THE EXPERIENCES, MEANINGS AND OUTCOMES OF STUDYING ABROAD:
A QUALITATIVE MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY

by

Mahamood Shougee

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

The Experiences, Meanings and Outcomes of Studying Abroad: A Qualitative Multiple-case Study by Mahamood Shougee
A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 1998

Canadian universities are increasing the number of study abroad opportunities available for students. This increase is based on the perception of beneficial academic, personal, and career outcomes coming from study abroad programs. In this qualitative research study, I explored the in-depth experiences of fourteen study abroad students. This study’s conceptual framework assumed that the curriculum of study abroad emerges from each participant’s reflection on her/his lived-experience. I also assumed that studying abroad is a holistic learning process involving three temporal phases: before, during and after. Within this framework, I explored the following aspects of my participants’ experience: (1) motivations for studying abroad, (2) preparing to leave, (3) experience abroad, and (4) the experience of returning home. Further, I explored their construed meanings and outcomes of the study abroad experience.

The multiple-case study design used in this study considered the participants as representative cases. Embedded in this design was also my autobiographical experience. Data gathering included: (1) research conversations; (2) journal entries; (3) analysis of pertinent documents; (4) art-based images of the underlying meaning of studying abroad; and (5) graphic illustrations portraying the emotional peaks, valleys and plateaus of the study abroad experience.
I found parental socialization to be the dominant influence in forming the participants' desire for studying abroad. Preparing to leave was a bittersweet time, influenced significantly by the support, or lack of it, from the home institution. Their experience abroad led to an alternative perspective on "culture shock": my participants experienced culture shock as a profound learning experience rather than a debilitating difficulty. Their re-entry experience led to an understanding of "reverse-culture shock" as: (1) a process of mourning for the loss of attachments abroad, and (2) a process of constructing relationships at home.

The core outcome of studying abroad was the transformation of self and perspective. I developed a model that represents study abroad as a holistic learning process leading to transformations of self and perspective. Theoretical perspectives from cultural and cross-cultural psychology, global education, and transformational learning illuminated my findings. Based on the findings, recommendations were made for study abroad research and practice.
To
my mother Faiza Ali
and my wife Fathimath Thouseega,
who have encouraged me consistently on my path,
with commitment
and love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe this study to fourteen sojourners who gave me the privilege to listen to their stories. This dissertation is their story. They were my research participants. Regretfully I am unable to reveal their real names. I thank them for their commitment to this study, their enthusiasm to share their stories with me, and for their time.

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CHAPTER I

Setting the Stage

Much of our gathering of data from other people will take the form of stories they tell and much of what we can convey to our readers will preserve that form.

Robert Stake

1.1 Introduction

In this study I explore the experience and meaning of studying abroad for undergraduate university students. The operative term “study abroad” refers to educational activities abroad that include internships, educational tours, field research, and student exchange opportunities. Researchers and practitioners refer to such activities collectively as “student mobility” or “study abroad” (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997). My focus in this study is on students’ experience and meaning of participating in credit-bearing study abroad programs. A student who participates in a study abroad program leaves her/his “home university” (i.e. one’s university in the home country) for a specific period of time to study abroad in a “host university” (i.e. a university abroad). S/he would normally obtain prior approval from the home university to pursue a certain set of courses in the host university. When s/he returns home, courses taken abroad are accredited toward the degree programs at the home university.
This study is a qualitative inquiry designed as a “collective-case study” (Merriam, 1988; Stake; 1995; Yin, 1994). In Chapter Three I define a collective-case study. I collected data for this study by listening to fourteen co-participants’ stories of studying abroad (i.e. 14 representative cases, Chapter Three, pp. 67 - 95). I also became a participant in this study by reflecting on my own experience of studying abroad. I gathered the stories of my participants’ by using the following methods: (1) research conversations with participants and their significant others; (2) analysis of pertinent documents; (3) student journals; (4) art-based images of the underlying meaning of studying abroad; and (5) graphic illustrations that portrayed the emotional peaks, valleys and plateaus of the study abroad experience. I detail these methods and procedures in Chapter Three.

I report my findings through an overarching metaphor of a ‘journey’ (Chapter Four, pp. 96 - 145). This meta-theme illuminates the embedded structure of my participants’ study abroad experience. I explore the twists and turns of their collective journey in Chapter Four and Five; in Chapters Six I discuss the meaning and impact they attributed to their journeys. As I discuss my findings, I refer to relevant prior findings and theoretical perspectives. In Chapter Seven I provide a summary of the findings and their implications for research and practice.

Having briefly outlined the study, I now turn to the key purpose of this chapter. A drama unravels in its unique setting. A research study unfolds inside a particular
framework. In this chapter I want to introduce the reader to the concerns that frame the focus of this study. In other words, I want to begin by describing the "building blocks" that set the stage for this study. They are:

1. The need for study abroad research in Canada
2. My autobiographical experience of studying abroad: Arriving at the topic
3. Research questions and an alternative conceptual framework for study abroad research

1.2 The Need for Study Abroad Research in Canada

This study's contribution to educational policy and practice emanates from the current context of internationalization of post-secondary education in Canada. Knight (1997) has written extensively on the internationalization of Canadian universities. She defines internationalization as "the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/training, research, and service functions of a university or college or technical institute" (p. 29). She confirms that internationalization is an institutional priority in many Canadian universities and colleges, at least at the level of rhetoric; in a survey of institutional mission statements, over 80% of Canadian universities gave a high priority ranking for internationalization (Knight, 1997).

What is the rationale for internationalizing university education? A consensus is emerging among Canadian universities that students' learning should become the focal
point of internationalization. Warner (1992) reports that in 1992 there was no consensus among Canadian universities regarding the goal of internationalizing higher education. However, five years later, Knight (1997) reports that institutions of higher education, including government and private sectors, agree that the most important rationale for internationalization is "to prepare graduates who are internationally knowledgeable and interculturally competent" (p. 30).

Although these stakeholders (i.e. education, government and private sectors) now agree that preparing internationally knowledgeable graduates should be the goal of internationalization, no consensus exists regarding the reasons for preparing graduates in this way. According to Knight (1997), the education sector wants to prepare graduates to live and work in an increasingly interdependent world of global cooperation. On the other hand, the government sector wants graduates to understand the impact of globalization on the economy and trade, and obtain skills to work in an information-based economy. The private sector believes that graduates should be prepared to work for corporations that are globalizing and functioning in an internationally competitive economy.

In spite of these differences in perspective, all sectors are promoting study abroad opportunities as a key activity for preparing internationally knowledgeable graduates. Government and private sector agencies claim that students who participate in study abroad gain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are desirable for the global economy (Larson, 1997; Knight, 1997). They also assume that those who study abroad are more
likely to find gainful employment upon graduation. Government and private sectors, therefore, promote study abroad on the basis of increased employability of returnees (Human Resources Development Canada, 1997). Recently, the Canadian government began supporting study abroad by sponsoring such programs as the Canada-European Community Programme for Higher Education and Training and the North American Student Mobility Programme, both announced by the Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) in 1997.

Universities are responding by increasing the number of study abroad programs because of the perceived academic, cultural, personal and professional benefits for students. For example, the University of British Columbia (1995) states that the experience of an exchange “will prepare UBC graduates to play a leading role in representing our [Canada’s] national interest in a rapidly changing international community” (p.3). The University of Toronto (U of T) asserts that “while the greater Toronto area provides a remarkable degree of cultural diversity, local experience cannot equal the benefits of complete immersion in a different cultural and/or linguistic environment, on-site research in different geographical regions, or participation in different educational settings and/or business organizations” (Task Force on International Student Exchange Programs, 1995, p. 3). U of T also “strongly believes that participation in appropriate forms of international study and/or work during a student’s formal academic life is a highly desirable and valuable educational experience” (p.3). Ryerson Polytechnic University states that “the development of international academic linkages is undertaken in order to achieve identifiable and beneficial outcomes for
partner institutions and their academic constituencies” (Ryerson Polytechnic University, 1993, p.3).

The rapid growth of study abroad programs is influenced by other factors as well. First, they are easier to develop compared to other institutional activities such as internationalizing the curriculum. Second, most universities tend to measure the success of study abroad by the number of students who want to participate in them. Third, institutions do not assume significant costs in developing study abroad programs; students generally pay for all aspects of studying abroad.

Although the number of study abroad programs is increasing, we know very little about students’ experience of studying abroad. In my review of research literature, I was unable to find a Canadian study that explored how university students experience studying abroad. I was also unable to find a Canadian study that focused on the meaning that students attribute to their study abroad experiences. In addition, as noted earlier, the current emphasis is on the employability of study abroad returnees in an internationally competitive labour market. The focus on employability may be hindering our understanding of the personal impacts of studying abroad. Thus, I began this study hoping to provide broader and richer descriptions of the students’ experience and meaning of studying abroad. I also hope that my findings will expand the discussion on the value of studying abroad for students. Does study abroad contribute to the academic development of students, or is study abroad mainly a means of becoming acquainted with
another culture through first-hand exposure? Can study abroad be an intercultural and personally transformative experience?

1.3 Autobiographical Experience of Studying Abroad:
Arriving at the Topic

I have outlined why the context of study abroad programs in Canada calls for research on students' study abroad experience. I became aware of this need because of my professional and personal involvement with international education in Canada. I now provide a brief biographical sketch of my own experience with study abroad and reflect on this experience to explicate my subjectivity concerning the research phenomenon. Objectivity is often seen as a researcher's ideal. But qualitative research is inherently subjective (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research involves active reflexivity in that researchers constantly take stock of their actions and their roles in the research process (Marynard and Purvis, 1994). Reflexivity is based on the belief that researchers are unable to be entirely neutral, objective, or detached from the research phenomenon and the knowledge that they seek to generate (Manson, 1996).

I arrived at this topic while working as the International Student Exchange Officer at the University of Toronto. Furthermore, the writing of this dissertation is the
final phase in my own study abroad journey in Canada. Therefore my personal experience with study abroad is firmly embedded in this study. The conjugality between my participants’ experience and my own lived-experience is what sustained my passion for this study. My experience of studying abroad forms the “basis for the story that I am able to tell” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 104). It makes me who I am as a person and as a researcher, providing me with the perspectives that I bring to this research topic and its conceptual framework.

Encountering Study Abroad

I began this study as a learner. I wanted to learn with and from my co-participants. My wish was to understand how they experienced their journeys abroad and what meaning they attributed to their experience. This research interest grew from a seed planted by my great-grandfather. I recall him as a fragile man who could not walk because of old age. My mother says that he died at the age of ninety-nine when I was eight years old. As a boy I remember spending countless hours listening to his life history. I know him through his experiences of travelling and studying abroad. As a teenager he left the Maldives in search of a foreign education on a cargo ship bound for India. There he worked in a printing press and learned Arabic for five years. He then embarked on another cargo ship to attend an Islamic university in Egypt. Fifteen years later he returned to the Maldives as a religious scholar and was appointed as the Chief
Justice by the King. His stories of studying abroad kindled my imagination and introduced me to the world outside.

The death of my great-grandfather was a real loss. I admired him for his experience abroad. I wanted to emulate his experience. As a boy I would say to people that I wanted to go abroad to study and become a scholar like my great-grandfather. I admired him because he was very different from other people I knew as a child, including my own mother and father. In those days only a handful of people in the Maldives had either studied or lived abroad.

The Maldives is an island nation composed of 1190 islands. Out of these, only 200 islands are inhabited. Throughout its history the Maldives has generally remained isolated from the rest of the world. Webb (1988) writes that the “remote islands of Maldives must be one of the few places left in the entire world where it is possible to find people who have so little contact with outsiders that children will run, screaming to hide themselves at the sight of a stranger” (p. 31). I grew up in this isolated country, yet my great-grandfather was able to introduce me to the experience and meaning of studying abroad.

My second significant encounter with study abroad occurred when my older brother left to study abroad at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. He studied there for five years during Lebanon’s civil war. He returned home a changed man. It was difficult for me to understand why he had changed so much. His personality, values, and
perspectives changed. I remember the frustration of not being able to relate to my own brother. I began to understand my brother's transformation only after I too began my own study abroad experience by coming to Canada.

A Student In the Maldives

I recall listening to my parents arguing about the value of sending me to an English-medium school. It was 1969 -- nine years after the Maldives began a nationwide education system based on the British General Certificate of Examinations (G.C.E). At this time there were two systems of education operating side by side. One was the traditional system in Dhivehi (local language) based on the principles of an Islamic education. The other system's medium of instruction was English, and the curriculum was imported from the United Kingdom. Parents could send their children to either of these two systems.

My father was a somewhat conservative man. He felt that sending me to the English medium school would take me away from the practice of Islam. He was also afraid that the English-medium would instill "foreign" values in me. My mother, on the other hand, felt that I would have a brighter future by attending an English-medium school. My mother was educated in the traditional system and she had never lived or studied abroad. Yet she wanted all her children to attend the English medium schools hoping that they would get the opportunity to pursue higher learning abroad.
The English medium school system in Maldives did not instill foreign values in me but it taught me about the world outside. Most of my teachers were expatriates from Sri Lanka, India and England. The language of instruction and the curriculum I pursued was English, a foreign language I used only for learning, not for thinking and reflecting. I learnt British and European history that had no relevance to Maldives. I studied the geography of Europe and North America that was very different from the physical and natural landscape of where I lived. The science textbooks I read provided examples of animals, plants, machines and ecosystems that were outside the realm of my experience. Despite such absurdities, learning about foreign places and peoples kindled my imagination of a larger world and fuelled my desire to study abroad.

My student days in Maldives were also marked by the responsibilities of having to work and make a living. My father died when I was ten years old, leaving my mother to raise six children on her own. The challenging economic circumstance of my family meant that I began working when I was thirteen. I started by giving tuition to schoolchildren in the neighbourhood. Then I became a tuition teacher in a night school. Finally, while I was in grades eleven and twelve, I had become the supervisor of this night school. By the time I finished my schooling in Maldives, I was looking for a way out of the daily routines and responsibilities of my work life. In 1986, one year after graduating from secondary school, I received a Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship toward a Bachelor of Education degree.
A Foreign Student In Canada

In September 1986 I arrived in Winnipeg as an international student from the Maldives. Within four years I achieved the goal of obtaining a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Manitoba (U of M). Then I began working as the Development Educator (the person responsible for raising awareness of developing countries on campus) for U of M’s International Centre for Students. While working I concurrently pursued a Master of Education degree and earned it in 1992. In 1993, I moved to Toronto to become the Program Director at U of T’s International Student Centre. In 1995 I was appointed as U of T’s first Student Exchange Officer with the responsibility of developing and coordinating international student exchanges.

I also moved to U of T hoping to pursue doctoral studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). I began my doctoral studies in 1993, and as I write this dissertation in 1998, I am approaching the end of my study abroad journey in Canada. At the completion of my doctoral studies I will be returning to Maldives.

Canada has shown me many personally transformative landscapes (Connelly and Clandinnin, 1988). Let me very briefly reflect on my experience during the first year of studying in Canada to explicate my “situational subjectivity” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992)
regarding this research topic. In Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven I further explicate my own experiences of studying abroad.

I recall the loneliness, the search for friends, and the eventual freedom that I experienced during my first year of studying abroad in Canada. After having worked in Maldives throughout my teenage years and young adulthood, by going abroad to study I escaped the daily stress of work life and family responsibilities. By coming to Canada I also escaped from the familiar cultural, social, political and geographical landscapes of Maldives. I found freedom in the company of Canadians who were my classmates. They welcomed me to their world although I did not share common experiences with them. Neither could I relate to their socio-cultural and recreational world. For example, when I could not converse about ice hockey or baseball, I knew that my social world was very different from theirs. I felt lonely, homesick, and had a strong urge to find friends with common interests and values. To find such friends I went to the local mosque because I knew I would find other South Asians (Indians and Pakistanis) there. I enjoyed the company of my South Asian friends but I quickly learnt that my cultural experience was very different from their own. While maintaining friendships with my South Asian friends, I continued to “hang out” with Canadian friends I met in my classes and in the residence hall. Gradually I began to feel comfortable with my Canadian friends and began relating to their experiences.

