EXAMINING STUDY ABROAD ALUMNI'S PERCEIVED LEVELS OF

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY AND ITS ORIGINS

by

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(Under the Direction of Tina M. Harris)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how study abroad alumni understand and exhibit intercultural communication competency development upon reentry to their home culture. Seventeen study abroad alumni from four selected programs (two communication-based programs and two non-communication-based programs) at a southeastern university participated in in-depth interviews to discuss their intercultural communication behaviors post-study abroad. Results indicated that study abroad alumni perceive and exhibit varying degrees of development. Further, these participants identified several sources of development, including cultural immersion, education, and group dynamics. Additionally, results supported the notion that intercultural communication competency is culture-specific, meaning that participants understand their behavior development in specific cultural contexts that do not necessarily translate to a myriad of cultural experiences. Implications for intercultural communication and international education scholarship are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Intercultural Communication Competency, Deardorff, Study
                 Abroad Programs, Communication Education

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Prologue

During my time as an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to participate

in a study abroad program. I chose to participate in the University of Georgia's

International Perspectives on Interracial Communication (IPIC) Study Abroad program in

Costa Rica because I always wanted to experience a different culture, specifically in

Latin America. I began the application process early fall semester, and I was excited to

learn soon thereafter that I had been admitted into the program! Not only was I going to

earn academic credit in a foreign country but I was also about to embark on a cultural

experience that would quite possibly change my life. This also afforded me the

opportunity to experience a culture I believed was quite different from my own. I spent

four weeks studying interracial communication in Costa Rica during the summer after my

sophomore year. The trip had its ups and downs. I experienced homesickness and found

myself not always agreeing with the behaviors and opinions of my peers. I found some of

my living accommodations to be less than appealing. However, despite all these moments

of discomfort, I left Costa Rica that summer with a new worldview. I was finally given

the opportunity to experience another culture, and it *changed* me in ways I could not

imagine.

The study abroad program experience changed the way I thought about my own

culture, in both good and bad ways. It changed the way I thought about success. It

changed the way I thought about happiness. As I began to readjust to my life back in the

United States, I was forced to make a decision. Would I allow my experience abroad to

influence my "American" lifestyle? Would I be consumed by the materialism and success that seem to inform a person's identity and understanding of self, or would I now engage with the environment and life in ways that were more open-minded and receptive to change? It did not take long, but I decided that I, in fact, did want to capitalize on this amazing experience and use skills I had developed to inform my day-to-day experience in the United States post-study abroad. I strategically enrolled in more culture-based courses at the University, expanded my social network to include more individuals from different backgrounds, and pursued a graduate degree in Communication Studies to enhance my understanding of culture as an influencing factor in interpersonal communication interactions.

I have been very vocal about my positive experience with study abroad and its lasting impact on my behavior and the way I think about intercultural differences and similarities. When I share with family members, friends, colleagues, and my students the extent to which this experience has radically changed my life, I specifically describe my time abroad as a life-changing encounter and one of the best decisions I have ever made. Four years later, I am constantly encouraging my peers and students to study abroad so that they, too, can reap its many benefits. I found that my perspective on the study abroad experience was also shared by others whom I met and had fallen in love with this process of cultural immersion. It seemed like every other study abroad alumni with whom I spoke agreed with my tremendously positive attitude regarding the study abroad experience.

Participating in a study abroad program seemed to resonate with many of my fellow students as being a wonderful experience. The most common theme was our continued appreciation for the cultures and cultural group members with whom we came

in contact and the ways in which these experiences collectively worked to help us become more comfortable with and open to intercultural interactions in our everyday lives. We had all participated in different programs that spanned the globe, but we had quite similar experiences that could not be denied: Our lives were changed in critical ways due to our respective study abroad programs and our experiences in cultures that are quite different from our own. As a student studying intercultural communication, our consensus prompted me to question why and how a study abroad program can be so *life changing,* which led me to my selected thesis topic. To further explore this question, the present study's primary aim was to reach an understanding of how individuals exhibit and assess their own levels of intercultural communication competency (ICC) after reentry to their home country due to their study abroad experience. In addition, I sought to examine what factors within their respective study abroad programs that participants considered the most salient to their development as intercultural communicators.

Furthermore, I examined how study abroad alumni perceived themselves as competent in a variety of intercultural contexts. In other words, the study questioned the impact of cultural knowledge as being influential to a study abroad alumni's ability to communicate effectively in an intercultural interaction, thus examining whether students are only exhibiting ICC development within the context of their host culture or if their skills can be generalized upon return to their home country.

While this study was borne from my own experiences with a Communication Studies study abroad program, its results have the potential to make a significant contribution to intercultural communication scholarship. Curriculum designed to take place in a foreign country has many goals, one of which may be to challenge students to

get out of their comfort zones and engage in a cultural experience that would be difficult or impossible to replicate in one's country of origin. Both my personal experience and many conversations with other study abroad program alumni suggested this process extends beyond the coursework and has long-term effects on its participants; however, this study was useful in examining the perspectives and development of study abroad participants from multiple programs with emphases in different areas (i.e., communication vs. non-communication).

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter describes the statement of the research problem. A brief introduction of the concepts being examined throughout this paper will be provided. Further, the complex relationship between these concepts will be discussed and, finally, the research questions born from the research problem will be presented.

Statement of the Problem

One oversight in the study abroad and intercultural communication literature is the extent to which students become culturally competent and apply those skills and knowledge to their post-program experiences and interactions. As this review of the literature will demonstrate, this is an important area of inquiry to explore. Study abroad programs are unique opportunities for students to experience a different culture, and research suggests that they do in fact acquire skills critical to intercultural communication processes (e.g., Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004, Penington & Wutherford, 2005; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010; Williams, 2005); however, little is known about the long-term, or post-program, benefits yielded from studying abroad. In essence, much of the research fails to consider how cultural competence is translated into intercultural interactions after the program has been completed, hence the current study.

In order to better understand this communication phenomenon, we must first have a working understanding of intercultural communication, beginning with the term *culture*. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) operationalize culture as a

primitive theoretical term, concerned with enduring yet evolving intergenerational attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns into which people are born but that is structurationally created and maintained by people's ongoing actions (p. 7).

As it relates to communication processes, intercultural communication is defined as the process of meaning creation between individuals who come from "different affective, cognitive and behavioral orientations to the world" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 7). It is of particular importance to note that this project examined communication between individuals representing different national and intra-national identities. Examples of intra-national non-dominant groups, or co-cultures, in the United States are groups categorized by age, sex, religion, ethnicity, abilities, and affection or sexual orientation (Orbe, 1998). When individuals from different co-cultures communicate, they can be influenced by their group's attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns. Thus, these co-cultures are oriented, affectively, cognitively and behaviorally, towards the world around them and will be included in this project's understanding of intercultural communication. In the case of this study, the main goal was to examine intercultural communication competency (ICC) as an outcome of the study abroad experience. Although ICC will be conceptualized in more detail later in this thesis, it can generally be thought of in terms of an individual's ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural interactions (Wiseman, 2002).

There are many reasons to cultivate ICC skills. While both people involved in an intercultural interaction can potentially benefit from their encounters, intercultural communication has benefits that also extend to the self or individual. Specifically, studies

have found that communication between people (namely students) from different cultures can lead to a variety of positive outcomes, including personal well-being, new behaviors, attitudes, personal growth, maturity, capacity to view the world more critically, and development of intercultural/ intracultural understanding (Scott, 1998; Tseng & Newton, 2002). Unfortunately, navigating these interactions can sometimes be difficult as a result of barriers specifically related to cultural differences.

Intercultural communication scholars have suggested that several barriers are associated with the effectiveness of intercultural communication, setting it apart from intra-cultural interactions. For example, interactions occurring within an intercultural context may cause interlocutors to experience higher uncertainty levels (Gudykunst, 1983; Gudykunst, Chua, & Gray, 1987) and lower communication quality in initial encounters (Hubbert, Guerrero, & Gudykunst, 1999) in comparison to intra-cultural interactions. In addition, higher levels of anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) have been reported as being present in intercultural interactions as well, thus offering additional evidence that communication within these contexts can be very stressful for culturally different individuals. Neulip and Ryan (1998) label one's level of anxiety or fear related to interacting with individuals from different cultures, ethnic, and/or racial groups as intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). They also argue that individuals who report higher communication apprehension levels are more likely to evade communication and, as a result, less likely to assert themselves or engage with other individuals from a different culture (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). In terms of its prevalence, Anarbaeva (2006) claims that ICA is the most intense forms of communication

apprehension one might experience among all of the different types that have been recognized by scholars.

In order to fully understand *how* ICA is managed, we must first understand its origins. Where does ICA come from? Why is it predominant for many people? It is reasonable to assume that interacting with people from different cultures or ethnic groups may involve a low degree of familiarity and a very high degree of "strangeness." These strange and unfamiliar circumstances have been identified as leading to both higher ICA and varying degrees of uncertainty (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998; Wang, 2004). It must be noted, however, that if an individual is aware of the communication tendencies or norms of the other culture, then he or she is less likely to experience apprehension typically associated with intercultural interactions (Olaniran & Williams, 1995). Thus, it can be concluded that learning about other cultures and interacting interculturally can negatively influence one's level of ICA, which is considered a positive outcome of these interactions.

This informal learning process in a social, non-academic setting may allow a person to gather more information and knowledge about another culture, with a potential outcome being more understanding about the beliefs, values, and traditions of that culture, and subsequently the individual members of that culture. One way to learn more about other cultures is through direct interaction with its members. Communication, according to Kim (2001), is the ideal method of learning about different cultures, as it allows for individuals to constantly learn and change through their interactions with others. Although it is common for individuals to experience high levels of discomfort in their initial interactions with those who are culturally dissimilar, those interactions

eventually lead to more satisfaction in their international experiences (Kealy, 1989; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). This supports Kim's (1988, 2001) conceptualization of cross-cultural adaptation, which asserts that during a cultural immersion experience such as study abroad, individuals adjust their behaviors to assimilate into the host culture. For successful adaptation to occur, the individual must be able to communicate using the appropriate and desired norms of the local culture. Kim refers to this as cross-cultural adaptation and argues that it typically occurs in a dynamic stress-adaptation-growth process. The stress that is initially experienced during these interactions is often a result of high levels of anxiety/uncertainty. As the interaction progresses, an individual is able to adapt to the cultural differences present and, ultimately, will grow to be competent communicators as a result of the experience (Kim, 1998, 2000). Kim (1991) argues that this process of adaptation leads to ICC development.

Fortunately, in the case of the study abroad students, their experiences with cultural immersion allow them to learn about other cultures in a natural environment (e.g., host culture). These experiences play a pivotal and critical role in significantly reducing these feelings of discomfort in intercultural encounters (International Education of Students, 2010) and can provide students with an opportunity to communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds that might not be present in their daily lives in their home country. Thus, if study abroad participants take advantage of opportunities to interact with individuals within the host culture, and engage in cross-cultural adaptation, then their effectiveness as intercultural communicators within the host country will improve (Gill, 2007).

Many studies have supported this notion that the effectiveness of a student's intercultural communication skills increase as a result of cultural immersion through a study abroad experience (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004, Penington & Wutherford, 2005; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010; Williams, 2005). Some studies identify study abroad as a catalyst for students to shift their current worldview away from ethnocentrism, or the tendency to evaluate other cultures using one's own culture as a standard, towards ethnorelativism, or being understanding and respectful of cultural difference (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2001). These studies recognize the importance of cultural immersion and attitude change, but they have failed to actually assess the change in the communication behaviors of the study abroad alumni. In essence, the studies do not assess the extent to which students' communication behaviors have impacted their intercultural experiences upon returning to their native country.

In order to understand perceptions of ICC, Penington and Wutherford (2005) interviewed students about their study abroad experiences, which involved them reflecting on and evaluating the effectiveness of their reported intercultural encounter. These interviews were conducted the semester following their return from their study abroad program. Findings illustrated that students were willing to communicate interculturally during their time abroad and were demonstrating appropriate cultural communication skills during their interactions. While these findings are important, there is a noticeable gap in the literature in terms of examining the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication behavior *after* the student has returned from their

study abroad program. Study abroad orientation and reentry programs iterate the prominence of what has been termed "shoeboxing," or the loss/compartmentalization of the student's experience abroad (La Brack, 1993). Similar to how alumni will end up storing their pictures and keepsakes in shoeboxes, study abroad professionals warn students not to "shoebox" their actual experience abroad. La Brack, a cultural anthropologist, designed pre and post-departure orientations designed specifically to train students not to partake in "shoeboxing" and to continue their intercultural development after they have returned to the U.S. These orientations encourage students to continue incorporating their study abroad experience into their everyday life and to practice their intercultural skills (NAFSA, 2003). How do we know the students who report intercultural communication skill development as an outcome of their study abroad experience immediately upon their return do not inevitably shoebox their skills?

Alumni surveys conducted by organizations like the National Association of International Educators and the Institute for International Education have used surveys to ask alumni to report their perceptions of the long-term cultural development outcomes of their study abroad experience (IIE, 2011; NAFSA, 2008). The results indicate a strong correlation between the two, but are examples of international education supportive websites that are biased towards providing positive information relative to these experiences. These websites are biased because of their motivation to sell the study abroad experience. In addition, the survey results involved self-reported perceptions of the study abroad experience on their intercultural interactions but failed to prompt program alumni to share specific examples of such, which would allow the researchers to conclude whether or not effective and appropriate communication behaviors are actually

being enacted. Given this oversight, this current project was designed to address the gap in the current scholarly literature by examining how successfully study abroad alumni communicate interculturally after reentry. Thus, my first research question posits:

R1: How do students who have studied abroad exhibit and assess their intercultural communication competency development upon reentry to their home culture?

It is important to note that study abroad programs are diverse in and of themselves, and the current literature on study abroad outcomes examines the influence of these variables on intercultural communication skills. For example, program length (Medino-Lopez-Portillo, 2004) and the opportunity for cultural immersion (Penington & Wutherford, 2005) have been investigated in terms of intercultural competence development. The findings suggest that longer programs and programs that allow for cultural immersion are likely to produce intercultural communication development. One variable that had not yet been examined was the influence of communication-based course content on intercultural communication skill development during a study abroad program. In order to best understand how to design programs that will promote the greatest amount of personal development, the current study examined the extent of influence that communication education has on its participants' ability to communicate interculturally. To do so, this study compared the perceptions of students who participated in a communication-based study abroad program with the perception of students who participated in a non-communication based program. Thus, this project

sought to understand how students attribute their ICC development to factors within the study abroad program by proposing the second research question:

> RQ2: What factors within the study abroad experience do alumni perceive as being influential to their intercultural communication competency development?

In addition to understanding how effective study abroad alumni are in their intercultural communication encounters and the alumni's perception of the effectiveness' source within the SAPs, there was also a need to examine how often these interactions take place and within what contexts. Study abroad researchers and organizations continue to argue that students are more competent intercultural communicators as a result of their study abroad experience (Engle & Engle, 2004; IIE, 2011; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004, Penington & Wutherford, 2005; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010; Williams, 2005), but do not examine the specific contexts in which their skills are applicable upon their return. Are these intercultural skills generalizable to other types of cultural interactions? Kim (2001) argues that communicating is the key to successful cultural learning, which decreases levels of uncertainty/anxiety in intercultural interactions. This accumulation of knowledge specific to the host culture might not be helpful or useful if the student does not have any opportunities to interact with the same cultural group in the US. The current study addressed this gap by examining how students who have studied abroad continue to employ their skills in various intercultural contexts, which prompted the final research question:

RQ 3: How do study abroad alumni understand their competency as intercultural communicators within different intercultural contexts upon reentry to their home country?

CHAPTER 2: **Review of the Literature**

The current study aimed to fill the existing gaps in the literature on intercultural communication competence by conducting a qualitative investigation of study abroad alumni's perceived and real levels of ICC upon reentry and those factors within their study abroad program that are identified by students as the most influential to ICC development. In this chapter, a proper history, conceptualization and literature review of both intercultural communication competency and study abroad programs will be presented. Then, the current study's research questions will be reintroduced.

Intercultural Communication Competency

Because intercultural communication competence (ICC) is often considered a subfield of communication competency, we must first understand how interpersonal communication competency is operationalized prior to a discussion of the influences of a cultural context on an individual's ability to communicate effectively. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) describe communication competence as an individual's ability to be appropriate and effective in their communicative interactions. These scholars provide a general model of interpersonal communication competence, which incorporates motivation, knowledge, skills, and criterion outcomes. This model of communication competence, and other iterations thereof, describes how motivation (affect/emotion), knowledge (cognitive), and skill (actions and behaviors) lead to certain outcomes (e.g., perceived effectiveness and appropriateness, satisfaction, attraction, understanding) when considered in particular contexts (environments, situation, relationship, culture, function),

(Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Despite controversy over a concrete conceptualization of intercultural communication competency, almost all models and theories reference the basic conceptual metaphors in the interpersonal communication competency model previously discussed (Gertsen, 1990; Lustig & Koester, 2006; Spitzberg, 1997; Sue, 2001), and, according to Spitzberg (2009), must be included if a model is to truly explain interculturally competent communicators.

