returned. When they could share their new experiences and integrate them into existing relationships, they felt their relationships had grown, for the better. By sharing and having receptive listeners, they found their relationships with others to be strengthened.

For Matt, it was through our conversations in the focus groups that he began to process how his relationships had evolved since he returned from being abroad. He had questioned why things had seemed different with some of this friends, but when Lucy and Janie shared how some of their relationships had changed, it really helped Matt understand why his relationships were different now. With his friends who had also gone abroad, he loved sharing stories with them, and he felt very close to them. His family had also been very supportive. His mom was attempting to learn Spanish and wanted to send Christmas gifts down to the children Matt was helping in Mexico. But there were other friends that he felt he had very little in common with anymore. He also admitted that these friends knew very little about his internship experience.
(5) Career Aspirations

These students selected their internships based on the skills they would develop through their internships which they thought would be needed in their future careers. They all had career goals, and their job appointments overseas matched their goals specifically. All three of these students had well defined careers goals before embarking on their internships, as their visions and expectations about their futures had been developing for a few years. However, all three of them came back with different future plans from those they left America with. Learning more about their fields of study in a very different setting, opened many more doors and raised many more questions for these students. Even though they believed their career goals were well developed before their internships, they were exposed to many more options overseas. None of the students made radical career shifts, but new pursuits in the same field were stimulated. Matt now wants to become a paramedic before he goes to medical school. Lucy now wants to work on organic farms in Central American and then do more research. And Janie no longer wants to do back stage work for the theatre, but would prefer a career doing public relations for a theatre company.

(6) Support

These students found vastly different support systems to assist them during their internships. For Lucy, the support she found was through her own reflection. She kept a detailed journal and she often looked back on what she wrote. It helped her to remember all of the obstacles she had already overcome. She wrote about things she found
challenging at the beginning of her internship. When reading her journal a few weeks later, those things no longer bothered her. She had evidence that things changed and evolved. She also relied on the Intercultural Adjustment Cycle graphic in her pre-departure handbook. She often looked at that graphic, which gave her confidence that every emotional low was followed by a high, and her feelings of adjustment were normal. Through her own introspection, she became her own support system.

In contrast, Matt found his support in other people. There were other interns working at the medical clinic. Matt talked to them almost every day at work. They were able to share stories and have similar experiences. Matt also quickly bonded with his host family. Throughout his life Matt has been supported by his family in Oregon, therefore having an extremely open and caring family in Mexico was a blessing. His coworkers were also very helpful. In all the different duties of his internship, he was always working with other health care professionals. He was always with a group of paramedics, doctors, or social workers. Matt’s support system was external, as opposed to Lucy’s own internal support. His drew support from relationships he formed.

The London Globe Theatre has an established internship program. On Janie’s first day of work, she met her internship mentor who assisted Janie in all aspects of her job. She helped her find free housing and helped her communicate with her supervisor regarding her workload. Janie also felt supported by the internship advisors in Corvallis. Janie had financial concerns about living in London, and her advisors created detailed budgets so she could be adequately prepared for her time abroad. Her advisors in Oregon were in contact with her throughout her internship. Janie’s support came from
established sources. Her support came from formal relationships that had been set up by the internship program.

Support was a significant aspect of all of these students' internships. But the sources of their support varied widely. These students found support internally and externally. And external support came from both formal and informal relationships.

The themes that have emerged from these students vividly show us the complicated identity development issues they encountered as a result of their international experiences. Their struggles and triumphs through different parts of their internships and their re-entry home give us concrete examples of how these students have formed their identities.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss how insights into the development of college students while abroad from the three students in this study can help student affairs professionals better support their students. Sanford (1966) and Erikson (1968) believe that the crisis moments faced by students cannot be resolved without the correct amount of support. Student affairs professionals play a significant role in helping student cope with these identity challenges before their departure, while they are overseas, and upon their return to the U.S. This research is perhaps most important for study abroad and internship advisors, but there are also ways in which other student affairs and academic departments can assist students through these transitions. Hopefully, these insights into the lives of Matt, Lucy, and Janie while abroad can help colleges and universities develop multi-faceted approaches to supporting students who participate in international experiences.