My first year of study abroad experience was accompanied by a perspective change as well. Before coming to Winnipeg, my teaching style was authoritative and
outcome-based. In my first year I taught under the supervision of a caring and gentle teacher. My experience in his classroom changed my perspective on teaching. I now understand it as a process of facilitating students to learn and grow in their own unique ways. Canadian teaching experience also presented me with not so pleasant learning situations. It exposed me to racism when two students refused to come to my class because I was a “Paki”. Furthermore, some colleagues tried to proselytize me into accepting Christianity. But I believed that this was a sincere act on their part because they wished me well. While such incidents taught me the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity, I also developed a self-awareness of my identity, nationality, values and faith. As a result, I joined anti-racist and multicultural clubs on campus and assumed a leadership role in them. I also made a commitment to promote anti-discrimination in all my professional and personal activities. Thus, it is very much my personal experience of study abroad that brings me to this research study.

1.4 Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

Reflections on my personal and professional experiences shaped this study’s guiding questions. Let me begin by listing these questions. These questions fall within the three temporal dimensions (before, during and after) of the studying abroad experience. The conceptual framework of this study brings together the experience in these temporal dimensions into a whole.
Guiding Questions

Before

1. How do students develop interest in studying abroad?
2. How do students prepare for studying abroad?

During

3. What experiences are meaningful for students while studying abroad?

After

4. How do students personally, socially and academically experience re-entry?
5. What are the meanings and impacts of studying abroad?
6. How do temporal dimensions of the study abroad experience (before, during, and after) connect with each other?

Having listed the research questions let me now turn to the study's conceptual framework. First, I discuss the need for an alternative conceptual framework for study abroad research. Second, I outline how this framework brings together two related research needs expressed in the above questions: (1) how study abroad students experience their journey (i.e., the process) and (2) what meaning and impact they construe from it (i.e., the outcome). Third, I explore the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this framework. Fourth, I consider curricular perspectives that inform my conceptual framework.
The Framework

With the inauguration of the *Journal of Studies in International Education* in 1997 by the United States' Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE), Hans de Wit (1997) advocated situating future study abroad research within a sound conceptual framework. He observes that prior research has not been placed in a comprehensive framework that brings together the experiences and outcomes of studying abroad. Having reviewed the literature myself (*Chapter Two*), I am inclined to agree with his observation.

As I discuss further in *Chapter Two*, literature on study abroad could be grouped into (1) studies that measure the outcomes of studying abroad, and (2) studies that explore the experience of studying abroad. Those that consider outcomes have been generally based on causal/comparative designs (Torney-Purta, 1994). They attempt to measure knowledge, skills and attitudes that students develop by studying abroad (Barrows, 1981; Bennet, 1986; Hoopes and Ventura, 1979 and Lambert, 1994). Some of these studies also associate the knowledge, skills and attitudes developed during study abroad in terms of creating intercultural competence (Dinges, 1983; Chen 1987), multicultural competence (Lambert, 1994) and global competence (Carter, 1994; Lambert, 1994).

The second group of studies explores the students’ experience of studying abroad. They consider either the cultural adaptation abroad or the re-entry adaptation at home. I was unable to find a study that explored the connection between preparing to leave,
cultural adaptation abroad, and returning home. Therefore I created a conceptual framework for this study that integrates these temporal dimensions. In doing so I consider (1) students’ motivation for wanting to study abroad, (2) their pre-departure experience, (3) socio-cultural and academic adaptation abroad, (4) and the experience of returning home as phases of an experiential continuum.

I conceptualize study abroad as a developmental and transformative learning experience. This leads me to see the meaning students construct from studying abroad as the most significant outcome of their journey abroad. Based on my own experience, I assume that study abroad is a dynamic and holistic learning experience in which meaning is construed by the participants’ active reflection on their experience. In Chapter Two I construct a literature-based model of the experience and impact of study abroad that fits within my conceptual framework (Fig. 2.2, p. 57). In Chapter Six I provide a model that shows how study abroad becomes an experience that transforms one’s perspective and self (Fig. 6.1, p. 265). This second model is based on the findings of this study and also fits the conceptual framework outlined here.

Assumptions

Embedded in this framework are my “ontological” and “epistemological” assumptions of the research phenomenon. My ontological assumption is that study abroad facilitates a profound experiential learning process that includes personal, academic, and professional change. “Change” here refers to becoming different without any negative or positive judgement to the direction of change. I assume that these
changes emerge from emotional, social, cultural, and personal adaptations to an unfamiliar environment. Study abroad involves learning in and through an environment that is often culturally, linguistically and socially different from one's own. Such a learning environment includes a range: physical, interpersonal, institutional, psychological and socio-cultural attributes. Such an environment evokes students’ interests, challenging them personally, academically and socially.

Epistemologically, I assume that reality is filtered and understood through our imagination and that we construct knowledge by reflecting on our subjective experiences. This is my perspective on knowledge itself. Obtaining objectivity in creating knowledge is illusionary. It is impossible to find “hard core” objective truths. I say this not because I deny the existence of an objective world or an unquestionable reality, but because I assume, as Geetz (1990) asserts, that we are unable to understand the objective world in its ontological state. Whatever we come to know as reality is mediated and filtered through our experience and understanding.

The meaning of an experience is constructed by our interaction with a physical and socio-cultural environment. Even after having created meaning from a particular human phenomenon, we are able to shift our perspectives and meanings upon further reflection (Hirst, 1974). These epistemological assumptions lead me to perceive the meanings and impacts students attribute to their journey abroad as dynamically evolving over time. They also focus my attention onto each individual’s construction of the subjective meaning and impact of her/his experience of the journey abroad.
These ontological and epistemological assumptions influenced my research design. I used qualitative research because it deals with meaning (Merriam, 1988); qualitative researchers explore ways in which people make sense of their lives, experiences, and structures of their experiential world. Qualitative research is congruent with my conceptual framework and its assumptions. The research design detailed in Chapter Three assumes that stories students tell about their study abroad journeys contain useful knowledge for developing theory, policy and practice. Such stories do not accurately predict the likelihood of what will happen to others who embark on study abroad journeys. Rather, they act as guides that highlight important landmarks and describe the complexities of the terrain for future travelers.

Curricular Perspectives in my Framework

Curriculum is educative experience (Dewey, 1916; Kilpatrick, 1936; Cremin, 1976; Schubert, 1986). My ontological and epistemological assumptions inspired me to look at study abroad as a curricular activity. Living and learning abroad is necessarily an educative experience. It is the type of educative experience in which situation and interaction are inseparable. Dewey contends that an individual lives in a series of situations in which s/he interacts with objects and persons. Thus the concept of situation and interaction are inseparable, each informing the other. Dewey also asserts that
different situations succeed one another in providing the continuity of experience (i.e. something is carried over from an earlier to later one). Dewey (1938) writes:

As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learnt in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow (p. 44).

Dewey’s explanation of how interactive experience becomes curriculum applies to students’ experience of studying abroad. Study abroad involves a series of learning experiences. It begins with preparing to leave (Part Two, Chapter Five), socio-cultural adaptation abroad (Part Three, Chapter Five), and re-adapting to one’s home country (Part Four, Chapter Five). The curriculum of studying abroad is found in these situations and the reflective construction of meaning from them.

Pinar and Grumet (1976) and Greene (1978) posit that curriculum is the reflective integration of lived-experience. Instead of relying on the “race course” etymology of curriculum, they emphasize the verb form of curriculum, “currere”, to refer to the running of the race and to emphasize an individual’s personal capacity to reconceptualize her autobiography (Schubert, 1986). Hence, a student is seen as seeking meaning amid a swirl of present events, moving historically into her or his own past to imagine and create possible future directions. Similarly, integrating of lived-experience by reflecting on the past and imagining the future is inherent in students’ active construction of meaning during and after studying abroad. My conceptual framework incorporates this perspective to examine the experience and meaning of studying abroad.
I assume that at the core of the curriculum of studying abroad is learning about
“self” and “others”. Learning about “others” includes developing greater awareness of
other cultures, people and places. I assume it also includes the development of a
worldview that is inclusive of others. Pike and Selby’s (1988; 1995) conceptualization of
“person-centred, planet-conscious learning” (p. 43) provides a pertinent curricular
perspective that illuminates this aspect of studying abroad. Person-centredness is about
developing a greater awareness of self. Planet-centredness is about learning about global
issues such as development, environment, peace and human rights. Understanding the
interconnectedness of global systems and developing a worldview that is inclusive of
others is also important to planet-centred learning.

I believe that study abroad offers a “global” learning opportunity in which
“emerging awareness of the world goes hand and glove with a growing level of self-
awareness” (Pike & Selby, 1995, p. 18). Seeing studying abroad as global learning allows
me to pay attention to the emotional, spiritual and psychological aspects of my
participants’ journeys abroad. In addition, global learning focuses my attention to the
temporal dimensions (past, present and future) of their experience. Pike and Selby (1995)
assert that a student’s present learning is shaped by past experiences and future
aspirations. My conceptual framework addresses these temporal dimensions of studying
abroad.
1.5 What is to Come

I began this chapter with a very brief introduction of the study. Then I focused on the “building blocks” that merged to create this study. First, I explored the institutional context in Canadian universities that calls for research on study abroad. Then I briefly traced my personal experience with study abroad that inspired me to pursue this study. Finally I outlined the study’s conceptual framework, its ontological and epistemological assumptions, and the curricular perspectives that shaped this framework. I want to end this chapter by introducing the reader to the organization of this dissertation. Table 1.1 provides a bird’s-eye-view of the remaining chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Number</th>
<th>Relevant Research Question</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Chapter Two: Review of Literature |                            | • Traces the development of study abroad programs and research  
• Reviews the relevant literature on the experiences and outcomes of studying abroad  
• Creates a literature-based model of study abroad experiences and outcomes |
| Chapter Three: Methodology |                            | • Describes the research design  
• Details the data gathering methods, timelines and procedures  
• Details the data analysis methods  
• Outlines means of ensuring quality and ethical standards |

Table 1.1 Organization of the Dissertation (Continued on p. 23)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Relevant Research Question</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Chapter Four: The Journey Begins</td>
<td>• How do students develop interest in studying abroad?</td>
<td>• Begins reporting the findings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduces 'journey' as meta-theme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Introduces the participants (gender, home universities, academic programs, study abroad locations and ethnic backgrounds)</td>
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<td>• Explores the participants’ motivations for studying abroad</td>
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<td>• Explores the influences that shaped participants’ motivation for studying abroad</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discusses the theoretical perspectives on participants’ desire for wanting to study abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Before, During and After</td>
<td>• How do students prepare for studying abroad?</td>
<td>• Provides an overview of the study abroad experience (Part One)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What experiences are meaningful for students while studying abroad?</td>
<td>• Explores four themes regarding the participants’ experience of preparing to leave (Part Two)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How do students personally, socially and academically experience the re-entry phase?</td>
<td>• Explores four themes regarding the participants’ experience abroad (Part Three)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Explores five themes regarding participants’ experience of returning home (Part Four)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: The Journey as a Whole</td>
<td>• What are the meanings and impacts of studying abroad?</td>
<td>• Provides the participants art-based images of the underlying meaning of studying abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do temporal dimensions of the study abroad experience (before, during, and after) connect with each other?</td>
<td>• Explores five findings regarding the meanings and impacts of studying abroad</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Synthesizes the research findings into a model of study abroad as a transformative experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven: Into and Beyond the Journey</td>
<td>• Summarizes the research findings</td>
<td>• Discusses the implications of findings for future research</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recommends ways of improving study abroad practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1.1 Organization of the Dissertation (Continued from p. 22)
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

(“Little Gidding”, T. S. Eliot)

2.1 Introduction

I cannot forget my first day of kindergarten. Fearful of confronting the unknown, I climbed onto the corrugated iron roof of my parent’s house hoping to escape from my mother. She was determined to take me to school. She brought me down from the roof, forced the school uniform on me and then dragged me to school. On the second day I walked with her. After a month I ran to school on my own, eager to play with friends. When I started school I reluctantly began a process of learning by observing, absorbing, testing, and actively constructing relationships with others. At first I felt like a stranger in a foreign land. Then I gradually adapted to the school by learning to live in harmony with others. Finally the end of the school year came too soon. During the year-end vacation I lamented for my friends, classroom, and the school.
A child's experience during the first year of schooling is perhaps analogous to the study abroad experience of university students. Study abroad students learn to live in a new cultural, physical and social landscape; they make friends out of strangers. They negotiate their roles in an unfamiliar society and, in the process, rediscover and reconstruct self-identity, academic interests, career aspirations, and relationships. Subsequently they return home to continue their studies and resume living among family and friends. The initial excitement of returning home often fades away, and a sense of lamenting for attachments abroad gradually develops. This emotional and educational studying abroad process leads to profound change and learning. It is also as old as human history—sojourners from all corners of the world have always travelled abroad in search of knowledge and experience. Yet research on their experience is limited and research literature generally refers only to the experience of American and European students.

In this chapter I review the findings of prior research on student experience and outcomes of studying abroad. The findings I review generally relate to undergraduate university students. I searched the following sources for this review: (1) The Review of Educational Research published by the American Education Research Association, (2) Education Index, (3) Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), (4) Dissertation Abstracts International, (5) Association of International Education Administrator's (AIEA) bibliographic database, and (6) various academic and professional journals. As noted in Chapter One, research on study abroad generally falls within two groups: (1) studies that report the impact or outcomes of study abroad and (2) studies that explore students' experience of studying abroad. I structure this chapter to reflect these
groupings. I divide this review into students' *experience* and *outcomes* of studying abroad. Throughout this review I highlight how my current study relates to and builds upon prior research.

This is a relatively long chapter. First, I provide an overview of the development of study abroad programs in Europe and the United States. Most studies I reviewed are from American and European sources and this overview introduces the reader to the context of these studies. Second, I introduce a model (Fig. 2.1) that I developed to show the three temporal phases (before, during and after) of studying abroad. These phases are embodied in this study's conceptual framework (as outlined in Chapter One). Using this model as an anchor, I review research findings on the following phases of students' experience of studying abroad:

1. **Before:** Setting the stage for studying abroad
2. **During:** Experience in the host country
3. **After:** Re-entry experience

Third, I review literature regarding the impact (i.e. outcomes) of studying abroad. My review follows a continuum of "extrinsic" (outer) to "intrinsic" (inner) outcomes. Extrinsic outcomes are generally based on quantitative studies that attempt to measure observable and generalizable outcomes of studying abroad (e.g. factual knowledge about world issues and ability to speak a foreign language). I refer to them as "extrinsic" for lack of a better term. "Intrinsic" outcomes are less observable because they are likely to manifest themselves in the inner mental world (e.g. transformation of perspective and development of self-confidence). There is obviously some level of overlap between these two types of outcomes. On a continuum of extrinsic to intrinsic, I review
the following outcomes:

1. Global awareness
2. Intercultural Competence
3. Global Competence
4. Language acquisition
5. Academic Change
6. Development of global understanding or perspective
7. Development of Self

2.2 Development of Study Abroad Programs in Europe and the United States: An Overview

Said (1991) observes that there is something hallowed and consecrated about institutions of higher learning. My experience as a student and as a staff in universities leads me to agree with Said’s assertion that universities often develop a culture or identity of their own, depriving students of opportunities for interacting with cultures, identities and ideas of “others” who live outside the academic world. Life in institutions of higher education is often inwardly oriented, making it difficult for students to relate to the world outside the academy. Perhaps the academic and cultural confinements inherent in institutions of higher education sway academics and students to become travellers in search of knowledge and experiences of and with “others.”
Said (1991) offers two images of the academic and cultural space provided by schools and universities. One is the image of the academic professional who acts as king and potentate, surveying the world with detachment and mastery. The other conception is the traveller, a mobile and playful professional or student who, although no less serious, has a willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, and understand a variety of disguises, masks and rhetorical conventions.

