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Immediate Impacts of Short-Term Study Abroad Programs on Students at a Small, Religious, Comprehensive University

Robert D. Larson Jr.

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IMMEDIATE IMPACTS OF SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS ON
STUDENTS AT A SMALL, RELIGIOUS, COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY

By

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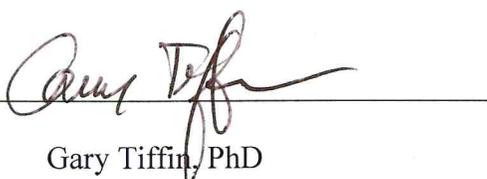
“IMMEDIATE IMPACTS OF SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS ON STUDENTS AT A SMALL, RELIGIOUS, COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY,” a Doctoral research project prepared by ROBBY LARSON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department.

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the impact of short-term study abroad programs on students at one small, religious, comprehensive university on the West Coast. In particular, four dimensions of influence are investigated: academic impact, personal impact, social impact, and spiritual impact. The primary objective of this investigation is to determine whether the short-term study abroad programs at this institution provide substantive opportunities for student growth in these four dimensions. A secondary objective utilizes Astin's Student Involvement Theory to discover the extent to which student engagement affects this student growth. The literature review examines the impact of study abroad experiences in each of this study's four dimensions, as well as the implications of study abroad duration on student outcomes. All participants in this study attend the same university and enrolled in a short-term study abroad program nine-months prior to participating in this research. The survey instrument relied on student self-assessment. Findings revealed that the short-term study abroad experience did have a measurable impact on study participants. Each of the four dimensions studied exhibited areas of positive impact, with the greatest impact occurring in the areas of personal and social growth. While less substantial, some degree of impact was felt in the areas of academic and spiritual growth. Further, the research found a positive correlation between quality and quantity of student investment in the short-term study abroad experience and the impact that students realized as a result. This study builds on a shallow base of scholarship specifically pertaining to the impact of short-term study abroad. Due to its methodology, this study is limited in its universality. The findings and conclusions are directly applicable to the institution and participants studied, but are not intended to be representative of all short-term study abroad programs.

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Completing a dissertation is the final step one must take to earn their doctorate; the pinnacle moment, perhaps, of one's lifelong educational journey. It is not, however, an individual endeavor. To be sure, this document is the result of an untold number of hours hunched over my kitchen table or in the Sterling Room for Writers at the Central Library in my hometown of Portland, Oregon. But even more so, what follows is the product of an incredible network of educators, mentors, colleagues, students, friends, and family who have ardently supported me throughout my life and who continued to encourage, inspire, and pray for me while I pursued this long-held aspiration.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandfathers,
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who were two of my first “teachers.”

Both understood the importance of education
and attended college without earning their degrees.
Both sought to provide a better future for their family.
They succeeded.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

There is little question among university educators that in our increasingly global society, students must be exposed to different cultures and need to learn to appropriately engage with people whose backgrounds differ from their own (Kehl & Morris, 2007). Now more than ever before, training in cultural competency has become an educational imperative for understanding humankind, successfully competing in the international job market, and to otherwise function productively in an interconnected world. As colleges and universities search for ways to enhance their cross-cultural offerings, many have increased their emphasis on study abroad programs as a key component of a broader strategy. These international experiences, regardless of their structure, create a vastly different educational environment than the traditional classroom-based education students receive at their home institutions. Even when these programs use a strict classroom format, the mere act of learning in another culture still produces a powerful learning experience for the student (Wessel, 2007). “Study abroad is primarily about intentionally moving beyond one’s local comfort zone and attempting to navigate in an environment different from one’s own. It is about discovering worlds beyond those the student already knows” (Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto, & Kheiltash, 2007, p. 12).

Over the past decade, study abroad programs nationally have seen a steady increase in participation rates. For the 2008-09 academic year, the number of Americans studying abroad was 260,327, just shy of the all-time record of 262,416 set the prior year (Chow & Bhandari, 2010). In fact, this 0.8% decline in study abroad participation was the only year-to-year decline

in the past 20 years. Early reports by the Institute of International Education (2010), the leading nonprofit that tracks study abroad participation, indicate that this uncharacteristic decline was reversed in 2009-10. Since 1996-97, the number of participants has grown over 370%, from a total of just under 100,000. However, despite the impressive historical growth rate of 9.7% (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005), the average undergraduate student is highly unlikely to study abroad as a part of his or her academic career (Dolby, 2007; Sambrook, 2008). According to 2004 figures published by the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program the total number of students participating in study abroad programs “represents only 3% of students enrolled in 4-year undergraduate programs and only 1% of all students in postsecondary education” (Dolby, 2007, p. 142).

Although these aggregate numbers describe the total population of college students studying abroad, it is beneficial to analyze the data further as there exists within the realm of study abroad programs a wide variety of offerings and options. For instance, the duration of a student’s international experience can range from one week to more than one year. As could be expected with such variance, the student experiences and outcomes of study abroad differ widely depending on a number of factors. Of the over 260,000 students studying abroad in 2008-09, nearly 55% participated in short-term programs, defined as those that are eight or less weeks in duration and typically take place during the summer or January term (Chow & Bhandari, 2010). This represents an abnormal decline in both the number of students participating in short-term programs, down 5,500 from the previous year, as well as in the share of all study abroad participants, down nearly 2% (Chow & Bhandair, 2010). Not surprising, however, is that with the exception of 2008-09, short-term trips have continually represented a greater share of all study abroad participation, while both mid-length and long-term programs account for a lesser

share in recent years. The accessibility of these short-term programs allows students to more easily overcome the academic, financial, and social costs associated with studying abroad, while still affording them the opportunity to receive academic credit in an overseas environment (Sambrook, 2008). Despite the ease of short-term programs, still more than 40% of all study abroad participants took advantage of mid-length programs, defined as one or two quarters, or one semester in length, representing a small increase in both the number of participants and overall share. Long-term programs, defined as those lasting for an academic or calendar year, also bucked recent declining enrollment trends, experiencing nearly negligible growth in overall share and number of participants (Chow & Bhandari, 2010).

Although most schools have established study abroad programs, the percentage of students actually participating in these programs is relatively small and study abroad experiences are still a fairly uncommon student occurrence at most institutions. Some schools have begun setting goals for study abroad participation, with a number of schools making some form of study abroad a requirement for graduation. George Fox University is among the schools that has committed to exposing students to study abroad opportunities. In 2010, U.S. News and World Report ranked the school 49th out of nearly 1,400 colleges and universities for the percentage of students that have an international experience prior to graduation (George Fox University, 2010). Just over 54% of all traditional undergraduate students participate in these programs, with a significant majority taking advantage of the short-term Juniors Abroad Program. This program consists of three week long, faculty-led trips to various destinations around the world each May and June, and is the primary emphasis of this research study. Some George Fox students do participate in mid-length or long-term programs lasting a semester or full year, but this is far less common.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the academic, personal, social, and spiritual outcomes of short-term study abroad experiences of George Fox University students nine months after returning from their overseas experience. Using self-assessment surveys, this research attempted to determine the impact of such experiences in the four dimensions listed above. The objective of this investigation was to determine if short-term study abroad programs provided substantive opportunities for student growth.

Research Questions

Given the stated purpose and methodology outlined in the problem statement, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) *To what extent are students' academic engagement and performance influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?*
- 2) *To what extent are students' self-perception and personal identity influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?*
- 3) *To what extent are students' understanding and appreciation of others influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?*
- 4) *To what extent are students' spiritual faith and habits influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?*
- 5) *To what extent does student engagement, as defined by Astin's Student Involvement Theory, affect the outcomes that result from a short-term study abroad experience?*

Working Hypothesis

From the onset of this study, the researcher's working hypothesis was that short-term study abroad programs do have a positive impact, to some degree, on the academic, personal, social, and spiritual lives of student participants. The extent to which these programs impact students was assumed to be less than those students participating in longer-term study abroad experiences, but greater than those students who did not participate in any study abroad program. Further, this working hypothesis was predicated on the assumption that those students who more actively engaged in the study abroad course and experience were influenced to a greater extent than those who were less engaged.

Theoretical Framework

After more than 20 years researching and writing about student development theory in higher education, Alexander Astin set out to articulate his own theory of student development. The need for this new theory was grounded in the seemingly convoluted literature that had, up until that point, failed to create unifying themes. The publishing of "Student involvement: A development theory for higher education" in 1984 was an attempt by Astin to simplify the discussion. At its core, Astin argues that the greater "physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518), the greater the outcome of that academic experience will be. Astin notes that the concept of student involvement has much in common with the concept of effort. However, effort alone is only part of involvement. The primary focus of this theory is on behavior, although Astin acknowledges that internal motivation does contribute to involvement.

Underlying Astin's Student Involvement Theory are the following five postulates:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. The objects may be highly generalized (the student experience) or highly specific (preparing for a chemistry examination).
2. Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum; that is, different students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different objects and different times.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features. The extent of a student's academic work, for instance, can be measured quantitatively (how many hours the student spends studying) and qualitatively (whether the student reviews and comprehends reading assignments or simply stares at a textbook and daydreams).
4. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.
5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. (Astin, 1984, p. 519)

To support this theory, Astin outlines existing research on student development that relates elements of the college experience to successful outcomes, the most notable being student retention and increased graduation rates. These elements include: living on campus, participation in an honors program, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, athletic involvement, and involvement in student government. In one way or another, each of these areas serves as a

key indicator and predictor of college success. In crafting this new theory, Astin was most compelled by its simplicity. At the most rudimentary level, Astin's theory states that one gets out of an activity what one puts into that activity. Additionally, Astin noted that this theory could "be used both by researchers to guide their investigation into student development—and by college administrators and faculty—to help them design more effective learning environments" (p. 518).

For the purposes of this research study, the primary area of investigation was related to Astin's fourth postulate noted previously. As this research sought to understand the impact of short-term study abroad programs on college students, special consideration was made regarding the students' own investment in the study abroad experience. Did they intentionally choose to immerse themselves in every aspect of the experience, with a commitment to suck the very nectar from their time overseas? Or did they instead commit minimal effort to the experience, content to merely be physically present in a foreign country?

Key Terms

Academic Impact – One of four dimensions of influence under investigation in this study. This concept refers to any self-reported change in students' scholastic habits, skills, focus, direction, achievement, attitude, approach, and/or commitment, which happens as a result of a short-term study abroad experience.

Immersion - Any experience in which an individual is embedded into a culture different from her or his own for a period of time which requires interaction with elements of that culture.

Long-Term Student Abroad Programs – Any academic program that occurs outside of a student's home country that lasts for one semester or more. Although some research does make a distinction between mid-length and long-term programs, for the purpose of this research that is

specifically concerned with short-term programs, all programs that exceed eight weeks in length will be grouped with, and referred to as, long-term programs.

Mid-Length Student Abroad Programs – Any academic program that occurs outside of a student’s home country that lasts for one or two quarters, or one semester in duration.

Personal Impact – One of four dimensions of influence under investigation in this study. This concept refers to any self-reported change in students’ self-perception, including identity, self-confidence, self-awareness, self-worth, and/or values, which happens as a result of a short-term study abroad experience.

Short-Term Student Abroad Programs – Any academic program that occurs outside of a student’s home country that lasts for fewer than eight weeks in duration. These programs often take the form of travel tours, study trips, or service-oriented trips and usually take place during January terms or during the summer break.

Social Impact – One of four dimensions of influence under investigation in this study. This concept refers to any self-reported change in students’ views of others or the world in general, including acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences, language, traditions, differing values, and/or perspectives, which happens as a result of a short-term study abroad experience.

Spiritual Impact – One of four dimensions of influence under investigation in this study. This concept refers to any self-reported change in students’ faith, including specific beliefs, importance of faith, spiritual habits or disciplines, and/or the role of faith in daily life, which happens as a result of a short-term study abroad experience.

Study Abroad – Any academic experience that occurs outside of a student’s home country that makes up a portion of her/his larger academic degree program or academic pursuit.

Limitations and Delimitations

Students took part in this research study nine months after participating in a short-term study abroad program. While this allowed the influence of the experience to play out over the course of nearly an entire academic year, in most cases the senior year, student self-perception of the specific impact of their study abroad experience versus other significant life experiences or regular maturation may not have been taken into account. This study was also dependent on student self-assessment. While a pre- and post-test research design may have yielded specifically quantifiable effects of the study abroad experience, the researcher elected to rely on student self-assessment, recognizing that this decision may have potentially introduced biases stemming from the social desirability effect.