Since the 1950s, researchers from a variety of disciplines have worked to develop a model that describes and explains intercultural communication competency (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009). For many years, scholars used terms such as intercultural understanding, overseas success, and cross-cultural adjustment, adaptation or effectiveness (e.g., Guthrie & Zektick, 1967; Harris; 1975, Ruben & Kealy, 1979) interchangeably to speak to the issue ICC but have more recently reached a consensus in terms of describing ICC as involving "the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (Wiseman, 2002, p. 208). This consensus is important, as it demonstrates consistency in understanding this phenomenon on a very basic level.

A significant number of theorists have designed models to depict intercultural communication competence, the majority of which rely heavily on these components of *knowledge, motivation, and skill* (e.g., Gertsen, 1990; Lustig & Koester, 2006; Spitzberg, 1997; Sue, 2001). An overview of the development of ICC and these terms will be discussed to gain a deeper understanding of how these models work to describe ICC in general.

A Brief History of ICC. Due to the globalized society in which we currently live, the need for individuals to be competent in their intercultural interactions is becoming increasingly vital to everyday living. According to United States International Trade Administration, US exports of goods and services reached $172.7 billion in March of 2011 (www.trade.gov). Businesspeople exporting these goods and services will need to rely on their ability to communicate effectively in intercultural interactions in order to remain competitive in a global market. This push for ICC development, however, is not a novel occurrence. In fact, the US government and, consequently, social scientific researchers initially became interested in training and assessment of ICC after World War II ,which was a time when the nation was searching for foreign investment opportunities to rebuild a broken economy and an improved international presence in an effort to improve international relations (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Several studies conducted were assessing characteristics of Peace Corps volunteers who were successful abroad after training and cultural immersion. For example, according to Smith (1996), one of the first assessments of attitudes indicated these volunteers possessed "self-confidence, energy, responsibility, flexibility, and hopeful realism" (p. 558) together with interpersonal sensitivity and openness, maturity, empathy, nurturance and self-involvement. Another early study by Ezekiel (1998) compared the characteristics of competent Peace Corps volunteers with those with less competence and found that the more successful individuals possessed a wider range of interests and a value for intellectual matters. In addition, the competent volunteers also had higher aspirations, were more cheerful, and possessed an ability to express their ideas efficiently. The volunteers who exhibited less competence also shared certain characteristics, including

discomfort with uncertainty, sensitive to criticism, reluctant to making commitments, and distrustful.

Over time, Peace Corps volunteer competencies continued to be assessed, and by 1977, a list was created that contained 24 variables that delineated successful volunteers from less successful volunteers. Some of these characteristics directly relate to an individual's ICC level. For example, language proficiency, ability to adapt, cultural sensitivity, patience/tolerance, initiative and maturity were some of the identified characteristics (Harris, 1977) that can still be seen in most current models/conceptualizations of ICC (e.g., Deardorff, 2006; Hamilton, Richardson & Shuford, 1998; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

The need for government and business leaders to be competent in their ability to communicate interculturally was widely accepted by the 1980s; however, there was still not a model that scholars from various disciplines could agree on (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). While it was generally recognized that adaptability was an underlying component of the ICC concept, scholars found that there were other dimensions at play (e.g., Abe & Wiseman, 1983; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1984; Hammer, 1987; Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978; Koester & Olebe, 1988; Martin & Hammer, 1989; Wiseman & Abe, 1984). Unfortunately, these models reached different conclusions with regard to which dimensions were the most prevalent and why.

Since the 1990s, scholars from a variety of different disciplines have continued to examine ICC from different perspectives and developed models to depict ICC in different contexts (e.g., Kim, Cartwright, Asay, & D'Andrea, 2003; Martin, Hammer & Bradford, 1994). Some models focused specifically on certain components of ICC, such as

knowledge and skills (Bradford, Allen, & Beisser, 2000), while others include motivation and affect as an essential aspect of the concept (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984).

As mentioned previously, the concepts of motivation, knowledge and skills were identified as factors of basic human competence (Bloom, 1956; Havighurst, 1957) and have been key concepts included within ICC model as well. Later, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) expanded the conceptualization by including context and outcomes in addition to the basic three components of the model. Depending on the focus, different conceptual components (e.g., motivation, knowledge, or skills) are considered important and highlighted in ICC models by each theorist. Based on area of study, most theorists take a stance on whether they consider ICC to be primarily *behavioral, cognitive*, or *affective* in nature and their proposed model is representative of their focus. For example, one of the first proposed conceptualization of ICC was created by Ruben in the 1970s and reflected the belief that ICC is a behavioral concept. In other words, ICC was defined by measuring how effective an individual behaves in intercultural interactions based on seven *skills*: empathy, respect, role behavior flexibility, orientation to knowledge, interaction posture, interaction management, and tolerance for ambiguity. In this influential research on behavioral communication competency, an assessment of whether or not individuals were exhibiting behaviors that reflected these skills was successful in predicting whether or not effective adaptation within the host culture would occur (Ruben & Kealy, 1979).

Other researchers have focused on ICC as attitudinal or cognitive constructs. As only one of several conceptualizations of ICC, Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Competence (DMIC) examines attitudinal change as it occurs through

experience. According to the DMIC, individuals can grow in terms of their level of ICC during experience with cultural difference and examines ICC growth by placing the individual's attitude or worldview in one of six stages. The first three stages (denial, defense, and minimization) are reflective of an ethnocentric perspective, while the final three stages (acceptance, adaptation, and integration) indicate stages of ethnorelativism. Each stage is characterized by attitudinal and behavior change. An individual located in *denial,* the first stage, considers his/her own culture is the only legitimate perspective and rejects all differences experienced during intercultural interactions. The *defense* stage represents more recognition of the opposite culture. However, the individual still possesses a perspective of "us" vs. "them". *Minimization* is the third stage of ethnocentrism and represents an individual's belief that the other culture's worldview is somehow related to or spawned from his/her own culture. Once an individual reaches the *acceptance* stage, he/she has transitioned from ethnocentrism to early ethnorelativism. The *acceptance* stage reflects an individual's recognition that his/her own culture is only one perspective in a world that includes many cultural orientations. Adaptation allows for individuals to behave appropriately in the other cultural context by abiding by rules and norms. Finally, *integration* represents the ability to incorporate one's home culture with the perspective of the new culture. An individual's shift in attitude from stages of ethnocentrism to stages of ethnorelativism marks development in ICC (Bennett, 1986).

Some scholars have focused on both attitude and knowledge. For example, Wiseman, Hammer and Nishida (1987) examined both of these by assessing attitudes based on an individual's level of ethnocentrism and knowledge in terms of cultural understanding. Another perspective, employed by Collier (1986, 1988), utilizes a rules

approach to examine ICC. This cognitive approach centers on the knowledge component of ICC based on Collier's claim that individuals must possess an understanding of cultural rules to engage in effective intercultural interactions (Collier, 1986, 1988).

The Campina-Bacote Model encompasses all three dimensions of knowledge (cultural understanding), affect (or willingness to communicate), and skill (ability to enact appropriate communication skills in an intercultural encounter). In addition, the Campina-Bacote Model also includes an encounter component. This model argues that individuals are capable of becoming more interculturally competent and that their progress between stages is enhanced through cultural encounters (similar to the DMIC). According to this model, five interdependent constructs (cultural awareness, cultural desires, cultural knowledge, cultural skills, and cultural encounters) can be linked to ICC development (Campina-Bacote, 2002).

Communication scholars (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Wiseman, 1991) view communication skills as falling under the *behavioral* umbrella of intercultural communication competency. Due to this project's main goal of assessing ICC as it occurs during study abroad participants' reentry to the US, I will draw from a conceptualization of ICC from a behavioral perspective. However, I am also interested in how the other components identified throughout ICC's conceptual development can influence the overall outcome of an effective and appropriate intercultural interaction. In addition, I am examining factors within the study abroad experience that study abroad alumni perceive to be influential in their IC development. While the Campina-Bacote and DMIC models both consider how cultural encounters and the process of adaptation influence an individual's ICC, I am interested in examining how other aspects of the program can also

influence student growth. For example, educational aspects of the program that promote cultural learning should be considered as a source of behavior change.

Based on these particular constraints, I decided to pull from Deardorff's (2006) conceptualization of ICC within the Process Model of Intercultural Competence (DPMIC) that is inclusive of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and both internal/external outcomes. In addition to Deardorff's (2006) inclusion of all relevant concepts, there was another reason I determined that her model was the most useful for this project. What make her perspective on the ICC model the most impressive is how the model was developed. At the beginning of Deardorff's project, there were over 200 models that attempted to conceptualize ICC. As mentioned previously, scholars from different disciplines possessed varying perspectives (behaviorally, attitudinal, or cognitive) on the nature of ICC and could not agree upon a solid definition for the term. To address this barrier, Deardorff implemented the use of Delphi methodology to obtain the perspective of over 20 intercultural communication experts on what truly constitutes ICC. Deardorff relied on the components that these experts agreed upon as essential to conceptualizing ICC and created a model (see Figure 1.1) based on the results.

Deardorff's model is comprised of four main constructs: (1) attitudes; (2) knowledge and comprehension and skill; (3) desired internal outcome; and (4) desired external outcome. The DPMIC describes the intricate relationship between these constructs and describes the relationship between each of the constructs and the desired outcomes of an interculturally competent communicator (Deardorff, 2006). Prior to discussing how the model describes these relationships in detail, I will first briefly discuss each of the constructs. The concepts were not constructed by Deardorff; rather,

she introduced a new way of conceptualizing ICC that included attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive perspectives as indicators of ICC as advanced by intercultural communication.

Deardorff (2006) conceptualizes *attitudes* as including respect, openness, and curiosity and discovery. Respect is defined as perceiving value in other cultures. Openness denotes a tendency to withhold judgment. Curiosity and discovery refer to tolerance of ambiguous situations. For study abroad alumni, these attitudes would allow for individuals to accept and appreciate different belief systems in a variety of contexts.

Knowledge and comprehension and skills are the next component of Deardorff's model and describe an individual's possession of self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness. Deep cultural knowledge involves an individual's comprehension of the context, the impact the culture has on its members, and the worldview possessed by the culture. Sociolinguistic awareness, or the ability to interpret how culture influences the use of language, is also encompassed within the knowledge and comprehension component of the DPMIC model. *Skills* includes listening, observation, and evaluation, as well as analysis, interpretation, and relating to cultural differences. In terms of study abroad, Deardorff (2006) argues that the knowledge and comprehension and skills assessment describes how adept individuals are at learning about the other culture and their ability to translate the knowledge to effective communication behavior.

In terms of outcome assessment, Deardorff delineates between *desired internal outcome* and *desired external outcome*. *Desired internal outcome* (DIO) denotes an individual making an informed shift in their frame of reference (Deardorff, 2006). This

shift requires flexibility, adaptability, an ethnorelative (as opposed to an ethnocentric) view, and empathy. In terms of flexibility, individuals exhibit an ability to choose how they act in a given circumstance. This ability to choose communication behaviors and alter behavior reflects someone who is flexible. Similarly, adaptability involves being able to adjust to various cultural environments and communication changes. In order to fit within the desired internal outcome part of the model, an individual should also have developed an ethnorelative worldview. Ethnorelativity, in contrast to ethnocentricism, allows individuals to understand and accept cultural differences without prejudging them as wrong or incorrect. In essence, this involves not making judgments of other cultures and using one's own culture as the correct way of doing things. Finally, the desired internal outcome also includes the characteristic of empathy, or making an attempt to understand the perspective of the other culture. Together, adaptability, flexibility, ethnorelativity, and empathy allow an individual to shift their frame of reference (Deardorff, 2006). This desired internal outcome is very similar to Bennett's DMIC in terms of assessing shifts of perspective and worldview.

As previously mentioned, this project focused on behavioral outcomes, which is located within the *desired external outcome* of the DPMIC. Desired external outcome (DEO) is the pinnacle of ICC development and is described as "effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 256). An individual who reflects the DEO will be able to interact with individuals from different cultures in a way that promotes mutual satisfaction for both participants. All of the other constructs within the model (Attitudes, Knowledge and Comprehension and Skill, and the DIO) influence whether or not the DEO is ever actually reached.

As an ICC process, the DPMIC is separated into two levels: the individual level (attitudes, knowledge and comprehension and skills) and the interaction level (outcomes). The degree of intercultural communication competence exhibited in the interaction level of the model depends on the degree of the individual level components. The model argues that individuals possess certain attitudes that promote intercultural competence and result in the DEO. Individuals who are respectful, open, and curious are more likely to both reach this level and be motivated to understand and develop cultural skills. The model predicts that as an individual becomes more knowledgeable and skillful, then s/he will exhibit the constructs situated within the interaction level of the DPMIC: the DIO and the DEO. These two outcomes are triggered during intercultural interactions and allow the individual level characteristics to be applied. For example, individuals who are respectful and open-minded, in addition to having cultural knowledge and skills, are able to exhibit a frame of reference shift (DIO). This frame of reference shift allows the individual to be adaptive, flexible, and empathic in intercultural interactions because they have essentially developed an ethnorelativistic perspective on the encounter. Although these outcomes are cognitive in nature, the DIO will then also predict the effectiveness and appropriateness of the intercultural episode or the DEO within the model. The DPMIC considers all of these constructs important towards becoming interculturally competent (Deardorff, 2006).

The construct of knowledge and comprehension is a construct that relates to the debate on whether or not ICC is a general or culture-specific concept. Some scholars, such as Imahori and Lanigan (1989), Spitzberg (1989), and Carbaugh (1990), consider their conceptualizations of ICC to be specific to particular cultures based on the

prioritization of cultural knowledge. On the other hand, Bennett (1986), Cupach (1984), Gudykunst (1993), and Hammer (1989), argue that ICC can be generalized and transferred between cultures and contexts. Deardorff notes that some individuals are capable of reaching the DEO without becoming knowledgeable about cultural information. In other words, individuals who possess the appropriate attitudes and/skills can still act appropriate and effective in intercultural encounters due to their established abilities as a communicator and general openness and respect for others (Deardorff, 2006).

Now that we have developed a solid conceptual framework for understanding ICC, we can now seek to understand contexts and experiences that are effective in influencing its development. There have been many studies that have aimed to identify factors that influence an individual's level of intercultural competency. In the context of a University setting, whether or not a student has studied abroad has been identified as a factor of ICC (International Education of Students, 2010; Sutton & Rubin, 2004; Penington & Wutherford, 2005).

Study Abroad Programs

Study abroad programs (SAP) have different curriculum, assignments, destinations, and objectives, thus making it impossible to say with certainty that all programs have the same general objectives. However, it can be asserted that programs across and within institutions of higher education share one common goal: to provide students with the opportunity to receive an educational experience within the context of a foreign country. There is not a clear description that captures the essence of all SAPs beyond conceptualizing it as an educational experience held in a location outside of one's

home country. This basic conceptualization can be problematic because it is inclusive of such a wide variety of programs and does not articulate commonality across programs that seem to promote intercultural communication. Fortunately, Engle and Engle (2003) have presented seven variables that can be examined in terms of characterizing the dimensions of SAPs that can be incorporated into a program, which is useful for both international education scholars and professionals. These variables include: (1) length of student sojourn, (2) entry target-language competence, (3) language used in course work, (4) context of academic work, types of student housing, (5) provision for guided/structured interaction and (6) experiential learning, and (7) guided reflection on cultural experience. When considered together, these variables can be used to establish categories for SAP types. Furthermore, Engle and Engle (2004) argue that if study abroad professionals can agree on a uniform way to categorize programs based on these variables, researchers will be better equipped to establish more reliable assessments of program outcomes. For instance, consider the following program examples: 1. A two-week program taught by home institution faculty in English where students stay in hotels together without any provisions for cultural interaction or reflection on cultural experiences, and 2. A semester-long homestay where students take courses from host country institutions in the country's primary language and are encouraged to interact with locals and reflect on these interactions. These two programs represent completely different experiences abroad and as Engle and Engle (2003) propose, can be classified appropriately based on their proposed variables that define the nature of the program. If study abroad offices and program directors become more proactive in identifying and categorizing their programs according to these variables, then efforts can be made by

researchers to assess the effectiveness of these programs in equipping students with the skills necessary for ICC.

This lack of consensus among international education professionals in clearly identifying a comprehensive classification system for study abroad programs subsequently makes it difficult to measure the outcomes of specific program types because each SAP is such a unique experience (Engle & Engle, 2003). While consensus can ultimately lead to cookie cutter SAPS, the use of specific categories to articulate educational opportunities designed to develop certain skills among student participants is important to determining the effectiveness of SAPs in meeting their respective goals and objectives. Doing so will allow program directors, administrators, and student participants to delineate between important program distinctions and determine which ones meet their needs on an institutional and individual level. It must be noted that the goal is not to use findings to generalize about SAPs; rather, it is important to be able identify the specific variables that are guiding the program in meeting the general goal of preparing students to be global citizens through this very unique and important opportunity.