The second part of this chapter will examine limitations of this study and suggest possibilities for future research. As with many research projects, although I feel I have uncovered valuable information about these students’ identity development, beginning to understand these students only created more questions in my mind.

Practical Applications

Pre-departure

We have the opportunity to prepare students for the identity challenges they will face while overseas. Supporting students as they struggle with their identity is essential, but we can also prepare them by helping them recognize their own identity before going
abroad and give them real life examples of other students who have experienced similar challenges. This approach does not remove identity challenges, because these challenges are important for their development. However, giving students a better understanding of their own identity and the process experienced by others will help support their struggles.

Understanding their Own Identity. It is often difficult to get students to reflect on their own identity. As college students, they have little free time with the demands of school, work, and their friends. Also introspection is a time for individual thoughts and emotions, and college students are rarely alone. Residence halls, group housing, classes of 250 students, and study groups provide for very little alone time for students. Additionally, we want students to find this time while they are finishing their finals and getting their affairs in order to go overseas for at least three months. I do not believe it is a matter of convincing students that this time of reflection is important, it is more a matter of setting aside this time on top of their priority list.

As learned from Matt, Lucy, and Janie, they questioned some of their long-standing values and their identity as American citizens. Before students are faced with these challenges, it would be helpful for them to articulate these beliefs. The IE3 internship program provides each student with journal questions, which ask them to reflect on their own values and their own biases. The questions also ask them to examine the stereotypes they have of the host country they will be going to. The IE3 journal questions are structured so students will reflect on certain questions before their departure, and others at specific times during their internship. (The IE3 journal can be found in Appendix C).
I believe the IE3 journal is an excellent tool to help students reflect before their departure. However, even though all the students were given the journal, none of them actually spent time contemplating the questions before their departure, while abroad, or upon their return. Therefore, we need to create ways to structure this specific reflection process to ensure that it occurs. Perhaps students could receive one credit of course work for their completed journal. Knowing the journal was an academic requirement would place it on the same plane as their other coursework. And to ensure that they dedicate a specific amount of time for self-discovery, the one-credit class could meet on a weekly basis. For the first half of every class period, there could be an informal discussion about their values, and the second half of the class time could be left for personal reflection. This would provide an opportunity for students who learn best through personal interaction and also for those who need personal time for self-reflection. Once students start their journals, they may be more likely to continue them once they are abroad. We would want to give students the freedom to write about any thoughts and concerns about their internships, therefore we could grant credit on the basis of their in-class work, and they would not have to turn in their journals to be read by administrators.

The journal and in-class time would be valuable to help students resolve Erikson's fifth stage of identity development. He believes that resolution of this stage is achieved through reflection and introspection (Erikson, 1968). Since we do not believe students take the time for reflection and introspection, the one-credit class offering would facilitate this process.
The one-credit class could also help students better understand their American identity. The students interviewed had never thought about being an American before going abroad. They also wished they had been more informed about Americas’ foreign policies throughout the world. In a group of other Americans, the class could explore worldviews they may encounter overseas. With this background, when students are overseas they would be better prepared to compare the views of others against their own.

In Chickering’s final vector, developing integrity, he believes individuals clarify their own values, beliefs, and ethical standards. This also entails an individual being willing to consider different points of view and then build their own value system (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The one-credit class provides an atmosphere for students to clarify their own values, before they go overseas. This is the first step of Chickering’s developing integrity. Students will then be more open to the views of others from their initial moments abroad.

Understanding the Identity Struggles of Others. The students I interviewed struggled with their identity alone. Unlike study abroad programs, these students were often the only intern and often the only American at their work site. They did not have other students to talk with who were going through similar challenges. At times these students felt isolated and had no knowledge that other interns were currently facing the issues they were struggling with. They did not know these were the same struggles faced time and time again by interns abroad. If the students knew their struggles were normal and could be overcome, they may have been more comfortable in their situation and more confident they could resolve these struggles.
This shows the importance of connecting students with past interns before their departure. The IE3 Internship Program does a good job of this by bring past participants to the pre-departure orientation. The past participants speak on a panel about the challenges they faced abroad. An IE3 Regional Director facilitates the panel and current students are encouraged to ask questions. Some additional issues that need to be addressed by the panel are the sources of students’ support and how their career paths were changed by this experience. As seen by the students in this study, there were very different ways students can be supported; both internally and externally, and through formal and informal structures. Informing current interns about the different types of support can help them seek out the support they need while they are overseas. Additionally, having the experienced interns talk about their career paths could help current interns see how divergent careers paths can become. This will help students be more open-minded as they explore these fields. Past participants are an invaluable resource to students who will be departing the U.S. soon; therefore their participation in orientation is essential.