Additionally, this study was delimited to students at George Fox University who participated in the Juniors Abroad program in summer 2013. Other students that participated in this program's 25-year history were not included, nor were students that participated in other study abroad programs at the university, all of which were at least mid-length in duration. Further, short-term study abroad students at other colleges and universities were not studied, as it was the researcher's sole intent to examine the impact of this singular institutional program.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

From the advent of higher education in North America, students have included international travel in their educational experience. In the earliest years, it was thought that the colonial colleges offered strong educational programs but were unable to develop proper worldly gentlemen. Although not a normative activity, some students who were enrolled at colonial colleges took advantage of the “great schools” and culture of England and the European continent. While a number of these students enrolled to seek formal degrees, others went abroad for a “Grand Tour” that offered a general engagement with European society and ways (Hoffa, 2007). Not surprisingly, however, these foreign educational endeavors were largely limited to young men from wealthy, landowning families.

With several less-than notable international initiatives notwithstanding, the University of Delaware is largely credited as the first American institution of higher education to develop a formal study abroad program (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004). In 1923, the university sent eight students to France for a yearlong intensive language and cultural immersion program. The program and model, which later became known as the Junior Year Abroad, grew quickly by attracting transfer students from other colleges, and was soon copied by other institutions (Hoffa, 2007). From those initial eight students, formal study abroad programs have grown steadily in the United States, eventually topping a quarter of a million students studying abroad in 2007-08 (Chow & Bhandari, 2010).

Not surprisingly, research investigating the effectiveness of such programs has also grown in the past 90 years. Kauffmann and Kuh (1984), in a study presented to the American Educational Research Association, indicated that between 1958 and 1984 more than 30 research studies were conducted to assess the effects of study abroad on the personal development of college and university students in the United States. Subsequently, the number of studies conducted has skyrocketed. Despite this growth in the amount of research conducted, it is common to find authors and researchers still articulating a general dearth of research on the topic, or more specifically, research that effectively informs practice. Some of this sentiment is communicated as a criticism of the field in general. However, the majority is portrayed while addressing study limitations or as suggestions for enhancing the understanding of this burgeoning area of scholarship through future research. Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) offer a statement that encapsulates this line of thinking: “Professionals in international education have long lamented the lack of a concrete quantitative foundation of data upon which to base recruitment and program design strategies in order to maximize student learning outcomes” (p. 165). In a report published by the Great Lakes Colleges Association, the authors both acknowledge and excuse this lack of research:

The number of evaluative instruments that focused on student learning and/or program design was small. Given the comparatively recent emergence of study abroad as a critical component of a liberal education, and the acknowledged difficulty in assessing outcomes that are largely comprised of experiential learning, the scarcity of instruments focusing on learning or program design was not unexpected. (2008, p. 4)

Further critiques of study abroad scholarship are often leveled at elements of research methodology, including the lack of a control group (Dwyer, 2004), use of self-reported data

(Dwyer, 2004; Great Lakes Colleges Association et al., 2008), limited use of pre- and post-trip assessment (Kehl & Morris, 2007), inadequate reflection time prior to assessment (Kauffmann & Kuh, 1984), and nonexistent links between student assessment and program design (Great Lakes Colleges Association et al., 2008; Kehl & Morris, 2007).

The existing body of research does leave significant room for further exploration, thus establishing the need and opportunity for this study. Still, much valuable research has been conducted, particularly in regard to the impact of study abroad experiences in the lives of higher education students. This literature review is largely organized around these findings, categorized by the four dimensions of impact that this study seeks to address: Academic, personal, social, and spiritual. Specific attention is paid to the differences that program length has on program impact.

Impact of Study Abroad

Rust et al. (2007) end their description of study abroad's purpose by stating, "It is about learning new languages, cultures, and ways of life" (p. 12). Growth in these three specific areas is among the most significant outcomes of study abroad, as is partially demonstrated by the volume of the study abroad literature dedicated to outcomes. At the same time, the growth that can and does occur through these foreign encounters is considerably broader. Sandell (2007) argues that the most substantial areas of impact are in a student's "professional role, international perspectives, personal development, and intellectual development" (p. 13). A review of existing research indicates a good degree of agreement with Sandell's categories, which although not the same, fit the four focus dimensions of this study well. In fact, only spiritual impact appears to be underrepresented in the literature.

Academic impact

By virtue of their place in the academic curriculum, and if for no other reason than the awarding of academic credit, it is reasonable to expect study abroad programs to produce academic outcomes. Though many aspects of study abroad are categorized as experiential learning, as opposed to academic learning, considerable research substantiates the academic growth that occurs through these programs (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Jones & Bond, 2000). According to Kauffmann and Kuh: “It is interesting that students involved in a highly experiential learning activity would report and, to a certain extent, exhibit increased interest in reflective thought usually associated with academic activities” (1984, p. 13).

Intended to evaluate the liberal education outcomes of study abroad programs at its member institutions, a joint report produced by the Great Lakes Colleges Association, Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and Associated Colleges of the South (Great Lakes Colleges Association et al., 2008), promoted academic growth as one of the most compelling reasons students should study internationally. The report highlights academic gains in both academic expertise, such as enhanced understanding of community or regional dynamics, and specific content knowledge, such as language acquisition or linguistic gain. Cubillos and Robbins (2004) noted similar gains in both technical expertise and content. Though linguistic impact is neither a specific focus of this research study, nor a goal of most short-term study abroad programs, any discussion of the academic impact of study abroad experiences must include its mention.

Linguistic. Countless studies are concerned solely with foreign language learning, program design to facilitate such learning, and evaluation of programmatic elements that may facilitate greater learning. Among these studies that seek, at least in part, to understand or

quantify study abroad's impact on the foreign language skills, there is near consensus that overseas learning experiences do positively aid language acquisition or linguistic skill development (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Jones & Bond, 2000; Sandell, 2007). This is hardly an unexpected finding, as language immersion has been a root motivation of study abroad since its origin, and serves as a repeatedly endorsed methodology for language acquisition. The extent of study abroad's impact in this area, and the factors that produce this impact, are less agreed upon. Using a paired-sample of participants' writing, Cubillos and Robbins (2004) found that "brief and structured foreign sojourns may have significant and lasting impact" on foreign language skills (p. 29). Jones and Bond (2000) found the opposite in their research of those studying abroad for anywhere between two and 10 weeks. They indicate that "despite the growing popularity of such immersion experiences, there is little evidence that those of short duration, less than a semester, are viable strategies to learn culture and language" (p. 34). Still, while not endorsing these trips as a primary language learning method, Jones and Bond do admit that "language proficiency improved for each length of stay but improved more with longer stays" (p. 41). This disagreement in findings is indicative of much of the study abroad literature that focuses on language skills. Beyond the linguistic gains achieved through study abroad experiences, researchers have found growth in a wide-range of other academic areas.

Motivation and attainment. A study of more than 3,700 alumni of programs operated by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), a recognized leader in study abroad programming, found that these international experiences had a profound impact on measures of academic attainment (Dwyer, 2004). Among the most notable findings of this study, 80% of those surveyed indicated that their study abroad experience increased their interest and

commitment to their academic studies. This largely confirms a previous finding by Kauffmann and Kuh (1984), which counters some widely-held apprehension about study abroad.

Apprehension that still exists nearly 30 years later:

Some faculty at Midmen College have periodically expressed concern about the “academic” rigor of the study abroad program, and suggested the activity is intellectually “soft” and is perceived by the students and others as a [sic] easy way to obtain academic credit. The data reported here suggest that study abroad was related to an increase in some students’ motivation for learning and appreciation for reflection, behaviors believed necessary for intellectual development and subsequent academic learning. (pp. 13-14)

Elsewhere in their discussion, Kauffmann and Kuh indicated that the proportion of students who articulated a marked increase in motivation for and interest in academic work as a result of the study abroad experience was nearly half. In addition to this increased motivation, Kauffmann and Kuh also found that returning students had greater interest in the “arts, literature, and culture” (p. 13) than before travelling overseas. Similarly, Lewis (2005) concluded that the vast majority of those surveyed exhibited greater propensity for interdisciplinary studies, with many enrolling in courses outside their majors. Malmgren and Galvin (2008) confirmed previous research, finding that study abroad participants have a greater degree of educational engagement than those choosing not to study abroad. Other findings reported by Dwyer (2004) are noteworthy for the specific results they reveal about increased academic motivation. Of those surveyed, 87% indicated that their study abroad experience influenced successive educational pursuits. Most notably, 63% were influenced to change or expand their major field of study, and 64% were inspired to attend graduate school.

At least one research study also credits study abroad with increased graduation rates. After following three incoming freshman classes at the University of Minnesota, Malmgren and Galvin (2008) found that those who had studied abroad graduated at a higher rate than their classmates who remained on campus. Perhaps even more significant for higher education practitioners, students of color and those identified by the university as “at risk” that participated in a study abroad program also realized higher graduation rates. Malmgren and Galvin (2008), along with Dwyer (2004), are quick to point out that their findings may or may not be the result of study abroad alone. It is possible, they speculate, that students self-selecting to study abroad may be intrinsically more motivated academically.

Another indicator of academic motivation stemming from a study abroad experience is the desire to study abroad again (Dwyer, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). While each of these studies posits different reasons for this interest, ranging from desire for greater learning to increased confidence, all acknowledge at least some degree of increased intellectual curiosity. In the study conducted by Lewis (2005), nearly half of all respondents had studied abroad again within six years of their initial experience. Another key finding is that for those students engaging in a short-term study abroad experience, often these experiences propel them to at least consider another study abroad experience of greater length (Dwyer, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011).

Career preparation. In much the same way that study abroad experiences inspire greater academic interest, research indicates that students also find greater career interest, in terms of aspirations, preparation, and effectiveness, following an overseas educational experience. According to a study by Sandell (2007) among students at a public university in the upper-Midwest, the career benefits of study abroad are significant. Though the study had a small

sample size, nearly 70% of respondents indicated that their study abroad program was relevant to their chosen career field. Additionally, 75% believed the experience enhanced their professional ability, and a slightly higher percentage indicated that the experiences would have a lasting impact on their professional practice. A particular challenge admitted by the author was that the career-related questions were focused on professional practice, even though the participants were still undergraduate students not yet in professional roles. Still, the results are consistent with other studies that did not have similar limitations.

Included in the previously mentioned study conducted by Dwyer (2004), was a section devoted to career impact. Most significant among this study's findings were that 76% of participants believed that over the course of the study abroad experience they developed skills that would help them professionally or influence their career path. A slightly smaller group, 62%, indicated that this experience inspired them to pursue a particular career direction. However, it should also be noted that only 12% changed their career plan as a result. The inference to be made is that, while igniting passion for a career direction, the study abroad experience did not cause the vast majority of students to alter their previously chosen career path. Another remarkable finding is that roughly one in five respondents were influenced by their experience to pursue a career overseas.

Personal impact

“It seems that coping with novel situations in a foreign culture with the support of a mentor (faculty leader) and a small group experiencing similar challenges is a suitable vehicle for encouraging certain aspects of personal growth” (Kauffmann & Kuh, 1984, p. 14). Though a significantly larger portion of the study abroad literature reports on academic and cultural learning, it is perhaps the impact that takes place within the student that is the most meaningful.

Not coincidentally, assessment and measurement of internal factors such as personal identity, self-confidence, tolerance for ambiguity, and maturity is difficult. Still, after observing students using a modified field study, Jones and Bond (2000) found that study abroad does serve as a catalyst for personal adjustment and change, as students live and interact in an environment that differs from their own. A finding that is summarily endorsed by Dwyer (2004).

Self-Confidence. Of the personal change that occurs during study abroad programs, enhanced self-confidence is perhaps the most widely reported. The discussion of impact on confidence level includes increased belief in understanding of specific functional knowledge (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Cubillos & Robbins, 2004) or skill sets (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011), as well as in a more generic idea of confidence or belief in self (Dwyer, 2004). A key finding of a qualitative study conducted by Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) was that the experience of being immersed in a foreign location, even for short periods of time, gave students a tremendous confidence boost in their ability to travel. This was especially telling, considering that several study participants had previous international travel experience. This enhanced confidence in one's ability to travel, subsequently led the majority of students to take the risk of further international travel. Lewis (2005) reported a similar result, indicating that students' desire to participate in additional study abroad, specifically in programs of extended lengths, was derived from this increased confidence in travel ability.

Another aspect of growth in self-confidence is a greater tolerance for ambiguity. In two studies, conducted 20 years apart, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) and Kauffmann and Kuh (1984) found that students participating in study abroad programs had an easier time dealing with and accepting the unknown. According to Kauffmann and Kuh, nearly half of respondents attributed this increase to "Coping with the challenges posed by immersion in a different culture" (p. 12).