For students, these diverse program characteristics are one of the most attractive selling points for study abroad. With such a wide variety of program options available, it appears that a student interested in studying abroad would be able to find a program that specifically meets their individual goals. In order to assess the effectiveness of SAPs in developing ICC among students, I must first present a history of the field of international education, as a historical understanding of study abroad field's development and its goals are fundamental to the proposed study and utility of the current findings.

International Education History. It is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of international education. As noted by Nelson (1995), the history of international education began with higher education itself. For those interested in searching for wisdom in ancient times, travel was the only option for discovery. The Greeks were so influential that scholars from all over Europe were attracted to their resources (Nelson, 1995). In Medieval Europe, students traveled to attend the universities of Bologna, Paris, and Oxford to achieve the highest quality education of the time period. From the 6th to 12th centuries, Germans, in particular, were well-known for pursuing degrees outside of Germany because they perceived they had no other choice but to do so due to sub-par educational opportunities in their home country (Courtenay, 2000). As time passed, universities in Europe began to develop certain strengths (e.g., canon and civil law at Bologna and theology at Paris and Oxford) that attracted students from different nations who sought those expertise in those areas of education. Due to political unrest, many German students in Bologna were forced to leave their current studies and, thus, moved to Paris and Oxford to complete their education. These students were among the first to experience more than one University's education in their travels (Courtenay, 2000; Nelson, 1995).

In the 1700s, college education in the United States (US) was greatly influenced by England and Scotland, both of which became a study abroad destination for advanced US students. German education also began to develop a heavy influence on American colleges in the late 1700s and the US research university began to build in momentum. During this time, an emphasis was placed on US graduate education and more students were encouraged to traveled to Europe for their studies. Although these developments in

international education have been linked to the history of study abroad, it was not until 1923 when the first official study abroad program was established (Nelson, 1995).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Institute of International Education (IIE) developed in 1919 were (and still are) visionary in terms of leading the international education field. As a result of IIE's development, international education became recognized as a viable component of higher education due to its focus on creating international exchange, a tool that IIE founders argued to be the strongest tool for achieving enduring peace among nations (Mikhailova, 2003). Unfortunately, at the time of the inaugural study abroad program, which took place in Paris and was sponsored by the University of Delaware, there was not much interest in undergraduate international education (Nelson, 1995). In general, the US population possessed an isolationist attitude at the time despite the norm of European travel and study during the century prior to World War I. As a result, the study abroad experience faced new barriers during World War II as programs were forced to close due to the dangers in many parts of Europe and reticence among US citizens to participate in international travel. Once World War II ended, new programs were developed in previously unexplored countries, such as Switzerland, that escaped the repercussions of war (Nelson, 1995).

Fortunately, post-World War II, study abroad programs began to receive support from the federal government and greatly expanded in the 1960s. During this time, government and military leaders recognized the need for foreign language speakers and cultural training and, thus, increased funding for institutions of higher education specifically to address these issues (Nelson, 1995). One example of national support for international travel was the Fulbright Act of 1946, which sought to gain knowledge and

understanding of other cultures and develop social connections by funding international

scholar exchanges. J. William Fulbright was a young senator from Arkansas who is

credited for introducing the legislation because of his belief that education exchange

programs have great potential to influence the attitudes toward foreign nations of its

participants. The IIE is still responsible for administering the US Department of State-

funded Fulbright Program (Vogel, 1987) and remains a viable and successful resource for

advancing international education.

For the most part, the goals of the various study abroad programs were to help

students gain foreign language speaking skills and to become knowledgeable in a content

area until the 1980s. It was not until then that SAP developers began to recognize

international education as a vessel for assisting US students in becoming less narrow-

minded and more prepared to thrive in a globalized world (Bok, 1986). Since their

inception, study abroad programs continue to develop and increase in popularity (Nelson,

1995) and remain a very important educational experience. In fact, the IEE (2010) reports

that study abroad participation by US students has more than tripled over the past two

decades, resulting in a total of 270,604 student participants in the 2009-2010 school year.

Although there currently is not a classification system being uniformly used

across colleges and universities, SAPs are often examined in terms of host region, field of

study, and program length. Of the 270,604 students who participated in 2009-2010, the

majority of students (53.5%) were hosted in Europe, followed by Latin America (15%)

and Asia (12%). Social Science students represented the largest percentage of student

participants by field of study, followed closely by Business and Management (20.8%)

and then Humanities (12%) students. When accounting for program duration, short-term

programs are the most popular, accounting for 56.6% of all participation. These short-term programs, which are usually held in the summer or January and do not exceed 8 weeks (IIE, 2010), are expected to remain a significant growth area for the foreseeable future (Guitierrez, Auerbach & Bhandari, 2009). Mid-length programs, which last for about one semester, constitute 39.4% of all programs, while longer term, or year-long, programs only make up 3.9% (IIE, 2010).

While these statistics are representative of the most popular types of programs and the most common academic disciplines that participate in the programs, it is important to note that there are SAPs in all parts of the world and that students from all disciplines have opportunities to enroll in programs specific to their major. For example, the University of Georgia (UGA) offers over 100 faculty-led programs and an additional 24 non-traditional programs (e.g., internships, independent research, etc.). UGA advertises programs in approximately 50 countries every year and has the ability to link students to external programs through other Universities in instances where students desire to study in different locations (University of Georgia Office of International Education, 2011). These offerings only represent those of one University system and are not inclusive of other SAPs available from other institutes of higher education or privately owned companies.

Now that a history of international education and its development has been presented, I will provide an overview of the current study abroad literature with a focus on students' motivation to enroll, perceived barriers of participation, and learning and personal development outcomes.

SAP Motivations and Outcomes. The influence of the study abroad experience on its participants has been a popular area of investigation as of late. This surge in research can be attributed to the rising number of study abroad participants over time as well as the push from governments, businesses, and educational leaders to further increase study abroad participation, which has been identified as a method to guarantee US security, financial prosperity, and worldwide leadership (Bikson & Law, 1994; CIEE, 1988, 1990; Lincoln Commission, 2005; NAFSA, 2008: Association of International Educators, 2008; NASULGC Task Force of International Education, 2004; Treverton & Bikson, 2003). In 2004, Congress created the Lincoln Commission with the purpose of increasing the opportunity to study abroad for students in the US by providing scholarships and initiating strategies to recruit participants. Based on the Lincoln Commission's (2005) assertion that "what nations do not know exacts a heavy toll" (pp. 3), the commission released a report that set a goal for student participation in SAPs to exceed one million by the year 2017. In order to find ways to reach such a goal, it is important to determine the current state of study abroad participation in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. In other words, why are students studying abroad? More importantly, why *aren't* students studying abroad?

Goldstein and Kim (2005) conducted a longitudinal study examining predictors of study abroad participation. Results indicated that there are several potential predictors of study abroad participation, including concerns about completing degree requirements, ethnocentrism levels, prejudice, and interest in foreign language interest (Goldstein & Kim, 2005). As mentioned previously, certain areas of study (i.e., humanities and social sciences) are more popular fields of study (IEE, 2011), which is related to students'

perception of study abroad as a hindrance in reaching degree requirements. A report of

the Task Force on the *Institutional Management of Study Abroad* points to educational

curriculum restraints placed on students in science, technology, engineering or math

majors as a potential barrier of study abroad participation (NAFSA, 2008).

Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella (2009) examined undergraduates' *intent*

to enroll in SAPs and found that certain factors were influential in determining whether

or not students held intentions of studying abroad. Socio-economic status was identified

as one factor due to findings of a 20% increased probability for students' intent to study

abroad from low socio-economic status to high socio-economic status. Social and cultural

capital, or the degree to which a student has established culturally diverse social

networks, was also identified as a factor of intention across socio-economic status groups.

Students from all different socio-economic statuses exhibited an increase in 21%

probability of intention based on levels of social and cultural capital accumulated prior to

college. Interestingly, the study also found that academic major does not play a

significant role in a student's intention to study abroad (Salisbury et al., 2009). Therefore,

their findings support the notion that perhaps curricular restrictions in particular areas of

study (namely science, technology, engineering or math) are limiting students' options to

participate in SAPs (NAFSA, 2008) since academic major did not influence intent to

participate.

Lusby and Bandaruk (2010) initiated a mixed-method study to examine student

perceptions of study abroad programs. This particular study involved the administration

of 240 surveys to undergraduate students. The findings suggest that students, in general,

are very interested in studying abroad. In their assessment of barriers to studying abroad,

the students perceived money and time to be the biggest constraints. Students identified the most desirable study abroad locations to be Western Europe and Central America. To assess perceived outcomes, Lusby and Bandaruk (2010) conducted 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews with study abroad alumni. The main themes that emerged from the data included students' perceptions of increased self-confidence, social awareness, changed perspective on the country visited and a reevaluation of what it means to be an American. All of the interviewed study abroad alumni described their experience as beneficial and agreed that they would recommend the process to others (Lusby & Bandaruk, 2010).

In terms of identifying academic outcomes, SAPs are considered especially useful for the acquisition of foreign language skills (Brecht, Davidson & Ginsberg, 1993; Engle & Engle, 2004; Freed, 1995), which has already been described as one of the original goals of international education (Nelson, 1995). However, there are many other outcomes of SAP participation that have been examined in more recent literature.

The International Education of Students Abroad (IES Abroad), a national organization that designs and advertises thousands of study abroad programs conducted a longitudinal and quantitative survey to examine long-term impact of study abroad on SAP alumni's careers, education and worldviews. The survey was administered to more than 3,700 study abroad alumni who participated in a program between 1950 and 1999. The sample included individuals from all different types of programs and from all over the world. The results indicated that SAP experiences can have long-term effects on participants academically, professionally, and personally.

Academically, 87% of study abroad alumni claimed that their experience abroad influenced further educational endeavors, with 52% of those participants attaining

graduate degrees. Of the 52% who pursued a graduate degree, 15% received a Ph.D,
Ed.D, JD, or medical degree. When questioned regarding their foreign language study,
respondents overwhelmingly reported that the study abroad experience reinforced their
commitment to learn.

Professionally, SAP alumni are also reaping benefits from their experience. A
large majority of respondents said they believed that they developed skill sets during their
SAP that impacted their career path and that the experience provoked their eventual
career interest. In addition, about half of the participants claimed that they have since
worked internationally or engaged in volunteer work since they studied abroad.

Finally, there are also strong indicators that study abroad can influence personal
growth and cultural development. In personal growth assessment, SAP alumni perceive
themselves to be more mature, self-confident, and tolerant of ambiguity. In addition,
almost all of the respondents believed the study abroad experience assisted them with
their understanding of their own cultural values and biases and considered the experience
to be an ongoing influence on their current interactions with individuals from different
cultures. In addition, 94% claimed that the experience also influenced them to pursue
friendships with diverse individuals (IES Abroad, 2004).

Black and Duhan's (2006) findings also support the notion that SAPs influence
personal development. These researchers conducted a study to examine such
development of 26 business students who studied abroad during the summer in Britain.
The project specifically focused on two areas of personal development that were outlined
as part of the program's objectives: 1) cross-cultural tolerance and empathy and 2) self-
confidence and independence. They utilized the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory to

assess theses areas of personal development both before and after their participation in the program. Findings revealed that students indicated personal development in cross cultural tolerance and empathy as well as an increase in self-confidence and independence (Black & Duhan, 2006).

Another project that has been particularly successful in identifying student learning outcomes is the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) (Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010). The longitudinal study involved gathering data from 2000 to 2007 to track education-related outcomes of both study abroad alumni and a control group of domestic (non-study abroad) students, which included 238,000 students at 35 institutions in the state of Georgia. These students' SAP experiences varied, as the sample included participants from over 425 study abroad programs of all different types and lengths. Findings from the GLOSSARI suggest that students who study abroad are better able to understand and navigate cultural contexts, exhibit improved academic performance upon return, and have higher graduation rates than students who have not studied abroad. In addition, the GLOSSARI project found that the SAP experience is particularly helpful for at-risk students (Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010).

SAPs and ICC

There are multiple projects, including GLOSSARI, that examined how the study abroad experience influences its participants' intercultural communication competency. To reiterate, the GLOSSARI findings showed that students who have studied abroad, in general, are better able to make sense of their cultural encounters and navigate intercultural interactions (Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010). However, there are many studies

that have examined some of Engle and Engle's (2003) proposed variables and their influence on intercultural communication effectiveness and appropriateness.

Scholars have investigated how different program types, sorted by course content and length, have influenced student's ICC levels. Intercultural sensitivity is a concept of interest for many scholars associated with ICC that measures how an individual is able to process and experience cultural difference. Although it does not assess the ability to act in interculturally appropriate ways, it has been used as a pre- and post-program measure design in language skills-based study abroad programs (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004). Engle and Engle (2004) specifically looked at US undergraduates who participated in an advanced French language program in Paris. The participants were enrolled in the program for either a semester or a year. The study participants represented eight different program semesters. The researchers utilized the Hammer and Bennett (1998) Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to assess student growth according to Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The IDI is effective at measuring how students are oriented towards cultural difference and, thus, their capacity to be interculturally competent. Results indicated that the majority of students (52%) studying abroad exhibited achievable progress on the IDI scale, meaning they showed intercultural sensitivity growth during their time spent in the program (Engle & Engle, 2004). While the findings are significant and notable, they are limited in that it measured cultural sensitivity rather than behavior and solely included one program.

In their assessment of ICC, Paige et al. (2004) observed that students from the US enrolled in French and Spanish language-based programs experienced an increase in

intercultural sensitivity levels during their time abroad. These studies assessed programs that were semester-length (16 weeks) or year-long and included the use of a guide for cultural and language learning support. This study also utilized the IDI to measure cultural growth and the DMIS as its theoretical basis. Results indicated that students experienced a decrease in ethnocentrism, an increase in ethnorelativism, and an increase in overall intercultural sensitivity (Paige et al., 2004).

Finally, Medino-Lopez-Portillo (2004) examined Spanish language-based programs using pre-post IDI and qualitative data. For the qualitative analysis, students were interviewed to gauge their perceptions, definition, and opinions of culture and cultural difference. While the results showed intercultural sensitivity development within both programs, the findings indicated that the *duration* of the program influences intercultural sensitivity development. Both quantitative and qualitative methods signified that students enrolled in the longer (semester or year-length) Mexico City program reflected greater levels of development than those students who participated in the shorter (six week) Taxco program. Specifically, the Mexico City participants reflected "1) significant development in intercultural sensitivity as defined by the IDI, (2) broader vocabulary and examples with which to talk about cultural difference, (3) a deeper understanding of Mexican culture and its people, and (4) a critical –and well informed – point of view regarding the United States, its culture, and its international politics" (Medino-Lopez-Portillo, 2004, pp. 192). Interestingly, results also showed that qualitative measurements yielded indications of higher levels of development for both program types than the IDI scale. Medino-Lopez-Portillo (2004) argues that relying on the IDI scores alone would have been misleading in terms of data analysis because interviews present

students with the opportunity to reflect on their experience, thus addressing the limitation of the IDI to "capture the complexity of the phenomena under investigation" (pp. 193).

Although apparently not to the same degree, short-term study abroad programs, characterized by being one month or less, have also been identified as having an influence on students' intercultural development. For example, Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen and Hubbard (2006) found that students in a short-term non-language-based study abroad program experienced an increase in their intercultural sensitivity levels as well. The participants in this study were given the IDI to evaluate their intercultural sensitivity levels before and after their program, which took place in London and England. The students were enrolled in a "British Life and Culture" course which was taught by US faculty and the students spoke English during the entirety of the semester. Increases in intercultural sensitivity were still observed (Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2006).

In addition, Patterson's (2006) comparison study on the effects of a short-term study abroad experience versus an on-campus intercultural course found that the study abroad students reported a greater improvement in their ability to communicate effectively in intercultural contexts than the on-campus students.

In their study of students involved in a business-related SAP in Belgium, Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, and McMillen, (2009) found that students who study abroad typically possess greater intercultural proficiency, an increase in openness to cultural diversity, and are more globally-minded in comparison to students who remain in a traditional campus setting. What is even more notable is that the students themselves also recognized a change in their competency, subsequently perceiving themselves as being more

approachable, proficient, and open to engaging in intercultural communication as compared to their time prior the program. The study used surveys to assess pre-post differences in global mindedness, intercultural communication skills, and openness to diversity (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, and McMillen, 2009).