Current interns could also benefit from hearing from international students who are studying in the U.S. International students are currently struggling with some of these development issues. Additionally, their outside viewpoint about American culture is invaluable. This will help current interns understand how they are going to be viewed by their employer overseas. Cultural differences are difficult to see without leaving your own culture. O.S.U. has the International Cultural Service Program (I.C.S.P.) in which international students serve as cultural ambassadors at various events in the community.
These students could serve on another student panel during orientation. The combination of these panels would provide current interns with two amazingly different perspectives.

*While Abroad*

As student affairs professionals, our role of providing support to students is much more complex while students are overseas. Without face-to-face contact, there is less we can do as advisors via phone or email if a student is unprepared when we are an ocean apart. That is why our efforts are so important before their departure. As for internal support, hopefully our work to show the students the importance of journaling through the one-credit class would be enough to encourage the students to continue while on their internship. It might also help to give the students a bound journal with the questions printed throughout the book. The IE3 journal currently given to students may not get used because they just leave it at home with their other pre-departure materials. The Intercultural Adjustment Cycle would also be helpful to include in the journal, as well as quotes from past interns (Rhinesmith, 1975).

External sources of support are not available in all of the internships sites. Every site has an internship supervisor, but some supervisors see themselves more as bosses than mentors. Because every internship placement is so unique, it is difficult to create formal mentors at every site. But regional directors should keep in mind the value some students have found through these relationships. If at all possible, setting up more structured mentor relationships may be helpful to students. Because the role of internship supervisor is already established, the IE3 internships program can work with these
supervisors to help them understand the type of support needed by students. Perhaps a handbook could be developed for on-site mentors that outlines the intern-mentor relationship. The handbook could help supervisors understand the developmental process students will be experiencing throughout their internship. Also personal stories from interns and mentors could assist mentors in understanding how the intern-mentor relationship is created at other internship sites.

Support upon Re-entry

The re-entry process for internship students has been difficult to support. Since many of the students go on an internship as their last requirement of graduation, it is challenging to create formal support structures since they often do not return to campus. Some of the individual campuses do re-entry programming, but it may not be done every term. And for students who are now working or looking for work, they may have little connection to other students. But it was clear that many of the identity challenges experienced by students occurred upon their return to the U.S. Therefore, systems of support need to be put in place to reach students back on their home campuses and those who have graduated.

A workshop could be offered every term for students who have recently returned from their internships. The goals of the workshop will be to connect past interns with one another, give interns a chance to share their experiences so they can see that others are struggling with similar issues, and suggest ways in which they could incorporate their new experiences. Just by bringing these students together, the past interns will not feel as
isolated in their struggles. The workshop will include a time for the interns to simply share their experiences, similar to the focus groups conducted for this study. By giving them a space and time to bring up their concerns, they will be reflecting on their identity struggles in a group with similar experiences. Additionally, student affairs professionals from career services could be asked to come and help the students define their newly established career goals. Career counselors are valuable resources in assisting students find careers overseas, creating international resumes, and identifying graduate schools that fit their new interests.

It is important to recognize that not all past interns would be able to attend this workshop. Many of them might have moved out of the region, and possibly out of the country. We are fortunate, however, to have technology that can reach across geographical barriers. Through the IE3 Website an on-line discussion could be created. After the workshop each term, an advisor could post some of the issues discussed by the students. Students unable to attend the workshop could then log on to this discussion board and post their own responses. The same feelings of reconnection and sharing could be felt by students thousands of miles away. Students who attended the workshop could also be encouraged to post answers on the discussion board. The discussion board could serve as an on-going support system for these students.