Of the nearly 130 study participants, 53% indicated that they gained self-confidence in their personal well-being. In Dwyer's (2004) report two decades later, the percentage of students expressing similar increased confidence and tolerance for ambiguity was considerably greater. Almost nine out of 10 participants revealed that their overseas experiences enabled them to better handle the unknown. Indeed, 96% reported increased self-confidence after studying abroad. Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) reported that 27% of respondents indicated they experienced personal growth related to adaptability, flexibility, and patience.

At least two other consistent findings relating to increased confidence were revealed in multiple studies. Both Dwyer (2004) and Sandell (2007) note that participants concluded their overseas experiences with a greater sense of maturity, which both authors attribute to increased confidence. Sandell goes on to assert that this maturation led students to enhanced decision-making, a result also presented by Kauffmann and Kuh (1984). In that particular study, nearly 40% of participants indicated that they were better positioned to make their own decisions as a result of studying abroad. Moreover, increased self-confidence helps students better develop their personal identities as well (Great Lakes Colleges Association et al., 2008).

In concluding this discussion on the enhanced self-confidence associated with participating in overseas education, it is important to note that an increase in self-confidence does not occur for all students. There is research to indicate that for some students these experiences lead to heightened anxiety instead. Due to many of the same factors that some researchers attribute to increased confidence, Jones and Bond (2000) found that, particularly for younger students, anxiety is a common result of the culture shock that can develop in a foreign environment.

National identity. “Although global perspectives are certainly a worthy goal of study-abroad programs, it appears that understanding the role of the United States in the world is an important part of a shifting awareness for the students” (Dolby, 2007, p. 152). As students leave the United States, they are not only confronted with places, peoples, and cultures that are different than their own, they are often brought face-to-face with their own identity as Americans. Dolby’s research focused on this aspect of study abroad. In conducting small group interviews with 50 students from three large research universities who went abroad for one semester, the author found that upon return most students were better able to articulate what it means to be an American citizen, something they struggled to articulate prior to their study abroad experiences. This finding is similar with that of Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) who found that nearly 30% of those surveyed viewed the United States differently after they had studied abroad, and of Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) who observed that students returned with a deeper understanding of the United States, particularly its global politics. Both Chieffo and Griffiths and Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) also identified a greater willingness among study abroad participants to openly criticize the United States following their return.

For Dolby (2007), questions related to national identity were particularly significant due to the fact that her research was conducted in 2004, while the United States was engaged in armed conflict in both Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, students were much more aware, many to the point of concern, about the significance of being an American abroad. Respondents indicated a heightened awareness of American stereotypes, especially those of the “ugly and loud” American. Further, most respondents were intentional about distancing themselves from these common labels and acknowledged the importance, even to the point of pride, in being recognized as “atypical Americans” (p. 148). With few exceptions, Dolby found that students

rejected an “exclusionary and ethnocentric” (p. 149) identity, while also rejecting its opposite, denying their American identity completely. So long as they were not viewed as “‘that type’ of American” (p. 149), students were content to be known as American citizens. Due to the ongoing military conflicts, students were often forced by locals to represent or defend American policy or actions, regardless of how they felt personally. As a result, most learned to adapt their national identity based on the circumstances and conversations in which they found themselves.

“Students actively constructed and strove to personify this good American, who is respectful of other cultures and people, open-minded, and willing to be critical of the United States’ role in the world” (p. 151).

Social impact

Researchers who initially set out to specifically quantify the linguistic impact of study abroad, often times find themselves addressing the non-linguistic growth that occurs as well. In their 2004 study, Cubillos and Robbins note the clear change seen by study participants on important non-linguistic measures. In particular, participants saw significant growth in the areas of global mindedness and cultural awareness and appreciation. Perhaps it is not surprising that these two areas are, outside of language acquisition, two of the more frequently cited benefits of study abroad.

Global perspective. There is no commonly accepted definition of the phrase “global perspective” that exists within the literature, which perhaps is indicative of the need for more research and publishing on the subject. Still, the concepts included in this notion are pervasive. These concepts include changes in global-mindedness, worldview, understanding of globalization and increased interconnectedness, insight into the role and position of the United States on the international stage, and participation in internationally minded activities. Further,

there is resounding evidence that study abroad programs make a positive impact in these areas (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dolby, 2007; Dwyer, 2004; Great Lakes Colleges Association et al., 2008; Kauffmann & Kuh, 1984; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Lewis, 2005; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011; Sandell, 2007).

When students choose to participate in a study abroad program, they do so from a particular frame of reference of themselves and of the world, one which will most certainly be challenged by this foreign experience. “Living in a different culture required participants to deal with circumstances and ideas that were not easily assimilated into their present world view” (Kauffmann & Kuh, 1984, p. 15). The previously mentioned IES study of 3,700 program alumni found that 95% of respondents believed their international study experience “has had a lasting impact on how they view the world” (Dwyer, 2004, p. 160). Perhaps the most significant aspect of this study is that respondents spanned nearly 50 years of study abroad experiences, indicating that this nearly-unanimous impact is felt continually years after returning from a study abroad program. Additionally, this study included a control group of alumni that did not study abroad. The result was a statistically significant difference between those that traveled abroad and those that didn’t.

In another large-scale study, specifically focused on students who had participated in short-term study abroad programs at the University of Delaware in the past year as compared to a control group that enrolled in similar courses on campus, Cheiffo and Griffiths (2004) reported that nearly 30% of the more than 1,500 participants indicated they learned to view the world differently. Again, there was a significant difference between those that participated in study abroad and those that hadn’t. Study abroad students were more likely to recognize that “the whole world is not like the U.S.” (p. 170), and to think “about why other countries may have a

different perspective than the U.S. on global issues” (p. 172). The authors stop short of claiming causation, but do conclude that “those who travel may develop a greater sensitivity towards other world views” (p. 172).

Other findings in this study included a greater propensity by study abroad participants to understand their relative wealth and privilege, a far greater awareness of our increasingly global society, and increased engagement in internationally-minded activities after their program concluded. Similarly, Lewis (2005) found that among those study abroad participants surveyed, 100% indicated that their understanding of globalization, and particularly its costs and benefits, had been impacted by their study abroad experience. Lewis conducted this study among students who had all participated in the same short-term study abroad course over a six-year period focused on the environment and conservation in Latin America.

Culture. Much like in the previous section, the study abroad literature provides neither a singularly agreed upon term for what amounts to cultural appreciation, nor a set of defined elements that should be considered in such a definition. Instead, the literature uses a wide variety of terms to discuss the significant growth that occurs in this area as a result of study abroad programs. Among the terms used are “intercultural awareness” (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004, p. 167), “culture learning” (Jones & Bond, 2000, p. 44), “cultural development” and “cultural tolerance” (Dwyer, 2004, p. 151), and “intercultural sensitivity” (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004, p. 191). Other researchers fail to articulate a specific name for this area of growth, instead choosing to describe the growth or broadly categorize it as culture. What makes the task of definition especially difficult is the potential for overlapping concepts, particularly in regard to areas of global perspectives and national identity. Despite the varied language used by researchers and the lack of agreement on terms, this section includes elements from the

definition of “Social Impact” provided in Chapter 1: “Any change in students’ views of others, including acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences, language, traditions, differing values, and/or perspectives.”

A key distinction found in the literature is between cultural awareness and appreciation. While most research studies point to growth in the appreciation and understanding of other cultures stemming from an increased knowledge of those cultures, some discussions go no further than the increased knowledge itself. Rust et al. (2007) and Jones and Bond (2000) limit their discussion to the importance of learning about foreign cultures. Cubillos and Robbins (2004) take a similar position, though they very briefly mention creating “personal bonds” with the host culture (p. 29).

With one of their stated goals being to determine whether study abroad participants acquire intercultural awareness, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) found that not only did this occur, but that participants developed a greater appreciation and understanding as a result of this increased awareness. Students who participated in study abroad reported higher scores, at statistically significant levels, than those students who did not participate on all of this study’s measures of intercultural awareness. Among these measures were a higher degree of patience and empathy with foreign language speakers and a higher propensity to consider the similarities and differences of people in other countries. The researchers also noted that the most frequent responses to the survey instrument’s one open-ended question were focused on the “knowledge/appreciation of another country or culture” (p. 173) and the respect for others. Additionally, this study found that returning students are more motivated to listen to non-English music or watch non-American television shows or movies than those remaining on campus.

Kauffmann and Kuh (1984) described a marked increase in students' appreciation of cultural differences that they encountered while studying overseas. This same study also noted that as a result of these foreign experiences, students were more apt to express a desire to help others, particularly those that differ from themselves. Dwyer (2004) and Sandell (2007) noted similar findings, with students engaging in more interaction with people from different cultures, both during and after studying abroad. In fact, Sandell notes that nine out of 10 "respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that study abroad influenced them to seek out a great diversity of friends" (p. 158). Part of the explanation for this result is that students come away from these experiences with a more complete understanding of their own perspectives, values, and biases, which are shaped by their own culture. Additionally, six out of 10 respondents reported that their study abroad experience inspired a passion within them to learn about other cultures.

Utilizing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) created by Hammer and Bennett in 1997, Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) found that one-third of the University of Maryland students participating in the university's Taxco, Mexico program achieved significant development in intercultural sensitivity. Roughly two-thirds of the students participating in the alternate, and slightly longer Mexico City program also advanced to a higher level of intercultural sensitivity. This was measured using a pre- and post-trip administration of the IDI. A significant finding from the qualitative portion of this study was that students returned with "a deeper understanding of the Mexican culture and it's people" (p. 191), and perhaps more importantly, a broader vocabulary to discuss cultural differences and issues. Instead of talking about culture in broad, sweeping terms, participants were able to discuss culture through

personal experience, citing specific examples from their program that demonstrated cultural understanding.

Spiritual impact

In 2004, the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA released a report on the spirituality of college students in the United States. Based on data collected from more than 100,000 freshmen students at almost 250 institutions, this seminal study was one of the most complete and data-rich efforts to investigate the spiritual lives of students.

The study revealed that today's college students have very high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. Many are actively engaged in a spiritual quest and are exploring the meaning and purpose of life. They also display high levels of religious commitment and involvement. (Higher Education Research Institute, 2004, p. 3)

Though this research study was focused on a broad understanding of spirituality, not any particular faith tradition, the findings were a vastly important insight into the current generation of college students. The results were so striking and clear that many colleges and universities, regardless of their faith tradition or lack thereof, began to take matters of student faith more seriously. Furthermore, institutions began to recognize the role they play in creating space for students to explore faith and spirituality. A key finding of this report was that as a group, freshmen expected their institutions to play a role in their own personal spiritual growth and development. Students saw colleges as a place that should encourage their spiritual expression while also helping develop their personal values and self-understanding through programmatic efforts (2004).

With regard to study abroad, there is good reason to believe that the spiritual life of students may be impacted. As students venture beyond the comfortable surroundings of their

own campus and local culture, they are confronted with the other, challenging their way of thinking. “This first hand experience with another culture and religious beliefs different from one’s own produces a ‘shake-up’ of one’s values and beliefs that is probably like none other previously experienced” (Reinhard, 2005, p. 104). A bevy of anecdotal evidence seems to support this conclusion. In their book “Transformations at the Edge of the World: Forming Global Christians Through the Study Abroad Experience,” Morgan and Smedley (2010) share essays written by Christian study abroad practitioners who describe the various ways in which their particular programs lead to spiritual growth. However, these first-hand accounts rely heavily on storytelling to make the case for impact.

An exhaustive search of existing literature unearthed one research study that addressed spiritual growth as a result of study abroad. After recognizing a true absence of research on this topic, Reinhard’s (2005) dissertation tackled the topic head on, while admitting that constructs such as faith development are extremely difficult to measure. This mixed-methods research study measured the spiritual development of Greenville College students participating in a semester-long study abroad program in Africa. To assess the impact of the trip, Reinhard used a pre- and post-trip administration of the *Faithful Change Questionnaire* developed by William E. Slater, as well as post trip student interviews. Further, Reinhard also conducted research with a control group of students that remained on campus for the semester.