This image of a traveller fits the millions of students who sojourn abroad. According to UNESCO, one million students studied abroad in the late 1980s (Barber, 1992); this number continued to grow in the 1990s. The incremental growth in the number of study abroad students may suggest that study abroad is a recent phenomenon. However, it is an old phenomenon. In the Middle Ages, even before the establishment of the nation state, students and academics sought educational opportunities abroad by travelling between different communities (Gordon & Jallande, 1996). In the 19th century, American scholars regularly travelled to Europe to complete their studies (Gordon & Jallande, 1996). In addition, colonization caused the emergence of student migrations from Africa, Asia and South America to Europe. The institutionalization of study abroad, however, is contemporary. Institutions of higher education in Europe and the United States are accredited with developing student mobility programs (i.e. international exchanges) (Davis, 1995; Huag, 1996; Teichler, 1996).

The institutionalization of study abroad intensified after the Second World War. Many European and American universities began to include study abroad opportunities as an 'organized'
or 'integrated' institutional activity (Teichler, 1996). Integration means that universities send their students to study abroad for a specific period and accredit courses taken abroad toward students’ degree program at the home university (i.e. sending university). Teichler reports that some academic programs in Europe now perceive integrated study abroad as an indispensable part of a student’s academic experience.

Recent Developments in Europe

Let me now very briefly sketch the major developments in Europe and the United States. In Europe, integrated study abroad programs gained momentum in the 1970s when higher education became part of the European Community’s (EC) agenda. Teichler (1996) and Smith (1996) examine EC supported programs (including the Internationalization Program in Sweden, Integrated Study Abroad in Germany, and the Academic Links and Interchange Scheme in the United Kingdom). In 1976 the EC established the Joint Study Programme (JSP) to facilitate student mobility within EC countries (Smith, 1996). This program was phased out in 1986, and in 1987 the EC developed the European Community Action Scheme (ERASMUS) Programme.

ERASMUS has a long-term goal of sending at least 10% of students in every EC country to study in another EC country. It provides fellowships for students to cover the additional costs of studying abroad. As a result of ERASMUS, the number of study abroad students among EC
countries increased from 5000 in 1987 to 128,000 in 1995 (Teichler & Maiworm, 1996). A parallel development, which complements the ERASMUS Programme, is the creation of the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which began in 1989 as a six-year pilot project. Under ECTS, university departments participating in student exchange networks agreed to mutually recognize all credits of partner universities.

Recent Developments in the United States

Haug (1996) traces the institutionalization of study abroad programs in American universities between the two World Wars. During this time American universities opened study abroad programs in Europe for their undergraduate students. In particular, after 1945 educational exchanges in Western Europe were seen as a means to foster democracy and rebuild shattered economies (Haug, 1996). American universities quickly expanded opportunities and study abroad locations to other parts of the world. The Institute for International Education (IIE) estimated that 140,000 American students studied abroad in 1995 (Davis, 1995).

Americans developed several models of study abroad programs. Among these the dominant model is based on "island" programs. These are American programs set in foreign countries, often on the campus of a foreign university. They teach students from a sponsoring American university for a semester or academic year. The sponsoring university usually appoints the resident director of such an island program, and teachers are also typically brought in from the United States.
In addition to the island model, "immersion" study abroad programs are gaining popularity among American universities (Davis, 1995). Unlike island programs, these programs immerse students in the academic and cultural life of a foreign university. In other words, students who participate in immersion programs become students in a foreign university for a certain period of time. They completely enter into the academic system and culture of the foreign university.

Some writers attribute the popularity of immersion programs to the findings of the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP) conducted in the 1980's (Davis, 1995; English, 1995; Teichler, 1996). This is the largest study abroad research project so far in the United States (Teichler, 1996). It is hailed as a landmark study for its comprehensiveness and empirical findings (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990). It surveyed 450 study abroad students and included 800 students in a control group. The primary research instruments were pre-measure and post-measure questionnaires. The study sought answers for the following key research questions: who chooses to study abroad? What changes occur in the two groups over the time span of a year? What are the long-term effects of the study abroad experience? Carlson et. al. (1990) explain the purpose of the SAEP:

Despite widely held convictions and assumptions on study abroad, little hard data and comprehensive research have documented the actual contribution that it makes to students and their educational development. Little is known about the conditions under which students profit most from study abroad and in what ways. The Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP) was launched in 1982 in order to undertake the kind of systematic and comprehensive research needed to document and give future guidance to the role of study abroad. The focus of the study is on what differences, if any, study abroad makes to students in their undergraduate careers and later lives, or put differently, the outcomes for students of study abroad. (p. 1)
The SAEP made the following observations about students in immersion programs: (1) low level of interaction with fellow Americans correlated positively with international learning, (2) a lack of problems experienced abroad, (3) integration into the host culture and (4) strong academic performance. These findings seem to have influenced American institutions into increasing the number of immersion programs.

2.3 The Experience of Study Abroad

In Chapter One I noted the curricular perspectives that inform this study’s conceptual framework (pp. 14 -21). I stated that the curriculum of studying abroad is in the lived-experience (Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Greene 1978) of students who participate in study abroad programs and also in the meaning they construe from their experience. Lived-experience envelops the past, present and future. We reconceptualize lived-experience to construe meaning in present events by reflecting on our past and by imagining our future. Thus study abroad research needs to consider students’ experience during the three temporal phases (i.e. before, during and after) of their journey abroad. Let me begin by introducing Fig. 2.1 — a model I developed to incorporate the three temporal phases of studying abroad. I structure my review of research literature according to this model. In this section I focus on the ways in which students experience their journey abroad. In the next section I focus on the outcomes of the study abroad journey that is at the centre of this model.
and Liseun considered these people's purpose of going abroad, when changes occurred while they
1994, gathering the life histories of a group of foreign-educated men and women in Bombay. Liseun
influence of setting on students' experience of studying abroad. They spent one year from 1995 to
a setting (Dewey, 1938; Liseun and Liseun (1955), cited in English (1999)), commenting on the
as noted in Chapter One (p. 19), educative experience occurs in a person's interaction with

Study Abroad Settings

home and abroad) as shown in Fig. 2.1. From now on I refer to these concepts as settings.
connected to others and embedded contextually. Study abroad embodies two key concepts (i.e.,
I assume that no single phase of this process is complete or absolute in itself — each phase is
contextual (Cawal, 1993; Clark, 1988). When I consider study abroad as a "global" learning process
Hofstede sees all phenomena, all existence, as interminably interconnected (Miller, 1995; 1997) and
I see the three phases (i.e., before, during and after) in this model as holistically related.

Fig. 2.1. Temporal Phases of Study Abroad Experience
were abroad, and how these changes were modified after they returned to India. The conclusion was that "the aim of a foreign education cannot be isolated from the environment in which they originate; they are related to economic, political, and educational conditions within a society, to the relationship between societies, and to changes in perspective in response to dynamic processes of historical development" (Useem & Useem, 1955, p. 12).

In consultation with Useem & Useem, Bennett, Passion & McKnight (1958), cited in English (1995), conducted a qualitative study of Japanese scholars in two settings, first in the United States, and then in Japan (after they returned). They found that setting affected the perception of the scholars and their rapport with researchers to the extent that the two parts of the study elicited very different information. In a parallel study, Kobayashi & Uyeki (1993) surveyed the alumni of Fulbright exchanges between the United States and Japan to understand ways in which individuals incorporate educational experiences from a different society and culture into their own lives. This survey included 789 Japanese who studied in the United States and 338 Americans who studied in Japan. Through regression analysis this study explored the impact of the Fulbright experience on national identity and the incorporation of host-country values into the lifestyle of respondents. In general, Americans who studied in Japan reported that their experience abroad had a greater impact on both identity and lifestyle values than did the Japanese who studied in the United States.

Although these studies do not provide an in-depth analysis of students’ experiences in various settings, they do signal the significance of host and home settings. They also imply the need for future research on the role of study abroad settings. Most importantly, the study by Useem and
Useem is remarkable because, in retrospect, it answers Torney-Purta's (1994) call for more qualitative research on study abroad participants in their natural settings (home and abroad). Torney-Purta also advocates searching for ways in which various components of an intercultural encounter fit together into a system or process. In this study I follow her call and attempt to understand the experience of my participants in their settings. I also search for ways in which various aspects of their study abroad fit together into a learning process.

Before: Setting the Stage for Studying Abroad

All learning situations are historical. Every learning situation is influenced by prior experiences. Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) "narrative accounts" (p. 55) and "personal curriculum" (p. 25) illustrate how prior experiences relate to present learning situations. According to them "narrative" is the "study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (p. 25). They see personal narrative accounts as helping to uncover and understand one's personal curriculum. Embedded in one's personal curriculum are (1) images that embody one's self-concept and enfold in actions, (2) personal rules (Elbaz, 1983) that determine what and how we do things in particular situations, and (3) personal philosophies based on beliefs and values. One could assume that the experience of studying abroad is part of a continuum of a student's narrative experience. Personal images, philosophies, and values are likely to influence one's decision to study abroad.
What prior experiences and interests influence a student’s decision to study abroad? There is very little research that addresses this question. However, I found two studies that shed some light on this. The first is the SAEP study discussed earlier (p. 32). It looked at how students who study abroad differ from those who remain on their home campuses (Carlson et al., 1990). It used an elaborate survey questionnaire using a scale of 1 to 5, grouping the questions into categories. These categories included: (1) interest in other countries, (2) attitudes toward the United States, (3) career orientation, and (4) students’ motivation to study abroad. For comparison, it included a group of students who were studying abroad and a control group of students who decided to remain on the home campus. Carlson et al. found that student sojourners had a higher level of interest in other countries, current events, and foreign affairs. On the other hand, the control group valued the United States system of post-secondary education more highly than the study abroad group.

Carlson et al. (1990) report that the primary reason students choose to study abroad relates to their desire to experience new cultures and to learn the language of the host country. They also found that academic reasons seem to be of secondary importance for electing to study abroad. In contrast, the reason why those in the comparison group decided to stay at the home institution was academic in nature. The primary reasons were that study abroad was unnecessary for their course of studies, it would be inappropriate for their majors, and it could delay their graduation.

Although Carlson et al.’s (1990) study revealed useful information about the characteristics of students who decide to study abroad, it did not comment on prior experiences and events leading students to decide to study abroad. Taylor (1994) notes that we must recognize that each person
comes to an intercultural experience with former critical events from his or her life; these include personal goals, varying amounts of intercultural training, and previous intercultural experiences that influence the learning process. Taylor’s (1994) research shows the importance of what students bring to intercultural learning situations and studying abroad. His study looked at the intercultural development of 20 students studying abroad. He found that students who developed intercultural perspectives were ready for change due to former critical events, personal goals, or prior intercultural experiences. Taylor clearly raises a question about the degree of influence prior learning experiences has on one’s decision to study abroad as well as on one’s experience abroad.

In Chapter Four I discuss my findings about students’ motivations for wanting to study abroad. I also discuss the influences that shaped these motivations. My findings build on the work of Carlson et al. (1990) and Taylor (1994). In addition, I explore students’ experiences of preparing to leave that I believe is an important aspect of the study abroad experience. I was unable to find any prior study that discussed students’ experiences of preparing to leave on study abroad journeys.

During: Experience in the Host Country

My discussion here is brief for two reasons. First, most studies on students’ experience of studying abroad focus on the outcomes. I discuss outcomes and students’ experiences in Section 2.4. To avoid repetition, I do not at this stage include these related experiences. Second, studies that explore students’ qualitative experiences in the host countries are limited.
Carlson et al. (1990), in the SAEP that I discussed earlier, make several observations about American students' experience abroad. They report that 68% of participants in their study took courses abroad to broaden their academic and cultural backgrounds. Carlson et al., therefore, suggest that experience abroad enables students to expand their academic and intellectual horizons beyond what they could have obtained at home. Carlson et al also comment on the "personal aspects" of studying abroad. They report that extracurricular activities such as "clubs, athletics, social and cultural events, travelling, reading, and people watching", contribute to the "richness of students' overall experience" (p. 40). However, they did not explore any further details of students' qualitative experience (academic or personal) of studying abroad. In Chapter Five I expand on their findings by discussing my participants' academic and personal experiences of their study abroad.

I believe literature on cross cultural-adjustment sheds light on the experiences of study abroad students. The U-curve pattern of cross-cultural adjustment (Taylor, 1994) consists of "honeymoon, culture shock, recovery, and enjoyment in ascending order towards cross-cultural adjustment" (p. 156). The focus of the U-curve is on "culture shock" (Church, 1982; Furham & Bocher, 1986; Kolhs, 1986; Oberg, 1960). Culture shock is a construct referring to "confusion or disorientation that many sojourners experience when they enter a new culture" (Furham & Bocher, 1986, p. 234). I return to a detailed discussion of cross-cultural adjustment literature in Chapter Five where I compare the findings of this study to prior research on cross-cultural adaptation. My findings build on Adler's (1975) suggestion that cross-cultural adjustment is a phenomenon that
needs to be understood as a learning process. I also explore how cross-cultural adaptation abroad connects to the re-entry adaptation at home.

After: Re-entry Experience

Austin (1983) claims that the first known article on re-entry deals with students from China who returned home after an extended period of study abroad in 1925. The challenge, reconstruction of meaning, and continuing personal growth that students encounter upon returning to their home country after studying abroad are commonly referred to as "cross-cultural re-entry" or "reverse culture shock" (Citron, 1996). Some authors also refer to this phase of students' experience as "return cultural adjustment" (Brislin & Pedersen, 1976; Werkman, 1986).

Some researchers write about the re-adjustment to one's home country as being a difficult process because students do not expect it to be so (Brislin & Pedersen, 1976; Werkman, 1986). Brislin and Pedersen classify re-entry problems as being of four types: personal, social, cultural and political. Personal problems include unhappiness about the loss of friendships abroad. Social problems include feelings of alienation, isolation, boredom, or loneliness; they also encompass feelings of superiority, resentment or jealousy from others that had not been abroad. Cultural problems include the development of a more informed, critical, or appreciative viewpoint of one's own country and culture. Citron (1993) identified similar categories of re-entry problems experienced by a group of American undergraduate students who returned home after a short-term study abroad program in Mexico. Citron's categories included loss of relationships, language
problems, cultural frustrations, identity stress, and an inability to share experience abroad with others.

Although researchers often see re-entry as a difficult time with many problems to overcome (i.e., a coping process), I conceptualize re-entry as an opportunity for academic, personal, and professional growth. My intention is not to ignore the pains of re-entry, but to capture and celebrate the learning that occurs while struggling to re-adapt to one’s home institution and country. Hence, this study attempts to examine and understand the pedagogy of re-entry. In doing so I build on Adler’s (1976) proposal to explore re-entry not as a debilitating difficulty, but as an opportunity for potential growth and a larger process of intercultural learning. I also explore how the home institution and society can either be a facilitative or non-facilitative environment for the integration of students’ academic, personal and professional changes that come from studying abroad.

Adler (1976) writes about four re-entry coping styles – alienated, resocialized, rebellious, and proactive. In this framework, the alienated person rejects the home environment and consequently fails to continue to grow from the international experience. Resocialized returnees wholly readjust to their culture but do not incorporate their study abroad experience. Rebellious returnees try to control the home environment by changing it in unrealistic ways. Finally, proactive returnees actively integrate in their re-entry experience by growing from their foreign experience even after returning home. Let me reflect on these copying styles.
Alienation may be a result of study abroad returnees being less appreciative of their home environment. Carlson and Widman (1988) report that returnees’ attitudes toward host and home culture is conversely related; increased appreciation of the host culture is often associated with a critical view towards one’s home culture. Carlson and Widman assert that the new attitude towards the home environment could be due to returnees revising former interpretations of their own culture. Such a change in interpretation could be the result of their efforts to reconceptualize previously accepted presuppositions (Mezirow, 1991). There is growth, or rather an expansion of meaning perspectives, in such a reinterpretation.