We also need to create support systems for those students who return to the college classroom to finish their degrees. These students are experiencing unique identity challenges unlike their classmates. These are not the same students as they were before their departure. It is necessary to educate faculty and advisors about the challenges that
returned students are experiencing. Academic advisors will want to be in contact with their students to ensure they are not disillusioned with college coursework. The students I interviewed were adjusting well as their disillusionment was not interfering with their studies. However, this may not be the case in all students. Advisors may want to suggest taking classes that are internationally focused so the students can share their new ideas. Advisors also need to recognize that students’ career goals may have changed, and advisors need to ensure their students are still on the correct academic path. Only by creating a support system throughout many areas of campus will the needs of all of our students be met.

We also need to create more opportunities for students to stay connected with their overseas experiences. Marcia (1980) believed that successful resolution of an identity crisis resulted from students’ committing to new ideas. If the college classroom does not allow students to exhibit their new identity, perhaps there are opportunities through International Education offices. Past participants can be extremely valuable in helping market international experiences. Asking past participants to speak to classes and students organizations about their experience abroad can help the student commit to their experience back at home and excite new students about the opportunities abroad. Asking returned students to use their photos in promotional materials, brochures, flyers, websites, can help students stay connected to their experience abroad. Past participants sharing their stories at orientations is another venue for students to share their experiences. We need to create opportunities for students to incorporate their experience abroad into their lives at back home.
Limitations

Limited Sample Size

There were only three subjects for this study. In choosing to work with the internship students who had gone abroad during the summer of 2003, there were only ten students from O.S.U. in this pool. Out of those ten, only three decided to participate in this study. Two students in the pool were not contacted because their internships were six months long, therefore they were still abroad at the time of the study. Two students replied to my email that they had graduated and moved out of the Corvallis area. Another student expressed interest in the study, but her busy fall term schedule did not allow her to participate. And two other students did not reply to my email.

We must consider that those students who chose to participate in this study may have done so because they had positive experiences during their internships. Although these students did struggle with identity issues, they have obviously adjusted very well. We do not know why two students decided not to respond to my email, but we must be aware that those who chose to join this study may have had uniquely positive experiences.

The students that chose to participate had similar characteristics. All of the students had completed four years of course work at O.S.U. They had all spent at least three months overseas before, either working or studying abroad. They were all born in Oregon and had lived their whole lives there. They considered themselves Caucasians,
with ancestors from Western Europe. The themes that emerged from this study may have been specific to this homogeneous group.

There was also no control group in this study. Student development theories outlined in this thesis were created to explain the changes students experience while on their home campus. For these three students, if they had not gone abroad during the summer of 2003, they possibly would have experienced other events at home which could have helped them develop their identities. Comparison groups are necessary in order to attribute observed changes to the foreign study experience (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Therefore, another study needs to be done using a control group of students doing summer internships at home. By doing a direct comparison of the experiences of students interning both abroad and at home, the changes seen in these groups could then be attributed to the overseas experience.

**Short Time Abroad**

These students were also abroad for only three months. Studies have shown that the development of positive attitudes toward other countries appears to be related to extended, positive contacts which the sojourner has with host country nationals (Tims & Miller, 1986). Although these students were selected because they would have more interaction with host nationals than students participating in a study abroad program, these internships were only for a short duration. Long-term programs, both study abroad and internships, might lead to an enhanced international understanding.
However, short term abroad programs need to be studied because these programs have had a significant rise in participation in the last few years. According to NAFSA’s (Association of International Education) 2003 Report of the Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad “more than 90 percent of the Americans who study abroad go for a semester or less.” Even if the research shows that a longer duration of time abroad is related to the development of positive attitudes towards other countries, we need to understand and facilitate the experience that most of our students are having overseas.

Recolleciton of Past Experiences

We were able to understand the struggles experienced by the students in this study because these students reflected on their time abroad. Their journals, their photos, and the stories of other interns elicited many emotions they had felt through their internship. However, they were attempting to remember emotions they had felt three to six months earlier. Naturally with the passage of time, their recalled memories may have been different from their actual feelings at the time of the event. In recalling their emotions, they had had time to process their struggles. Some of their identity conflicts they may have resolved as time passed; therefore some particular struggles may not stand out in the students’ minds. I believe the students attempted to be as honest and reflective as possible, however time may change the way incidents and feeling are viewed.