This study resulted in two key findings. First, students who spent a semester abroad scored significantly higher on faith development upon return from the experience overseas. Second, the data indicates that the change in scores between pre- and post-experience is significantly different for students that studied abroad than for those students in the control group. While it could, and perhaps should, be expected that students in a study abroad program

would experience more growth than the average student on campus, Reinhard also included a separate control group of students “enrolled in an intentionally faith-challenging course” (p. 104) that “deals extensively with one’s relationship between self and transcendent reality” (p. 105). Once again, those studying abroad scored significantly higher than the students enrolled in this course on campus, a result that surprised the researcher. Even when breaking down the concept of faith development, the study abroad students still experienced greater growth. Reinhard’s study looked at both matters of vertical faith (the relationship between an individual and God) and horizontal faith (the relationship between an individual and humanity), with both pointing to more significant impact on study abroad participants. On the qualitative side of the study, Reinhard notes that he witnessed a greater willingness and stronger ability to share how faith had been impacted during the semester from those that had studied abroad. The responses to questions were noticeably more complete and detailed than those that had remained on campus.

The results of this research are significant, if for no other reason than the fact that it appears to be among the only research conducted in this area. At the same time, it should be noted that the sample size for this study was extremely small, especially as it relates to the quantitative portion. A total of 11 students participated in both the pre- and post-trip assessments, while only 30 students participated in the on campus control group.

Impact of Program Duration

“Conventional wisdom in the study abroad field has held that more is better; that is, the longer students study abroad the more significant the academic, cultural development and personal growth benefits that accrue” (Dwyer, 2004, p. 151). As was noted in Chapter 1, study abroad programs range in length from as little as one week to more than one year. While mid-

length and long-term programs have been a staple of study abroad since its inception, short-term programs are a newer phenomenon that continues to grow in popularity among both students and schools. Today, there is as much diversity in programs as there is among college students (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004), and the reasons for this diversity are plentiful. Some students lack the confidence, skill, or willingness to risk traveling abroad for an extended period (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). For others, the choice to study abroad is much more practical. Rust et al. (2007) note that the curriculum of many academic programs is structured in such a manner that study abroad is practically prohibited for students wanting to graduate on time. Often this leaves short-term study abroad programs as the only option available to students (Lewis, 2005).

With the growing popularity of short-term study abroad programs, research focused on identifying and assessing the relative strengths of these specific programs has increased as well. In the mid-1990s, researchers Bond and Jones (1994) indicated that they could not find any studies investigating the impact of short-term immersion programs. They do acknowledge a growing body of anecdotal evidence gleaned from faculty observations during and following these programs, but no formal academic research had been conducted on the topic. A decade later, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) lamented the still limited body of research on the topic: “Nearly half of the students earning credit overseas are doing so for a period of fewer than eight weeks leaving educators to explain or defend with only spotty evidence what the benefits of these short-term sojourns might be” (p. 166). Jones and Bond (2000) concur and even suggest that as the popularity of short-term programs grows, there is little research that shows that programs shorter than a semester are viable strategies for student growth. Short-term study abroad programs now account for over half of the study abroad population, a threshold first reached nine years ago which promises to continue for the foreseeable future. While the volume

of research conducted on short-term study abroad has increased considerably in recent years, there still exists broad disagreement on the value of such experiences. This disparity exists for the comparison of short-term programs versus not studying abroad, as well as for short-term programs versus longer study abroad programs (Kehl & Morris, 2007).

After observing students participating in short-term immersion trips lasting between two and 10 weeks, Jones and Bond (2000) confidently state that improvement did, in fact, occur. Specifically, the authors note positive impacts in “personal adjustment, language acquisition, and culture learning” (p. 44). With regard to linguistic improvement, all students, regardless of length of stay, saw improvement. Nevertheless, as Dwyer (2004) contends, students who stay in a foreign country the longest tend to experience the greatest gain. Relative to cultural and language learning, Jones and Bond fully endorse “short-term language and cultural immersion experiences, as a viable strategy for educational goal attainment” (p. 44), as they found that regardless of length of stay, study participants experienced growth. Similarly, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) found that for those students studying abroad for as little as one month, significant growth occurs, particularly in engagement with and appreciation for the host culture and confidence in the functional ability and knowledge of students. This study also noted a significantly greater propensity to engage in internationally minded activities upon return and that participating students had a greater appreciation for the arts, as compared to those students in the control group that remained on the University of Delaware campus. Lastly, study abroad participants were more likely to describe their educational experiences in broader more experiential terms than the academically focused language used by the control group. Other researchers express less certainty in reporting their results. For example, Cubillos and Robbins (2004) state that their study “suggest that brief and structured foreign sojourns may have

significant and lasting impact on the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical skills” (p. 29) of participants.

Of those studies taking a more pessimistic view of short-term study abroad, most avoid stating that these programs have no impact. Instead, they typically indicate an insufficiency of evidence demonstrating that a positive impact exists (Kehl & Morris, 2007). Still others, like Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) reflect the commonly held concern that short-term experiences can, for at least some students, be seen as less than educational. Among some students, “Their comments and descriptions convey the impression that for them, study abroad provided a pleasant vacation in beautiful and historic Taxco; they had relatively little time to examine and reflect upon cultural, socio-economic and political issues” (p. 190).

While recognizing that some positive impact does take place in short-term experiences, the results of their study led Kehl and Morris (2007) conclude that institutions using study abroad as a tool to grow the global perspectives of students should advocate for mid-length or long-term programs. This is due to the statistically significant differences realized between those study participants that went abroad for short-term programs versus those in semester-long programs. In comparing both groups to one another and with a third group of students who intended to study abroad but had not yet done so, the semester-long participants had a statistically significant difference in global-mindedness scores than both the short-term participants and the future participants. At the same time, the study found insufficient evidence to conclude a difference for short-term participants and those planning to study abroad.

The 2004 study conducted by Dwyer yielded interesting results in comparing the experiences and impact of 50 years of study abroad participants in full-year, semester, and short-term programs of at least six weeks. In general, this study found that participation in study

abroad led to positive results in academic attainment, intercultural development, career impact, and personal growth for nearly all students regardless of program length. As one might expect, long-term participants experienced the greatest increase in commitment to foreign language use. However, the author witnessed greater growth in this measure among short-term students than those who went abroad for a semester. Those in full-year programs also returned with the greatest increase in cultural understanding, both in terms of their own values and how those values shape their worldview. “Full-year students were more likely to achieve these gains, but the impact is impressive regardless of term length. This is particularly the case in the areas of increased self-confidence, tolerance of ambiguity and maturation” (p. 160).

Short-term participants did report a slightly greater interest in academic study than the other two groups, with 84% of these students reporting enhanced interest as compared to 81% and 80% for long-term and mid-length programs respectively. Additionally, in summarizing the study’s findings, the author reports a rather counter-intuitive result in regard to short-term students:

In some categories of factors, summer students were as likely or more likely to achieved sustainable benefit from studying abroad in comparison with semester students...the results of this study should encourage study abroad educators and should reinforce the value of short-term programming of at least 6 weeks duration. Whether these results would hold for the increasingly popular 1-5 week programs is unknown. Nevertheless, clearly the greatest gains across all outcome categories are made by full-year students. (p. 161)

Conclusion

As study abroad has steadily increased in the number of participants, it has also become the topic of increasingly greater volume of research in the past 20 years. With limited exceptions, the majority of this research is in agreement that these international programs do have a largely positive impact on the students that participate in them. However, there is subtle disagreement regarding the magnitude of that impact. The greatest concentration of research on study abroad is in regard to academic and social impacts, most notably linguistic development and items that can be described in a broad category of “culture.” Significantly less research has been conducted on the more personal impacts of these experience, areas such as self-confidence, identity, and maturation. The spiritual impact of study abroad has yet to emerge as a topic of research, with only one research study found, yet again demonstrating the need and value of this current study.

Researching the impacts of study abroad, and comparing research studies can be difficult, if for no other reason due to the vast differences between programs. Particularly related to program duration, the conclusion from one investigation that study abroad makes significant impact on students may be countered by another that finds inconclusive results. Still, if one of these programs is four months long and the other is four weeks, such discrepancy might not be as surprising, or meaningful. For those studies that take program duration into consideration, the general consensus is that longer-term programs do have a greater impact on students. This does not mean, however, that short-term programs fail to impact. On the contrary, the literature presented here indicates that although not as significant as their longer-term counterparts, these programs still lead to positive growth among student participants. There seems to be significant agreement that study abroad, regardless of program duration, does have a positive impact on students. Comparing those students that participate in study abroad to control groups remaining

on their home campuses, research repeatedly shows that those students who study abroad experience greater growth, at least on items being measured. Still, there is also agreement that those that participate in a long-term study abroad program will experience greater growth than those that participate in a short-term program.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The purpose of this research study was to examine the impact of short-term study abroad programs on students at George Fox University. Specifically, the research sought to identify self-reported impacts in the areas of students' academic, personal, social, and spiritual lives. In order to accomplish the goal of this research, specific research protocols were developed. This chapter describes these protocols by outlining the setting, participants, sampling strategy, research ethics, research design, data collection techniques, analytical procedures, the role of the researcher, and potential contributions of the research both practically and to the existing body of scholarship.

Setting

The complete body of research included in this study was conducted on the main campus of George Fox University, a private, Christian, comprehensive university with a current enrollment of roughly 3,700. Founded in 1891 by Quaker pioneers in a suburb of Portland, Oregon, the university now offers more than 40 undergraduate majors, a degree-completion program for working adults, and 16 master's and doctoral degrees. The traditional undergraduate program accounts for slightly more than half of the total student population, with nearly 1,900 students enrolled on the main campus; the university's 1,600 degree completion and graduate students are enrolled at the main campus as well as three teaching sites elsewhere in Oregon.

The university maintains a strong connection to its parent church body, while also retaining a traditional undergraduate student population that represents the vast spectrum of

Christian denominations and perspectives. Students are not required to sign a statement of faith. However, only a small minority of students come from faith traditions outside of Christianity or has no faith perspective. Nearly 20% of undergraduate students self-identify as students of color.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

The unit of analysis for this study was individual George Fox University students who took part in a short-term study abroad program through the university. More specifically, only those students participating in short-term study abroad programs, namely Juniors Abroad, conducted during summer 2013, were included in the research. In order to reach the broadest possible population, the researcher employed a census strategy, inviting every student that participated in a qualifying program to participate in the study. This sampling strategy was selected for several reasons. A primary consideration is that the total population was well defined, records were accessible, and contact data were available. A secondary reason for a census approach was that the population was relatively small, roughly 200 students. Inviting the entire population to participate ensured a large enough dataset to conduct meaningful statistical analyses on the data. A final consideration is that this strategy eliminated any potential sampling error or bias that could have inadvertently altered the results.

Research Ethics

The researcher made every effort to adhere to all policies and guidelines for conducting ethical research. This included securing informed consent from all research participants prior to their participation, developing procedures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all participants, and properly storing and disposing of research data to further protect the

participants from any potential personal risk. Further, this research was subject to approval and evaluation by the George Fox University Institutional Review Board.

Prior to the start of data collection, each participant received a personalized e-mail through the George Fox University e-mail system that fully explained the nature and purpose of the research study and provided potential participants with contact information for the researcher. This notice also explained the voluntary nature of their participation in the research. Immediately prior to the data collection process, each student in the population received another personalized e-mail with a link to the online survey instrument. The first screen of the survey was a letter of informed consent (see Appendix A), reiterating much of the content from the previous notification. Participants were asked to indicate acknowledgement and consent to participate, and then confirm their consent by typing their full name. Upon submission, these “signed” letters were electronically submitted to the researcher, and the participant was redirected to the survey instrument. The consent records are maintained separately from the completed questionnaire data in a password-protected file.

Similarly, the data from completed questionnaires, received anonymously, is maintained in a secured location. None of the items on the questionnaire included personally identifiable information, nor is any such information reported in the research findings. In accordance with prescribed procedures, all records of consent and completed questionnaires will be destroyed by the researcher after three years. The researcher will, however, maintain the actual dataset in perpetuity.

Research Design

This research study was conducted using a survey instrument (see Appendix B) as its primary data collection tool. The specific survey instrument, developed by the researcher, incorporated scales to determine the extent to which short-term study abroad programs impacted students in their academic, personal, social, and spiritual lives. Although the researcher could have used any number of research designs to explore the impact of these programs, the choice to utilize a survey methodology was threefold. First, a survey would most likely provide the researcher with a broad sweeping view of the impacts on students. To be sure, a survey does limit the depth of the responses and precluded the researcher from digging deeper in a manner that would be possible with personal interviews. However, the trade off of depth for breadth was acceptable to the researcher in that the results would still provide an opportunity for greater understanding of the research problem. A second reason for this selection built on the first. With a foundational understanding of the impacts, this research provided the researcher with a baseline of knowledge from which future research can be conducted. Certainly it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully comprehend the entire subject matter with one research study. It was the intent of the researcher that from this study would emerge specific highlights for future in-depth research, potentially using a qualitative methodological approach.