While respecting Adler’s categorization of returnees into four coping styles, I approached this study by accepting the possibility that these coping styles may not be present in every returnee’s experience. Stated differently, I do not see returnees as occupying four mutually exclusive strategies. Rather, I see alienation, resocialization, rebellion, and proactive integration as integral and overlapping dimensions of the re-entry learning experience. I build this study on this assumption and my findings support it.

The idea that resocialized returnees wholly readjust to their culture without incorporating their experience abroad implies that somehow they are able to isolate their experience abroad from their re-entry experience. Is this possible? My findings lead me to assert that such compartmentalization of study abroad experience is problematic, if not impossible (Chapter Five, p. 211). On the other hand, Adler’s rebellious returnees who try to control the home environment and change it in “unrealistic” ways can be seen as attempting to reconstruct the social and cultural
environment at home. I found such reconstruction to be an integral aspect of the re-entry learning experience (Chapter Five, p.211).

Wilson's (1991) research is particularly useful to conceptualize re-entry as a learning experience. She studied the re-entry experience of study abroad returnees coming back to the United States from Australia, Ecuador, Norway and Sweden. She developed the following dimensions of the re-entry process: (1) exploring one's feelings about returning home, (2) sharing the experience with others, (3) dealing with stereotypes, and (4) developing bridges between cultures. Wilson found that while students were happy to return home and get on with their lives this was not as enjoyable or as easy as going abroad. After returning home, students were eager to share their experiences with others; however, they found it difficult to share their experience in meaningful ways with family and friends. Wilson does not explain why returnees find it difficult to share their experiences with others. My findings shed some light on the nature of this difficulty (Chapter Five, pp.220 -226). Wilson also found that returnees had to deal with stereotypes that people have of other countries. She also found that they were keen to develop meaningful relationships with people from other cultures and countries.

Rebuilding relationships is a significant dimension of the re-entry experience. Lank (1983) and Uehara (1986) report that, in general, relationships with parents (especially mothers) improve over the time students are gone, but romantic relationships and friendships suffer. They did not explain the reasons for changes to these relationships. The only relationships with friends that seems to improve are those with individuals who have had similar overseas experiences ("birds of
a feather construe together"). Since these findings come from a quantitative survey, the authors could not suggest qualitative descriptions of how returnees reconstruct their relationships at home.

The findings mentioned to this point clearly indicate that re-entry is an emotionally challenging process. Is this because re-entry is about loss, grief and an attempt to regain ownership of a previously familiar setting? Returning home could also be felt as a loss of one's attachments to the host country. If this is the case, we could expect students to go through a grieving process, eventually gaining ownership of the change (Geddes, 1992) experienced from studying abroad. Or is re-entry a period of cultural disequilibrium (Taylor, 1994) in participants' lives causing stress and intense emotions? Are there unique personal factors such as prior experiences, family situations, gender and one's own place in society that either intensify or mute re-entry experience? In this study I sought and explored answers to these questions and suggested ways in which institutions can support their students during re-entry.

2.4 The Outcomes of Study Abroad

In the previous section I explored students' experience (i.e. process) of studying abroad. In this section my focus is on the outcomes of this experience. As noted in the introduction, my review of existing literature is placed on a continuum of "extrinsic" to "intrinsic" outcomes. I begin with "extrinsic" outcomes. These are "generalizable" and "solid" outcomes of study abroad based on quantitative inquiry. Research meant to discover such outcomes assumes that study abroad is an
intervention that leads to a set of measurable outcomes. An analogous assumption is teaching as an intervention in the process-product research framework of teacher effectiveness (Biddle, 1974; Gage, 1978; Brophy, 1983). As I move forward on this continuum I inch towards outcomes that are less generalizable and more embedded in students' subjective meaning of studying abroad. Such outcomes generally come from qualitative studies.

Researchers using quantitative inquiry have attempted to measure the development of global knowledge (Barrows, 1991), the change in behaviours (Hofstede, 1984; Ruben, 1976), and attitude changes (Paige, 1983; Stephan & Stephan, 1992) among sojourners. Other researchers show that students who study abroad achieve (compared to those who do not study abroad) higher levels of cross-cultural interest, cultural cosmopolitanism, and international interest (Opper, Teichler, & Carlson, 1990; Burn, Cerych, & Smith, 1990; Teichler & Steube, 1991). As exemplified by the SAEP, the prevalent quantitative approach in study abroad research is a causal/comparative design that uses comparison groups to implicate cause. Key studies that use this design include Kauffmann (1982), Carlson and Widamann (1988), Carlson and Abram (1979), Pelowski (1979), and Koester (1985). These studies use large sample sizes to increase generalizability. Their central focus is to examine "facts" about students, their opinions and attitudes (Kerlinger, 1979) for the purpose of systematically describing facts and characteristics about a given population (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). These quantitative researchers seek to explain their results by indicating the relationships between cause and effect. Four broad categories of outcomes emerge from quantitative studies: (1) global awareness, (2) global competence, (3) intercultural competence and (4) language acquisition.
Global Awareness

In the late 1970's and 80's, researchers in the United States attempted to establish baseline information on the level of knowledge about global issues and other cultures that all American students should know. Let me provide a very brief history of this attempt. Researchers grouped knowledge about global issues and cultures that students should know into a concept called "global awareness" (Barrows, 1981). Barrows used a 96-question instrument that tested knowledge about international aspects of the environment, food, health, energy, religious issues, arts and culture, the distribution of natural characteristics, relations among states, war and armaments, human rights, racial and ethnic issues, and population. Their purpose was to develop an indisputable base-line knowledge of global awareness. The test items were developed by experts in world history, geography, political science, economics, sociology and international studies to measure knowledge of international concepts and events. Knowledge scores were compared with a fixed criterion of what the test developers believed students should know.

The test items and their scores on the global awareness survey were not referenced to measure or to evaluate any particular experience that students might have had. But Torney-Purta (1982) used the scores from the test items to show that those students who had either studied or worked abroad scored relatively high compared to those with no international living experience. This finding led to several more studies that demonstrated that study abroad students develop global awareness. The psychometric model for developing tests of knowledge and scales of attitudes - in
conformity with principles of reliability, validity and content representation — was then used for measuring global awareness (Torney-Purta, 1994).

During the 1970's, several researchers attempted to measure the global awareness of American students. For example, the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IAEA), in conjunction with the Educational Testing Service (ETS), conducted a study in 1971 that included 30,000 students (10, 14 and 17 to 20 years of age) to determine their global awareness (Torney-Purta, 1994). Barrows (1981) conducted a similar study for the the Council of Learning in the early 1980's.

Carlson and Widamann (1988) adapted Barrows's (1981) test items to develop an instrument to study the impact of study abroad on 450 undergraduate students from three American universities. They also included a control group of 450 students. The study abroad group showed higher levels of cross-cultural interest, cultural cosmopolitanism, and awareness of international political issues.

The measurement of global awareness received much attention in the 1980's. However, the problematic nature of this research soon became apparent. The questions in the measurement instrument quickly became outdated. Researchers found it difficult to decide how to define and rank global knowledge since the amount of factual knowledge about other societies that one might learn is nearly infinite.
There is no doubting that students acquire substantive knowledge of the host culture and country by studying abroad. Hansel (1986), Carlson et al. (1991), and Wilson (1994) report that increased knowledge of the host country, foreign language fluency, awareness of world issues, and knowledge of global dynamics and human choices are outcomes of studying abroad. However, a focus on the acquisition of knowledge does not tell us about the personal outcomes and meanings of studying abroad. Knowledge acquisition is inseparable from the formation of attitudes, perceptions and emotions, and cannot be isolated from these complexities.

Global Competence

Researchers began using “competence” in the mid-1980’s to describe a wide range of general abilities (i.e. knowledge and skills) and perceptions that seem to develop in students who participate in study abroad programs (Hargerty, 1989; Stark et al., 1986). They group these abilities and perceptions into “global competence” (Carter, 1994; Lambert, 1994) or “intercultural competence” (Dinges, 1983; Bennet, 1992). While these two competencies are closely related, I discuss them separately to illustrate subtle differences. I will now discuss global competence; under the next subheading I will discuss intercultural competence.

Some researchers propose that “global competence” is the principal outcome of study abroad (English, 1995; Lambert, 1994; Roeloffs, 1994; Huebner, 1994). Despite this I was unable to find a comprehensive definition or a list of abilities, skills and perceptions encompassing global competence. It is vaguely defined as a concept that “aggregates a wide range of abilities, knowledge,
skills and attitudes that result from study abroad that are desirable for living and working in an international setting” (Lambert, 1994, p. 11). Lambert attributes five components to global competence: (1) world knowledge, (2) foreign language proficiency, (3) empathy for other cultural viewpoints, (4) approval of foreign people and cultures, and (5) the ability to practice one’s profession in an international setting. What he means by “world knowledge” is the awareness of international aspects of arts and culture, as well as environmental, food, health, energy and religious issues. He also assumes that the development of the first four components of global competence listed above are necessary to acquire the fifth component, that is the ability to work in an international setting.

Lambert asserts that global competence is measurable. He says: “what we have in mind is a personal transformation, a kind of mellowed patina that marks the civilized person, a salubrious personal growth that is unidimensional, cumulative, irreversible, recognizable, and measurable” (p.11). In this study I also found that the core impact of studying abroad is a transformation of self and perspective. However, contrary to Lambert’s belief, I found this transformation to be multidimensional and rooted in participants’ subjective and private worlds. I also found this transformation to be dynamically evolving in its meaning over time. Therefore, I am reluctant to reduce this transformation to a form of competence.

Designating study abroad returnees as having achieved global competence compels educators to imagine other students as globally incompetent or inept. I cannot think of an educational use for such a classification of students. Perhaps it might be of some value for those who
are instrumentally driven to find a distinct credential that could be granted to potential candidates for internationally-oriented employment (Miller, 1994). The impetus for such a credential-oriented concept of global competence is evident in the writings of Bismuth & Edmundson (1994), Huebner (1994), and Young (1994). Bismuth and Edmundson suggest that we urgently need to prepare globally competent professionals for an increasingly global business environment. Huebner (1994) supports this argument by providing a rationale for why the United States needs globally competent corporate leaders. Young (1994) outlines the need for global competency among legal professions. Hence, the move to distinguish some students as globally competent seems to be fuelled not by an educational rationale but by business concerns about “global competitiveness”.
Intercultural Competence

Whereas global competence focuses on abilities and skills, intercultural competence emphasizes the perception that an individual brings to international issues and settings. As with global competence, I was unable to find a detailed description of the perceptions and abilities that create intercultural competence. Taylor (1994) defines intercultural competency as “an adaptive capacity based on an inclusive and integrative worldview which allows participants to effectively accommodate the demands of living in a host culture” (p. 1). Although an integrative worldview is at the heart of intercultural competence, abilities also play an important role. For example, Dinges (1983) focuses on abilities by including the following dimensions of intercultural competence: (1) information processing, (2) capacity for learning and change, (3) communication style, and (4) stress tolerance.

According to Storti (1990), the impetus to develop intercultural competence among American students comes from the need for Americans to work and live abroad. Yet it seems to be a difficult challenge for Americans to adapt to life in a foreign country (Storti 1990). They report that one-third of all Americans who take up residence in foreign countries return prematurely because they are unable to adapt to the day-to-day life in foreign cultures. This is by no means a uniquely American phenomenon. It is certainly a challenge for people from any country to adapt to life in a foreign country.

Many scholars consider study abroad as a means to develop intercultural competence (Dinges, 1983; Chen, 1987; Taylor, 1994). They widely accept this as a key outcome of study
Some researchers focus on identifying predictors that are indicative of intercultural competence among study abroad students. These attributes include empathy, respect, overseas experience, listening skills, and tolerance for ambiguity (Dinges, 1983; English, 1995; Ruben, 1987). Kealey (1989) reports that these attributes are important for developing cross-cultural effectiveness among students. Benson (1978) reports that these attributes facilitate cross-cultural adjustment abroad. In addition, Kim (1991) and Spitzberg (1989) claim that they are important for intercultural communication competence.

Hammer, Gudykunst & Wisements (1978) conducted a survey research study involving 50 study abroad students in which they identified three additional attributes. They called these the imperative conditions for the formation of intercultural competence. These are (1) the ability to deal with psychological stress, (2) the ability to effectively communicate with others, and (3) the ability to establish meaningful interpersonal friendships. They also report that the affective aspects of intercultural competence are related to the degree of ‘third cultural perspective’ one achieves – that is, “the perspective or frame of reference that a stranger brings to interpret one’s own intercultural experience” (p. 43). These findings indicate that one’s frame of reference, and one’s capacity to reflect on intercultural experiences, affects the attitudinal dimensions of such experiences.

In this study I found the development of an inclusive worldview (inclusive of other cultures, people and places) to be one of the key outcomes of studying abroad for my participants (Chapter Six, pp. 272 – 285). This development is related to the concept of intercultural competence discussed here. However, I do not attribute any form of ‘competence’ to my finding. As Hammer
et al. (1978) suggest, the use of the term competence, which usually implies aptness, may take our attention away from the affective dimensions of intercultural development.

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is not a focus of my study. However, I decided to include a brief review of literature on language acquisition abroad because learning the language of the host country is inseparable from the cross-cultural experience abroad. My specific focus is on studies that relate personal characteristics to successful language acquisition abroad, for these studies highlight personal characteristics that may facilitate intercultural learning abroad.

Many short-term study abroad programs are developed primarily to facilitate students' acquisition of a foreign language. Such programs are numerous in North America, Europe and Japan. The popularity of these programs results from the widely accepted notion that second or third language acquisition is accelerated by learning the target language in a country and among people whose native language is the target language (Brislin, 1981; Seya, 1995). Allen et al (1990), Diller and Market (1983), DeKeyser (1991), Gardner (1985) and Freed (1990) claim that those who study second languages abroad (i.e. where the target language is native to the study abroad setting) develop a higher level of language skills compared to those who study second languages at home. Researchers also recognize second language acquisition as an outcome even when language acquisition is not the primary purpose of studying abroad (Barrows, 1981; Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1990; Terrell; 1982).
Gardner's (1985) model of second language acquisition explores the relationship between personal attributes and language acquisition. He claims that students' motivation and situational anxiety (i.e., stress felt in different learning settings) particularly influence the learning outcomes in both formal and informal instructional contexts. His model identifies two types of motivation: (1) integrative motivation (i.e., motivation to learn the language to become a member of the host community) and (2) instrumental motivation (i.e., motivation to learn the language for a specific practical or business purpose). Research shows that the integrative motivation relates positively to successful foreign language acquisition abroad (Au, 1988; Giles & Byre, 1982 and Miesel, 1980). Research also shows that situational anxiety relates inversely to successful language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gardner 1989). These findings signal that students who want to integrate into the cultural life of the host country may experience less stress during cross-cultural adaptation and are more likely to learn the language of the host country.

Savenes (1987) further reports the results of a study on predictors of successful target language learning. She studied the experience of African, American, European and Middle Eastern students studying in Norway. She found that American and European students were more integratively oriented to language learning and also had the best grades. She attributed successful language acquisition among American and European students to cultural affinity between Norway (study abroad setting) and other European countries and the United States (home setting of these students). Her conclusion is that the American and European students' familiarity with the Western culture played an important role in their successful learning of Norwegian in Norway.
Research on the influence of prior second language learning is conflicting and inconclusive. Hart et al. (1994) explored the impact of a French language exchange program for 100 Anglophone students studying in Quebec and reports that the exchange positively affected oral and listening skills, and that students with lower levels of proficiency at the start of the program benefited the most. However, Kauffmann et al. (1992) conducted a qualitative study on the study abroad experience of 15 students and found that prior study of the language correlated poorly with the level of acquisition abroad. Miller and Ginsberg (1995), in a study regarding American students who studied Russian in the former Soviet Union, also came to the conclusion that previous language learning experience can inhibit learners from making the most out of the opportunity to learn the target language through meaningful communication.