Carlson and Widaman (1988) suggest that retrospective analysis may present potential problems. The students may have inaccurately remembered the attitudes they previously held and students may believe by virtue of their international experience they
were supposed to have been more worldminded in their views and, consequently, knowingly or unknowingly respond in that manner.

Interview Process

These students' identity development may have been aided by our discussion in the focus groups. Kauffmann and Kuh (1985) found that the reflective process required to prepare for and participate in the interview may encourage additional intellectual development. For example, Matt mentioned that only through our discussion regarding how relationships had changed upon their return home did he realize there was a connection between the distance he felt in some of this relationships and his experience abroad. Because these focus groups were a unique experience for these individuals, their development upon re-entry may have been influenced by their participation in these discussions.

Questions for Future Research

This study gives us insights into lives of three dynamic students. However, their backgrounds were fairly similar. Further research needs to be done to discover whether identity development is different for diverse student populations. What if the internship was the first overseas experience for students? What if these students had only completed two years of college coursework? What if students participated in their internships for six months or a year? What if student participants were from other racial backgrounds? This study could be replicated with a diverse sample of students. The
practical applications suggested meet the needs of the students in this study. However, these students' struggles may not illustrate the struggles experienced by all students.

As stated in the chapter on methods, the focus groups were conducted after the students returned from overseas. I believe knowing the students' initial gut reactions to situations overseas may give us better insight into their identity development. Therefore, communicating with the students while they are abroad may provide raw emotions before the students had time to process them. This processing is a step in development; therefore, by only hearing these students' stories three months after the initial encounters, we may not hear about essential steps in their development. It would be impossible to conduct focus groups on site because the internship sites are mostly individual placements. But the support systems suggested to encourage journaling may help elicit these genuine reactions at the current time of the struggle. Additionally, if the on-line discussion boards are set up for returned interns, another discussion board could be created for current interns. Not all interns have Internet access. But for those that do, the discussion generated may produce valuable insights into their identity development at the moment they are truly experiencing it.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

For Matt, Janie, and Lucy, their participation in an international experience created a tremendous environment for them to process their identity development. They had to defend their own views and the views of their country. They were stereotyped as rich and spoiled because they were Americans. They stated that they learned more about medicine, theatre, and horticulture in their three months abroad than in their entire undergraduate education. Upon their return home, they had modified their value systems and discovered new vocational interests. Their relationships with those they had left back in the U.S. had changed. By overcoming these challenges, Matt, Janie, and Lucy were able to further develop their identities.

It is important to return to the literature regarding international education to explore how this study contributes to our understanding of the effect of an international experience. From the six themes that emerged in this study, I will look to examine how they confirm or contradict the findings of previous research.

Matt, Lucy, and Janie experienced profound personal changes as a result of their international internships. Their experiences abroad helped them clarify their personal values regarding the privileges they had, the value of death and family, and their own materialism. This confirms the findings of Carsello & Creaser (1976) and Kuh & Kauffman (1985) which found that an international experience caused students to experience personal changes.

According to Carlson & Widaman (1988), students gain new perspectives of their home country from going abroad. The students in this study defined what it meant for
them to be an American. They had never really thought about what it meant to be an American before going abroad. However, once abroad they were faced with many American stereotypes. Many of the Mexicans Matt spoke with believed America was a land of endless opportunities, which caused Matt to think about the poverty in America and the lack of opportunities that truly existed. Lucy was hated by another traveler for being an American. Janie was embarrassed by the other Americans she saw in London and wanted to distance herself from them. As a result of their internship, they developed new perspectives about America.

Their experiences overseas caused the students to re-adjust their career goals. Although they did not radically change their career interests, being abroad helped them discover their true vocational passions. This is similar to Pyle’s findings (1981), where an experience abroad helped students develop lifestyle plans, including vocational interests, personal values, and future plans.