Exploratory research can be conducted with either qualitative or quantitative methods both of which create opportunity for future research. When initial research is qualitative, the findings may inspire a follow-up quantitative study to determine the widespread implications or applicability of the findings. Similarly, as in this instance, the researcher having used quantitative research methods to gain a broad understanding can then use qualitative research methods to gain deeper insight into the findings of the initial study. The final reason for the use of a survey

instrument was that it was easier to generalize results to broader populations. Even as this research study was conducted using a census strategy at one particular institution, its broad applicability, at least to schools of a similar nature, was increased, whereas it would have been more problematic to generalize from a qualitative study.

Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

As stated previously, the data was collected using an online survey instrument. Although the researcher would have preferred to use a paper survey and recognized some of the inherent limitations of using a web-based instrument, conducting a research study among college students lent itself to an online approach. This approach likely garnered a greater response rate than a paper survey would have, rendering the results more valuable, therefore overcoming any possible objections of using the online method.

The gathered survey data was analyzed using appropriate statistical procedures in SPSS. In addition to frequency and descriptive statistical procedures, the researcher's analysis also included Cronbach's Alpha to test for internal reliability of scales, Pearson's Correlation Coefficients to test for two-tailed statistical significance in relationship between variables, and regression analysis in support of the correlations

Role of the Researcher

This study developed out of the researcher's personal experiences as a higher education student. Participating in three short-term study abroad programs, two as an undergraduate student and one as a graduate student, the researcher's perspective on and understanding of the world and the researcher's role in it was transformed in significant ways. These experiences in New

Zealand (undergraduate), Hong Kong and Southern China (undergraduate), and Northern China (graduate) contributed to the researcher's development as a scholar, a professional, a member of the global community, and as a person of faith. Further, as a result of these experiences, the researcher has been a staunch advocate for students to incorporate a study abroad experience into their academic programs.

Lastly, the researcher has engaged in numerous debriefing conversations with students at several institutions after they have returned from study abroad experiences. While these conversations largely center on the key lessons learned from such experiences, the extent of those lessons varies widely, particularly among those returning from short-term programs. Seeking to better understand the normative impact of short-term study abroad programs on students was a significant factor in the selection of this research topic.

In conducting this study, the researcher approached the task as a professional researcher. In all ways, the researcher sought to follow appropriate research methodologies that would yield results that contribute to the broader understanding of the role and impact of short-term study abroad. Additionally, careful attention was paid to conducting this research within the framework of accepted ethical procedures to ensure that no harm would be done to participants, and that the resulting outcomes would be objective and valid.

Contributions of the Research

The results of this research demonstrate the impact of short-term study abroad programs on students at one university during one academic year; the results are therefore limited in their universality. However, this study provides researchers and practitioners alike with valuable insight into the potential of short-term study abroad programs to shape students in substantive

ways, specifically in the four dimensions assessed. The existing body of study abroad literature is quite limited by a lack of research on short-term programs. While some research has been done, much of it points to the commonly recognized finding that longer-term study abroad programs generate more substantive gains than their shorter counterparts. In contrast, this study focused solely on the outcomes of a short-term program. Future researchers can employ similar student self-assessment tools to determine the ability of other study abroad programs to influence students, regardless of the length of their study abroad program. Similarly, study abroad practitioners and other university administrators, at George Fox University and other institutions, can utilize this study to assess program outcomes and suggest program changes as necessary.

Another key contribution of this research is to the area of the spiritual impact of study abroad. As was noted in the literature review, only one previous research study was identified. While structurally different, this study provides future researchers with another data set and series of conclusions from which to shape their own research. With such limited research available, the impact of additional study to the corporate understanding of this area of study abroad literature cannot be understated.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The researcher undertook this study in order to assess the effect of short-term study abroad programs on the academic, personal, social, and spiritual development of college students. After a brief demographic and background summary of the participants, the findings presented in this chapter address each of the five research questions guiding this investigation.

Demographic and Background Summary of Participants

The survey instrument's response rate was 45.2%, yielding $N = 94$. While an additional seven participants completed sections of the survey instrument, the researcher made the decision to remove partial responses from the statistical analysis to establish a consistent N . Nearly 65% of respondents were female (Table 1). This figure is consistent with the census population invited to participate. It should be noted, however, that this figure represents less gender-balance than the total undergraduate population at George Fox University, of which only 56% are female. The response group included less racial diversity, 17% students of color, than the broader university population, 27% (Table 2).

Table 1
Gender

	N	%
Female	61	64.9
Male	33	35.1
Total	94	100.0

Table 2

Race

	<i>N</i>	%
Asian	3	3.2
Hispanic or Latino	8	8.5
White	78	83.0
Multi-Racial	5	5.3
Total	94	100.0

Of particular note, and quite surprising to the researcher, was the finding that more than 80% of respondents had previously traveled outside of the United States (Table 3). No effort was made to determine the extent or locations of these travels. Despite the significant incidence of previous international travel, only 6% of respondents had traveled outside of the United States as part of a study abroad program (Table 4).

Table 3

Prior International Travel

	<i>N</i>	%
No	18	19.1
Yes	76	80.9
Total	94	100.0

Table 4

Prior Study Abroad

	<i>N</i>	%
No	88	93.6
Yes	6	6.4
Total	94	100.0

Findings: Research Questions

Addressing the constructs posed in the first four research questions, the researcher asked participants to respond to a series of related statements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The instrument was structured with all statements related to each construct grouped together. The mean response for each statement is presented in the Tables 5-8. The findings associated with the research questions are presented below.

Research Question #1: To what extent are students' academic engagement and performance influenced as a result of a short-term study aboard experience?

Mean responses to statements on academic impact (Table 5) ranged from 2.71 to 3.30; a mean of 3.0 indicates neutrality. It is notable that five of the 11 statements presented had means lower than 3.0: Increased academic focus, more time spent on schoolwork, earned better grades, greater interest in graduate school and reevaluated career aspirations. Among the 33 statements presented in the other three constructs, only three statements resulted in means lower than 3.0. At first glance, two of the presented statements, reevaluated career aspirations and increased confidence in anticipated career field, appear to be opposite sides of the same coin. Although the researcher views these statements differently, responses may demonstrate their connection as the sum of their means (2.71 and 3.30) just miss a perfect 5.0. The internal reliability of these statements along with the others in each construct grouping will be addressed later in this chapter.

Table 5

Academic Engagement and Performance Influenced by Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I am more academically focused.	2.91
...I am more confident in my choice of academic major.	3.24
...I spend more time working on schoolwork.	2.73
...I enjoy school more.	3.24
...I earn better grades.	2.86
...I am more enthusiastic about school.	3.21
...I am more committed to my academic success.	3.10
...I am a better student.	3.06
...I am more interested in attending graduate school.	2.89
...I am reevaluating my career aspirations.	2.71
...I am more confident in my anticipated career field.	3.30

Research Question #2: To what extent are students' self-perception and personal identity influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?

Statements related to the personal impact of the short-term study abroad experience (Table 6) yielded much higher results than those related to academics, with means ranging from 3.46 (increased awareness of intrinsic worth) to 4.26 (increased confidence in ability to adapt to different circumstances). With the exception of two statements, all means fell in between neutral (3.0) and agree (4.0). It is important to note that this dimension is the only one of four that did not have any means fall below the point of neutrality.

Table 6
Self-Perception and Personal Identification Influenced by Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I have more self-confidence.	3.80
...I am more aware of my strengths and weaknesses.	3.85
...I have a greater understanding of what is most important to me.	4.00
...I am more confident in who I am as an individual.	3.84
...I see myself in a more positive light.	3.48
...I am more confident in my ability to adapt to new/different circumstances.	4.26
...I am more mature.	3.87
...I take more chances.	3.85
...I am more aware of my intrinsic worth.	3.46
...I am more comfortable with ambiguity.	3.69
...I am more patient.	3.69
...I am more confident in my decision-making.	3.71

Research Question #3: To what extent are students' understanding and appreciation of others influenced as a result of a short-term study aboard experience?

Table 7 displays findings regarding the self-reported social impact, the dimension with the greatest gap in mean values. The highest mean in this dimension, and also the highest in the entire study, is increased interest in learning about other cultures (4.28). In light of this finding, it is remarkable that the lowest mean related to this construct is more frequent interaction with international students (2.97). Similarly, the second lowest mean within this dimension is more frequent interaction with people from different backgrounds (3.48). Potential reasons for this discrepancy, as well as the implications for study abroad practitioners, will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Table 7

Understanding and Appreciation of Others Influenced by Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I am more accepting of other people's differences.	4.12
...I interact more frequently with people from different backgrounds.	3.48
...I have more patience with people who speak other languages.	3.97
...I am more likely to try new foods.	3.90
...I am more comfortable with perspectives that differ from my own.	3.90
...I interact more frequently with international students.	2.97
...I am more globally minded.	3.95
...I am more interested in learning about other cultures.	4.28
...I have a greater understanding of the world's interconnectedness.	4.13
...I view the world differently.	4.07
...I am more interested in learning another language.	4.01
...I have a greater desire to help others.	3.74

Research Question #4: To what extent are students' spiritual faith and habits influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?

Similar to the academic dimension presented above, the means related to spiritual impact of short-term study abroad (Table 8) are lower than those for the personal and social dimensions. The highest mean (3.55) among these statements was in response to increased confidence in personal faith. Three statements had means below 3.0; each of these statements address an increase in specific behavior or activity related to faith.

Table 8
Spiritual Faith and Habits Influenced by Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I am more confident in my faith.	3.55
...I read scripture on a more consistent basis.	2.90
...I am more committed to my church/parish/synagogue/etc.	2.87
...I am more comfortable talking about my faith.	3.19
...I have a more active prayer life.	3.07
...I take my faith more seriously.	3.28
...I am more committed to actively growing my faith.	3.22
...I am more involved in faith-based activities.	2.93
...I am better equipped to handle questions and challenges regarding my faith.	3.36

Research Question #5: To what extent does student engagement, as defined by Astin's Student Involvement Theory, affect the outcomes that result from a short-term study abroad experience?

On the survey instrument, participants were asked to respond to a series of statements using the same five-point Likert scale for their personal engagement as was used for each dimension of impact (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Prior to conducting a more thorough statistical analysis of the role of student engagement in academic, personal, social, and spiritual development, descriptive statistics were calculated using the raw survey data. The means for each statement are grouped by timeframe (prior to, during, or after travelling) and are contained in Tables 9-11.

Comparing the different variables, the mean scores related to student engagement were much higher than those for dimensions of impact. In fact, the means for all 15 items were above 4.0, indicating broad agreement with each statement. Means ranged from 4.01 to 4.67.

Table 9

Perceptions on Engagement Prior to Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I actively participated in the pre-trip class sessions.	4.53
...I completed all of the pre-trip assignments and readings.	4.43
...I researched the destination(s) on my own.	4.15
...I viewed my Juniors Abroad experience as an opportunity for significant learning and personal growth.	4.43
...I had conversations with others about what I hoped to experience and learn.	4.29

Table 10

Perceptions on Engagement During Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I actively participated in all group activities and discussions.	4.37
...I took advantage of opportunities to step outside my comfort zone.	4.55
...I immersed myself in every aspect of the trip.	4.56
...I sought additional opportunities to learn from the experience.	4.47
...I remained open-minded to new experiences.	4.67
...I went out of my way to maximize opportunities for personal growth.	4.36
...I regularly asked questions of my professors.	4.04

Table 11

Perceptions on Engagement After Short-Term Study Abroad

<i>N</i> = 94	μ
...I actively reflected on my experience.	4.46
...I shared what I learned with others.	4.54
...I sought opportunities for additional learning about my destination(s).	4.01

The operationalization of variables used to determine the role of student engagement in realizing impact of short-term study abroad necessitated the creation of scales using multiple questionnaire items. Scales were developed for each of the four dimensions of impact, as well as

for student engagement. The student engagement scale utilized all 15 questionnaire items, regardless of their timeframe, as all contribute to the overall level of engagement of the participants. Table 12 presents each scale along with the number of items considered and the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of reliability calculated. It is important to note that even with scales including up to 15 items, all five of the reliabilities displayed outstanding strength over .9.

Table 12
Scales and Reliability Coefficients

Academic Impact (11 items; $a = .918$)
Personal Impact (12 items; $a = .916$)
Social Impact (12 items; $a = .924$)
Spiritual Impact (9 items; $a = .951$)
Student Engagement (15 items; $a = .905$)

Table 13 presents the Pearson Correlation Coefficients among the scale variables. Most notable is the statistically significant correlations between the dependent variable (Engagement) and all four of the independent variables. Each of these variables are significantly correlated at the $p < .01$ level: academic, $r = .385$; personal, $r = .410$; social, $r = .393$; and spiritual, $r = .412$. This demonstrates that among this group of short-term study abroad participants, a positive relationship exists between the student engagement and the academic, personal, social, and spiritual development that occurs from such programs.