Other personal characteristics relevant to language acquisition abroad include learning styles and learning strategies (Skehan, 1991). Learning styles refers to a cognitive and affective orientation to learning whereas learning strategies are actions taken by a learner. Skehan predicts that the ability to adapt one's learning styles and strategies to a new environment may determine the success of language acquisition abroad. She also predicts that students adopt the following strategies in learning a target language abroad: (1) getting attuned (psychological and physical adjustment to a new language-learning environment), (2) plugging in (an active orientation to use the target language for communication), and (3) reflecting (personal monitoring of the language learning process).
Shifting Focus to "Intrinsic" Outcomes

As described earlier, I have been discussing the outcomes of studying abroad on a continuum of "extrinsic" to "intrinsic" outcomes. The outcomes included to this point fall on the extrinsic side of this continuum. Now I focus on the other side to discuss outcomes that are personal (i.e. subjective) and dynamically evolving. These outcomes inform my own conceptualization of the experiences, construed meanings and outcomes of studying abroad. In Chapter One I stated my assumption that study abroad is a global (i.e. holistic) learning process. It is a process that leads to academic and personal change. It is a process that moves participants toward a transformation of perspective (Elbaz, 1988; Diamond, 1991; Mezirow, 1989) and development of self (Kauffmann et al., 1992). Transformation of perspective involves an emancipatory process of critically reconstituting the ways in which one sees oneself and one's relationships. A transformation of one's perspective on "others" occurs concurrently with the awareness of self. Augusburger (1986) states that "in knowing the other, one comes to know the self more deeply; in knowing oneself, one is opened to perceive and receive the other more fully" (p. 37).

The journey outward becomes the journey inward (Pike and Selby, 1988). When I discuss my findings regarding transformation of self and perspective (Chapter Six) I draw on conceptual and theoretical perspectives from cultural literacy (Bowers, 1993), ecological paradigms and human development (McMillian, 1990), and holistic education (Miller, 1995). Here I limit my discussion to prior research that informs study abroad as a learning process. In Fig. 2.2 below I bring together research findings that help us to understand study abroad as a transformative learning experience.
I group the findings into *transformation of perspective* and *development of self*. Fig. 2.2's circular nature illustrates that the transformation of perspective and self overlap each other.

**Figure 2.2 Transformative Outcomes of Studying Abroad**

**Academic Change**

Universities expect students to advance their studies during study abroad by pursuing courses that are transferred to the home university as degree credits. Although "academics" is only one aspect of the study abroad experience, universities perceive study abroad primarily as an academic activity. As mentioned earlier, some of the obvious academic benefits of study abroad include
gaining substantive knowledge about a particular country (Hansel, 1986; Wilson, 1993) and learning a second language (Barrows, 1981; Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1990; Terrell; 1982).

Wilson (1993) states that a less obvious academic benefit is the opportunity to enhance academic experience abroad by taking courses that are normally unavailable at the home university. She claims that by taking such courses students gain a new perspective on their major or minor area of study. Carlson et al. (1990) found that 66% of the students in the SAEP took at least a few courses that they could not or would not have taken on their home campus. They also reported that 57% of students developed new areas of interest and 68% took courses to broaden their academic and cultural backgrounds. Billingmeier & Forman (1975) asked a group of United States students in Germany if their experience in Germany provided something they might not have received at home. Eighty percent said that they had gained new perspectives on the content and methods of their major fields.

Perhaps the most significant academic change during study abroad is students’ discovery of new learning styles and strategies. Carlson et al. (1990) found that after studying abroad a significant number of students consider getting better grades and learning facts less important than they had before. In addition, they also found that students began to value systemic thinking and developed familiarity with different aspects of an issue. Furthermore, Kaufmann and Kuh (1985) found that study abroad students develop an increased interest in reflective thought. However, we do not know how the change in learning styles and the acquisition of new perspectives on their fields of study relate to students’ experience of academic integration during re-entry.
Developing Global Understanding or Global Perspective

Kelly's (1955) theory of personal constructs argues that experience shapes the way in which we view the world. Different experiences lead to different perceptions. Kelly says that the way we view the world goes on to affect the way we experience new events and places. Hence, our perception is cyclic: experience leads to understanding, and understanding influences our interpretation of new experiences. This theory of a transforming view of the world is applicable to the study abroad learning process. Researchers refer to students' transformation of perspective as the development of "global understanding" (Barrows, et. al., 1981) or the development of a "global perspective" (Case, 1991; Koester, 1985; Martin, 1987; Wilson, 1993). These terms are about the development of a worldview that is inclusive of "others" in the global community.

Let me first review the concept of "global understanding." It is a concept meant to include knowledge and attitudinal changes leading to an increased awareness of other cultures, countries and international issues (Barrows, 1981). Barrows defines "global understanding" in terms of awareness of international issues pertaining to the environment, food, health, energy, religious issues, arts, culture, war, racial and ethnic issues, and population growth. His definition emphasizes the "knowledge" component of global awareness. It also stems from the efforts to measure "global awareness" which I discussed earlier. In his perspective, global awareness is combined with empathy for others leading to global understanding. Goodwin and Nacht (1988) argue that global understanding is also about becoming "more mature, sophisticated, hungry for knowledge, culturally aware, and sensitive" (p.12). In other words, the "personal growth" dimension of global awareness
emphasizes and cultivates personal attributes.

The concept of global perspective (Koester, 1985; Martin, 1987; Wilson, 1993) is closely related to the concept of “world-mindedness” (Sampson and Smith, 1957). World-mindedness emerges from an increased knowledge or interest in international affairs combined with a value-oriented frame of reference on global issues. According to Sampson and Smith, a world-minded person is one who favours a global view of humanity’s problems, whose primary reference group is humanity rather than a particular nationality, and who may or may not have a great deal of interest in and knowledge about international affairs.

Wilson (1993) provides additional insight on global perspective. She speculates that international experience leads to the development of the various dimensions of “global perspective” proposed by Case (1991). These dimensions include open-mindedness, anticipation of complexity, resistance to stereotyping, inclination to empathize and non-chauvinism. Although Case emphasizes affective dimensions, he also combines the framework of Kniep (1986) and Hanvey (1976) to suggest five elements of the substantive dimensions: (1) universal and cultural values and practices, (2) global interconnections, (3) present concerns and conditions, (4) origins and past patterns, and (5) alternatives and future directions. Thus, those embracing the concept of global perspective acknowledge the interconnectedness between affective change and the acquisition of substantive knowledge.
Several studies report various manifestations of global perspective. One such manifestation is a changing of attitudes towards home and host culture and country (Carlson & Widman, 1988; Koester, 1987; Marion, 1980; Sell, 1983). Koester reports that the longer students stay abroad the more likely that their perception of the home culture will change. Six months abroad is considered the optimal length of stay abroad to develop positive attitudes towards the host country. Koester also states that the development of favourable attitude towards the host culture relates to prior experiences with the host culture and the level of immersion in the culture during study abroad. In addition, Carlson and Widman found that the attitude towards the host and home culture is conversely related: increased appreciation of the host culture is often associated with more critical views of one’s home culture.

Adler’s (1975) model of transitional experience, which speculates what happens to the person undergoing an international experience, is useful to explain the process of developing a global perspective or inclusive worldview. He suggests that “specific psychological, social, and cultural dynamics occur when new cultures are encountered and these behavioural dynamics are, in large part, perceptions of similarities and differences as well as changed emotional status” (p. 15). Adler further explains that successful cross-cultural experience should result in the movement of personality and identity to a new consciousness of values, attitudes and understanding. In his model, one begins the cross-cultural experience at contact with the other culture and moves to disintegration (depression and withdrawal may result from the impact of cultural differences), then to reintegration (differences are rejected by a person who is angry, but assertive), then to autonomy (when differences and similarities are legitimized and one becomes confident and empathic), and finally
to independence (when the person exercises choice and responsibility). I build on Adler's model in discussing the findings in this study concerning my participants' transformation of perspective and self.

Development of Self

In Fig. 2.2 (p. 56) I show that perspective transformation conflates with the development of self. The journey outwards in terms of gaining a global perspective is also a journey towards self-discovery. Adler (1976) refers to the development of self as the movement of personality and identity. In my experience, students normally refer to this as the development of self-awareness or self-discovery. Kauffmann et al. (1992) include the following quote from a student to illustrate self-development:

I experienced a change in self-awareness and a change in the way I approach learning... I was starting to observe the world from a different angle and I couldn't really figure it out... It's a very philosophical approach and deeply rooted in self-awareness. At the same time I can extrapolate it to the world. I would say that my worldview has definitely grown and been enhanced, but at the same time it's an introspective phenomenon. It's a journey outward, but also inward... It's difficult to describe because I can't separate the self-awareness from global awareness. (p.74)

Researchers report the development of self-control, self-direction, self-reliance and self-confidence among study abroad students. Hansel (1986) reports that study abroad students develop the ability to exercise self-control and self-direction. Sell (1983) claims that students develop self-reliance and the ability to make decisions on their own. Barber (1983) and Kauffmann, et al. (1992) report that study abroad students developed self-confidence. In this study, I too found that my participants developed self-awareness and self-confidence. My participants also negotiated
autonomy and relatedness to their parents and developed a sense of belongingness to their home country (Canada) and to their place in the world. I discuss these findings in Chapter Six.

Grove (1984) and Hansel (1986) report the results of a six-year study conducted by AFS International and Intercultural Programs in New York. The study’s purpose was to determine if high school students who participate in intercultural homestay experiences develop and mature in positive ways more rapidly compared to students who do not participate in such experience. Grove and Hansel report that study abroad students develop adaptability, the “ability to deal flexibly with and adjust to new people, places, and situations; willingness to change behaviour patterns and opinions when influenced by others” (p. 36). They also found that study abroad students develop communication skills, an “ability to understand and be understood by others; skills at interacting socially (such as speaking, listening, and observation skills); willingness to accept and share with others” (p. 36). Finally, they claim that study abroad students develop critical thinking, “an inclination to be discriminating and sceptical of stereotypes; a tendency not to accept things as they appear on the surface” (p. 36).

Research also shows that students reflect on career and professional directions while studying abroad. Kauffmann et al. (1992) report that studying and living abroad forces students to think about life’s direction because they encounter new ways of being in the social order. Students wrestle with the questions central to vocational choice: who am I, who am I going to be, where am I, and where am I going? In addition, Carlson et al. (1990) state that study abroad experience broadens students’ career options. Ninety nine percent of the students in the SAEP felt that they
would be able to utilize the international experience in their professional and academic life. My research builds on these findings. I found that studying abroad had the effect of providing career directions for my participants. I discuss this finding under the theme of ‘life direction’ in Chapter Six.

Why is it that study abroad has such a profound influence on personal development? Kauffmann et al. (1992) provide some answers to this question. They provide a model for understanding cognitive growth during study abroad. Self-development and cognitive growth are considered inseparable. They draw on the cognitive growth model of Piaget (1970) and Kohlberg (1976), and focus on Piaget and Inhelder’s (1958) view that change in perspective is the essence of maturation. They suggest that our view of reality expands when we experience discrepancy between what we already understand and what our environment presents to us. From this perspective, personal growth is a complex, evolving process of balancing and rebalancing, assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation involves interpreting a new experience in terms of current or previous structures of knowledge. Accommodation involves modifying existing ways of looking at the world to incorporate new knowledge or experience. When an individual is only assimilating, boredom could develop. Too much accommodation will lead to stress. Thus, this model assumes that human beings seek an equilibrium between assimilating and accommodating. According to Kauffmann et al., study abroad has a profound influence on personal development because it involves a process of moving from equilibrium (i.e. between assimilating and accommodating) through disequilibrium toward a new equilibrium. In this study I build on this model (Chapter Six, Fig. 6.1, p. 265) to show that transformation of perspective and self becomes the core outcome of studying abroad.
2.5 Concluding Thoughts

I began this chapter with two goals: (1) to review study abroad literature relevant to this study's conceptual framework, and (2) to show how my study relates to and builds upon prior research on the experience and outcomes of study abroad. I structured this chapter in line with this study's conceptual framework depicted in Fig. 2.1. This framework brings together the experience and outcomes of studying abroad. I have, first, provided an overview of the development of institutional study abroad programs in Europe and the United States. This led us to the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP) that played a pivotal role in the development of study abroad research. Second, I reviewed research findings regarding students' experience of studying abroad. Third, I reviewed findings concerning the outcomes of studying abroad. I first reviewed what I referred to as the "extrinsic" outcomes (i.e. stable, outer and "chaos-free" outcomes). Then I reviewed what I called "intrinsic" outcomes; I focused my review on research concerning transformation of perspective and self. Having accomplished my goals for this chapter, I now look towards the next chapter (methodology) by commenting briefly on the current trend in study abroad research.

By conducting this study I am hoping to provide an alternative approach to study abroad research. My approach conflates students' experience of the study abroad journey and the meaning they attribute to it. By using qualitative research I want to present the quality of students' study abroad experience in their own voice. My approach is quite different from the dominant trend in study abroad research. Regrettably, survey studies based on causal/comparative designs and the scaling of attitudes continues to dominate study abroad research. The Association of International
Educational Administrators (AIEA), an organization known for its leadership in international education in the United States, recently placed a high priority on more surveys and impact evaluation studies regarding knowledge, attitudes, practices and outcomes of study abroad (AIEA, 1995).

The causal/comparative research design raises methodological questions about its validity and effectiveness for study abroad research. First, there are no naturally occurring control groups of university students for this form of research. Students who do not go abroad to study (i.e. those included in control groups) also continue to transform their perspectives and grow personally while they remain on their home campus and come into contact with people from other cultures.

Second, the outcomes of study abroad cannot be atomized into discrete units that can be explained independent of each other. The impact of study abroad, in my view, cannot be reduced to independent variables. Various dimensions of study abroad experience rest on a matrix of “relational holism” (Pike & Selby, 1995, p. 7) in which nothing has full identity or meaning except in relation to everything else. The experience and construed meaning of studying abroad rest on a complex matrix of interconnections relating to students’ prior and post international experiences. Indeed, some who have worked with quantitative assessments of the impact of study abroad conclude that the outcomes can vary considerably according to the background that students bring to their experience (Albach & Wang, 1989, Carlson et al., 1990; Eide, 1970; Koester, 1985 and 1987; Opper et al., 1990; Weaver, 1989). For example, self-confidence, a widely accepted outcome of study abroad (Grove, 1984; Carlson, 1990; Opper et al., 1990), is a holistic feeling of self-worth
that is inseparable from one's accomplishments, self-concept, identity and personal relationships.

Third, the dominant research trend sidelines research that explores students' qualitative experience. Studies on culture shock, cross-cultural adjustment and intercultural experience (Adler, 1975, 1982; Citron, 1992; Kim, 1988; Kim & Ruben, 1988) have received considerably less attention among study abroad researchers. Much of my study is an attempt to address these blind spots.

My observations about the bias of study abroad research enticed me to use qualitative inquiry in this study. In my research design (see next chapter) I move away from perceiving reality as "objective" -- something out there independent of the researcher and participants. Through this design I place my research in a view of reality that accepts and uses "zones of uncertainty" and "non-rational process" (Bruner, 1986; Polanyi, 1967; Schon, 1983). It is a worldview that recognizes the existence of us (researchers and participants) inside, not outside, that which we are observing. Thus, I acknowledge my own experience to enable me to move closer to the subjective reality of my research participants' study abroad experience. It is crucial to understand students' subjective experience and construed meaning of their journeys abroad; it is this subjective meaning that carries the impact of studying abroad through one's life-course trajectory.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study's conceptual framework, and its ontological and epistemological assumptions (discussed in Chapter One), place it within the qualitative research paradigm. Stated differently, the following dimensions of the qualitative paradigm apply to this study: (1) reality is socially constructed; (2) variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure; (3) the need to examine how people in social settings construct the world around them; (4) the need to understand research participants' own perspectives; and (5) the need to search for patterns and themes in our experience (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

As I noted in my concluding remarks in the previous chapter, the paradigm of inquiry to be chosen was obvious. However, choosing the appropriate qualitative tradition of inquiry was initially baffling. I reviewed the established traditions such as biography (Denzin, 1989), case-study (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994), ethnography (Atkinson, 1990), grounded theory study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), life-history (Cole, 1994) and phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) to determine the best approach for my study. Upon reflection, "collective case-study" (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994) emerged as the most relevant research design. However, the study's focus on understanding the underlying meaning (i.e., the essence) of the study abroad experience for students also relates to phenomenology. Hence, I consider this a collective case-
study that contains a phenomenological orientation.