Martin (1986) discovered friend relationships had a more significant change than family relationships for students who went abroad. For Matt, Lucy, and Janie they did not see any change in their relationships with their family members, however they did see change within their groups of friends. Upon returning home, they felt they did not connect as well with some of their friends as they had before going overseas.

This study contradicts the findings of McGuigan (1958) and David (1971) that found there to be no effect of an international experience. Matt, Lucy, and Janie all believed their international internship experience had profoundly influenced their lives. Matt found a new calling in emergency medicine. Lucy learned what it was like to be
hated for your nationality. And Janie became embarrassed of the culture she had grown up in.

The challenges these students faced were not easily or completely resolved. They found support in their families, friends, former interns, intern mentors, and internship advisors. And sometimes the support they needed had to come from within. Finding the ideal type and level of support is essential for students to be able to grow from these crises. Providing the requisite support is the role of study abroad and internship advisors. As international advisors, we need to keep adding new support strategies to our repertoire, especially with new advances in technology that can facilitate communication across great distances and with multiple parties. Through the stories of these three students, we can learn a great deal about the support students need and how their needs can be more effectively met.
REFERENCES


Marion, P. B. (1980). Relationships of student characteristics and experiences with attitude change in a program of study abroad. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 21*, 58-64.


APPENDIX A
Recruitment Email

Dear (name of student),

Welcome home from your internship in (country). I hope that you are having a smooth transition settling back into life here.

I am one of the IE3 Global Internship advisors at Oregon State University. I got the chance to meet some of you at the pre-departure orientation back in May. I am conducting a study as part of my masters degree in how students develop their sense of their own American identity while participating in an international internship. While students are abroad, they are often faced with questions about being an American. This study hopes to understand the process students go through as they struggle with what it means to be an American. This will help us as advisors to provide the right support before and after their international experiences.

I would like to invite you to be a participant in this study. A focus group will be meeting the third week of classes for an hour and half. The focus group will give you a chance to meet other students who had similar experiences abroad. The focus groups will be an informal discussion regarding some of the issues you faced as an American abroad. You are encouraged to bring any journals or photos to help you explain your experience. At the focus group, you will be asked if you want to attend any follow up interviews, but that is entirely up to you and you can make your decision at that time.

Please respond to this email if you would be willing to participate. I will correspond with all interested participants and work to find a time that works for everyone. I hope to see you in a few weeks. If you have any questions, please contact me by email or at (541) 737-1810. Thanks.

Sincerely,
Jill Gutzler
Graduate Assistant
International Education
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: American Identity Development Abroad
Principal Investigator: Tom Scheuermann, College Student Services Administration
Research Staff: Jill Gutzler

PURPOSE
This is a research study. The purpose of this research study is to examine how students who participate in an international experience develop their own American identity. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called “informed consent”. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you participated in an international internship in the summer of 2003 through the IE3 Global Internship Program.

PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate, your involvement will last for one and a half hours during the initial focus group. After the initial focus group, you will be asked if you would like to participate in a series of three in depth interviews, taking place the 6th, 8th and 10th week of classes. The in depth interviews will last for 1 hour.

The following procedures are involved in this study. The initial focus group will be a guided casual conversation between all participants. You will be asked to share your stories from your time overseas. If you choose to participate in the in depth interviews, you will be asked more detailed questions about your experience overseas.

RISKS
The possible risks associated with participating in this research project are minimal. However, a potential risk is that you may feel more disconnected from your universities and your own country after exploring your feelings regarding being an American overseas.

BENEFITS
The potential personal benefits that may occur as a result of your participation in this study are the opportunities to share your own experiences and stories about your international experiences. Students often feel isolated from the campus community when they return from overseas, therefore making connections with other students who had similar experiences abroad may be very beneficial to you. The researchers anticipate that society may benefit from this study by helping international educators better understand the process students go through as they develop their national identity overseas. With this information, international educators can better support students through their developmental process.

OSU IRB Approval Date: 09-29-03
Approval Expiration Date: 09-28-04
CONFIDENTIALITY
Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies involving human subjects) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. It is possible that these records could contain information that personally identifies you. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that you cannot be identified.