It is also important to note the significant correlations that exist between each of the independent variables, again at the $p < .01$ level. Academic has the strongest correlations with other independent variables, with each significantly correlated above the $r = .600$: personal, $r = .625$; social, $r = .616$; and spiritual, $r = .628$. Thus, those participants in short-term study abroad programs that experience academic growth will also experience growth in personal, social, and

spiritual dimensions. The correlation between personal and social is the strongest in the study, with $r = .736$, indicating that there is a robust link between personal and social development from these study abroad programs.

Table 13
Correlations Among Scale Variables

<i>N</i> = 94	Engagement	Academic	Personal	Social	Spiritual
Engagement	1.00				
Academic	.385**	1.00			
Personal	.410**	.625**	1.00		
Social	.393**	.616**	.736**	1.00	
Spiritual	.412**	.628**	.510**	.533**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

To supplement the correlational findings, the researcher also performed regression analysis to ascertain which independent variables account for the greatest variance in the dependent variable engagement. The findings of the regression analysis are generally consistent with those found with the initial correlation findings (Table 14). This analysis revealed a deeper connection between two independent variables, spiritual involvement and personal involvement with the dependent variable engagement: Spiritual, $\beta = .274$, $p < .05$; and personal, $\beta = .271$, $p < .05$. These two independent variables account for 22.3% of the variance in engagement, with 16.9% of that variance accounted for by spiritual. Thus, it appears that while the correlation analysis provides evidence that there is a strong positive relationship between engagement and the various dimensions of involvement; the regression analysis reveals that spiritual involvement and personal involvement are more strongly associated with the variance in self-reported levels of engagement.

Table 14

Multiple Regression Analysis for "Engagement"

Engagement	Unstandardized β	Standardized β
Spiritual	.267	.274**
Personal	.259	.271**
R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
.473	.224	.207

** Regression is significant at the 0.05 level.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The findings of this quantitative research study provide evidence that short-term study abroad programs do have a positive impact, at least in part, on the academic, personal, social, and spiritual development of college students. While the intensity of this impact varies by dimension and the specific statements in the survey instrument, the majority of the findings suggest some empirical association. This chapter includes a discussion of the research findings as they relate to the five research questions and the working hypothesis presented earlier, as well as a discussion of implications for both George Fox University and other study abroad practitioners. It concludes with suggestions for additional research.

Research Question #1: To what extent are students' academic engagement and performance influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?

In reflecting on their Juniors Abroad experiences nine months later, study participants indicated mixed results regarding impact on their academic lives. Taken in aggregate, the means of only 6 of 11 academic statements indicate some degree of agreement; and all 11 means are grouped relatively close to the point of neutrality. It should be noted that each statement was written in the affirmative, meaning that agreement with a statement indicates a positive impact and disagreement indicates no impact, or perhaps even a negative impact. Though the level of agreement on any of these 11 statements can be considered meager at best, it is still noteworthy that with nearly 100 participants, some agreement does exist. Among the participants in this

study, short-term study abroad did have a slight measureable impact on components of their academic lives. The statements yielding the greatest agreement were increased confidence in anticipated career field, increased confidence in academic major, and increased enjoyment of school; and those statements with the least agreement were reevaluated career aspirations, increased time spent on schoolwork, and earning better grades.

The researcher found the statements with the highest level of agreement to be quite telling. Part of the impetus for this research, noted in Chapter 3, is the researcher's own interaction with students who have participated in short-term study abroad at three universities. Though infrequent, a number of students have indicated that these short-term international experiences have radically changed or altered the trajectory of their life. The researcher sought, in part, to determine if these types of comments reflected outliers, or were more common among short-term study abroad participants. Considering that the strongest agreement was in regard to increased confidence in anticipated career field and increased confidence in academic major, these past statements appear likely to be exceptions to the norm. Though at the same time, the results indicate that short-term study abroad participation can play some role in confirming one's future direction.

The relative lack of impact among the academic dimension findings should not be entirely surprising. In general, the Juniors Abroad program, like most short-term study abroad programs, is not designed as a largely academic endeavor. Certainly there are academic components, learning is expected, and academic credit is granted to those that satisfy the requirements of the program. But the purpose and intent behind the program is not primarily, or secondarily, academic growth. As stated, Juniors Abroad exists "to enrich the intercultural and international awareness of our campus community," (George Fox University, 2011). That said,

the implication that some academic development does occur as a result of these experiences, whether in regard to increased confidence in academic and life direction, enjoyment of school, or academic commitment is notable. Particularly as it relates to enjoyment of school, the positive impact should not be surprising, though some might expect the findings to have yielded a higher level of agreement.

Research Question #2: To what extent are students' self-perception and personal identity influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?

Unlike the previous section, all of the findings related to the personal impact of short-term study abroad demonstrate a positive association. The means that all 12 statements in this dimension indicated widespread agreement, pointing to the ability of such international experiences to impact and shape the way participants see themselves. The statements with the greatest agreement, both with means between "agree" and "strongly agree," were a greater understanding of what is most important and an increased confidence in the ability to adapt to new or changing circumstances. Considering the size of the study, such strong agreement suggests that the personal impact of these experiences is very real, especially for these two highest rated statements.

Exposure to new things, new ideas, and new opportunities is one of the objectives of all study abroad programs. Students are intentionally inserted into the unknown or different, in an attempt to broaden their knowledge, awareness, and understanding. As stated by Rust et al., "Study abroad is primarily about intentionally moving beyond one's local comfort zone and attempting to navigate in an environment different from one's own. It is about discovering worlds beyond those the student already knows" (2007, p. 12). What makes this description of

study abroad so apt is that the focus is two-fold: engagement and discovery with the new, so that the participant experiences personal growth. In this study, the results show that as an outcome of a two to three week study abroad experience, students have more confidence, self-awareness, adaptability, and patience. They see themselves as more mature and less risk-averse.

Another interesting finding is that the statements with the lowest means within the personal dimension, increased awareness of intrinsic worth and increased self-perception, were still much higher than those with the highest means in the academic dimension. This again demonstrates that short-term study abroad programs can and do have a greater personal impact than academic impact. Generally speaking, it is not altogether surprising that one would experience greater personal growth than academic growth from such an experience. Still, there is tremendous value in supporting such an anecdotal assumption with hard data.

While some of these findings lack a certain “A-Ha” factor, some are more eye opening. For example, increased ability to adapt to new or different circumstances, the item with greatest agreement, seems like a logical outcome of spending time in a foreign country. However, the statement with the next greatest level of agreement was an increased understanding of what is most important to the participant. What makes this finding intriguing is its strength and its ambiguity. Why did participants gain a better perspective on the things that they value most? Unfortunately, this is a glaring limitation of this study, as the survey instrument did not allow for this level of depth to be explored. However, this finding does suggest a tremendous opportunity for future research.

Research Question #3: To what extent are students' understanding and appreciation of others influenced as a result of a short-term study abroad experience?

Prior to this study, the researcher anticipated that the greatest impact on short-term study abroad participants would be in the social dimension — engagement, understanding, and appreciation of the “other.” The results of this study bear this hypothesis out. Similar to the results in the personal dimension, study participants indicated that their experience with short-term study abroad greatly enhanced and broadened their perspective of the world. The resulting means of the statements “I view the world differently,” “I am more globally-minded,” and “I have a greater understanding of the world’s interconnectedness” point to a positive shift in student thinking as a result of studying abroad.

In total, five of 12 statements resulted in means between “agree” and “strongly agree,” and all but two statements had relatively high mean scores that indicate broad agreement among study participants. This dimension also included the statement with the highest mean in the entire study. Though not surprising, the results of this statement, increased interest in learning about other cultures, is a valuable finding; especially considering the lack of existing research on the outcomes of short-term study abroad. In confirming this reality alone, the value of short-term study abroad is, at least partially, validated. The other findings in this dimension further highlight the importance of these experiences. As a result of their overseas experience, student participants expressed greater acceptance of other people’s differences and have increased comfort with perspectives that differ from their own. Further, they are more patient with those who speak other languages and are more likely to try new foods.

There appears to be some degree of inconsistency in the behavioral changes that result from short-term study abroad, however. In addition to those mentioned previously, students also

expressed greater interest in learning a foreign language. At the same time, after returning from their international experiences, students were no more likely to interact with foreign exchange students, and only slightly more likely to interact with people from different backgrounds. Considering the strength of the other statements in this dimension, especially the desire to learn more about other cultures, these findings are quite surprising. One explanation is for this incongruence between intent and action is the limited number and diversity of international students at George Fox University. While the Juniors Abroad Program sends students to countries and continents all around the world, most international students enrolled at the university come from a small number of nations, with the majority coming from China, where none of Juniors Abroad programs traveled to in 2013. Another reason for this finding could be that upon conclusion of the Juniors Abroad trip, in most instances there is not an intentional debrief activity designed to foster or prolong the impact of the overseas experience. Future research needs to occur in order to explore this further.

Research Question #4: To what extent are students' spiritual faith and habits influenced as a result of a short-term study aboard experience?

Similar to the findings of research question one, the mean scores for the nine statements related to faith were largely grouped near the neutral point. Three means fell below neutral, while the remaining six indicated at least some measure of agreement. Taken in total, the results demonstrate that the impact of these short-term study abroad experiences on one's faith, though positive, is somewhat marginal. These findings might be attributed to the lack of specific emphasis placed on spiritual development within this program. Though, as a program of an intentionally Christian university, elements of faith are no doubt woven into the Juniors Abroad

experience. Another potential explanation for these results is that as students attending an intentionally Christian university, there are numerous other things that students might identify as driving their spiritual growth in more significant ways.

The statement with the highest mean, increased confidence in one's personal faith, was the only statement in this dimension with a mean that was closer to agreement than neutral. Other statement means that conveyed modest agreement were in areas such as being better prepared to answer questions or challenges regarding faith, increased comfort in talking about faith, and taking one's faith more seriously. These areas of agreement failed to align with behavioral changes that might be associated with such greater spiritual seriousness or purpose. Like the findings in the previous section, the statements yielding disagreement, were largely behavioral: increased commitment to a faith community, increased consistency in reading scriptures, and increased involvement in faith-based activities. Taken together, these findings could point to a failure to connect philosophical and attitudinal changes that are triggered by short-term study abroad experiences with long-term behavioral change as a result of these experiences.

Research Question #5: To what extent does student engagement, as defined by Astin's Student Involvement Theory, affect the outcomes that result from a short-term study aboard experience?

As previously discussed in chapter two, the primary point of emphasis of Astin's Student Involvement Theory that this study seeks to evaluate is his fourth postulate: The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program. Survey results indicate strong and broad agreement with statements related to student effort and intentionality as participants in the Juniors Abroad program. All 15

statements had means that fell between agree and strongly agree. Throughout the entire study, these results were not only the strongest, but also the most consistent.

It is possible that the relative strength of these findings are the result of the social desirability affect, with students being unwilling to admit that they were less than fully committed to the experience. And yet, when using the same self-assessment tool to address the four other research questions, results did not yield similar strength. Another explanation for the strong results is that those students who self-selected to participate in this research study were, in fact, students that fully participated in the Juniors Abroad experience. The key, however, is not the level to which students engaged, but instead how that level of engagement, whatever it might be, is related to the impact of the entire experience.

This study provides strong evidence suggesting that the dependant variable student engagement is statistically and significantly related to the independent variables academic, personal, social, and spiritual impact of short-term study abroad. At least for the population that participated in this research, the more actively a student participates in a short-term study abroad program, including pre- and post-trip activities, the greater impact the experience will have on them. Furthermore, the greatest correlation exists for spiritual and personal impacts.

Further, there is evidence that there exists a statistically significant correlation between each of the four independent variables, as well. This indicates that as a student experiences a positive impact in the academic, personal, social, or spiritual dimension, as a result of short-term study abroad, they will likely experience a positive impact in each of the other dimensions, as well. The strongest link in this regard is between personal and

social dimensions. The weakest links, while still significant, exist between the personal and spiritual dimensions followed by the social and spiritual dimensions. Perhaps this can be attributed to the lack of specific emphasis this program had on spiritual development of participants, whereas personal and social growth are more clearly emphases of the program.