Penington and Wutherford (2005) suggest that programs with a focus on course content and activities designed to educate students about culture produce students who have higher levels of ICC in short-term, or a 3-6 week, study abroad programs in comparison to those without such an emphasis. Their study was successful in qualitatively assessing ICC through participants by interviewing study abroad alumni from programs in China and Ireland. Penington and Wutherford (2005) used the Campina-Bacote model, which (as previously noted in this paper) specifically examines knowledge, awareness, motivation, skills, and encounters (Campina-Bacote, 2002) to evaluate levels of ICC. The participants were given the opportunity to provide a narrative of their experience abroad. Each interview contained several accounts of the students' experience abroad. During the coding process, each account was labeled as being related to knowledge, awareness, motivation, skills, or encounters. Ultimately, the encounter label was dropped because it continuously showed up in the narratives in relation to the other labels. The participants continued to reflect on the encounters during their study abroad and categorize them as learning experiences that influenced the other components of ICC within the Campina-Bacote model: knowledge, awareness, motivation and skills. The participant narratives make it clear that the encounters within their study abroad are pivotal in terms of experiencing a change in the possession of cultural knowledge and understanding of self in terms of a global citizen, which is an indication of decreased

ethnocentrism. The student participants also indicated that during their study abroad experience, they became more willing to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, which represents the motivation component of ICC. Skills were discussed specifically in terms of the communication behaviors that came up the most frequently in the participant interviews: listening, nonverbal sensitivity, and asking questions (Penington & Wutherford, 2005).

It is important to note that Penington and Wutherford (2005) were examining ICC specifically within the context of the host culture, or during the participants' SAPs. The student narratives continued to reference experiences abroad and were coded in terms of how they exhibited the components within ICC that occurred during their SAP. There was no mention of experiences upon return to the US.

Research Questions

The current study aimed to make unique and significant contributions to communication scholarship on ICC in ways that are currently underdeveloped in the study abroad research. It sought to enhance the current literature by assessing study abroad alumni's ICC levels using Deardorff's (2006) model but through qualitative methodology in the form of in-depth interviews. Interview questions prompted participants to reflect on their own attitudes, knowledge and comprehension and skills, the desired internal outcomes, and the desired external outcome, and describe these experiences on their own terms through narratives regarding interactions that have occurred after the study abroad alumni have returned to their home country. Prior to this study, study abroad alumni had not yet been given the opportunity to reflect on their intercultural encounters that have occurred upon the return to their home country. These

narratives illustrated whether or not students were "shoeboxing" any ICC developments experienced abroad. To achieve this goal, the following research question guided this study:

R1: How do students who have studied abroad exhibit and assess their intercultural communication competency development upon reentry to their home culture?

Much of the current literature suggests that intercultural experiences account for much of ICC's development (Bennett, 1991; Kim, 2001). However, Engle and Engle (2003) argue that researchers should consider the variables within study abroad programs and how each variable is influential on the program's overall experience. Other studies have examined students' development that results from particular areas of study, such as business (e.g., Anderson et al., 2006), and the presence intercultural interaction (Penington & Wutherford, 2005). However, the role of communication-related course content has not yet been examined in the study abroad literature. Therefore, the current study sought to understand how study abroad alumni attributed their ICC development (if it exists) to factors within their study abroad experience by comparing those experiences of students enrolled in communication courses to those who are enrolled in courses without such a focus. The following research question allowed for an analysis of how influential students perceive various aspects of the program, including communication content, to be toward their ICC development:

RQ 2: What factors within the study abroad experience do alumni perceive as being influential to their intercultural communication competency development?

Finally, Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, and Hubbard (2005) found that study abroad participants in a short-term program exhibited an increase intercultural awareness. They specifically argue that "intercultural awareness is, of course, not limited to improving one's understanding and acceptance of cultures outside of the US" and consider it "reasonable to expect that they will also be better prepared to address different cultures within the US – including those on their college campus" (pp. 467). Despite these important findings, there had not been any research conducted to support this assertion that increased intercultural awareness is in fact an outcome from study abroad participants after they have acclimated back to life in the US. In addition, scholars have argued about whether or not ICC is a culture-specific (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Spitzberg, 1989; & Carbaugh, 1990) or is generalizable across other cultural contexts (Bennett, 1986; Cupach 1984; Gudykunst, 1993; and Hammer, 1989). Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence acknowledges the possession of cultural knowledge (Knowledge and Comprehension) as an influence of the DEO, which reflects an appropriate and effective intercultural encounter, but also points towards other sources of competence as well (Deardorff, 2006). The current study examined just how influential the Knowledge and Comprehension construct within Deardorff's model was towards the development of ICC. Thus, I employed the final research question:

RQ 3: How do study abroad alumni understand their competency as intercultural communicators within different intercultural contexts upon reentry to their home country?

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter will discuss the methods and analysis employed in this study. The broad epistemological and methodological approaches will be discussed, followed by a summary of the study's design. Next, the recruitment and data collection process will be described. Finally, the participant demographics will be detailed and the analytic process will be presented.

Due to the nature of this study, a qualitative methodology was used. Rubin and Rubin (1995) explain that qualitative methodology is appropriate for studies where "an in-depth understanding is best communicated through detailed examples and rich narratives" (p. 51). More broadly, this project sought to understand this experience from an interpretative epistemological approach, meaning that it explored how SAP alumni make sense of their own experiences through personal narratives shared in the interview process. Interpretive phenomenological analyses are useful for understanding how participants assign meaning to their lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008), thus appropriate for this study due to the study's goal of exploring how SAP alumni understand and attribute meaning to their ICC development.

Design of the Study

Seidman (2005) argues that interviewing is a good methodological technique choice for individuals interested in others' stories. Specifically, in-depth interviewing allows participants the opportunity to use their own unique language and style to tell their stories. For the current study, the rich description emerging from student reflections

allowed for a more complete understanding regarding the ICC development process as experienced by SAP alumni. As previously discussed, existing studies on SAPs have used quantitative approaches to understand how students evaluate these experiences and the degree to which they impact their communication behaviors. The findings have been revealing, but I argue that it is the narratives that best tell student stories in this interpersonal/intercultural context. In addition, the interviews allow students the opportunity to identify critical incidents (Triandis, 1994) that possibly reflect the movement towards ICC. These critical incidents were not specifically measured; rather, students in this study offered general reflections on their overall experience with a communication phenomenon that occurred either during their SAP or upon re-entry into the US. More pointedly, the current study aimed to identify specific program events or experiences students believed contributed to their growth and skill development. Thus, interviews allowed for their responses to be personal and to reflect individual experiences that could not be measured quantitatively.

In terms of how the interview was conducted, I considered three interview styles. As presented by Patton (1990), the three types are standardized open-ended, informal conversation, and the interview guide. The first interview type, the standardized open-ended interview, requires that the interview guide be used to ensure all participants answer the same questions in the same order. The second type, the informal conversation, is essentially spontaneous and occurs unplanned during the fieldwork phase. Thirdly, the interview guide is a moderate approach between the standardized open-ended and the informal interview approach. The interview is planned and an interview protocol is used, but it is not as strictly adhered to as the standardized open-ended guide (Patton, 1990).

Due to this project's interpretive phenomenological approach, I employed the open-ended approach in an attempt to capture the participant perspective while ensuring a level of consistency. For this project, the interview guide approach prompted participant reflection and allowed for the opportunity to explore ideas outside the scope of the interview protocol. This interview style adhered to measures recommended within the interpretive phenomenological approach (Biggerstaff, 2008).

Although interviews provided the bulk of data for this project, some researchers argue that relying solely on interview data can be limiting and, thus, recommend incorporating additional perspectives on the issue (e.g., Dingwall, 1997; Silverman 1977; Lambert and McKevitt 2002). To address such limitations, this projected has incorporated my own observations, via field notes and observations, as a past study abroad participant and instructor. In addition, I have analyzed supplemental materials such as SAP course syllabi, program websites, and other program-specific information to aid in contextualizing the respective study abroad programs and the extent to which the curriculum design facilitates or hinders opportunities for intercultural communication. These materials were also used to identify the specific course goals and objectives, which allowed for an understanding of the aims of the programs and student perceptions of how they related to ICC.

Sample Selection

The participants in this study are all study abroad alumni from short-term programs offered by the University of Georgia. Short-term SAPs, as previously discussed, are currently the most popular type of study abroad program, accounting for 56.6% of participants in the 2010-2011 school year (University of Georgia International

Office of Education, 2011). Due to a desire to compare communication-based SAPs to non-communication-based SAPs, students from four programs were recruited. Initially, the students were recruited from the following programs: (1) International Perspectives on Interracial Communication program in Costa Rica and (2) the Communication, Health and Culture program in Australia, (3) the Warnell School of Forestry's Core program in Costa Rica, and (4) the International Wildlife Management program in Botswana.

The International Perspectives on Interracial Communication (IPIC) course is a month-long program that travels extensively throughout the country and involves a curriculum that examines issues of race and culture within Costa Rica (The University of Georgia Office of International Education, 2011). The course content focuses on how race influences communication styles within the United States and allows for comparisons and contrasts to be made between the interracial communication patterns within Costa Rica and those within the United States. In addition to having class daily with the faculty member/program director, students are also exposed to guest speakers from various fields in the social sciences, including communication, anthropology, and psychology, related to race within Costa Rica. The students are also allowed to interview and interact with individuals within Costa Rica to gain perspective on the issues they are learning in class. The students are constantly spending time with each other and the entire process is a learning experience. Students also spend a significant amount of time traveling throughout the country and having interactions with members of the three major racial/cultural groups (e.g., mestizos, indigenous, and Afro-Caribbean) through roundtable discussions, informal interviews, and cultural activities unique to each group and geographic location.

The Communication, Health and Culture/Sustainability in Australia (CHCS) program focuses on the issue of health as a social construct that is contingent on cultural, environmental, and global influences. The course examines health communication from a multicultural perspective, specifically comparing Western/mainstream culture with the Aboriginal community in Australia. The courses, reading materials, and general program curriculum focus on theories and applied approaches to communication while in a host country, which further demonstrated the appropriateness of including students from this program. Because the CHCS program was facilitated by a communication professor, formal efforts were made to create opportunities for the students to interact and communicate with members of the Aboriginal culture in Australia and attend guest lectures at Australian universities. This emphasis is critical to curriculum and general program goals, as there is interest in understanding the role that communication plays in creating culture and directly influencing how members of this cultural community communicate about their health. Another important feature of the program was the constant in-country travel, whereby the students traveled as a group and spent time in several different parts of the Northern Territory in Australia.

In an attempt to determine if differences exist regarding how students from different types of content programs perceive their experiences, students from non-communication based programs were also interviewed. Two programs that do incorporate culture and worldview into their curriculum and are offered through the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources were included in this study as well. The two programs looked at issues that related to national resources from an international perspective (University of Georgia Office of International Education, 2011). Specifically, the

programs' course contents focused on how countries with different worldviews examine issues related to resource economics (Warnell Core) and wildlife conservation and management (International Wildlife Management). The Warnell Core (WC) program is a program based in Costa Rica that does not involve extensive travel for the students and is housed on the University of Georgia campus throughout the trip's entirety. The students spend a large amount of time within the Monteverde region of the country getting to know the local customs and people. In contrast, the International Wildlife Management (IWM) program is located in Botswana. This program is similar to the Warnell Core in terms of its stationary nature, although the students mostly camped out at a national park in Botswana. The students traveled to rural areas and had opportunities to observe life in a developing country. The students were led by faculty to understand how cultural differences view issues related to how populations of wildlife are managed.

In addition to having been enrolled in one of these short-term programs, the participants were required to have completed the program within the past two years (i.e., students studying abroad during the summer of 2010 and 2011). By requiring the participants to have studied abroad within this time frame, it was anticipated that the participants would have more recall of their experiences and would be less likely to difficulty identifying specific events or moments that occurred one or two years prior to the interview. Further, another requirement was that the participants must have returned from their trip and spent at least six months in the United States in order for them to have intercultural communication interactions they could reflect on that occurred post-study abroad. SAP participants from the same program but different summers (e.g., participants from IPIC 2010 and 2011) were included when possible to assess differences in group

dynamics. While these restrictions limited the number of participants in the study, it increased the likelihood of gathering sufficient data on the topic and regarding cultural experiences germane to the current study.

Recruitment

Recruitment of these participants was based on a convenience, purposive sample. The goal in a phenomenological study is to acquire quality, relevant information (Smith & Osborn, 2007); therefore, there was not a focus on reaching a minimum amount of participants. This purposive recruitment strategy was used to increase the likelihood of eligibility and to specifically identify those students who were current residents in the college town and available for participation. In order to recruit eligible program participants, each gatekeeper was contacted either via email or in person to generate names and contact information for students to be contacted for possible participation. Once the names and email addresses were collected, a general email (see Appendix B) was created and then tailored to each program, providing students with an introduction to the research, a description of the proposed study, a discussion of participation criteria, and a request for participation. Participants were also informed that a $15 honorarium would be provided for those who successfully completed the interview. This information was derived from the Consent Form later provided in the actual interview in person (see Appendix C).

Because program participation was the primary criterion, efforts were not made to have an equal number of males and females or members of different racial/ethnic groups participate in the study. Rather, recruitment efforts focused specifically on all students enrolled in the respective programs. It must be noted that one of these programs did in

fact have a racially diverse student body, thus contributing to a diverse participant pool. Despite concerted efforts to actively recruit from the UGA Paris Program, repeated emails to students identified as eligible to participate went unanswered. This lack of response, a short window of opportunity to recruit (e.g., final exams, graduation), and student (un)availability warranted the decision to include a third communication-based program in the study.

It was desired that each program would yield at least five participants per program so that a cross-group and within-group comparison could be made regarding their cultural experiences in different intercultural contexts and programs. However, based on responses to recruitment materials, a total of 17 interviews were conducted. Guest (2006) argues that 15 participants in a particular study is the least acceptable amount. Glaser and Strauss (1967) posit that in terms of evaluating the maximum number of participants, the researcher should consider when the data reaches saturation, or "when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation" (p. 12). Because qualitative research is concerned with making meaning and not generalizing, there is not a strong emphasis on high sample sizes (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Charmez (2006) suggests that the most important part of determining sample size is related to the aim of the study. She also argues that smaller studies examining context-specific phenomena might achieve saturation faster than a project that is aspiring to analyze a process that spans disciplines. In the case of the current study, the goal is to identify ICC development within the context of short-term study abroad programs. Because it is not examining ICC development within multiple lengths of study abroad programs or, at an even greater level, ICC development of students in different

educational programs (e.g., study abroad, campus classroom, intercultural communication training programs, etc.), the sample size of 16 interviews was sufficient.

Of the 17 interviews, four participants were Botswana IWM alumni, four participants were Costa Rica WC alumni, seven participants were Costa Rica IPIC alumni (four from the 2011 program and three from the 2010 program), and two participants were Australia CHCS alumni.

The participants consisted of 13 Caucasians, 2 African Americans, 1 Asian American and 1 biracial participant. There were 15 females and 2 males. In terms of academic major, the participants majored in fields such as Communication (n=2), Public Relations (n=1), Journalism (n=2), Wildlife (n=5), Environmental Economics (1), Business (n=1), and Biology (n=1). The participants ranged in age from 19 to 22. Although participant availability was prevented an equal distribution of participants per program, the interviews conducted did yield a comparable number of participants per program-type (eight non-communication based program participants and nine communication-based program participants). For a visual breakdown of individual interview participant information, see Table 1 in the supplemental materials section of this paper.

Procedure

All 17 participants received an email request (See Appendix A) to participate in the study. Students were given the opportunity to respond to me if they were interested in participating, and upon receiving electronic confirmation regarding eligibility and interest, we set up a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview. A follow-up confirmation email was sent as a reminder a day before the interview was to take place.

The interviews were conducted in the Communication Studies graduate lab at the University of Georgia's campus to ensure a quiet environment with little to no distractions. This was very important given the sensitive nature of the topic (e.g., race and culture) and the need for noise-free audiotapes for transcription and analysis purposes.

Prior to beginning the interviews, participants were asked to complete a consent form (see Appendix B) outlining the purpose of the study, participation guidelines, and their freedom to end the interview if at any point they wished to no longer participate. Upon signing the consent form, participants were presented with the series of interview questions from the interview protocol, which was comprised of 14 questions (see Appendix C) that guided the interaction. The interview questions were structured as follows.

Question 1 was used to gather demographic information about the participant. Question 2 was asked in order to ease into the interview and allow the participant to briefly reflect on their study abroad experience and identify the most important lessons they learned in general while in the program. Questions 6, 7, 8 and 9 were used to address RQ1, which asked "How do students who have studied abroad exhibit and assess their intercultural communication competency development upon reentry to their home culture?" Question 6 asked the participant to describe their comfort level and experience in intercultural interactions prior to studying abroad, and Questions 7 and 8 focused on their perceived comfort levels with their intercultural skills pre- and post-program participation. Question 7 specifically focused on the thoughts and behaviors experienced during an intercultural interaction upon immediate return to the United States, while Question 8 allowed for reflections on their experience after a period of time passed

(either 10 months or 1 year and 10 months depending on the participant) after the program, which was an attempt to gauge whether or not the alumni were still exhibiting signs of ICC after they have acclimated back to their life in the US.

Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competency was used to determine how the participants illustrated the interaction levels, or outcomes, of the model. The participants provided answers to the interview questions about what they were thinking during the intercultural interactions (the DIO) and how they actually behaved (the DEO). In the analysis, the DIO was used to assess whether the participant's narrative reflected an informed shift of reference. The DEO was used to assess whether or not the participant's narrative exhibited effective and appropriate behavior. Question 9 asked students to consider a hypothetical example given by the interviewer when a cultural difference would be prominent during an interaction. This question allowed participants to consider how they would react to an international classmate/coworker who is not accustomed to US culture consistently arriving late to a meeting without offering apology. This scenario reflects the cultural difference of chronemics, or time use. Macduff (2000) provides an overview of how cultures have certain expectations for time-use and are oriented towards time differently. One specific cultural difference related to time involves punctuality. In the United States, punctuality is highly valued while other cultures (e.g., Italy) do not possess the same strict orientation towards being "on time" (Macduff, 2000). This interview question allowed for participants to respond to a potential cultural difference that could likely occur with international students on campus. Their responses were used during analysis as indicators of their degree of ICC and whether or not they were exhibiting either one or both of the desired outcomes.

Questions 3, 4, 5, 12, and 13 were used to address RQ 2, which asked, "What factors within the study abroad experience do alumni perceive as being influential to their intercultural communication competency development?" Question 3, 4, and 5 focused on the students' identification of critical incidents as they occurred during the program. As mentioned previously, these critical incidents offered an opportunity for the students to reflect on the moments during their program that they recognized as challenging them to become aware of their cultural differences. Due to RQ2's aim to identify program events or experiences students believed contributed to their growth and skill development, the inclusion of these critical incidents (if experienced) were assessed in terms of whether or not the student perceived those experiences as potential sources of change in ICC level. Question 12 asked the student to reflect on whether or not his/her experiences within the SAP influenced the way he/she communicates in intercultural contexts. These questions were used to determine which parts of the program were related to the constructs within the DPMIC. For example, course content from lectures that focused on cultural differences on communication behaviors might be identified by one of the participants. If so, this factor can be considered part of the DPMIC's Knowledge and Comprehension construct. However, becoming more open-minded towards others because of a one-on-one conversation with a local in Costa Rica would mark a change in DPMIC's Attitude construct. Question 13 gave the participant an opportunity to voice whether or not he/she considers study abroad programs to generally be a source of ICC development.

Finally, questions 10 and 11 were used to answer RQ 3, which asked "How do study abroad alumni understand their competency as intercultural communicators within different intercultural contexts upon reentry to their home country?" After asking

students to describe their general growth in intercultural competency, these two questions explored participant reflections on intercultural interactions they have had upon their return to the US and their level of comfort within those exchanges. Specifically, the participant was given an opportunity to consider which groups he/she feels the most and least comfortable around and why.

As mentioned previously, Kim (2001) argued that intercultural communication encounters are the best way to learn about other cultures and these experiences are efficient in reducing uncertainty/anxiety levels. Thus, these questions sought a deeper understanding of how participants experienced anxiety/uncertainty in different intercultural contexts, and what implications these levels have for ICC. If the student was able to identify specific cultural groups that he/she does not feel comfortable around due to a lack of understanding, their response highlighted ICC as being culture-specific.

Due to my role as a teaching assistant on the 2011 IPIC program in Costa Rica, I recused myself from these interviews to ensure the student comfort with disclosing about authentic experiences and to reduce the potential of a social desirability bias based on my role as their instructor. These four interviews were conducted by a fellow graduate student in the Communication Studies department at UGA. Another white female graduate student interviewed two participants due extenuating personal circumstances that prohibited me from conducting the interviews. Both interviewers were thoroughly briefed on interview procedures, questions, and goals to ensure the participant responses were not skewed by interviewer characteristics.

In an attempt to maintain consistency across all interviews, the interview questions were asked in the same order. Students were encouraged to elaborate on

examples when appropriate to gather data specific to the project's goals of understanding

ICC development. After the interviews were completed, participants were debriefed (See

Appendix D) and then given their $15 honorarium. The honoraria were provided through

a $1,000 stipend from the University of Georgia Graduate School's Dean's Award.

 Upon completion of the interviews, the audio-recordings were then transcribed by a

professional transcriptionist who transcribed all of the interviews verbatim for accuracy

and authenticity. (The professional transcriptionist was paid through the funds from the

Dean's Award as well.) As they were completed, the transcriptions were verified for

accuracy by comparing them to the original audio-recording. Once all transcriptions were

completed and verified, a total of 195 pages of data were generated from the interviews

for analysis. While all participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity, their

responses to the interview questions were analyzed in relation to their program affiliation.

Analysis

For data analysis, I used thematic coding. Thematic analysis refers to "identifying,

analyzing and reporting patterns within data" (Braun & Clark, 2005). The approach is

inductive rather than deductive, meaning that the themes, patterns, and labels emerge

from the data instead applying pre-conceived labels to the data (Patton, 1980). The

identification of themes and patterns is important in qualitative research, as it is provides

understanding of how individuals make sense of and process their experiences with a

given phenomenon. In the case of the current student, the themes speak to the ways in

which students in a SAP are able to identify and assess their ICC prior to and after

participation in their specific program. Although the interpretive phenomenological

approach is inductive in nature and is described as an "atheoretical" approach, Willig

(2001) argues that using appropriate concepts and terms may be used as a way to categorize the data during analysis. Deardorff's conceptualization of ICC was used at this stage to delineate levels of participant development.

The data was analyzed using HyperRESEARCH, which is a qualitative data analysis software program. The software served to be extremely helpful in offering a systematic way to examine a rich data set (thus providing a potentially richer analysis of the interviews and themes) and assigning open codes to my data. Open coding includes creating memos during coding/analysis that will relate to the formulation of theory and in vivo codes, which involves the exact words of the participants. The themes identified through coding are naturally emerging patterns in the data that reflect an idea, experience, or topic identified as being salient to participants and relating directly to the research questions posed for the study. The themes are not reflective of every participants' experiences or generalizable to the population of study; rather, they are representative of the value a person (or persons) has placed on an issue they deem significant (Bowen, 2005). Ultimately, it is the analysis of all of the emerging themes that serves to provide richer understanding of certain human phenomena.

It is important to note the impact that the researcher's subjectivities can have on data analysis. This process of reflexivity is essential at all stages of the research process due to the complex relationship between the researcher and the data (Finlay and Gough, 2003). Instead of attempting to moderate the researcher's role, the interpretive phenomenological approach encourages researchers to recognize the relationship and understand its implications for the results. Thus, I will now present a subjectivities statement that will describe my position in relation to the study's topic.

Subjectivities Statement

I am a second year graduate student and I am studying intercultural, interpersonal, and health communication. In my undergraduate program, I went on a study abroad trip to Costa Rica in 2008 and found it to be an incredibly rewarding experience. I also worked as a teaching assistant on the same SAP during the summer of 2011 between my first and second years as a graduate student. Collectively, these opportunities have enriched my interest in intercultural communication, and my positive experience in my own study abroad trip has specifically led me to become interested in how students' experiences with studying abroad can improve their ability to successfully communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Because my experience was positive and life-changing, this aspect of myself can potentially influence the way I analyze or code my data. I will take steps towards eliminating this bias; however, it is important to recognize its bias.

In addition to my experience with study abroad and communication studies, I am a White, middle-class woman who is collecting data in the same University that I attended as an undergraduate study abroad student. All of these things have the ability to influence the coding process as well. My overall identity can inform the entire project in positive ways in that I have significant familiarity with one of the SAPs from which I will be recruiting, which will be helpful in contextualizing student narratives and themes that emerge from the data.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will present the study's findings. Each section of this chapter will focus on the themes that emerged regarding each research question. First, I will report the three levels of ICC development as reflected by participant responses. Next, the factors participants identified as being salient towards their ICC development will be presented. Finally, the results associated with how participants understand their development as intercultural communicators in terms of specific contexts will be given. For a summary of the codes and categorization associated with each research question, see Table 2 in the supplemental materials section of this paper.

ICC Development

Research Question 1 posits: *How do students who have studied abroad exhibit and assess their own intercultural communication competency development upon reentry to their home culture?* When asked to discuss their pre/post-study abroad comfort levels in intercultural interactions and summarize their response to real and a hypothetical intercultural interaction upon their return to the United States, there were three major themes that emerged from the interview data. These three themes include students whose ICC development represents *transformation (N=11), idealization (N=4),* and *stagnation (N=2).* The analysis revealed that students from all three programs exhibited transformation and idealization. However, only two students, both participants in the Botswana IWM program, experienced stagnation. (See Table 1, Appendix D for a breakdown of students' level of ICC development by program affiliation).

Transformation. The theme of *Transformation* describes students who experienced significant intercultural communication competency development during their time abroad. Of all 18 participants, 11 students reported that they were aware of their growth and were able to provide specific examples of critical moments that demonstrated how their communication behaviors have changed as a result of their study abroad program. Six were from IPIC, three from Costa Rica WC, and two from Botswana IWM. In addition, these students recalled recent intercultural interactions and responded appropriately to the hypothetical intercultural encounter provided to them in interview question eight. The hypothetical scenario involved an international classmate or coworker consistently arriving late for group meetings without apology and the students were asked to consider how they would react and respond to the student's persistent tardiness. Responses to the question that considered how the tardy student could be influenced by his/her home culture's norms related to time-use indicated that students were being respectful of cultural difference. Answers to the hypothetical situation that reflected the participant either asking questions and explaining new cultural expectations or altering their own behavior to accommodate the international students' transition were coded as indications of transformation. In addition, transformed participants reflected on intercultural interactions that were experienced upon reentry to the United States and discussed how their behavior during these conversations was impacted by their experience abroad. Examples of how these participants exhibited greater levels of ICC include being more curious about diverse cultural groups, remaining open-minded during interactions where cultural differences are salient, and asking questions to ensure effective communication. The overall responses from the 11 participants demonstrated

that both the DPMIC's internal and external outcomes were in fact reached and that these students considered their SAP to be influential to this development. Two narratives reflecting participants who have transformed will be discussed as exemplars.

Christin, a 22-year old journalism major from Alpharetta, Georgia, a participant on the Costa Rica IPIC program, along with Wes, a 21-year old Environmental Economics and Management major from Atlanta, Georgia, a participant in the Botswana IWM program, both exhibited a clear demonstration of all of Deardorff's components of an interculturally competent communicator throughout her narrative. When asked about her comfort level with intercultural interactions prior to studying abroad, Christin answered:

> [Before I studied abroad,] I had no confidence whatsoever. I would have probably -- if I wasn't put in a position to speak with intercultural groups, then I would have probably chosen not to because I wouldn't have been comfortable with it. And I wouldn't have stepped outside my comfort zone to do it. And although I may not be 100% confident now communicating with all intercultural groups, I definitely have opened up my mind to it. I went to a step show with [two African American girls in my program] where it was almost predominantly African-American, and I was able to communicate with all of their friends. Although I wasn't 100% confident in things I was saying. I was a little worried about what they thought of me because they're my friends and I wanted their friends to like me. But I would never have done that before, so I think in that sense, my confidence has grown a lot because I went to the event, I talked with their friends, I had an open mind to communicating with all of them, and I had a great time. So I think it's definitely made my confidence a lot stronger.

As her response indicates, Christin demonstrated attitudinal development as a result of participating her study abroad program. That experience allowed her to display greater respect and more openness toward involvement in different cultural events (e.g., attending the step show), which is something she said she never would have done prior to the program. In addition, Christin's admission that she felt worried and uncomfortable at first denotes that she also possessed what Deardorff conceptualizes as curiosity and

discovery by tolerating a situation she perceived as ambiguous and remaining open-minded about the experience.

Likewise, when asked how his study abroad experience influenced the way he communicates with individuals from different cultures, Wes concluded that,

> Traveling in a study abroad, especially since you'll be there a longer time interacting with those people, will -- if it doesn't completely change your perspective and you have a higher respect or at least a respectful understanding of that's why people are different <Garbled> people just don't like that people are different, but that's because they've never really sat down and understood why. So study abroad can just change your perspectives completely. You could see things in yourself that you're like, this is dumb of me to be like this, but look how they're doing. It'll make you much more open-minded and understanding just the problems in the US that you see or when you're like, oh, I can't believe the French are like that… Other countries are different and that's good, the diversity is good. So it just gives you that perspective because people will be like -- I went to Spain for two months and I loved it, but it was completely different from the US. So the fact that you loved another culture a ton, that will make you open and more confident in seeking that and seeking and growing in that way.

Much like Christin, Wes' experience in another country also challenged him to think more critically about how he communicates with people from a different culture. His SAP gave him the opportunity to be more "open" and "confident" with these kinds of exchanges and created an interest in future opportunities to further develop in that area.

In terms of knowledge and comprehension, Christin described how the study abroad program changed her self-awareness while at the same time improving her confidence with intercultural interactions, which she directly attributes to the deep cultural knowledge she gained while in Costa Rica: In response to the question about what she considered to be the most important thing she took away from her SAP experience, she provided the following reflection.

> I came back probably -- everyone even said this -- I came back one of the happiest, most confident I've been in my entire life. I went into the experience just pretty down about things because things weren't going my way and I had -- I just

didn't have that much self-confidence. I don't really know why, but being in another country and having to be independent -- you had to force yourself to be independent. And once you gain that independence, you gain confidence. And when I came back, I was just on cloud nine about my new friendships and my new knowledge of a whole 'nother country, a whole 'nother culture and the different cultures that I was coming back to in the United States with having new friends.

Wes shared how learning from the guides in his program who were members of the host culture hired to assist with the program increased his understanding of cultural differences. He explained how those interactions allowed him to rely less on stereotypes based on information he received from media in the United States and much more on the new knowledge he was gaining while in Africa.

It's definitely made me more open to hearing what they have to say. Those guides, if you just looked, one, his dad owned like half of Botswana. But he had chosen not to be wealthy and to be a guide. And then another guide, he was born in Britain but grew up in South Africa. And then another one, she grew up as a surfer. And then another guy had fought in some crazy wars in one of the intense countries over there -- I can't remember what country it was. And then another guy was a very educated -- he was like a black Botswanan. Actually, we had a few of them. Whereas this was counter to most of the people we encountered. But he was incredibly smart and was highly educated and it was awesome to talk to him because he sort of had broken the mold, I guess, of what you would expect in Africa. So talking to all of them, it helped you understand where they're coming from. But then they also all have something to add. And we had a lot of respect for them just because of what they were doing. But then we might clash on certain things, but you still respected them as people because you understood more of where they were coming from. So that was just really big. It just makes you want to actually get to know the people really well just so you can have real conversations with them.

Christin also demonstrated that she reached the desired internal outcome during one of her experiences in Costa Rica. She was asked to provide an example of a critical incident, or a time when she struggled with cultural difference while abroad, and this was her response.

When we went on an indigenous hike and the indigenous, the Bribri tribe, had us eat this meal that they had made where it was out of a banana leaf. And it was just

so -- there was no utensils. They had just -- they raised the chicken, they killed the chicken, they cooked it for us. They know about utensils, they just don't use them. It's such a simple culture. And sitting there eating that and being -- just to think about how Americanized we are, whereas if we don't have utensils, it's like, "Oh my God. What are we going to eat with?" We're going to eat with our hands. And everyone's reactions to it -- you sit there and realize how much more simple the Costa Rican culture is. Their motto is "Pura Vida," like pure life. And in that moment, you truly felt it. And it's moments like that where, hey, maybe I wouldn't want to eat out of a banana leaf with my hands every day, but to think of a more simple culture, it was an incredible experience to see how they just are carefree about so many things. And we rely so much on this fast-paced life where we have to have the latest technology, the latest everything. And they're happier than any of us and they're living as simple as possible.

Christin's acknowledgement that the indigenous community's way of life was different, but not wrong, demonstrated her achievement of ethnorelativity. Through her SAP program, she became flexible by engaging in the cultural experience of eating food with her hands. This experience was salient for Christin and allowed her to experience a shift in her frame of reference.

Similarly, Wes demonstrated this shift from ethnocentrism when interacting with a German friend involving a disagreement about healthcare after his return to the United States. Based on his interactions with African guides and accepting new ways of doing things, Wes claims he was able to negotiate the way he understood his friend's perspective, which he considered a cultural difference in their relationship:

> I guess putting yourself in his own shoes – that's very cliché. But it is the same thing. It's like well, I might think the political system or the health care or something in the US is better, whereas he'll be like, "Yeah, well health care in Denmark is completely free or university for us is completely free." And just sort of working through that, not just being like, "That's wrong." Being patient and understanding where he's coming from.

In this talk turn, Wes described how his German friend has a very direct communication style, which he learned was a characteristic of German culture. At first, Wes was unable to accept the overt opinions and bluntness that typically occurred in their conversations.

However, Wes argued that by being exposed to African guides' communication styles

and hearing their perspectives on issues that differed from those reflective of his own

culture assisted him in being more patient and open-minded with his German friend. This

shift from considering his American lifestyle to be the correct way of doing things to

accepting the opinions and remaining open minded in their conversations reflects a shift

from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.