I begin this chapter with the rationale for collective case-study as the research design and a brief description of the study’s relation to phenomenology. I then detail the design components:

1. Selecting participants
2. Data collection methods and procedures
3. Data analysis strategies
4. Approaches used to enhance the quality of the study
5. Addressing ethical concerns

3.2 Collective Case-Study Design

The availability of multiple data sources, distinct contexts, a bounded process and a phenomenon to study led to the decision to use a case-study design for this study. Creswell (1998) defines case-study research as “an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p.61). Merriam (1988) further clarifies a case-study as an “examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or social group” (p.9). Further, some consider the “case” in a case-study as the object of the study (Stake, 1995), others see it as a research design (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). When the case is seen as the object of the study, the emphasis is placed on defining the setting and boundaries of the case. When the
case is seen as a design, the emphasis is on design components. I place the emphasis on the research design.

A "collective case-study" (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994), also referred to as a "multiple case-study" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998), is a design used when it is appropriate to consider several "cases" in a single study. Merriam (1988) explains that "the case study focuses on a single unit within which there may be several examples, events, or situations (which) can be exemplified by numerous case studies" (p.46). Similarly, Stake (1995) points out that, in some situations, we may feel the need to choose several individuals for a study because each case is instrumental to learning about a particular process, event or phenomenon. In this respect, this study involves 14 unique cases (i.e. 14 study abroad students) making this a collective case-study.

Merriam (1988), Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) propose a number of unique components of case-study design. I made the decision to frame this study as a case-study because of its natural fit to these design elements. These include: (1) defining the case as a bounded system (Stake, 1994), or a process (Creswell, 1995; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994) framed by both time and place; (2) situating the case in its natural context; and (3) obtaining data from multiples sources (Cresswell, 1995; Stake, 1995). In Fig 3.1, I summarize the study's relationship to these design components.
As I show in Figure 3.1, the phenomenon I want to study can be defined as a bounded system, situated contextually in students' home and host institutions. In addition, as case-study design demands, this study's data collection embraces multiple methods and sources: observation, in-depth interviews, documents and visual devices.

One other aspect to note is the instrumental nature of this study. Stake (1995) classifies case-studies as either "intrinsic" or "instrumental", based on the focus of the study. He explains that, if the focus is on the uniqueness of a case (i.e., a given case), it is an "intrinsic" case-study, referring to the researcher's intrinsic interest in the case. In contrast, if the focus is on
understanding a process or an issue, it is an “instrumental” case study – the study is instrumental in understanding something other than the case itself. In this regard, this study is an instrumental collective case-study exploring the process, issues, meaning and impact of students’ study abroad experience.

3.3 The Study’s Relation to Phenomenology

Phenomenological studies explore the essential meaning (the essence) – or the underlying meaning -- people attribute to “lived experience” (Pinar and Grumet, 1976; Polkinghorne, 1989) of a phenomenon (Cresswell, 1998; Moustakea, 1994). The “underlying meaning” combines outward appearance and inward consciousness to define and display the meaning of lived experience. As I expressed in Chapter Two, I believe that it is important to explore the underlying meaning of students’ study abroad experience, both in terms of outward appearances and inward consciousness. The long-term impact of study abroad for students, in my view, is embedded in the meaning they attribute to their experience. Therefore, a major focus of this study is to explore the underlying meaning of each participant’s study abroad experience. This is undoubtedly a phenomenological focus.

My data collection is purposely tied to phenomenology. For example, the study’s participants provided pictorial representations and narratives of the underlying meaning of their study abroad experiences. In addition, my in-depth research discussions with participants
explored the essential meaning of studying abroad for them. The cross analysis of data from each participant unveiled shared dimensions of meaning that students attribute to study abroad experiences.

I approach the analysis and interpretation of the phenomenological dimension of this study from a psychological perspective. Phenomenologists usually bring either a sociological (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994) or a psychological or narrative perspective to their studies (Tesch, 1990; Moustakas, 1994). I used a psychological perspective by focusing on the experiences and dimensions of the meaning of study abroad shared by the 14 participants as opposed to focusing on their collective experience in a social setting. In this study, the 14 participants studied abroad in very different socio-cultural settings. Yet their experience of studying abroad share many common themes.

3.4 Selecting Participants

Stake (1995) reminds us that “case-study research is not sampling research” in the traditional sense of the concept of sampling (p. 4). Stake stresses the importance of selecting cases that are typical or representative of other cases to maximize learning from them, particularly in instrumental collective case studies. While he refers to this approach to selecting cases as “representative sampling”, others call it “purposeful” or “purposive” sampling (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 386). Whatever term we use, as Patton (1990) and Yin (1994) suggest, case-study
researchers generally agree that understanding a critical phenomenon depends on choosing the cases well.

I selected this study’s participants based on two of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) typology of 16 strategies for purposeful sampling: (1) criterion selection and (2) maximum variation selection. In criterion selection, all cases meet particular criteria useful for quality assurance (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For example, Merriam (1988) uses Goetz and Leompte’s (1984) notion of criteria-based sampling to select participants based on characteristics likely to generate “a rich portrayal of the phenomenon under study” (p.48). I selected participants based on certain common characteristics that are important to frame the boundaries of my study. These common characteristics are the duration of the study abroad period, the home institution and cultural setting where they experienced re-entry (i.e. Toronto) and national identity (i.e. Canadian).

Maximum variation selection documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994). What is important in this approach is to recognize both variations and common patterns that enhance the opportunity to learn from the cases. For example, Creswell (1998) uses the maximum variation approach in collective case studies to represent diverse cases to fully display multiple perspectives. Similarly, Stake (1994) explains that, in collective case-studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority in order to allow for balance and variety.
Table 3.1 demonstrates how I utilized both criterion and maximum variation selection methods to enhance the design of this case study. It outlines common characteristics among the 14 participants and the variations selected to gain multiple perspectives. Furthermore, Table 4.1 in Chapter Four identifies the diversity of the 14 participants in terms of gender, academic program, self-disclosed ethnic background, study abroad context and student’s home educational institution. Together, these participants reflect many of the attributes of undergraduate students who participate in Canadian study abroad programs; separately, they tell unique stories. Hence, this group of participants provides the balance and variety advocated by Stake (1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Patterns</th>
<th>Duration of Study Abroad (8 months)</th>
<th>Home Institution: General Ethos</th>
<th>Duration of Re-entry experience explored (8 months)</th>
<th>Nationality, Home Province and City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variations</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Host Institution: Specific Focus of Dept./Program</td>
<td>Academic Program</td>
<td>Ethnic Background/Cultural Affiliation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Common Characteristics and Variations among 14 Research Participants

In participant selection, I also incorporated Miles and Huberman’s (1994) suggestion that an “extreme” or “deviant” case may help to fully display multiple perspectives about a case. Asmussen and Creswell (1995) support this notion by providing examples of collective case studies in which a few unusual cases enhanced the opportunity to learn about diverse ways in which people experience a phenomenon. For this reason, I selected two unusual cases: one participant is from a different home institution in Toronto and the other spent a year abroad working as opposed to studying.
Finally, I think it is important to explain why I used 14 cases, particularly because this may appear to be too many cases for a typical collective case-study. In choosing the number of cases, I faced the usual dilemma identified by case-study researchers in that the more cases the researcher selects the greater the lack of depth in any single case. Therefore, Cresswell (1998) and Stake (1995) recommend no more than four cases in a typical collective case-study. However, I selected 14 participants (i.e., cases) for three reasons. First, the study’s relation to phenomenology suggests that I should consider about 10 participants to capture the essence of lived-experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Second, I needed at least 14 participants to represent all the variations listed in Table 3.1. In Chapter Seven (the concluding chapter of my dissertation), I reflect on this study and suggest considering the experience of fewer students to further explore the in-depth experience of a few cases.

To select 14 appropriate participants, I met with 25 students who had returned to their home institution after completing various study abroad programs. After meeting with each student for a one-hour interview, I selected 15 participants based on the commonalities and variations listed in Table 3.1. I decided to involve 15 participants initially because of the likelihood that some would withdraw from the study before its completion. One participant did withdraw from the study due to time constraints.
3.5 Data Collection

I involved six data collection techniques, all meant to elicit stories of study abroad that would reveal the depth of my participants' experiences and bring me "close to the phenomenon" (Patton, 1980). These techniques were: (1) observation, (2) in-depth interviewing, (3) document analysis (including analysis of students' journals and pictures taken abroad), (4) focus group discussion, (5) analyzing drawings to explore the underlying meaning of the study abroad experience, and (6) a graph to display critical stages of the study abroad process. With the exceptions of drawings and graphs (described later under Photographs and Visual Devices), these methods ascribe to forms of case-study data collection suggested by Merriam (1988), Stake (1995) and Yin (1994).

In addition to this, I interviewed a person (significant other) known to each participant (a parent or a very close friend) for two reasons: (1) to understand the social and family contexts of the re-entry experience and (2) to strengthen the quality of the research design by gathering data from a second source -- "data triangulation" (Denzin, 1978). Table 3.2 lists the guiding research questions and the data collection techniques that relate to these questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Pertinent Data Collection Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEFORE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When and how do students develop interest in study abroad programs?</td>
<td>In-depth interviews, graphical display of critical stages, documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do students prepare for the study abroad experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DURING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What experiences are most meaningful for students during study abroad?</td>
<td>In-depth interviews, pictorial representation of the underlying meaning of study abroad, documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the personal (e.g. cultural and social), professional and academic impacts of study abroad?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AFTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do students experience the re-entry process?</td>
<td>In-depth interviews, graphical display, pictorial representations, journals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In what ways are the temporal dimensions (before, during and after) interconnected with each other in students' interpretation of the experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the underlying meaning (i.e., the essence) of the study abroad experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Guiding Questions and Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Time-Line

Fig. 3.2 shows the data collection time line that reflects the three-stage study abroad process experienced by my research participants. The participants’ graphic display of the study abroad process (see Appendix C) corresponds to this time line.
BEFORE | DURING | AFTER: RE-ENTRY PERIOD
---|---|---
Feb. 95 - August 95 | Sept. 95 - May 96 | June 96 - April 97

Figure 3.2 Study abroad Process Time Line for 14 Participants

February is when the participants applied to their home institutions to participate in study abroad programs. August is when most of the participants travelled to their host institution abroad. They returned home the following summer and began their subsequent academic year at the home institution in September.

Observations

Stake (1995) considers it an important element of case study to observe the physical and social settings of the research participants. He explains that “the entry ways, the rooms, the landscape, the hallway, its place on the map, and its decor” (p. 63) are all important aspects of the context. Although I could not directly observe the study abroad settings of my participants, I attempted to understand their physical and social settings by reviewing and discussing photographs taken abroad with each of them. In research conversations, my participants talked about their pictures.
I observed the institutional, social, and cultural settings of the participants' home institution and city, which is where they experienced the re-entry process. Thirteen out of the fourteen students experienced their academic re-entry in a large educational institution in a major Canadian urban centre. Having worked in this institution, I was familiar with its educational settings (e.g. classroom, libraries and laboratories), social settings (e.g. residences, clubs, and cafeterias), and the physical landscape. The fourteenth participant experienced her academic re-entry in a medium-size institution in the same urban centre. I visited this institution twice to observe its educational and socio-cultural setting. In addition, as a participant-observer, I accompanied each participant to either a classroom, a seminar, or an extra-curricular activity such as a cultural event or social gathering held in their institution. I recorded observation notes in my research journal.

Along with physical contexts, certain other contexts are important for case-study research. According to Stake (1995), if the case is a person or persons, the home and family are usually important contexts. Further, he notes that in instrumental case studies, the physical context may be less important than contexts of issues. Hence, data collected for the study includes information about the participants' family and their social contexts. I also had the opportunity to visit the homes of 8 participants.
Interviews: Research Conversations

I refer to interviews as research conversations to highlight the genuine conversational relation between the researcher and participants. The interviews with my participants were conversations in which the researcher and participants jointly reflected on a phenomenon, providing a deepening of experience both for the interviewer and the participants (Weber, 1985). In these conversations we learned as much about each other as we learned about the topic. As Weber (1985) points out, no research interview can be simply a conversation as it is recorded, transcribed and invariably written down. Hence, I refer to my research interviews as research conversations. These research conversations were semi-structured; a set of questions, which I developed and rehearsed during the pilot study, guided these research conversations (see Appendix A).

Between August 1996 and April 1997, I met each participant at least three times for one-hour research conversations; some of these conversations lasted two hours. These conversations were inter-related. Each preceding conversation built on past conversations. I wrote reflective notes in a research diary immediately after each conversation, and transcribed recorded conversations for future analysis. Furthermore, as described earlier, I met a significant other person known to each participant for a research conversation. In Appendix B, I provide a list of questions that guided these conversations with significant others.
Documents

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Taylor and Bogdan (1984) discuss the use of: (1) personal documents, (2) official documents, (3) photographs, and (4) visual devices as rich sources of qualitative data. As described below, I used all four types of documents in this study.

Personal documents: Journals and diaries

Personal documents refer broadly to any first-person narrative that describes an individual's actions, experiences and beliefs. Such documents collected for this study include journals, letters, photographs and travel logs.

During the research period, each participant kept a journal as a reflective commentary on academic, personal and social aspects of their re-entry experiences. My previous research experience with journals made me aware that the need to keep a weekly journal could be a challenge causing participants to withdraw from the study. Hence, I asked participants to aim for writing a journal entry every other week, and I contacted each participant monthly to monitor the progress of their journals. I collected journal entries from the participants in conjunction with the interviews and discussed experiences reflected in the journals during research conversations.
Stake (1995) points to the personal diary as an excellent source of qualitative data because of the spontaneity and intimacy of what we write in our diaries. However, unlike journals, diaries have to be discovered rather than solicited. I was fortunate to discover an excellent source of data in the personal diaries of four of my participants; these were autobiographical accounts of experiences abroad that these participants voluntarily offered to share with me. Although only four participants provided such autobiographical accounts, I decided to use data from these diaries when such data were relevant to issues discussed in research conversations.

Official Documents

Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and Stake (1995) explain that official documents such as memos, minutes from meetings, newsletters, policy documents, proposals, codes of ethics, dossiers, student records, statements of philosophy, news releases, brochures and pamphlets are useful sources of qualitative data. In Merriam (1988) and Stake (1995) emphasize the use of such materials as qualitative data in case studies to understand their social and political setting. These materials, of course, are subjective, and represent the biases of promoters and administrators. However, it is because of their subjective nature that many qualitative researchers look upon these documents as useful data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I collected policy statements, reports and brochures on study abroad from Canadian universities, government sources and the business community as data for this study.
Official documents pertaining to individual participants used in this study include dossiers submitted to students' educational institutions when they applied to participate in study abroad programs. Student dossiers, almost always, include a statement of interest from the student explaining the reasons why she/he wanted to participate in a study abroad program, as well as what she/he expected to achieve from an international experience. With the consent of the participants, I collected copies of these documents for each participant from their home institutions.

Photographs and Visual Devices

Photographs offer a historical rendering of our lived experiences; they evoke images and stories of experience. Hence, photographs are visual rhetorics that have captured the attention of many qualitative researchers such as Harper (1994). My use of photographs for this study follows Harper's (1994) method of photo elicitation in interviews. In other words, the individual from the pictured world (the individual in the photo) interprets the image and experiences related to the image in interviews. I found this method particularly useful because my research participants had taken many photographs while studying abroad, and they were keen to discuss them during research conversations.