AUDIO OR VISUAL RECORDING
By initialing in the space provided, you verify that you have been told that audio and visual recordings will be generated during the course of this study. All focus groups and in depth interviews will be recorded with a video camera. You will be asked if you would like to be referred to by pseudonym or by name during the interviews. Only the research staff will have access to the recorded tapes. The researcher will then transcribe the tapes with only pseudonyms listed. The tapes and transcripts will be destroyed once the Graduate School has accepted the thesis.

Participant’s initials

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. If at any time during the focus group or in depth interviews, you would prefer not to answer a question, please feel free to do so. If you decide not to take part, or if you stop participating at any time, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will be asked if the information provided by you up to that point can be used in the research. You may ask that all conversations by yourself be eliminated from the study.

QUESTIONS
Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Jill Gutzler, (541)737-1810, jill.gutzler@orst.edu OR Tom Scheuermann, (541)737-0692, tom.scheuermann@orst.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-3437 or by e-mail at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

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

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

RESEARCHER STATEMENT
I have discussed the above points with the participant or, where appropriate, with the participant’s legally authorized representative, using a translator when necessary. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

(Signature of Researcher) (Date)

OSU IRB Approval Date: 09-29-08
Approval Expiration Date: 09-28-04

APPENDIX B
APPENDIX C

IE3 GLOBAL INTERNSHIPS: INTERNSHIP JOURNAL

The questions here provide guided reflection for your internship experience. By beginning your journaling before you leave and continuing throughout the internship, you will have a clearer picture of how the internship has contributed to your professional, personal, and cross-cultural development.

The journal questions are broken down into five sections with recommended timeframes for answering the questions:

- Part One: Pre-departure
- Part Two: First Week
- Part Three: Initial Adjustment (end of second week)
- Part Four: Internship Reflection (throughout internship)
- Part Five: Post-Internship (ongoing after return to home country)

These questions also provide important material for your final report, which must be submitted to IE3 Global Internships within a month of returning from your internship.

Prior interns recommend you also include the following in a journal or portfolio:

- Publications and information about the host organization (very helpful in job interviews!)
- A list or portfolio of projects you work on (include photos, reports, articles, etc)
- A packet of materials about local transportation, good deals, recommended outings, etc. (Keep one as a souvenir and bring one back for the next intern.)
- A page in your journal of notes for the next intern

Good luck and all the best!

Part One: Pre-departure
Answer these questions in the weeks prior to your internship.

Internship Preparation
- List three of your internship goals for each of the following areas:
  a. Professional development
     1.
     2.
     3.
b. Personal development
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
c. Cross-cultural understanding
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

• What contributions do you expect to make to the organization?

• What expectations do you have of the work environment at your internship site?

• What are your concerns about the internship experience? What are your hopes?

• What are some key issues (political, social, environmental, etc.) influencing the professional field of your host organization?

• What are some current news headlines in the host country?

**Values and Culture**

• List three values of your home culture that are important to you.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

• What behaviors in your home culture are expressions of these values?

• List three values of the host culture that differ from your home culture.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

• What social behaviors do you expect to see that are expressions of these values?

• What aspects of the host culture do you think you will find frustrating or challenging? Which aspects are you looking forward to?

• What stereotypes do you expect people in the host country will have about people from your home country?

• What sources of information have shaped your impressions of the country where you will be working?
• What new information have you learned about the host country since receiving your internship assignment? What resources did you use?

• What are three things you can do to combat culture shock?
  1.
  2.
  3.

• Draw a picture that represents the host country to you.
Part Two: First Week
Answer these questions at the end of your first week in the organization.

• What are your initial impressions of:
  a. the country
  b. the workplace
  c. your housing situation
  d. your ability to communicate
  e. local transportation

• Describe your first interaction with your co-workers. Looking back, would you have done anything differently?

• Now that you are here, look at the list of goals you set pre-departure. Do you need to revise or adapt any goals or expectations?
  Professional:

  Personal:

  Cross-cultural:

• Is the work environment more formal or less formal than you expected? What aspects?

• What surprised you most in the first week of your internship?

• What are the first three things you learned to do?

• Who has been most helpful to you in your first week of work?

Part Three: Initial Adjustment
Answer these questions at the end of your second week in the organization. You should have already had a workplan meeting with your supervisor.