Further, Christin demonstrated the desired external outcome upon reentry into the

United States by describing a critical event where she describes herself as communicating

appropriately and effectively with an African American woman upon her return to the

United States. Christin shared this experience:

> My little brother plays on a travel basketball team, and he's one of three white
> kids on it. And when I came back, one of the moms is very into racial -- learning
> more about racial discrimination and how to eliminate the stereotypes of the
> African-Americans. And she writes these blogs about it and all of this. So she was
> very interested to talk with me when I got back. And I was able to speak with her
> and we had never -- I had been to so many of my little brother's games with my
> family. And we had never talked just because -- I guess we probably had assumed
> that we didn't have much in common, which really we did. And being able to sit
> with her and talk about my experience and her experience with it. She was blown
> away, she had tears brought to her eyes. And I just felt great that I was able to
> communicate with somebody I probably wouldn't have before and shared
> knowledge I learned. And she shared some of the things she's learned from just all
> of her experiences. And we were able to relate on all of that. And I wouldn't have
> been able to relate to that aside from this trip.

Wes answered the hypothetical scenario involving the international group

member being late to a meeting by considering cultural difference and responding

appropriately. He explained that he would handle the situation as follows:

> I guess depending on what country... say they're from a Latin American culture
> maybe, because they're late there a lot, I'd be like, "Wow, we're actually
> witnessing their culture right now." I guess I'd try to make my group [be] patient
> with it and then maybe try to tell them, but I don't know if I'd really care that

much. But yeah, I'd probably try to make it a learning experience for the rest of my group.

In comparison to other student responses, Wes' answer reflects patience and understanding regarding a potential cultural difference. His decision to engage in a dialogue with the group member and the rest of the group about why the student was late and to encourage respect of difference indicates that he is aware of how culture can influence time use. In addition, he is using listening skills to understand the situation and respond appropriately and effectively.

Idealization. Idealization describes students who considered their study abroad program to be influential in their development as intercultural communicators but did not exemplify significant growth through their examples of intercultural interactions. These students were successful in illustrating aspects of the DPMIC (e.g., altered attitude, shift in worldview, skill development); however, these areas of growth did not translate to the external outcome of appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural encounters. These students either could not think of any recent intercultural interactions or shared an example that illustrated cultural insensitivity or inappropriateness. Examples of inappropriate behavior were showing disregard for potential cultural difference in a conversational partner, limited or no patience for the international student in the hypothetical example, and lack of interest in meeting diverse individuals. While four participants (two from Australia CHCS, one from Costa Rica WC, and one from Costa Rica IPIC 2011) reflected this level of development, Austin and Brittany's talk turns best describe this notion of idealization.

For example, Austin, a 21-year old biology major from Atlanta, a participant in

the Health, Communication, and Culture program, first recognized that his study abroad

program allowed him to be more comfortable in intercultural interactions:

> [When I returned from my SAP,] I felt very confident. I mean, I feel like most
> people who come back from trips like that say that they're going to completely
> change their lifestyle and whatnot and try to be more aware. I definitely was
> pretty determined to be… If I become a doctor, [I want] to be better at
> communicating and understanding that most people -- what might seem logical to
> you but people might not understand what you're saying [and] that you have to
> kind of dish it out to them so that they can understand it.

His response suggests some degree of cultural awareness; however, when asked about

any intercultural interactions he experienced upon his return to the United States, Austin

was unable to recall any critical incidents where he could apply what he learned during

his program. He was then probed and asked about how his comfort level has changed

now that he has become reaccustomed to life in the United States. Unfortunately, Austin

reported that his confidence has decreased:

> It's definitely gone down a bit. It's different when you've been exposed to that
> mindset for a whole month, day by day by day, and then of course it was
> definitely a lot better right after when I came back. You don't really think about it
> as much on a daily basis.

Further, the notion of idealization is evident in Austin's response to the

hypothetical scenario involving an international group member being late. He explains

that he essentially would be using cultural norms of the United States as a guide for his

communication behaviors (e.g., ethnocentrism) when stating he "would not be happy

about it" and would "originally try to deal with it in our culture, like, 'Why are you late?

You can't be doing that.'" After further reflection, he explained that he would consider

how culture would play a part in the interaction only *after* his initial approach was used

with the student. This decision to disregard the other's cultural influence during

conversations and rely on one's own cultural perspective reflects an ethnocentric mindset.

Brittany, a 21-year old communication studies major in the Costa Rica IPIC 2011

program, demonstrated a changed perspective on cultural difference and considers herself

more open-minded in her encounters. She shared that she had enrolled in another study

abroad program after the first one because she enjoyed learning about cultural differences

and lists being more open-minded as one of the major outcomes of the experience.

Despite this perceived change, her actual description of communication behavior upon

return to the United States did not exhibit any change in external outcomes. For example,

when asked about recent intercultural interactions, Brittany could not recall any. Further,

Brittany was probed to consider how likely she would be to approach someone from

another culture and she responded:

> Let me say this. [If someone approached me and wanted to] talk about Costa Rica,
> and I'm like, oh -- I'd probably jump right into it. But any other culture, I probably
> [would not be receptive to it]. So I guess I sort of [would be more willing to
> approach intercultural conversations] but not really. [If] I heard anybody talk
> about Costa Rica, I would jump right in, in the conversation, but not so much
> other than that.

Stagnation. The final theme associated with ICC development upon reentry is

stagnation. Stagnation describes those students who did not consider their study abroad

program to have influenced their appropriateness or effectiveness in intercultural

interactions. Similar to those representing idealization, these students were unable to

recall recent intercultural interactions and tended to respond in inappropriate ways to the

hypothetical example presented during the interview. Further, the stagnating students

admitted that they did not experience any ICC development as a result of the study

abroad experience. There were two participants, both alumni of the Botswana IWM program, whose answers indicated stagnation.

Ansley, a 21-year old wildlife management major from McDonough, Georgia, does not consider her study abroad experience to have any impact on her ability to communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. When asked how she considered her comfort level with intercultural interactions had changed based on her SAP, she states, "I don't think it did, honestly." Ansley did mention a change in perspective about conservation and land use, one of the program goals; however, regarding interactions with individuals, Ansley did not think the program impacted her upon reentry to the United States, claiming that "being in America, it's home, everything is usually the same. So it would probably apply more when I travel again outside of the US." In addition to not recognizing any growth in ICC as a result of her program, Ansley was also unable to recall having had any intercultural interactions since her return to the United States, which she claimed was a result of her focus on school and work. When given the hypothetical example, Ansley claimed she would "just approach them and ask them to be on time." All of these responses indicated that Ansley was not aware of cultural difference nor did she use any skills or knowledge to enhance her effectiveness as an intercultural communicator.

Karen, also a 21-year old wildlife major in the same program, told a similar story. She described her development as a student and other positive aspects of the program, including her altered perception of conservation and economics. However, when asked specifically if the program influenced the way she communicated, Karen responded, "Not

particularly. I think I'm more adventurous, but towards people, I don't think I'm acting any differently really."

For a breakdown of ICC development levels by program, see Table 3 in supplemental materials.

Factors Influencing ICC Development

Research Question Two asks: *What factors within the study abroad experience do alumni perceive as being influential to their ICC development?* The purpose of this question is to determine what sources, such as relationships and experiences, are identified as critical to the participants' ability to communicate more competently in an intercultural context. While aspects of the SAP might have a direct impact on such change, the possibility exists that participants may attribute change to parts of their experience abroad that might not have been explicitly outlined in the program's goals or objectives. In response to this question, three major themes emerged. The participant responses indicated that they perceived *immersion, education,* and *group dynamics* to be the main sources of ICC development.

Immersion. When asked what aspects of the program were the most influential to the way they communicated with individual from different cultural backgrounds, 13 students identified immersion as a prominent source. *Immersion* describes the experiences of study abroad students who had direct contact with members of the cultural group of the host country. These experiences were both interpersonal and observational. Three sub-themes emerged within the immersion experience that identified by students as particularly influential in their ICC development. Their responses to the interview questions regarding what parts of their study abroad program was the most salient for

them in terms of becoming more comfortable in intercultural interactions demonstrate that their growth as an intercultural communicator occurred as a result of *Interaction, Discomfort* and *Temporal Minority Identity*.

 Interaction. The first subtheme and refers to one-on-one interpersonal encounters with members of the host culture that facilitated intercultural competence is interaction. Allie, a 21-year old Wildlife major on the Costa Rica WC program attributed her communication skill development to the interactions with the Costa Rican staff workers on the University of Georgia campus in San Luis/Monteverde. Allie shares that conversing with the Costa Rican staff was easy because "they were younger, in their early 20s," and that she began to feel more comfortable speaking in Spanish and adhering to cultural norms in conversation.

 Likewise, Shelly, a 23-year old pre-vet major from Atlanta, a participant in the Australia CHCS highlights how her interactions with the Aboriginal community in Australia contributed to her open-mindedness. Shelly shares that,

> Whenever we went to the school and got to see the kids, we were like, oh man, they're so more open when we'd ask them questions one on one and get a better feel for the way things are for them... Everywhere, people are different and you kind of figure out – people are interesting. It's worth getting to know them.

The skill accumulation and attitudinal shift described by these participants are both components of Deardorff's DPMIC. By their own assertions, Allie and Shelly would not have experienced growth without having these pivotal interactions. The interactions were coordinated by the program directors and were a part of the program curriculum.

Discomfort. The second sub-theme of discomfort describes the critical incidents

where the students believed they were pushed outside of their comfort zone to experience

new ways of living. Out of the Whether these moments were caused by eating "strange"

foods or interacting with members of the host culture, four students specifically identified

the aspect of discomfort as causing them to grow. As briefly mentioned previously,

Christin considered her experience eating out of a banana leaf (something she never

would have done at home) to cause a shift towards ethnorelativity. Wes recalled his

experience grocery shopping in Botswana, saying that he initially felt very uncomfortable

and anxious negotiating with the border police when they went into town. However, he

considers these uncomfortable encounters to be the most informative to his own learning

experience:

> We had to go and talk to the border and figure that out ourselves, and it was on us.
> So I think an important study abroad is that you have a good mix of being pushed
> out of your comfort zone and not just watching, but interacting.

Similarly, Suzie (Costa Rica IPIC) and Chelsie (Costa Rica WC) both expressed

that these critical incidents where they felt uncomfortable made them question and

reevaluate their cultural stance.

> So I think in the conversations that I had and the experiences where I felt either
> overwhelmed or intimidated or unsure of myself were the ones that impacted me
> the most because those were the ones that really opened my eyes to think, "Hey,
> not everybody is going to cater to me, speak English and be easy to understand.
> It's easy to forget that when you live in your own little world. But I think the
> experiences that I had that kind of shook me up a little bit were the ones where I
> learned the most about what it's like to actually speak to people of different
> cultures. (Suzie).

> For me and for a lot of people, it opens your mind a lot more because you are
> being exposed to such different things that – you were in your comfort zone
> before and then a study abroad sort of puts you a little bit out of your comfort
> zone, so you have to adapt and be able to be a little bit more flexible. And I feel

like it helps, that it helps a lot in communication too because then later, you can be more flexible and open in communications with other cultures (Chelsie).

Temporal Minority Identity. The third sub-theme, temporal minority identity, refers to critical incidents where students who are usually part of the majority or macrocultural group are able to somewhat understand what it means to temporarily have membership in a microcultural or minority group. This status is temporary because they return to their majority group status either after the intercultural interaction as taken place or when they depart from the host culture and return to the US.

Jenny, a 21-year old white female participant of the Costa Rica IPIC 2010 program, shared that her experience as a minority in Costa Rica influenced her ability to relate to an individual from Taiwan back in the United States. Due to Jenny's experience as a non-native speaker, she altered her behavior in an intercultural interaction. Jenny shares:

> I think that by understanding what it's like to be in a setting where the language spoken is not your primary language really helps with talking with them and understanding where they're coming from, not [focusing on how] that word's not right or that sentence structure is kind of weird. Not being so judgmental about how they're speaking with me and trying to be more understanding of what they're saying. I think is something that came out of the program.

> In the case of Ansley, she did not consider her experience to be a source of

development that translated to her experiences in intercultural interactions in the United States. Instead, it was her exposure to being a temporary minority in Botswana that transformed the way she thought about her identity as a traveler:

> I guess just the exposure to being the minority, kind of repetition. The more things happen, the more comfortable that you are with them. So probably the next time around that [I travel abroad] I will be more comfortable.

Education. The next theme that emerged from the data as a perceived source of ICC development was education. Education describes the ingestion of specific cultural knowledge through classroom lectures, discussions, and orientations as a perceived source of ICC development. Students indicated that being able to discuss what was going on in their interactions and "put a name" with the experience aided them in processing their experiences on a deeper level. This understanding allowed students to respect cultural differences instead of being annoyed by them, thus moving them from an ethnocentric view to ethnorelativity.

Abigail, a 22-year old pre-vet student on the Australia CHCS class, shared that she was able to better understand her experience with the aboriginal community in Australia due to the knowledge she received by her instructors. When asked how the course content influenced her ability to communicate interculturally, Abigail responded,

> [Our instructors] told us their families are number one in their lives, the community is number one. Their spiritual beliefs are number one. And everything else is just taking a backseat to it. So when they started asking us questions like that, we were like, oh that makes sense that they would ask these things. So we answered them like yeah, I have one brother and a dog and my mom, and I have a step-brother and a step-sister. It was neat.

Brittany, a member of the IPIC program, acknowledged how one of the guest lectures involving personal space in Costa Rica related to her experience at a club. Brittany perceived the close dancing as inappropriate, but after considering the guest speaker's lecture on customs and norms regarding nonverbal behaviors and proxemics in Costa Rica, she realized she should not necessarily be offended. She claimed she would never have known and would have considered the men rude had she not been taught this important bit of information through the SAP.

In response to the hypothetical situation involving the tardy group member,

Jessica recalls one of the lectures given in her 2010 IPIC program:

> In Costa Rica, we learned that there's this cultural difference in the concept of time. They're much more relaxed, whereas in America, we're more typically like, I've got to get to places, got to be scheduled, got to be organized. And I'm very much that type of person, so I have to know where are we going to meet at every minute of the day, that kind of thing. But just understanding that there may be cultural differences will help to deal with the situation, not get mad and be like, why are you so rude? I wouldn't want to approach it that way and that's not my personality either. So I would probably just ask them, is there some kind of problem? Or why you running late? That kind of thing, just to understand – maybe they do have issues that come up. Maybe they are a prompt person usually, but for some reason every time we have a coffee date, something comes up. Or maybe it's just in their culture. So if I can understand where they're coming from, they can understand where I'm coming from, then we can come to a compromise where maybe I would set the date half an hour earlier and actually meet at that time, or they can be more conscious of the fact that I'm expecting them at a certain time. Just understanding each other's cultures and how we deal with time would probably help too.

Without prompting, Jenny shared why she would respond to her classmate in an

interculturally competent manner. While Lisa and Brittany's assert that education

enhanced their intercultural dialogue during the program, Jenny expanded the knowledge

she possessed of time orientation and (hypothetically) applied it to an intercultural

encounter upon reentry.

One student who did not experience much cultural growth during her program

identified with this theme as well. Karen, a 21-year old Wildlife major from the

Botswana IWM program, reported that her program did not include enough cultural

education and she yearned for more. She stated:

> Our teacher really didn't focus on the culture very much. I really wish he would have because that's a major part of going to a different country. But it was definitely animal focused. For the course review, I told him next time, he should have a stronger focus on the culture aspect and learning the language, because the cooks were really thankful when we actually made an effort to learn it because they had made an effort to learn English so they could talk to us.

Group Dynamic. The final theme that emerged from the interview data as a perceived source of ICC development was the phenomenon of group dynamic. Of the 17 participants, 8 students responded that they learned from their peers throughout the program. Specifically, the IPIC and Warnell Core programs in Costa Rica yielded responses that showcased how critical diversity within the study abroad program participants can be.

All four of the participants within the 2011 IPIC program in Costa Rica claimed that group dynamics played a major part in their development as competent intercultural communicators. The 2011 IPIC program consisted of five African American and five white students. This unique mixture within the group allowed students to explore ideas and have open dialogue regarding race relations within both Costa Rica and the United States, which students identified as one of the things they learned the most during the trip. Lisa, a 22-year old business student from Tallahassee, expressed that she learned the most about communicating with individuals from different cultural backgrounds from her classmates. When initially asked about what she took away from the program, Lisa responded:

> We were on an interracial study abroad obviously, so it was split half and half, and class times definitely got heated at times. And we kind of had to learn how to be able to express how we felt about certain things without offending each other, both ways. So that was one of the biggest obstacles we overcame throughout the trip.

Later in the interview, Lisa elaborated on how these group dynamics influenced the way she perceives and understands racism in the United States. Similarly, Brittany, a 22-year old African American student on the trip, recalls her experience with having

diverse classmates on her trip, explaining that it was a reciprocal learning experience for

both races,

> I honestly wish that a lot of people could go on the trip to see the difference about the other side of race, I guess. Because I just felt like we taught [the white students] and I felt like they taught us a lot. So I think that more people just need to see, like, get outside of their comfort zone and learn about different cultures. So I really think that trip was helpful. I wish we would have had a white man in [on] the trip because it was girls, all girls. And I think it would have been interesting to get the perspective of a young man that was white.