In addition to photographs, I used two other visual devices in this study. First, each participant created a visual representation of his/her underlying meaning of the study abroad experience in the form of a drawing. These drawings offer an alternative medium to
communicate the meaning and impact of study abroad. They can communicate feelings which are sometimes challenging to express verbally. I first made this observation while working as the co-producer of a video called “World Within Reach”, a five part series on various aspects of university students’ experiences of studying, working and volunteering abroad. When we video-recorded interviews with 40 students we noticed a pattern in which students would express their study abroad experience as either “life-changing” or “remarkable” yet they found it very difficult to express what this experience meant to them. The reason for this could be that the meaning of international experience might exist as tacit knowledge, which is difficult to express in logical verbal form. According to Altheide & Johnson (1994), tacit knowledge plays a constitutive role in providing meaning, but is difficult to express in language because “social life is spatially and temporally ordered through experiences that cannot be reduced to spatial boundaries as numerous forms of communication attempt to do, especially those based on textual and linear metaphors” (p.492).

After completing her/his drawing, each participant interpreted the meaning embedded in her/his picture. This interpretation became the narrative of the image in each drawing. In Chapter Six, I provide each participant’s art-based image of the meaning of study abroad in conjunction with their own narratives of these images. I also look at the similarities and differences in these images and make a number of interpretative comments in Chapter Six.

As a second visual device, each participant developed a graphic illustration of the stages of their study abroad process. I asked each participant to graphically illustrate their feelings about
studying abroad (on a scale +10 to −10) from the time s/he decided to study abroad to the end of the re-entry academic year (i.e., April 1997). I also asked them to provide explanations of the experiences associated with their feeling rate indicated on the chart (see Appendix C). I solicited these illustrations to understand, individually and collectively, the shape of the participants’ adjustment curves representing the periods before, during and after the study abroad experience. In particular, I wanted to examine the pattern of adjustment abroad in relation to the re-entry experience.

Focus Group: A Joint Reflection on the Experience

Although social science researchers rarely used focus group research a decade ago, research using focus groups currently appears in academic journals at the rate of more than 100 articles per year (Morgan, 1996). Focus group research has evolved to provide three basic uses: (1) as the principal source of data, (2) as a supplementary source of data in studies that rely on other primary sources, and (3) as a source of data in multi-method studies that combine several primary sources (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1997). The use of a focus group in this study is as a supplementary source, adding to the data gathered primarily through individual research conversations.

Since “focus group” is a generic term that refers to several types of group interviews (Khan & Manderson, 1992), it is necessary for me to clarify the specific use of a focus group in this study. Following the suggestion of Morgan (1997), I used a focus group discussion to highlight issues and patterns that I identified through individual research conversations.
Individual conversations offered the advantage of gaining an in-depth understanding of research participants' experiences and opinions. The focus group discussion elicited group reflections on themes and patterns that I had discovered, and amounted to a form of member checking (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I hosted one focus group discussion and three of the fourteen participants were unable to attend this discussion.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Having completed the data collection in May 1997, I systematically arranged the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents in paper and computer files. Then I faced the challenge of determining the most appropriate and efficient procedure for data analysis. As Yin (1994) argues, the most underdeveloped and difficult aspects of doing case studies research (Yin, 1994) is data analysis; no particular data analysis procedure exists for case-study research. I turned to data analysis strategies suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Cresswell (1994), Manson (1996), Merriam (1988), Miles and Huberman (1994), Stake (1995), and Yin (1994) to develop the nine-step procedure detailed in Table 3.3. Furthermore, the large text database of the data convinced me to use the qualitative data analysis software NUD*IST (non-numerical unstructured data indexing, searching, and theorizing; Richards & Richards, 1994) for efficiency.

Since Table 3.3 details the technical steps of the data analysis procedure, I will limit my comments to the conceptual aspects of how I approached the data analysis. In summary, data
analysis involved two stages: (1) developing coding categories and applying these categories to the entire database, and (2) using the data grouped in these coding categories to search for themes, patterns, processes, impacts and meanings of study abroad. Stake's (1995) "categorical aggregation" (the collection of instances from data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge) and Manson's (1996) "cross-sectional indexing" methods guided the first stage. Cross-sectional indexing involved devising a consistent system for indexing the whole database according to a set of common principles and measures. The central idea behind indexing (also called coding) was to apply a uniform set of indexing categories to the data. By coding the data I was eventually able to develop a number of themes that related to each phase of the study abroad experience and the meaning of studying abroad. Proceeding to the second stage of data analysis, I used Denzin's (1994) approach to "sense making" and "representation" (p.501) to guide me. I searched for themes and metaphors that emerged from the categories of data that I had created. These themes evolved from prolonged engagement with, and reflection upon, the data. Finally, I consulted theoretical perspectives to illuminate my understanding and interpretation of the data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analysis Step</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Data organizing</td>
<td>• Organized each participant’s data, documents and observation notes into paper and computer files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. General reviewing of data</td>
<td>• Read each participant’s data (on hard copy) twice in long undisturbed periods, writing notes and possible coding categories in the margins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3. Developing preliminary coding categories | • Reviewed notes written in the margins and possible coding categories to generate preliminary coding categories  
  • Assigned abbreviations for coding categories, and created a file detailing the description of each abbreviation  
  • Once again reviewed the preliminary coding categories, and the data, to develop the final list of categories.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4. Revisiting and revising coding categories | • Used NUD*IST to tag interview, focus group, and journal data segments that relate to each coding category  
  • Merged data segments (or units of analysis) into categories (referred to as nodes in NUD*IST), and then printed hard copies of data segments that relate to each code. This is similar to the “cut-up-and-put-in-folders” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 5) traditionally used by qualitative researchers  
  • Used cut-up-and-put-in-folders approach for documents and observation notes that exist on paper                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5. Assigning final coding categories to data | • Analyzed the printed copies of text related to major categories to develop sub-codes for each category  
  • Assigned data to sub-categories using NUD*IST and the “cut-up-and-put-in-folders” method                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6. Assigning sub-codes                  | • Searched for ways in which categories relate to each other within each individual’s experience  
  • Searched for ways in which categories relate to each other across the 14 students’ experiences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 7. Cross analyzing of categories        | • Created a visual picture of how the categories relate to each other  
  • Printed a NUD*IST “tree diagram”, a hierarchical tree of categories based on a “root” at the top and parents and siblings in the tree                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 8. Diagramming                          | • Search for themes and patterns, concepts and processes that emerged from individual categories and the interconnectedness between categories  
  • Analyzed these themes within the study abroad process conceptualization advanced in the study, and searched for ways in which these findings related to prior research and various theoretical perspectives                                                                                                                                 |

Table 3.3 Data Analysis Steps
Creswell (1994), and Manson (1996) allude to the importance of ensuring that the perspective that one brings to developing indexing categories and the interpretation from these categories, should be consistent with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study. As this study is about a learning process, I searched for relevant patterns and themes in each individual case. This revealed identifiable stages pertaining to study abroad experience, stages indicating significant academic and personal changes over time. These patterns and stages can be considered turning points (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). After analyzing individual cases, I applied the patterns in these individual cases to a cross analysis of the 14 cases.

3.7 Ensuring Quality

Lincoln (1995) notes that criteria to judge qualitative research continue to emerge, and summarises some of the approaches already established to verify the quality of research. Many of these approaches build on the earlier work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), using concepts of "trustworthiness", "transferability", "dependability, and "confirmability" to measure the quality of research. Having reviewed the suggestions made to enhance the value of qualitative studies made by Lincoln and Guba, Glesne and Peshkin (1992), Merriam (1988), Morse (1994) and Stake (1995), I decided to use the following approaches to ensure that this study meets established conventions of quality standards.
Prolonged engagement

Prolonged observation in the field builds trust with participants and allows one to learn about their culture. Since my data collection spanned over eight months, I developed an excellent rapport and trust with my research participants. With respect to learning their culture, my personal and professional engagement with study abroad over 10 years provided me with an understanding of the culture of academic institutions and the place of study abroad within both home and host institutions. In addition, I was generally aware of the impact of studying abroad on students. Therefore, this study is a systematic approach to further explore my own understanding of the study abroad process for students.

Triangulation

When social scientists borrowed triangulation — a term that arose from the application of trigonometry to navigation — as a research concept, it carried its old meaning of verifying of the facts (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Triangulation has evolved to mean that many sources of data are better in a study than a single source. It is assumed that multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of a phenomenon. Researchers have expanded the concept of triangulation to include multiple subjects, multiple researchers, different theoretical approaches, and different data-collection techniques (Denzin, 1989). The multiple meanings of triangulation, unfortunately, can confuse more than they clarify, and might intimidate more than they enlighten.

I use the concept of triangulation, as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1989) and Manson
(1996), to encompass multiple sources of data as contributing to a better understanding of the phenomenon. Stated differently, I do not see triangulation as a technique for checking one method of data collection against another. Rather, I see it as a way to approach research questions from different angles to explore a topic multi-dimensionally. Hence, I collected data using multiple methods, making use of observations, interviews, documents, and visual representations developed by students. Second, I obtained data from two sources: the participants and significant others known to the participants.

Clarifying bias

From the beginning of this study I worried about the role of subjectivity, particularly because I have been personally and professionally involved in study abroad for the past 10 years. I struggled to recognize that my prejudices and attitudes would illuminate data collection and analysis. But I also knew that I could not entirely detach the conceptualization of the research topic, the data collection and analysis from my past experiences, beliefs, and values. Therefore, in Chapter One, I took the advice of many qualitative researchers to be reflexive and self-conscious of who I am, to acknowledge my past experiences, and to examine the assumptions that I bring to the research phenomenon. In Chapter One, I elaborate upon the experiences, beliefs, values and assumptions I bring to this study.
Checking with Participants: Member Checking

Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider “member checking” (p.314) as a critical approach to establish credibility. First, I brought forward my initial findings for participants to critique and comment on during the focus group discussion. Second, during systematic analysis of data I solicited comments from two research participants who were available to review my findings and comment on how I am reporting them.

3.8 Addressing Ethics

At the beginning of this study, I identified and became concerned with three ethical issues. The first two arose out of my professional involvement as the Student Exchange Officer in the home institution of 13 out of the 14 research participants. My initial concern was that my research participants might feel obliged to participate in this study either because they are formally or informally associated with my Office, or because of my position within the institution. I addressed this concern by openly discussing it with my participants, and by providing a letter of consent (Appendix D and E) in which I guaranteed confidentiality, and stated that any participant may decide to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences to the participant. This concern eventually disappeared as we developed genuine friendship and a trust that went beyond that of researcher and participants. My participants became my friends. I became their trusted friend and they enjoyed the opportunity to talk about what it meant for them to study abroad. Developing a close friendship with 14 participants took considerable time; soon I began to appreciate the demands and rewards of qualitative research.
The second ethical concern was political in nature. I wondered how far I could critique an institution’s policies, procedures, assumptions and motives for offering study abroad opportunities for students while working as the Student Exchange Officer for this institution. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) detail the ethical problems associated with researching in one’s “backyard”. Fortunately, my evolving career interests, and the need to find a block of time to concentrate on writing this thesis, offered an unorthodox solution to my problem — I resigned from my position to concentrate on writing my thesis and to return to my native country. I wrote this dissertation with complete freedom to be critical of my own “backyard.”

My third concern was about interviewing a significant other person known to each participant. First, I wanted to interview university professors and significant others. However, I soon learnt that professors in a large institution such as the University of Toronto are unlikely to know about the personal and academic meaning of studying abroad for their students. Many of my participants were reluctant to include professors as significant others. Therefore, the significant others I interviewed were either parents or very close friends, including intimate friends. The concern was that both my participants and significant other persons might feel uncomfortable about these interviews. I was mindful that discussion of sensitive information in these interviews might negatively impact the relationship between the participant and the significant other. Hence, I discussed my concern with both the participants and their significant others, and guaranteed that I would not disclose any sensitive information about each other to any of them. To my surprise, neither the participants nor their significant others were concerned about these interviews, and all my participants were eager to suggest and arrange for interviews.
with a significant other known to them. Appendices D and E consist of sample letters of informed consent signed by the participants and their significant others.

3.9 Conclusion

In the first two chapters I have given an overview of the dissertation, provided background information about the study's conceptual framework, delineated my personal and professional experiences that relate to the research phenomenon, and presented a review of the related literature. This chapter has set out the research design in terms of the considerations for selecting participants as well as the conceptual and ethical considerations pertaining to the collection and analysis of data. Seeing no need to further explain aspects of the methodology, I now conclude by reflecting briefly on my personal experience with data collection. These comments situate myself within the data collection period.

My Journey With the Data

To date, this is the most extensive data collection that I have engaged in for any research project. At times, the demands of data collection were challenging, particularly because I maintained full-time employment while collecting data. The period of data collection was, in effect, an intense period in which I maintained a close friendship with the 14 research participants. I accompanied them to classes, seminars, and events, and I kept regular contact with
them by e-mail and telephone in addition to meeting with them individually for scheduled research conversations. I also visited their homes, and met significant other persons known to them to discuss the outcomes and construed meanings of studying abroad for these participants. These meetings with strangers were uncomfortable at first, but, in the end, they became close friends.

With my wife and son away in England during the eight months of data collection (only a coincidence), I was able to immerse myself in data collection and work responsibilities for a prolonged period. The intensity of data collection revealed to me the time consuming and sometimes overwhelming nature of a collective case study. I could not have imagined this at the beginning of my research. However, this was also a memorable personal experience; the experiences of many participants mirrored my own study abroad endeavours, and listening to their future aspirations shaped my own future plans as well. My participants helped me to make the decision to complete my own personal study abroad journey by returning to my home country, the Maldives.
CHAPTER IV

The Journey Begins

Every journey’s beginning shapes its end.

David Suzuki

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I begin reporting my interpretation of the participants’ stories of their study abroad experience. My own narrative account of study abroad, as a co-participant, is also intertwined with the meaning I attribute to the participants’ stories. I begin by introducing the study abroad experience metaphorically as a “journey”. This is a “meta-theme” of this thesis (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997, p. 118), an overarching theme that emerged from the participants’ stories. As a meta-theme it anchors how I organize and present the sub-themes and patterns (i.e. findings) of this study.

Second, I introduce the participants. Third, I discuss the findings as themes and patterns pertaining to the beginning of the study abroad journey. These themes relate to the participants’ motivations, prior experiences, and the influence of others on their desire to study abroad. These patterns are about setting the stage for the journey. Finally, I explore the meaning of these findings through theoretical perspectives from cultural and social psychology as well as my own “personal practical knowledge” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) of study abroad.
4.2 A Journey: A Meta-Theme

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that exploring metaphors offers a way of understanding a situation that we might not fully grasp in other ways. They write:

The use of metaphors is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness. These endeavors of the imagination are not devoid of rationality: since they employ metaphor, they employ an imaginative rationality (p. 193).

Furthermore, Ely *et. al.* (1997) write:

Metaphorical concepts we live with and think through in our everyday lives may structure the way in which we orient ourselves in our research studies, giving coherence that is embedded and not easily recognized until we go in search of it (p.116).

The study abroad journeys in this study remind me of Captain William Pinkney’s voyage. The first African American to circumnavigate the globe, who sailed his boat, “Commitment” into Boston Harbour after completing his 22-month solo adventure. His journey began with a dream and took him to places he had only imagined, it tested his personal strengths, and changed him forever. It also affected others by sending an inspirational message to schoolchildren in Boston about dreams, education, and commitment (Cosby, 1994).

Captain Pinkney’s voyage mirrors the participants’ study abroad experience. They were solo navigators who travelled to unknown destinations and returned home
profoundly changed. They sailed through uncharted waters, navigated through various psychological and personal challenges, and, in the process, learned about themselves and others. They explored personal, cultural, social and ecological passageways. Yet their experience reflects the process of any other journey: they prepared for it, traveled its course, experienced its ups and downs, and returned home with pictures to show and stories to tell. Pike and Selby (1995) capture the essential character of their journey:

An emerging awareness of the world goes hand in glove with a growing level of self-awareness. As many people who have made voyages of discovery have found, they learn as much about themselves as about the new landscape they enter. The outward journey is also the inward journey. The two journeys are complementary and mutually illuminating (p. 18).