Further Discussion

The working hypothesis presented in chapter 1 expressed the researcher's belief that short-term study abroad programs do, in fact, have a positive impact in the lives of student participants, particularly in the areas of academic, personal, social, and spiritual development. This hypothesis was formed from anecdotal evidence gleaned from student conversations over 18 years in higher education. Despite the lack of supporting literature specifically dealing with short-term study abroad, interactions with countless students at three comprehensive private universities consistently pointed to the value of these experiences in various facets of the participants' lives. The results of this study offer strong support for this hypothesis. It is impossible to globalize these findings, thereby declaring that all short-term study abroad programs have a similar impact. However, for the students that participated in this research, the impact of their overseas experiences was measurable.

The working hypothesis went on to suggest a direct empirical link on impact, that those students who more actively engaged in the program would experience greater impact. While this hypothesis seems rather intuitive, the existing literature shows that Astin's Student Involvement Theory had yet to be applied to study abroad programs. Once again, the research findings support this assertion, offering some validation for the working hypothesis.

Application for George Fox University

The Juniors Abroad program at George Fox University began in 1987 as a recruitment and retention strategy aimed at growing the traditional undergraduate enrollment. Now in its twenty-ninth year, Juniors Abroad continues to be one of the university's signature programs. Year after year, students continue to remark that Juniors Abroad is one of the true hallmarks of their George Fox experience (see Appendix C). Due in large part to the success of this program, the institution itself has also gained national recognition for the number of students that graduate with an international experience. Despite its apparent success in achieving its initial objectives, however, the university has limited quantifiable research to support the program's outcomes. Each section, or trip, in the program is evaluated annually through the university's existing course evaluation process. Nevertheless, these evaluations are limited in their ability to identify consistent themes that may be present across the entire program. The results of this research provide essential insight regarding program outcomes.

At the most basic level, this research provides reliable data demonstrating the positive impact of the Juniors Abroad program. It shows that students did experience growth in academic, personal, social, and spiritual dimensions as a result of their overseas experience. The value of this finding cannot be overstated for the university, as the data confirms nearly three decades of anecdotal evidence with clear statistical support. The real value for university leadership, though, is the opportunity to evaluate stated program objectives in light of these results. Findings show that the most significant impact students experience was in the personal and social dimensions, while the academic and spiritual dimensions have a limited impact. Administrators would be wise to review desired institutional outcomes in light of this empirical data. Should the program structure, program leadership, and teaching faculty maintain the status quo or might changes be

introduced to alter the impact of these experiences? The realization that minimal academic and spiritual impact does occur, even as these areas are not emphasized, may open the door for a greater emphasis to be placed on these dimensions. Similarly, these findings could lead to a more intentional effort to build on the personal and social gains that transpire. Pursuing this line of questioning has a very real implication for program administrators who might also use this research to more effectively recruit, train, and equip faculty members to lead future courses/trips.

The resulting data on student engagement also has applications for both program administrators and faculty. Recognizing that the extent to which students actively engage the entire experience, from pre-trip coursework to post-trip reflection, has a significant bearing on the overall impact of the experience, should inform the very way that professors structure all aspects of the course. It should also affect the expectations that are conveyed to students. Most notably, faculty might place greater import on post-trip activities, recognizing the effect that these deliberate measures can have on creating impact from the experience. To be sure, it would be logistically difficult to develop extensive post-trip group activities considering these trips occur during summer break. However, there is significant opportunity to provide students with additional tools to process their overseas experience.

Application for Study Abroad Practitioners

In addition to the implications for the university studied, the broader study abroad community can also benefit for this research. Though this study is limited to only one year at only one university, there is significant value in its findings. This research should act as a starting point for a more complete understanding of the true value of short-term study abroad programs. As this form of study abroad programs continues to grow, practitioners need to be prepared to

defend the worthiness of these programs with strong statistical support. Practitioners can utilize these findings in support for funding proposals. They can use this research in the faculty recruitment process to counter the skepticism of potential faculty members. And perhaps most importantly, they can offer these results to help grow their enrollment. While many students, and their parents, exhibit interest in short-term study abroad, the data presented here reveals the impact that such experiences can have. This, in turn, enhances the value of these programs and increases the likelihood that students and parents will foot the additional tuition bill that often comes along with such programs.

Suggestions for Further Study

From the inception of this study, the researcher recognized that this exploratory effort was merely an initial salvo toward developing a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of short-term study abroad on college students. In light of the limited research on the topic, the study was intended to be a starting point; to reveal broad themes regarding the topic; and to provide baseline data that might inform and inspire additional research. There are admittedly limitations of this study, as mentioned earlier. But these limitations were, in most cases, calculated decisions leading to this initial dataset and findings. And most importantly, these limitations fling wide the door for future study.

Perhaps the most telling research that this study could spawn is to simply repeat the study. This research was only conducted among students that had a short-term study abroad experience in the summer of 2013. What would the data show if this research were conducted for students that participated in the same program in 2014? 2015? Would the findings be similar or might they yield differing conclusions? Establishing an ongoing longitudinal research effort

where each year students complete the same self-assessment would lend tremendous power to the results. Similarly, as this research was conducted only among students at George Fox University, there is tremendous insight to be gained by conducting the same research at numerous other institutions. It would be instructive, for example, to compare the spiritual impact for students at a small Christian institution like George Fox and a large secular institution such as a land-grant school. Again, tremendous value could be gleaned by study repetition over a number of years.

Initially, the researcher was conflicted about the research design, particularly whether to use a qualitative or quantitative method. The case for a qualitative approach was that this would provide the research with the opportunity to ask follow up questions of a smaller group of participants and to delve deeper into key themes that emerged. The rationale for a quantitative approach was that by engaging a broader sample, a more complete view of impact might be uncovered. In the end, a trade off of depth for breadth was made and the quantitative methodology was selected. This choice then, prepares the way for additional qualitative study, both with participants from this study and other short-term study abroad participants. By developing a set of research questions that build on the themes presented in this dissertation, researchers can fill out the understanding of what the impact of these experiences is and how that impact occurs.

One particular area that begs additional study is the effect of post-trip activity on fostering impact. This study was concerned with the level of student engagement throughout the program, including after the trip itself was completed. However, it would be interesting to conduct comparative research between a group of returning students who engage in specific follow up, debriefing, or supportive activities and a second group of returning students who are

left without such structured activity. As many of these short-term study abroad programs take place in the summer, post-trip activity is often minimal. Future research might recognize whether or not there is a benefit to more intentionally engage students after their overseas experience, creating great impact from the entire experience.

Concluding Thoughts

The primary purpose of this exploratory research was to determine whether short-term study abroad programs make a measurable impact in the academic, personal, social, and spiritual dimensions of student participants. While the extent of the impact varies between the four dimensions, the research reveals that a positive impact did occur for the study participants, with the most significant impacts taking place in the personal and social dimensions. The impact on the academic and spiritual dimensions was quantifiable, but minimal. A secondary objective of this research study was to identify the extent to which student engagement, as defined by Astin's Student Involvement Theory, influenced the amount of impact that short-term study abroad participants experience in each of the four dimensions studied. The results were unequivocal. Student investment in the short-term study abroad experience, starting with pre-trip class activities and continuing through intentional post-trip reflection, makes a statistically significant difference in the amount of impact that participants will realize in each of the four dimensions.

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APPENDIX A – Letter of Consent

Hello.

My name is Robby Larson and I am a staff member at George Fox and a doctoral student in the university's College of Education. I am conducting research as part of my doctoral dissertation on the impact of short-term study abroad programs on college students. Specifically, this research study seeks to determine the extent to which George Fox students are influenced by the university's Juniors Abroad program.

You are invited to participate in this research study because you participated in Juniors Abroad during summer 2013.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may chose not to participate, or you may withdraw at any time. If you chose not to participate in this study, or do not complete the survey, you will not be penalized.

Completing the online survey will take roughly 10-15 minutes. All responses will be kept confidential and will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Any personally identifying information gathered will be kept separate from survey responses and individual participants will not be identified. All study-related materials will be destroyed three years following the completion of my dissertation.

In addition to the completed dissertation, the results of this research will be shared with the director of the George Fox Juniors Abroad program, and may be used for other scholarly purposes.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact either:

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Dr. Terry Huffman
Dissertation Chair
Dept. of Educational Foundations & Leadership
George Fox University
503/554-2856
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Do you give your consent?

- Yes
 No

Type your full name to confirm you consent:

APPENDIX B – Survey Instrument

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

2. What is your race?
 - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - f. White
 - g. Multi-Racial

3. What is your religious preference?
 - a. Adventist – Seventh Day
 - b. Anglican
 - c. Apostolic Faith
 - d. Baptist
 - e. Bible
 - f. Brethren
 - g. Buddhist
 - h. Calvary Chapel
 - i. Christian – Disciples of Christ
 - j. Christian – Missionary Alliance
 - k. Christian Science
 - l. Church of Christ
 - m. Church of God
 - n. Community
 - o. Congregational
 - p. Covenant
 - q. Episcopal
 - r. Evangelical
 - s. Evangelical Free
 - t. Foursquare
 - u. Friends
 - v. Full Gospel Fellowship
 - w. Jehovah’s Witness
 - x. Jewish
 - y. Latter-Day Saints (Mormon)
 - z. Lutheran
 - aa. Mennonite
 - bb. Methodist

- cc. Muslim
 - dd. Nazarene
 - ee. Non-denominational/ Independent
 - ff. Open Bible Standard
 - gg. Orthodox
 - hh. Other – Christian
 - ii. Other – Non-Christian
 - jj. Pentecostal
 - kk. Presbyterian
 - ll. Reformed
 - mm. Roman Catholic
 - nn. Salvation Army
 - oo. Unitarian Universalist
 - pp. Unknown
 - qq. Village Missions
 - rr. Vineyard
 - ss. Wesleyan
4. What is your academic standing during Spring Semester 2014?
- a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Alumna/us
 - f. Graduate Student
 - g. No Longer Attending George Fox/Did Not Graduate
5. Which Juniors Abroad trip did you participate on?
- a. China (May Serve)
 - b. East Africa
 - c. Ecuador
 - d. France to Italy
 - e. Greece
 - f. Iceland to Switzerland
 - g. Ireland & Scotland
 - h. Israel/Jordan
 - i. Munich to Prague
 - j. New Zealand
 - k. Nicaragua (May Serve)
 - l. Romania (June Serve)
 - m. Rome to Paris
 - n. Swaziland (May Serve)
6. Prior to Juniors Abroad, had you ever traveled outside the United States?
- a. No
 - b. Yes

7. Prior to Juniors Abroad, had you ever studied abroad?

- a. No
- b. Yes

Please respond to each of the following statements by specifically considering the impact of your Juniors Abroad experience over the past six months.

8. As a result of Juniors Abroad...

- a. ... I am more academically focused.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- b. ...I am more confident in my choice of academic major.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- c. ...I spend more time working on schoolwork.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- d. ...I enjoy school more.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- e. ...I earn better grades.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- f. ...I am more enthusiastic about school.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- g. ...I am more committed to my academic success.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- h. ...I am a better student.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- i. ...I am more interested in attending graduate school.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- j. ...I am reevaluating my career aspirations.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- k. ...I am more confident in my anticipated career field.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. As a result of Juniors Abroad...

- a. ...I have more self-confidence.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- b. ...I am more aware of my strengths and weaknesses.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- c. ...I have a greater understanding of what is most important to me.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- d. ...I am more confident in who I am as an individual.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- e. ...I see myself in a more positive light.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- f. ...I am more confident in my ability to adapt to new/different circumstances.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- g. ...I am more mature.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 h. ...I take more chances.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 i. ...I am more aware of my intrinsic worth.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 j. ...I am more comfortable with ambiguity.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 k. ...I am more patient.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 l. ...I am more confident in my decision-making.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

10. As a result of Juniors Abroad...

- a. ...I am more accepting of other people's differences.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 b. ...I interact more frequently with people from different backgrounds.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 c. ...I have more patience with people who speak other languages.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 d. ...I am more likely to try new foods.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 e. ...I am more comfortable with perspectives that differ from my own.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 f. ...I interact more frequently with international students.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 g. ...I am more globally minded.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 h. ...I am more interested in learning about other cultures.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 i. ...I have a greater understanding of the world's interconnectedness.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 j. ...I view the world differently.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 k. ...I am more interested in learning another language.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 l. ...I have a greater desire to help others.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. As a result of Juniors Abroad...