As Brittany's talk turn suggests, the group diversity in the group created a new learning

environment that complemented what was being learned in the class. This aspect of the

program was organic because it grew naturally in the program, but she notes that gender

diversity would have enriched the qualities of their interactions even more.

In the case of the Warnell Core program in Costa Rica, all four participants

mentioned one particular group member who enhanced his or her experience and

development as an intercultural communicator. This participant was a student at the

University of Costa Rica and joined the UGA program to enhance his knowledge of

spatial analysis and international conservation economics. Due to his extensive

knowledge of Costa Rica, all of the participants claimed Victor's presence allowed for a

richer and more salient cultural experience. Chelsie, a 21-year old biracial wildlife

student, summarizes her experience with Benicio as follows:

> I think becoming friends with Benicio was a big impact just because he was kind of the epitome of the Costa Rican culture and he was there and we could ask – he was available so we could ask him and we all became pretty good friends with him, too. So it was a very open relationship. And we were like, "Oh, this is cool. We can just learn everything from him."

When asked how Benicio enhanced her experience with Costa Rican cultural, Rose identified him as the factor with the most influence on her ICC development. She also expressed very strong feelings about the need for study abroad programs to work towards including a participant from the host culture in the actual curriculum:

> [My study abroad experience] was a lot better, tons better… [Benicio] was an interesting person. But yeah, he definitely gave us insight about the culture and would tell us things… Just having him around, we could ask him questions. He was closer to our age. He understood English very well and he was very knowledgeable. So asking him questions, I guess that's where it came from.

For a breakdown of perceived factors influencing ICC development separated by program, see Table 4 in supplemental materials.

ICC and Intercultural Context

Research Question Three asks: *How do study abroad alumni understand their competency as intercultural communicators within different intercultural contexts upon reentry to their home country?* To answer this research question, the students were asked to consider cultural groups different from their own that they felt the least and most comfortable around and why. Out of the 17 participants, 2 did not answer the question due to omission of the question by the interviewer (one of my colleagues). Of the 15 participants that did answer the question, only 1 answered that her comfort level was the same for all cultural groups. All of the remaining participants were able to identify specific intercultural interactions that caused more discomfort than others. Based on these responses, two major themes emerged.

Generalized Cultural Comfort. The first theme that was identified, generalized cultural comfort, describes individuals who express a general comfort around individuals from all cultural backgrounds. Beth, a 22-year-old wildlife major from the Botswana

IWM program, was unable to pinpoint any specific cultural group that she considered more threatening or anxiety inducing, claiming that, "I'm pretty widespread... I have friends in a lot of different cultural backgrounds."

Localized Cultural Dissonance. The remaining participants' responses indicated that the vast majority of students were able to identify groups that they felt significantly more uncomfortable around than others, which reflects localized cultural dissonance. Localized cultural dissonance refers to a continued discomfort around members of a specific cultural group, not necessarily the host culture of their SAP. This dissonance is localized because it applies to solely one group and not others. While no particular cultural group was uniformly identified as creating discomfort across participants, each student was able to identify at least one group they believed created more discomfort for them than other cultural groups different from their own. In terms of understanding why participants have developed these various levels of comfort, three dominant themes emerged. The subthemes of *contact frequency* and *contact quality* speak to the source of the comfort or dissonance students are perceived to experience during intercultural communication interactions.

Contact Frequency. Contact frequency refers to students' perceptions of cultural groups as sources of comfort or discomfort due to limited or no previous exposure. Out of the 14 participants that responded to this question and reflected localized cultural dissonance, 8 cited contact frequency as a source of comfort in terms of intercultural contact. Chelsie (Warnell Core) provides a positive example identified Asian cultures as groups that she felt the most comfortable around due to very frequent interactions and contact. Chelsie shared that she grew up in a neighborhood with several Asian friends,

and because she was in close proximity to them and was able to establish relationships with them, she does not experience anxiety in intercultural interactions with individuals from Asian cultures to the same extent that she would for other groups. It may be inferred that she has high ICC in those interactions as well.

In contrast, Brittany expressed dissonance and discomfort with intercultural interactions involving people of Asian descent, which she attributes to limited opportunities for contact. Brittany, an IPIC Costa Rica participant, shared that she had a few Asian friends, but as a whole "they just seem to be very to themselves. They really keep to themselves, more so than I think any other culture group." It may be inferred that the relationships Brittany has had with Asians have been more like acquaintances rather than friendships due to the perception that members are socialized to value ingroup communication versus intercultural (or ingroup/outgroup) communication. While she has had positive interactions with them, she recognizes Asian cultures as a group she has problems interacting.

As these perspectives demonstrate, students varied vastly in their perceptions of the same racial group. While one student's experiences were quite positive and occurred rather frequently, another shared that her experiences with Asians lacked frequency and depth, which might be due to cultural norms. In both instances, contact (in)frequency created varying levels of comfort and was directly related to participants' exposure to the Asian culture.

Contact Quality. The second theme is contact quality and refers to students' perceptions of cultural groups as sources of comfort/discomfort due to the quality of previous interactions. Out of the 14 participants that reflected localized cultural

dissonance, 13 mentioned the quality of prior interactions as informing their perceived level of anxiety around persons from specific cultural backgrounds. While Chelsie explained that she feels extremely comfortable around Asian cultures due to exposure, she identified African Americans as the cultural group she feels the most uncomfortable around for the same reason; however, the quality of those interactions has ace but due to the negative nature of those previous interactions. Chelsie suggests that the reason for this discomfort is based on somewhat negative previous interactions:

> I know I work with a lot of African American people. And when we're working together, a lot of times they'll have conversations themselves that I realize I just don't understand what they're talking about. Just the jargon that they're using and everything, I just don't know what it means.

This talk demonstrates that the quality of the interactions she has had with African Americans is negative due to cultural differences. As she describes it, the barrier is directly related to linguistic differences that interacting with African Americans.

In a similar vein, Christin, a white female participant of the IPIC program in Costa Rica, identified African American females as one of the groups she felt the *most* comfortable around; however, she continued to feel uncomfortable around African American males. Based on her study abroad experience, Christin claimed:

> I have grown to be the most comfortable around black females, but I'm still uncomfortable around black males because I don't know -- I've had instances where they've said things to me that I think are inappropriate. And so I feel -- although I don't want to group them and stereotype them that they're all like that, I think that everyone struggles with stereotyping once you have one or two instances, it's hard not to. That's something I'm working with on my own.

These two talk turns offer further support of the contact quality theme as an indicator of intercultural comfort because these two white females both had been exposed to the cultural group (African Americans), but had different experiences. Chelsie, who

attributed negative feelings to those experiences, continued to express discomfort with her interactions with members of this group despite the fact that she had several encounters with African American coworkers. Christin, on the other hand, had positive experiences with her African American female classmates in her program; however, these interactions did not cause her feel less uncomfortable interaction with or being around African American males. She explains that the quality of those interactions has been negative, which she has come to expect in general, which she recognizes as a stereotype that she is trying to overcome.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Current research on the study abroad experience suggests that immersion in a foreign country or culture plays a critical role in the personal growth of students participating in a SAP (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004, Penington & Wutherford, 2005; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010; Williams, 2005). While the findings are significant, scant attention has been given to accounts illuminating these unique experiences via student narratives (e. g, qualitative data) after the student has reentered their home country. This project adds to the literature by providing an examination of how SAP alumni understand and exhibit ICC after they have readjusted to life in their home country. Further, the results indicated that (communication) education and group dynamics are two aspects of SAP programs that alumni perceive as being influential to their ICC development.

While the majority of students did in fact reach transformation, which supports the previous literature's notion that SAP produce ICC development (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2001), the results also indicated that some students (N=4) showed development in their level of ICC but were unable to recall intercultural encounters upon reentry that were handled appropriately and effectively. Instead, these participants, who fell under the idealization category, represented changes in what Deardorff (2006) conceptualized as attitudes, knowledge and comprehension and skills, and/or internal outcomes without ever reaching the external outcome. Austin, one of the idealizers, shared that upon his

return to the United States, he desired to maintain the mindset he obtained in Botswana but failed to do so based on the amount of time that passed and becoming reaccustomed to his Americanized lifestyle. Similarly, Brittany asserted that as time passed, things slowly went back to the way they were before her program in terms of how she negotiated and thought about intercultural relationships. These accounts both support the notion of "shoeboxing" (La Brack, 1993) as a barrier to authentic and long-lasting ICC growth.

According to the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), students should be led through a post-program orientation to reflect on their experience and how it is translating to their life during reentry in an attempt to encourage continued intercultural growth. Brittany and Austin's accounts support this claim. Further, these results reflect the importance of examining behavior change, which should be a focus of future research focused on assessing ICC development. These four participants categorized as "idealizers" all answered that they considered themselves to be more interculturally competent but could not recall any instances of effective/appropriate behavior. This finding is troubling, considering that the general aim of many SAPs to increase cultural sensitivity and awareness among students is not being achieved. Thus, I argue that future studies, quantitative or qualitative, should be designed to identify the specific ways in which students' behaviors are changing, which must also include examining cognitive or affective development. For example, studies should involve the development of interview protocols that explore and scales that measure student growth as a result of participation in a SAP. I argue that individually and collectively, these approaches will create greater understanding of the critical role SAPs play in achieving ICC by offering experiential

evidence of what aspects of the curricula participants identify as instrumental towards that end.

Cultural immersion, education, and group dynamics were identified as being the most influential aspects of study abroad programs in terms of ICC development. Not surprisingly, immersion was the most popular response (N=13). This notion supports the findings of previous research, which indicates that students who engage in cultural immersion during their SAP experience more intercultural development than those who are not immersed in the culture (Gill, 2007). However, the identification of education and group dynamics as being influential to development provides new and exciting implications for the international education literature.

Due to the current void in the research literature regarding the impact communication education has on SAP participants, this study sought to examine how students from communication-based and non-communication-based programs attribute cause for their ICC development. Education, specifically related to communicative differences in the host culture, proved to be an influential factor in producing ICC development in program participants. Four out of the eight participants in IPIC identified education as being salient to their effectiveness in communicating interculturally. One out of two participants in the Australia Health, Communication, and Culture program mentioned education as influencing their ability to communicate effectively while in Australia. In contrast, it is especially interesting that the two stagnating participants within the Botswana IWM program identified the lack of cultural education as a detriment to the program. The remaining two participants, both of whom experienced significant ICC development, did not mention education as a source of ICC development.

Likewise, only one out of four participants within the Warnell Core program considered education to be a source of development for their intercultural communication skills. However, the one participant who did mention education was referring to an additional Spanish course she took at the conclusion of the structured Warnell program. Although these findings are not generalizable to their respective programs, it is interesting to observe how several students who were enrolled in a communication course mentioned that they perceived education as a source of development, while the only two SAP participants who did not experience growth yearned for more knowledge. As an alumnus of and Teaching Assistant for the IPIC program, I recognize how influential the inclusion of an intercultural communication consultant is for the program. This past year, I observed how students were uncomfortable with some aspects of Costa Rican culture until our consultant explained that these behaviors are not signs of disrespect, but instead are just cultural norms. For example, the restaurant experience is much different in Costa Rica than the United States. It was normal for us to wait for what we would deem to be lengthy period of time, according to US cultural norms, after our meal to get our check. This created considerable frustration for many of the students. Once our consultant explained how time-use is different in Costa Rica and that the servers will not bring a check unless it is specifically requested, as bringing the check without a direct request for it by the diner is considered disrespectful and a nonverbal cue that the server is ready for them to leave. Eventually, the students were able to alter their behaviors to enjoy their meals as a unique cultural experience rather than a negative dining experience (e.g., receiving bad service), which involved the students making specific requests for their checks earlier to account for cultural differences. Without understanding this cultural

difference and discussing their encounters with the consultant, the students might have left Costa Rica with the perception that restaurant servers were ill-equipped to do their job, which reflects a degree of ethnocentrism. Thus, it may be concluded that ICC in SAP is facilitated in part by communication education.

The results from this study serve a greater purpose of highlighting the important role that the inclusion of intercultural communication content plays in students' development as competent in their intercultural interactions. These results suggest that SAP developers should implement orientations regarding intercultural communication differences specific to the SAP's host culture. For example, students studying abroad in China should be aware of how cultural dimensions such as power distance or collectivism cause communicative differences American students would otherwise be unaware of. By including this information in orientations prior to departure, students will be better able to understand why they are experiencing incidents that are uncomfortable for them. More importantly, SAP developers and faculty should consider including a series of lectures from a communication scholar native to the host culture. In the IPIC program, the Program Director has integrated guest lectures and information sessions with experts who are an integral part of the educational curriculum for the program. These scholars offer students information and education on cultural difference and offer specific communication strategies they believe can best assist the students with adapting to the host culture. The information provides them with knowledge about the culture as well as tips for effectively managing their communication experiences and behaviors with Costa Ricans. These findings lead me to conclude that having someone who is both familiar with the culture on a day-to-day basis and is an expert on communication, presents

students with an opportunity to think critically about the communication interactions they will undoubtedly have in the host culture and to ask questions of the experts about experiences in an effort to make sense of them, as Brittany did with her dancing encounter.

Group dynamics were also identified as being influential to ICC development. Two groups in particular considered group dynamics as pivotal to their experience. These two groups, the 2011 IPIC program and the 2011 Warnell Core program, both emphasized the importance of learning from peers within the program. Within the 2011 IPIC program, the racial make-up of the group allowed for increased understanding and reciprocal growth as interracial communicators. The goals of the IPIC program are to foster race relations that extend beyond the classroom, and as evidenced by the 2011 participant narratives (in contrast to the 2010 participant narratives), the findings reify the importance of group dynamics in reaching this goal. For example, all four participants within the 2011 program mentioned that the even distribution of races in the classroom helped them understand and appreciate the perspectives of the different racial group. The responses from the participants in the 2010 IPIC program (which did not possess the same level of diversity) did not appear to experience. A targeted recruitment approach was not used by the Program Director to create a racially diverse and balanced enrollment.

Within the Warnell Core program, students identified one particular group member as influencing their development as intercultural communicators within Costa Rica. Benito, the Costa Rican native, formally presented information to the students about the culture and specific customs that Costa Ricans engage in. His perspective as a

native and member of the host culture and on how the students should navigate the

country allowed for a culturally richer experience for program participants. Instead of

learning the culture's idiosyncrasies and expectations through lectures (education),

Benito enhanced student knowledge through interacting with them. The fact that Benito's

presence allowed for cultural growth further supports this notion that group dynamics are

an important part of study abroad outcomes and should be considered when study abroad

offices are accepting students for programs. Study abroad offices can use this

information to actively recruit diverse participants in an attempt to yield ICC

development.

　　　　According to data from 2007, "students of color comprise only 17 percent of the

U.S. study abroad population" (Inside Higher Education, 2007). Unfortunately, this trend

declined significantly for 2009-2010. Using data from the Institute of International

Education's and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education

Statistics' *Open Doors* report, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers

(NAFSA) states that non-white students represented a mere 8% of the 270,604 students

who participated in SAPs during the 2009-2010 school year (NAFSA, 2011). Various

reasons may explain why students of color do not participate in study abroad programs at

the same rate as White students (62.1% in 2009-2010), one of which may be lack of

information about this educational opportunity. Thus, it is incumbent upon SAP directors

and marketers to pitch the program to culturally diverse (i.e., non-white) organizations on

campus. Encouraging members to apply for admission will not only present studying

abroad as a viable academic and personal endeavor for students of color but it could

potentially diversify the applicant pool and program participants in ways that traditional

recruitment approaches have not.

Another recruitment approach could involve informal interviews with past

participants from various cultural backgrounds to identify specific recruitment strategies

they deem effective in making the traditionally mainstream SAPs more racially and

ethnically diverse. Using their own experiences are a reference point, the students can

describe what attracted them to the program and suggest ways to formulate methods to

effectively recruit more diverse participants. It will be important for SAP personnel to

ensure that tokenism is not a part of the process, as potential students might feel

objectified. Efforts must also avoid placing these students in the awkward position of

being racial spokespersons in the program. The extent to which they engage in

interpersonal communication with their peers is dependent on many factors, and the

burden of being "responsible" for offering a cultural perspective on these discussions

must be avoided.

This group dynamic of SAPs is often times fostered in various ways, and one

approach Program Directors can implement program requirements that allow for student

interaction. For example, alternating roommate assignments throughout the trip

encourages students to get to know their peers and experience diverse interpersonal

relationships. As was learned by the IPIC group, these unstructured opportunities for

interaction outside of the classroom were pivotal to the students and their understanding

of cultural differences. This component of the study abroad experience is organic in

nature and should be considered in program design and implementation, which ultimately

functions to enrich the program and group dynamics in ways that other parts of the curriculum may not.

To that end, participants were asked to identify groups that they feel the most and least comfortable around after having completed their program. Findings suggest that their interactions amongst each other and with members of the host culture may have contributed to their comfort levels. I was able to determine the degree to which these results support the notion that ICC is either localized or general. The vast majority of participants (N=14) were able to identify cultural groups that they felt more and less comfortable around than others. Generally, these responses indicated that individuals' comfort levels are influenced by contact quality and contact frequency. In other words, whether or not we have been exposed to the cultural group in a positive nature is an indication of how comfortable we are interacting with them.