• Describe the meeting with your supervisor about your workplan. Are the work assignments what you expected?

• Do you feel prepared for the projects you will be working on? Is there anything you wish you had done to better prepare yourself for this internship?

• Do you think the host organization’s initial expectations of you were accurate, too high, or not high enough? Is there any additional information about you that you would have liked them to have before you arrived?

• Select several of the following aspects of your workplace. Observe and comment.
How do people greet each other in the morning?

How does one express disagreement in the following situations?
   1. In a group
   2. With a supervisor
   3. With a peer

What is standard protocol for entering someone’s office?

What kinds of behaviors are rewarded/criticized?

What is the prevailing attitude toward rules and procedures?

How do people address their superiors? Their subordinates?

• Is the above typical of the culture at large or only of the cultural sub-set in this work environment? What cultural values are expressed in the above behaviors?

• Were you required to register with the police, apply for a work-permit, or otherwise satisfy bureaucratic requirements? Describe the experience.

**Part Four: Internship Reflection**

These questions are broken down into categories that focus on professional, cross-cultural, and personal development aspects of the internship. When journaling, try to answer at least one question from each category.

**INTERNSHIP REFLECTION: PROFESSIONAL**

• How well did your coursework prepare you for the internship? What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?

• Are you meeting your professional development goals? If not, have you revisited the workplan with your supervisor to discuss options? What happened?

• Have you improved your professional vocabulary? What tools or strategies have been helpful for this?

• Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths? Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) to learn about the field?

• With your experience thusfar, are you more or less committed to a career in this field? What experiences have contributed to this?
• Who in the organization do you admire most? What characteristics of this person do you admire? Which of these characteristics would you like to develop in yourself?

INTERNSHIP REFLECTION: CROSS-CULTURAL
• Looking back at your pre-departure journal, how have your impressions of the host culture changed? What new sources of information have shaped your impressions?

• Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences. What did you do? What would you do next time?

• Describe a time when you used D.I.E. (Describe, Interpret Evaluate) to overcome a knee-jerk reaction to a situation.

• What is the most frustrating aspect of the host culture? What is the most rewarding aspect?

• What do you think the most frustrating aspect of your culture is for the people you live and work with?

• Have you encountered stereotypes about your home culture? What are they? Do you think your behavior confirms or contradicts these stereotypes?

• Did you have stereotypes of the host culture before coming? How have your perceptions changed?

• What expressions or idioms in the host culture/language contradict or parallel the following American expressions. What value differences does this demonstrate?

“Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.”
“Nothing ventured, nothing gained.”
“Every cloud has a silver lining”

• What are three everyday expressions that embody values characteristic of the culture?

• Read the answers in your pre-departure journal about your expectations of the host country’s values and behaviors. What is different than you expected? What influenced your expectations before coming? What has changed since then?

• Draw a picture that represents the host country to you.
INTERNSHIP REFLECTION: PERSONAL

• What are the most important things you have learned about yourself through this experience?

• What has been the biggest challenge for you personally on this internship? What has been the greatest reward?

• The period or cultural adjustment is often drawn as a “W” curve (refer to the IE3 Global Internships pre-departure orientation handbook for a picture) with various peaks and valleys:
  - Honeymoon (peak)
  - Initial Culture Shock (valley)
  - Cultural Adjustment (peak)
  - Further Culture Shock (valley)
  - Further Adjustment (peak)
  - Re-entry Shock (valley)

Draw the curve (or any other representation) of your cultural adjustment period– mark the highs and lows with dates, descriptions or drawings of events that represent one of these phases.

• How have your personal goals evolved since beginning the internship?

• Would you do anything differently? What?
Part Five: Post-Internship
Answer these questions after returning to your home country.

• What are the most important skills you developed during your internship?

• What aspects of daily life in your home country do you view differently as a result of your internship experience?

• What surprised you when you returned to your home country?

• What frustrated you when you returned to your home country? What relieved you?

• What experiences from your internship have influenced your decisions about future studies and career?

• How do people around you think you have changed from this experience?

• How have you changed?

• Do you want to go back to the host country? Why or why not?

• What important aspects of your experience do you want to share with others?

• What's next?