- a. ...I am more confident in my faith.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 b. ...I read scripture on a more consistent basis.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 c. ...I am more committed to my church/parish/synagogue/etc.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 d. ...I am more comfortable talking about my faith.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 e. ...I have a more active prayer life.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 f. ...I take my faith more seriously.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 g. ...I am more committed to actively growing my faith.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 h. ...I am more involved in faith-based activities.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 i. ...I am better equipped to handle questions and challenges regarding my faith.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Please respond to each of the following statements by specifically considering your approach to your Juniors Abroad experience.

12. Prior to traveling on Juniors Abroad...

- a. ...I actively participated in the pre-trip class sessions.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 b. ...I completed all of the pre-trip assignments and readings.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 c. ...I researched the destination(s) on my own.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 d. ...I viewed my Juniors Abroad experience as an opportunity for significant learning and personal growth.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 e. ...I had conversations with others about what I hoped to experience and learn.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

13. While traveling on Juniors Abroad...

- a. ...I actively participated in all group activities and discussions.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 b. ...I took advantage of opportunities to step outside my comfort zone.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 c. ...I immersed myself in every aspect of the trip.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 d. ...I sought additional opportunities to learn from the experience.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 e. ...I remained open-minded to new experiences.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 f. ...I went out of my way to maximize opportunities for personal growth.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
 g. ...I regularly asked questions of my professors.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

14. After returning from Juniors Abroad...

- a. ...I actively reflected on my experience.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- b. ...I shared what I learned with others.
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- c. ...I sought opportunities for additional learning about my destination(s).
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

15. Additional Comments:

APPENDIX C – Additional Participant Comments

The final question of this study's survey instrument was an open-ended text box labeled "Additional Comments." No additional instruction or encouragement was provided to student participants. In total, more than 55% of the participants provided comments. The content of the responses was powerful, and the length of the responses was surprising. Though these comments were not specifically included in the primary body of this research study and analysis, they are provided below, in their entirety.

Additional Comments

"Juniors Abroad completely changed my life. I've been trying to articulate exactly why ever since I got back. I learned more about myself, my faith, and my goals in those three weeks than I have in years. And it's completely changed my career path - if everything works out, I'll be going to graduate school in Scotland in the fall, which isn't something I thought would ever happen. Juniors Abroad is probably one of the most significant experiences of my life."

"Juniors Abroad was more of a 'graduation present,' since I graduated in only 3 years. The experience was none like I've ever had before, and I am eager to return to the places I visited. The experience has helped me with the development of a business idea in the future, and the culture in which we were emerged has had a huge impact on me. When the topic arises, I always encourage undergrad students to plan for a Juniors Abroad trip, simply because it was one of the best experiences I had as an undergrad student."

“My experience in Greece was phenomenal. It was a beautiful place to literally walk in the foot steps [sic] of Paul, and see the times of when Christ lived on earth. I would do it again in a heart best [sic], diving even more into the culture of the Greek people today.”

“It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. The memories I have will remain close to my heart. I had a wonderful time traveling to gorgeous locations and building friendships with other classmates.”

“It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I cannot express in words the way the trip has impacted my life and my understanding of the world around me but I can say for sure, it was life-changing. I never quite expected this experience to have such an effect on me personally but I loved every minute of our trip and am incredibly eager to get out into the world again.”

“This was the best experience in life for me thus far.”

“Easily one of the best experiences of my life.”

“This was a wonderful experience! I was so blessed to be able to go on this adventure, and am so thankful for the opportunity presented to me through my attendance at George Fox!”

“Africa changed me, making me a better global citizen and friend to those from international places. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to grow and learn.”

“It was a wonderful experience, I tell everyone that they should take advantage of this awesome opportunity!”

“Juniors Abroad experience is the one of the best experiences I have had in my life until now! I think it is one of George Fox's best offerings and I would tell any junior to strongly consider going on one of the Jr. Abroad trips!”

“Overall, an amazing experience and I hope other students will have a chance to see New Zealand and even Australia in the future, despite the issues with the Exchange Rates between our countries.”

“This was hard for me to fill out because I have had a significant number of travel experiences before my trip to Swaziland. So even though I agreed with many of the statements they weren't as a direct result of my trip to Swaziland. For example my love of cultures and trying new things developed before my trip.”

“Juniors Abroad was the best three weeks of my life. I'm in love with New Zealand. I had never traveled before so that was exciting and there was so many incredible things to do and see in New Zealand. The best part of the trip, though, was the community built with my classmates that I was on the trip with. I'm so grateful to have had so many amazing experiences with so many amazing people that I became so much closer to.”

“I feel that your questions could be taken many ways. I felt that I was very open to new experiences and adventures on my Juniors Abroad trip, where my personal philosophy was to immerse myself the best I could for each country I visited (i.e., exploring historical sights, learning the history behind something, or eating new foods). However, I could imagine that others from my trip would also feel they were open to new experiences but they would ask for burgers and fries or pizza at most restaurants or want to go to places like H&M rather than experiencing something new.”

“I loved it! I also got a serious boyfriend out of the trip :)”

“Juniors abroad completely put South America on the map for me. Dying to go back.”

“My trip didn't really change my academics in any way. I do view the world differently and wish to travel more. I hope to someday travel within my field of practice and have been looking for learning opportunities in my major in other countries.”

“Juniors abroad is in an incredible program and I am blessed to be apart of it. I wish the trip experience lasted longer to help you learn more in-depth. I honestly believe higher education should require you to study abroad as part of the core curriculum because it gives you a broader perspective and better global understanding.”

“I think this was an amazing opportunity and I will cherish my experience for my whole life. I only wish that Fox could help the kids that cannot afford to pay for Juniors Abroad so they can share in the experience.”

“I feel that I should suggest that the university seriously inflates its ‘how many students study abroad’ statistics if Juniors Abroad is included in those figures. While this is a cross-cultural learning experience, I don't believe it is anything like a proper ‘study abroad’ program, in the sense that the short timeframe of the respective trips, combined with the more relaxed feel of the trip, is not analogous to the semester(s) abroad programs offered by George Fox. This isn't to say that Juniors Abroad isn't valuable in its own right; it certainly is, but I think calling it Study Abroad is a bit of a stretch.”

“It was amazing and I wouldn't trade the experience for anything!”

“I think the program is one of the best ‘perks’ of coming to Fox. I love to travel and wanted to do it just because it was such an inexpensive way to do it, but learned so much more than I expected in several different fields and made some great new friends, which I did not expect and it was great.”

“It was my favorite part of my education at Fox, but I think most of the cultural learning was done prior to leaving, and the trip was about experiencing it. Also, because New Zealand isn't a dramatically different culture, I think it wasn't a very personally challenging trip.”

“It was a life changing experience that added to my personal growth and development as a person and as a student. I learned a lot, got to experience a lot of new things, and it is a program that should grow.”

“Our trip did not include any spiritual growth opportunities and many students and one of our professors did not seem to try and respect each culture, so I spent my time away from them with a smaller group who did. Because I had lived outside of the country before I came with already prepared for that kind of experience [sic] so the Juniors Abroad trip did not enhance my appreciation of other cultures because I already did.”

“I appreciate getting to experience different countries and cultures and believe I am a more well-rounded person for it. I wouldn't trade going on this trip for anything and am so grateful I got to participate on Juniors Abroad.”

“The best experience of my GFU undergraduate study! It has inspired an intense curiosity about the global world I live in.”

“Juniors abroad was the most beneficial and interesting piece of my time as a bruin and I am so grateful for the opportunity that Fox provides for such a unique learning experience. I would take three more years of gen ed classes to go again!”

“The trip to Israel and Jordan is wonderful! It's such an awesome opportunity. Please don't ever get rid of it!”

“It was fun. I would love to visit another country sometime. I learned a lot, and I would recommend that everyone should go. I convinced someone who wasn't originally going to go to go anyway. I left my trip early to see my sister's graduation. If we had started a week sooner, I could have avoided leaving sooner. It was a great experience, but seeing my sister graduate was a greater one. This trip did help me learn how to keep my priorities straight.”

“Since I went on a Summer Serve trip, I had a distinctly greater spiritual aspect to my preparation and perspective overall on the trip. My particular trip was especially focused on interacting with students our age in China and that also greatly impacted the tone of the preparations.”

“It was fabulous. It would have had more impact had I not traveled so much as a child.”

“There are a lot of things I might have agreed with in regards to changing my worldview, if I didn't already have a very European perspective (Dual citizen). I'm sorry if this skews the data at all.”

“Getting to travel Greece for three weeks made the trip worth it in and of itself. Getting to travel Greece with a professor who (a) grew up in Greece and (b) taught Biblical Studies who shaped the trip around the locations and growth of the early church was phenomenal. I learned a lot, had a great time, and would highly, highly recommend the experience to any student.”

“The Iceland to Switzerland trip could have been much more enjoyable if it were not for certain variables: 1) The professors ruined the trip. 2) Other students spent their free time drinking. 3) The weather was terrible.”

“This was an absolutely amazing experience for me. It was the most amazing experience at George Fox thus far. I have grown so much because of it. That was what influenced me to study abroad for a semester and return to Germany.”

“Juniors Abroad was great because it showed me how easy it is to travel to other countries, and it gave me the tools to adapt to another culture, showing me that I could adapt and get used to anything if I kept an open mind.”

“Despite the unfavorable weather (which was out of our hands) and some misunderstandings among peers about the meaning of the trip. I had a wonderful opportunity and great time throughout my whole trip. I made sure I made the best out of every situation and felt truly blessed that I got to experience a trip that I may never get the chance to go to in the future. I might not have had the best camera to take awesome pictures, or a lot of money for souvenirs but the few pictures I was able to take and even just the memories I created with the citizens made the trip absolutely worthwhile. It simply made me realize I would love to travel in the future before I settle down in life.”

“Great program. Nothing else like it gives you the opportunity to travel to great places for such a good price. Great experience.”

“Wish I could go on another trip/more study abroad time!”

“Juniors Abroad is by far one of my favorite experiences from my time at Fox. I made so many friends, and learned a lot about myself and other cultures. I encourage anyone that asks to take part in the program, because my experience was so positive!”

“It was fantastic.”

“One of the best decisions of my life was taking part in Juniors Abroad. I am so thankful that I was able to explore the world in this way and I couldn't think of a better way to go abroad for the first time.”

“Fantastic experience!! Wish I could do it all again!”

“Juniors Abroad was the best part of my college experience!”

“It was beautiful. It is a time, an event, that cannot be replaced or recreated; the people, both my fellow travelers and those we met in Greece, and Greece itself made a lasting positive impression. It broke me, to some degree, of my crippling cynicism and my self-induced isolation. In many ways, I am the same, and I require much growth. But in precious few ways I am remade, reawakened. I do not doubt that God had His hand in making this trip what it was, because I know that I am not the only one who had a beneficial experience.”

“LOVED IT!”

“Juniors Abroad was truly an incredible experience. Before attending this school, I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would finally have the opportunity to travel abroad and learn about other cultures. I want to thank everyone behind the program for blessing students with such a splendid opportunity to better themselves and to obtain a more open-minded worldview!”

“It was the time of my life! I enjoyed it so much! The natural beauty of the wild animals and landscape was all I had hoped for and more. I had a talk with a man on the beach about life in Tanzania/Zanzibar and it really motivated me to be more passionate about medical research and refueled my desire to help other people. I am a double major of computer science and biology, and the talk rekindled the biology side. I would say that I now take less stupid risks and more wise risks. Before the trip, I was foolish enough to go out and break my left pelvis. It healed in time for the trip, but I don't do anything like that anymore - I learned my lesson - I have more ‘intrinsic worth’ than that, to quote the survey. I count this towards maturity as well. During the trip, we rafted on the Nile. The guide deliberately flipped the raft a few times. The most enjoyable part of rafting on the Nile was when it was over (for me). But this has to do with taking stupid risks vs. wise risks. The rafting (actually, the lack of a raft), in all its horror, was actually realitively [sic] safe because there were people to rescue you, the guides were experts, and we had PFDs on. Additionally, a chat with a bio professor, Dr. Jim Smart, settled what appeared to be a conflict between my faith and the Theory of Evolution. In a nut shell [sic], the whole dinosaur thing got settled by the observation that Genesis merely says that land animals

were made on day 6, not that land animals were only made on day 6. Additionally, it is possible that by 'land animal' it means non-human mammals, such as livestock. I now gladly share this interpretation with others, feel stronger in my faith, and am more comfortable and confident in talking about my faith with others.”

“I wish my trip and professors would have been more organized. Other than that, I enjoyed it.”

“Juniors Abroad is the single greatest learning experience from my time at Fox; it made me more culturally sensitive, globally aware, and confident of my ability to conduct myself well in new and unknown environments. The experience of being in these cultures helped me to see them as they are, rather than the caricatures television portrays.”