In some cases, participants responded that the study abroad experience altered their comfort levels with a cultural group (e.g., the host culture or the cultural group of his/her peers); however, none of the participants considered their experience abroad to significantly decrease their comfort levels with cultural groups to which they were not exposed during the program. These findings support Kim's (1991, 2000) claim that ICC can only be truly possessed in specific intercultural contexts due to knowledge and skill (language) development. According to Kim (1991, 2000) adaptation requires authentic communication encounters and exposure to the culture. The findings related to RQ2 and RQ3 support Kim's argument. In terms of RQ2, cultural interactions and group dynamics were identified as factors influencing ICC development. Both of these sources involve communication with culturally diverse members. Further, RQ3's findings that contact

quality and contact frequency were considered reasons for varying levels of comfort reinforce Kim's (1991, 2000) notion that exposure and quality of interaction enhance an individual's ability to communicate effectively and appropriately.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations of this study subsist in the method and participant sample. Due to its qualitative nature, the results are not generalizable to all study abroad programs (or even the study abroad programs specifically examined, for that matter). This concern associated with external validity is valid; however, the purpose of this study was not to generalize, but to understand the lived experiences of SAP alumni and how their experiences have translated upon reentry to their home culture. Qualitative research is more concerned with internal validity, or ensuring the accuracy of the study's findings (Patton, 2002). In the current study, I employed triangulation measures by including my own perspective as a study abroad alumnus and validating students' accounts by referencing information found on course syllabi and SAP websites and acknowledging my own bias as a researcher, both of which were identified as techniques to combat issues with internal validity. For example, my experiences with the IPIC were useful in evaluating how communication-based programs benefit from guest lecturers and intercultural communication content. Nevertheless, the findings are substantive and critical regarding the effectiveness of SAPs in facilitating ICC among.

In terms of participant representation, there was not an even number of participants per program. To create a clearer depiction of how SAPs influence participants, an equal number of participants per program type is desired. To that end, many efforts were made to achieve this goal in the research design. Due to scheduling

issues, I was only able to recruit during the last month of undergraduate classes, which could have decreased the response rate as a result of unavailability (e.g., final exams, studying, classwork, no shows). An equal program representation in the participant pool would yield even more substantive findings; however, logistics beyond the control of the researcher prevented that from occurring. Future qualitative research should involve increasing the number of participants would be to recruit at the beginning of the academic semester. This approach would increase the likelihood of equal representation and an even richer data set regarding the factors that influence ICC.

Finally, due to the subjective nature of qualitative work, the study was limited because I was the only one coding and analyzing data. While I did work with my academic advisor to ensure that the themes identified as being salient to the study where clearly conceptualized and identified, the analysis could have benefitted from having multiple coders analyzing the same data. This would reduce the possibility of biases impacting data analysis and interpretation.

In terms of suggestions for future research, several recommendations can be made as a result of the present findings. First, I think that researchers should continue to examine study abroad outcomes based on various program components. The current study solely examined communication and wildlife based SAPs. Future research could consider how a plethora of program types promote ICC development in its participants and how those participants attribute its source to aspects of the program. For example, the current project looked at programs where the students stayed in groups and traveled together. Programs that allow for more student independence should be examined as well, as students may report even more critical incidences where "forced interactions," such as

grocery shopping, sightseeing, and dining, independent of the group challenge students to actively communicate with members of host culture, thereby testing their ICC in real world contexts within the SAP.

Another conclusion drawing from the findings is the need for comparative data from multiple universities with a variety of SAP. Conducting interviews among participants in programs from a variety of institutional structures and geographical regions would offer data about specific curriculum components deemed essential to facilitating ICC. The findings would potentially identify general curriculum that faculty across disciplines can adopt to provide students with opportunities to evolve as intercultural competent individuals and future graduates preparing for a diverse workforce. In any event, comparative data will provide further evidence that institutions of higher education should be actively involved preparing students to be competent, effective global citizens.

Implications for Theory and International Education Professionals

A practical outcome of this study is the direct application of these findings to existing study abroad programs with a specific commitment to promoting ICC. Study abroad offices can implement programmatic initiatives based on the results of this study. Administrators, faculty, and staff who oversee these cultural experiences on a year-round basis can now benefit from an awareness of how students perceive study abroad and its components as being influential to their effectiveness as intercultural communicators. As such, study abroad staff have the opportunity to consider how SAPs could be improved to achieve the goal of cultural competence and awareness, which undergirds the goals and objectives of many SAPs. More pointedly, this understanding could potentially lead to

program changes that reflect more positive outcomes for students' cultural development by specifically including education, cultural immersion, and actively recruiting diverse students to enroll in SAPs. As mentioned previously, intercultural communication experts should be included during pre-program orientations and/or during the program to enhance the student experience and allow for a clearer understanding of their intercultural encounters. Pre- and mid-program orientations may include a series of three to four information sessions during each phase of the SAP that identify specific cultural norms and practices that the students must be cognizant because of their anticipated interactions with members of the host culture. This repeated exposure will demonstrate to the students the importance of developing culturally sensitive and appropriate communication skills during their time abroad. Subsequently, those lessons should translate into knowledge and experiences that extend to intercultural communication upon their return to the US.

Further, these results have implications for ICC scholars. Previous studies recognized the importance of cultural immersion and attitude change, but they failed to actually assess the change in the communication behaviors of the study abroad alumni (e.g., Penington & Wutherford, 2005). In essence, the studies did not assess the extent to which students' communication behaviors impacted their intercultural experiences upon returning to their native country. This model was effective in distinguishing students whose behavior was truly transformed by the experience from those who solely experienced internal growth. Further, the results associated with students' comfort levels (i.e., individuals feeling comfortable around others with whom they have had contact) reinforced the argument that the Knowledge and Comprehension component of the

DPMIC plays a vital role in an individual's ability to employ effective and appropriate communication in an intercultural encounter.

As the current findings suggest, research on SAP has significant implications for scholars, personnel affiliated with SAPs, and students who choose to pursue studies in a foreign country. The primary goal of studying abroad is obviously academic credit and progress toward degree completion; however, a more significant outcome is their ability to effectively communicate with culturally, racially, and ethnically different people. This skill set is imperative, given that we are living in a world and nation that are becoming increasingly diverse. Thus, it is critical that students begin a journey towards global citizenship, which requires developing skills and abilities that enhance the effectiveness of the intercultural communication processes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Deardorff Process Model of Intercultural Competence

ATTITUDES
Respect (valuing other cultures); Openness (withholding judgment); Curiosity and discovery

INDIVIDUAL

KNOWLEDGE & COMPREHENSION:
Cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knoweldge, sociolinguistic awarness
SKILLS: To listen, observe and evaluate; To analyze, interpret and relate

DESIRED EXTERNAL OUTCOME

Effective and appropraite communication and behavior in an intercultural situation

INTERACTION

Desired Internal Outcome

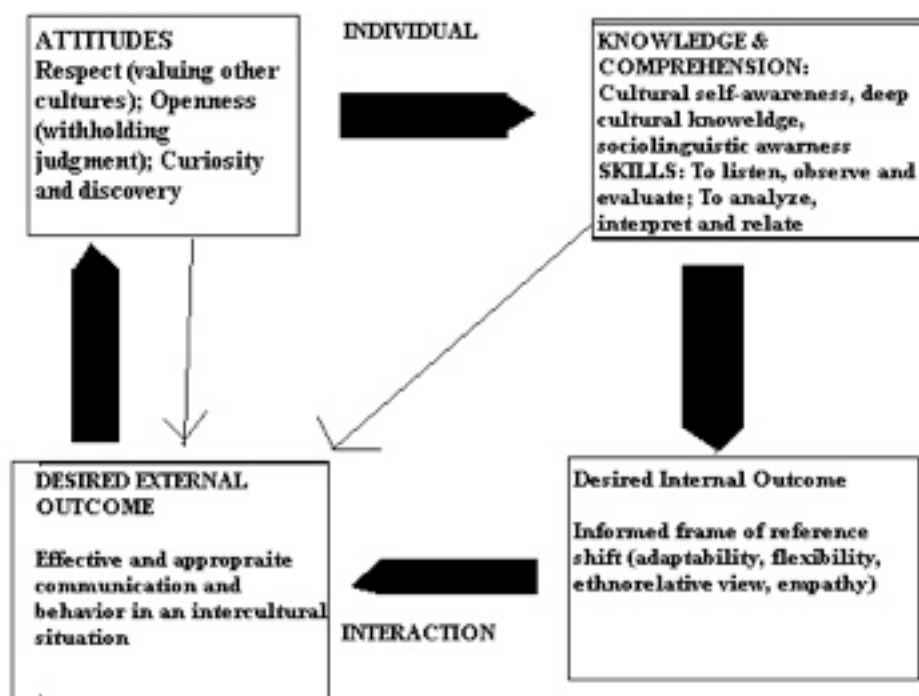Informed frame of reference shift (adaptability, flexibility, ethnorelative view, empathy)

Figure 1.1 Deardorff Process Model of Intercultural Competence
SOURCE: Adapted from Deardorff (2006)

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

1. The following email will be sent to study abroad program directors, who have agreed to forward to students from past-programs who meet the eligibility requirements.

Hello! I am contacting you because you have been identified as your study abroad faculty member as someone who might be interested in participating in a research study under the direction of Dr. Tina Harris (tmharris@uga.edu) from the University of Georgia's Communication Studies Department. This project is investigating how alumni reflect on their study abroad experience and evaluate its long-term effects. If you agree to be a part of this study, you will complete a face-to-face interview that will last approximately one hour.

To be eligible, you should have completed a communication-based study abroad program within the last year and a half. In addition, you should have spent at least six months in the United States since the completion of your study abroad program.

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will receive a $15 incentive!

Please contact Sarah Mink Tuck at sarah88@uga.edu or 706-252-5507 if you are interested in participating or have any questions regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Sarah Mink Tuck

Appendix C: Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Study Abroad Alumni's Perception of Intercultural Communication Competency" conducted by Sarah Mink from the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Georgia (583-0952) under the direction of Dr. Tina M. Harris, Department of Communication Studies, University of Georgia (542-4753). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to explore the role of study abroad on an individual's intercultural communication competency levels. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1)   Answer demographic questions about my biological sex, age, race and culture.
2)   Answer questions about my perceptions of my abilities as an intercultural communicator.
3)   Answer questions about my study abroad experience and other factors that might influence my ability to communicate with individuals from other cultural backgrounds.
4)   Answer interview questions regarding the previously mentioned topics for approximately 1- 1.5 hours.
5)   Someone from the study may call me to clarify my information.

My information will be kept confidential and my name will not be used in any written presentation of results. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes. Only the investigators will have access to the recording. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study.

The potential benefits for me are increased self-awareness about my perceptions of my study abroad experience and how it has impacted my communication skills. The researcher also hopes to learn more about the benefits of study abroad experiences. Risks involved in this study include the possibility of psychological or emotional risks, such as embarrassment or anxiety, as a result of discussing my communication abilities. I will be asked questions about issues that may make me uncomfortable when discussing them with strangers or in general.

No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare or if required by law.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher   Signature   Date
_____   _____   _____

Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Name of Researcher   Signature   Date
_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Signature   Date
_____   _____   _____

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

"Examining Study Abroad Alumni's Perceptions of Intercultural Communication
Competency"

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study about your study abroad experience. I
would like to begin our interview by asking a few basic demographic questions.

1. Can you please begin by telling me your name, age, race/ethnicity,
   occupation, and where you are from?
2. I want you to reflect on your study abroad experience. What do you consider
   to be the most important things you learned during your time abroad?
   a. How was that information taught to you through the course? Were
      there specific assignments or activities that were helpful?
3. Were there any times during the program that you realized you were different
   from the individuals from the culture you were visiting? Please describe the
   encounter that was the most memorable in terms of you feeling different or
   like an outsider.
   a. How did you handle this encounter?
      i. What were you thinking at the time?
      ii. How did you actually respond/behave?
   b. Were there other moments during the encounter that caused you to feel
      like an outsider? How did you handle these?
4. Did you feel better equipped to handle these encounters later in the program?
   If you did not experience another encounter, how do you think you would
   have responded differently later in the program?
5. How well (or in what ways) do you feel you were prepared to deal with those
   differences you experienced abroad?
6. Reflecting on your time before the SAP, how would you describe your
   feelings about communicating with others from a culture different from your
   own prior to your participation?
   a. What kind of experience(s) did you have, if any, with intercultural
      communication?
   b. How would you describe your confidence with intercultural
      interactions before you studied abroad?
7. Think back _____ months ago, when you first returned to the US, how would
   you describe your confidence then with intercultural interactions?
   a. Can you recall a specific example of an interaction you might have had
      during that time period or shortly after?
      i. How were you aware of cultural differences? How did you
         behave in the situation?
      ii. How do you think this interaction might be different from one
          you might have had *before* you studied abroad?

8. Now, consider an intercultural encounter you have experienced more recently. How did you think about and respond to cultural differences?
   a. How do you think this interaction might be different from one you might have had before you studied abroad?
9. Consider the following example: How would you respond to a classmate or coworker who just moved here from a foreign country and is consistently late to coffee dates without offering apology? What would you think and how would you address the situation?
10. What cultural groups (different from your own) do you find yourself feeling the most comfortable around? Why? How were your feelings toward them before the program?
11. What cultural groups (different from your own) do you find yourself feeling the least comfortable around? Why? How were your feelings toward them before the program?
12. How much do you think your study abroad experience has influenced the way you interact with individuals from other cultures?
    a. What parts of your study abroad experience impacted you the *most*?
    b. What parts of your study abroad experience impacted you the *least*?
13. How important do you believe study abroad programs are in helping people become more confident communicators with culturally different people?
14. Well, those are all of the questions I have for you. Do you have anything else you would like to add to our conversation?

Appendix E: Debriefing Statement

Thank you very much for your participation in this study. Your experience with the SAP is very valuable to our understanding of the ways in which these programs equip students with the communication skills necessary for effective intercultural communication. Once the data have been analyzed and reported, I would be more than willing to provide you with a summary of the general findings. If so, then you may contact me at sarah88@uga.edu. Again, thank you so much for your participation.

TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Individual Interview Participant Information

Name	Age	Major	Race/Ethnicity	SAP
Ansley	21	Wildlife	White	Botswana IWM
Beth	21	Wildlife	White	Botswana IWM
Karen	21	Wildlife	White	Botswana IMW
Wes	21	Environmental Economics	White	Botswana IMW
Ali	21	Wildlife	White	Costa Rica WC
Leslie	19	Wildlife	White	Costa Rica WC
Chelsie	21	Wildlife	Biracial	Costa Rica WC
Rose	19	Wildlife	White	Costa Rica WC
Beverly	22	Journalism	Black	Costa Rica IPIC '11
Brittany	21	Communication	Black	Costa Rica IPIC '11
Christin	22	Journalism	White	Costa Rica IPIC '11
Jenny	21	Communication	Asian-American	Costa Rica IPIC '10
Jeff	22	Communication	White	Costa Rica IPIC '10
Lisa	22	Business	White	Costa Rica IPIC '11
Suzie	22	Public Relations	White	Costa Rica IPIC '10
Austin	21	Biology	White	Australia CHCS
Shelly	22	Biology	White	Australia CHCS

Table 2: Categories and Codes

Research Questions	Categories and Properties
How do students who have studied abroad exhibit and assess their intercultural communication competency development upon reentry to their home culture?	TRANSFORMATION IDEALIZATION STAGNATION

What factors within the study abroad experience do alumni perceive as being influential to their intercultural communication competency development?	CULTURAL IMMERSION
	    INTERACTIONS
	    DISCOMFORT
	    TEMPORAL MINORITY
	EXPERIENCE
	EDUCATION
	GROUP DYNAMICS

How do study abroad alumni understand their competency as intercultural communicators within different intercultural contexts upon reentry to their home country?	LOCALIZED CULTURAL DISSONANCE (Due to) CONTACT FREQUENCY CONTACT QUALITY

Table 3: ICC Development by Study Abroad Program

	Costa Rica IPIC (Out of 7)	Australia CHCS (Out of 2)	Costa Rica WC (Out of 4)	Botswana IWM (Out of 4)
Stagnation	0	0	0	2
Idealization	1	2	1	0
Transformation	6	0	3	2

Table 4: Factors Influencing ICC Development by Study Abroad Program

	Costa Rica IPIC (Out of 7)	Australia CHCS (Out of 2)	Costa Rica WC (Out of 4)	Botswana IWM (Out of 4)
Cultural Immersion (Interactions, Discomfort, Temporal Minority Experience)*	5 (I: 3, D: 2, TME: 2)	2 (I: 2)	4 (I: 4, D: 1)	2 (I: 1, TME: 1)
Education	4	1	1	0
Group Dynamics	4	0	4	0

*Some participants identified more than one cultural immersion sub-theme as a factor of development.