The metaphor of a journey has particular relevance to me personally. Language is a cultural vehicle that drives the creation of meaning in qualitative studies (Ely et. al., 1997). Hence, the use of ‘journey’ as a metaphor in this thesis is a cultural bridge that connects my understanding of the participants’ experience to my own narrative (the composition of my lived experience). It is a culturally and linguistically meaningful medium to me. My first language, Dhivehi, the language that offers me the fullest possibility for meaning making, is filled with references to sea travel. I was socialized among travelers and fishermen. Thus, journeys and voyages have had a special place in my upbringing. I also use this metaphor to communicate my interpretations to you, the readers.

The meta-theme of a journey illuminates the embedded structure of the co-participants’ study abroad experience. Their voyage included several chronological landmarks: (1) choosing to embark on the journey, (2) preparing to leave, (3)
experiencing the journey, (4) returning home, (5) reflecting and reconstructing the meaning and impact of the trip. The memories of these landmarks are interwoven into a fabric that constitutes the subjective meaning of each participant’s journey. The colours and patterns of this fabric fully reveal their meaning to the participant only when the journey is completed.

In this chapter I describe and interpret the first landmark or stage of the journey, that is, the motivations to study abroad and the prior experiences that influenced the formation of this desire. In Chapter Five I explore the experience of preparing to leave (Part Two); the journey’s course (Part Three); and the re-entry experience (Part Four). In Chapter Six, I describe the underlying meaning of this journey for each traveler, and illustrate how study abroad leads to personal change and transformation of self and perspective.
4.3 The Travelers

How do I introduce the travelers (participants) to you? I struggled with this question from the beginning of my study. Should I devote a separate chapter for each case? Should I identify major concepts and processes from each case and devote a chapter to each, or should I do both? In the beginning, I envisioned sketching a narrative introduction of each participant because such a narrative would illuminate everyone’s unique experiences. However, I abandoned this wish while oscillating between drafts of this chapter. I realized that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide narrative accounts of 14 individuals. Instead, I introduce you to the travelers in Table 4.1 by listing their names (not real names), gender, home institution, academic program, location of study abroad, and self-described ethnic background. With one exception, these travelers were young adults in their early twenties. I later discuss how their age, in terms of the place they occupy in human life-span development (see p. 146), affected their experience and meaning of studying abroad.

The lack of in-depth narrative introductions does not negate my belief that it is important to capture the unique life experience of each participant. Each participant’s subjective meaning of her/his study abroad experience is the curriculum of her/his life, developed through “lived experience” (Pinar and Grumet, 1976) as well as through reflections upon that experience. For example, my own role in this study as a participant, played out through my narrative account of arriving at this topic in Chapter One (pp. 7 - 14) shows how my prior experiences have shaped the conceptualization of this study and
its interpretations. Therefore I regret that it is beyond the scope of this study to provide
detailed narrative introductions for each participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Home University</th>
<th>Academic Program</th>
<th>Study Abroad Country</th>
<th>Ethnic Background (i.e. hyphenated Canadian background)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>U of T</td>
<td>Sociology/Urban Studies</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>*Singapore (work abroad)</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>U of T</td>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U of T – University of Toronto  
Ryerson – Ryerson Polytechnic University  
U of M – University of Manitoba  
*Unusual cases (see Chapter 3 page 74 for the rationale for choosing unusual cases)  
** Researcher as co-participant

Table 4.1 Participants of the Study
4.4 Setting the Stage

During childhood, I traveled to many places with my mother. She was then a Communist, and really cared about people all over the world. I remember those days. Being in Morocco, seeing the children work, knowing that they were my age at that time -- I was eleven or younger -- and seeing in their eyes both hope and despair moved me, it made me think in different ways. It opened my eyes to the world.

These children had the faces of old people. They were very, very old. Some of them were slightly blind because a lot of times they were working in obscurity or close to total darkness. I remember one woman actually sitting there, and the women were veiled because of the Muslim religion, the influence of Islam. She was sitting with her child on the ground. She was young, a young woman. But she was begging for money. I looked at her and the only thing that I could see were her eyes, because everything else was covered in some fabric, really beautiful fabric. I kept just looking at her eyes; we couldn't communicate. So we did not exchange words. But, I connected with her. I remember just tugging on my mom: "mom, mom, mom, come on mom. Let's give her something." "Oh Terisa, come on." "Well, O.K, here is some money." I gave it to her, and she did not say anything. But, I could tell she smiled because of the way her eyes changed.

It's the people, the faces, that stay with you. I remember someone in Marrakech working with our tour group and he was in charge of unloading all the suitcases of the tourists. We were rich tourists, for them. He was thin, very, very thin. My mother took some food that we had from the hotel from dinner, kind of wrapped it up and said, "here, have a snack." And she thought that he would eat it right away. He said, "thank you." But he took it and he thanked us and he stored it away for later, probably to share with his family. The country itself is beautiful, and the people were wonderful.

So, my childhood travels with my mom were an eye-opener. Not only in developing countries, but also in Europe. All travel is a living experience. I remember that chicken in Spain was very good! I am rambling a bit, right. But, I just want to say that I had been travelling since a very young age. Although I went to Cuba to study on my own, I was also there with my mother when I was a teenager. Through travel, I was introduced to people, places -- some of these are people and places we don't want to see
because they shake our convictions and make us uncomfortable. I resent that. But, it is the way it is.

High school was a rough time because of the mentalities I encountered. I was the president of the anti-racism and anti-sexism club in high school. Our posters were fazed with “whites the best, suck the rest.” So, its just a shock when your eyes are open a bit and when you meet such mentalities. It’s hard, very, very hard. But, I also remember wanting to be like others. I used to insist that people call me with a proper English accent for my name, you know my name is Russian. Yeah, then there were struggles with my mom, because she traveled too much and she was a Communist. Not anymore. I would get mad at her. “Mom, why can’t you be like other moms on TV.” It was frustrating because I did not know why, but I knew she was different and I did not like it.

But, coming to U of T, it was great. I lived in a student residence off campus. It was a campus co-op, and it was known to a lot of international students. If I did not live in this residence I would be a completely different person today. My roommate was Chinese, and I lived with people from Spain who were living in exile. I lived with Africans, Iranians and Indians. Needless to say my marks suffered, not because I was at parties. If there were parties they were fundraising dances for the Powdered Milk Campaign for Cuba. I also learned to dance salsa, really well. Discussions, I don’t know how many debates and issues that were talked about till four in the morning. And I certainly don’t regret it. It certainly formed me as who I am today. And, before I knew it, I was on my way to study in Cuba.

(Terisa, Sept. 18, 1996)

The above vignette from Terisa’s story reveals a narrative thread that has connected her to “others” -- people and places abroad -- from childhood. In it she tells her story of arriving at the decision to study abroad by connecting childhood, high school, and university experiences into a whole. Embedded in Terisa’s story is the story of her mother. Her relationship with her mother is inseparable from her story of arriving at the decision to study abroad. In a “significant other” interview, I conversed with her mother about Terisa’s desire for study abroad. As a mother she recollected her involvement as a
guide, both intentionally and unintentionally, nurturing Terisa's "desire for travel and interest in helping people who are less fortunate."

As I continue weaving the stories of participants into a whole fabric, the reader will continue to see the threads of Terisa's story with that of others, including my own. Her study abroad journey is about her identity. It is about who she was, who she had become, and who she would like to become. As I write this thesis, Terisa is attending Medical School and hopes to work in developing countries.

Terisa's story is unique as are the remaining 13 stories. Each individual's desire to study abroad sprang from a unique personal, familial, educational, and cultural setting. Yet their stories also share common threads that form the patterns of experience I explore in the remaining parts of this chapter. From these threads I weave my own interpretation of their motivation to study abroad.

I discuss six such shared threads of experience -- "categories or dimensions of experience" (Creswell, 1998, p. 144). I organize these threads and their theoretical underpinnings into three parts. First, I explore the qualitative characteristics of the participants' motivations for study abroad. This exploration includes: (1) the underlying motivation (the desire for cross-cultural experience abroad), (2) learning the language of the host country, (3) and stepping out of constraining boundaries. Based on these themes, I propose that the underlying motivation to study abroad is essentially an intrinsic desire for cross-cultural immersion in a foreign setting.
Second, I explore *family and childhood experiences that shaped the desire to study abroad*. Here I discuss three themes: (1) subtle forms of parental nurturing, (2) direct forms of parental influence, (3) the beginning of negotiating autonomy from and relatedness to parents. Third, I discuss *theoretical “hunches”* or “inklings” that enlighten the findings discussed in this chapter. But first, I begin with three introductory comments on the findings.

The first comment is that in reporting the common threads in participants’ stories, I act as both an interpreter and storyteller. I weave patterns of experience by telling short stories: I use bits and pieces, excerpts and vignettes, from all 14 stories in this study. Through these patterns, I interpret these unique stories into a meaningful whole. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) write:

> Qualitative researchers are interpreters who draw on their own experiences, knowledge, theoretical disposition, and collected data to present their understanding of the other’s world. As interpreters, they think of themselves not as authority figures who get the “facts” on a topic, but as meaning-makers who make sense out of the interaction of their lives with those of their others (p. 153).

My second comment is that I want to make explicit that the findings of this study are not generalizable to study abroad students. My findings are qualitative, emerging from the experiences of 15 individuals, including myself. These individuals, except two, participated in immersion study abroad programs (Chapter Two, p. 31) that lasted one academic year. They were all, except two, from the University of Toronto and in undergraduate programs. My findings help us to understand some of the experiences of
those who participate in immersion study abroad programs. But I do not claim that my findings are generalizable to all students who participate in immersion programs. The experience of students who study abroad in short-term education abroad programs (i.e. programs that run for few weeks to few months), those who travel abroad for research, or those who participate in international internships, could be significantly different from the experiences of those in this study.

Finally I want to note that the meaning and impact that each traveler attributes to her/his study abroad voyage is personally contextualized: it depends on prior experiences, motivations, and personal circumstances. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that meaning is organic and evolves over time. It is chameleon-like, taking different forms in response to different personal circumstances, growing and evolving as participants paddle along the journey of life.
4.4.1 Motivations for Study Abroad

All travelers who embark upon a novel journey do so with certain aspirations, desires and interests. The travelers in this study also began their study abroad journey with various motivations for living and learning abroad. I became interested in this aspect of study abroad after reading Carlson et. al.'s (1990) findings on American undergraduate students’ motivations for wanting to study abroad. The researchers offered these insights:

Motivations that the study abroad students ranked about equally as being most influential in their decision to want to study abroad included desire for foreign cross-cultural experience, improvement of foreign language ability, desire to live in/make acquaintances from another country, interest in gaining another perspective on their home country, desire for travel, and enhancement of understanding of a particular host country (Carlson et. al., p. 1).

These findings are based on a quantitative survey questionnaire administered to 450 American study abroad students and a comparison group of 800 students who chose not to study abroad.

Having reflected on the above findings, I took my study’s participants on a very different yet complementary research path. While Carlson et. al. (1990) quantitatively identified key motivations, I wanted to qualitatively explore the character of these motivations and the experiential, familial and socio-cultural contexts that nurtured and shaped them. Furthermore, while Carlson et al. worked with a large sample, I wanted to work with a small group of students to give qualitative meaning to their motivations. My
very first observation was that the underlying motivation (i.e., the central or unifying motivation) for wanting to study abroad among participants was a desire for a cross-cultural immersion experience in another country. This desire forms the foundation for other motivations for study abroad.

A Desire for Cross-cultural Immersion Experience Abroad: The Underlying Motivation

What I refer to as the “desire for cross-cultural immersion experience abroad” is not different from Carlson et al.’s (1990 p.1) concept of the “desire for foreign cross-cultural experience.” However, I altered their description of this desire for the following reasons. First, I replaced the word “foreign” with “abroad” to recognize that, in many cases, the host culture (i.e., the predominant culture of the study abroad destination) is not entirely alien to, or situated outside the experiential realm of, the participant. For example, John went to Singapore to experience the “Chinese culture” which is his own cultural heritage. Similarly, Terisa went to Cuba to experience “Cuban and Spanish cultures” and to become fluent in Spanish. Although her ethnic background is Ukranian, neither Cuba nor Spanish culture were alien to her: she had visited Cuba as a child and also lived with people from Cuba and other Spanish speaking countries in Toronto.

Similar to Carlson et al. (1990), I believe that the term “cross-cultural” is appropriate to describe the participants’ desire to study abroad because, by definition,
what they wished for was a cross-cultural educational experience. Page & Thomas (1978, p. 93) define cross-cultural education as “a mix of cultures as when students brought up in one culture received education at an institution which has the values of another culture.” Finally, I added “immersion” to my description of the term to underscore the participants’ wish to immerse themselves in the host country, culture, and university for a significant duration of time (i.e., one academic year, 8 – 12 months).

I have used such a wordy description (i.e., the desire for cross-cultural immersion experience abroad) because the term “study abroad” or “education abroad” inadequately describes the participants’ motivations and experiences abroad. However, for the sake of brevity I will be using the term “desire for immersion abroad” from now on and urge the reader to recognize the “cross-cultural” and “immersion” experiences inherent in study abroad.

The Profoundness of the Desire for Study Abroad

A quantitative perspective, one from my own professional experience with education abroad, offers a starting point to reflect upon the profoundness of students’ desire to study abroad. While working as the Student Exchange Officer of the University of Toronto, every year I calculated what percentage of students who attended information sessions on international exchanges eventually completed the application for an exchange placement. It was 10 to 20 percent. In addition, after been selected to participate in an
exchange, another 20 to 30 percent would usually drop out. These numbers indicated to me that among those who are interested in studying abroad only a handful eventually participate in such programs. The reasons for such a high drop out rate are unclear; I am unaware of any research on this topic. However, I understood from years of working with study abroad students that the obstacle for studying abroad, apart from monetary and academic obstacles, was the lack of personal determination to take a journey abroad that is perceived as lonely and risky. Going away on an immersion study abroad is lonely because one travels alone. It is a risky journey because one has to face many unfamiliar situations.

The participants’ desire to study abroad, although not fully understood, was profound – subtle yet deep. Two qualitative characteristics characterize this desire. First, the profoundness of their desire not only gave them the courage to solo navigate an unfamiliar passage, it also provided them with the persistence to stay on course at times of difficulty and loneliness. Second, this desire compelled them to set out on a voyage that involved significant sacrifices while its gains were only vaguely understood.

As Jonil (Sept. 23, 1996) pointed out, he was aware that going abroad meant that he would “lose time, money, friends, and family.” However, similar to other participants, he too embarked on the journey believing it would, somehow, be beneficial for him. He said, “I knew that this experience would be good for me - you know you will change, but you are not sure how.” Similarly, Diana struggled with her decision to study abroad because it meant leaving behind important family responsibilities. In the end she
reluctantly set out to Germany because she felt a personal need to do so; however, she was also unsure of what she would gain from the experience.

Every single time [deciding to study abroad] the main issue for me was leaving home and finances; how would I fund it and how would I survive? And being raised in a single parent family the consideration was also about leaving my mother, we have a very co-dependent relationship and oftentimes I am the person responsible for running the household. When I told my mother she was very disturbed and upset by it and so I began considering at the back of my head maybe I shouldn’t go, this is going to be too hard on her and I had to keep reminding myself. This is where Professor Winston [a father figure] came in and he kept reminding me this is you that you have to think about for once. I was not sure how it would affect me, but I somehow knew it would be good for me.

(Diana, Sept. 27, 1996)

Desire for Study Abroad as a Conation

Early on during the data collection I recognized a peculiar aspect of the participants’ expression of their desire for study abroad. Some referred to it as an “urge to go abroad” (Linda), “a gut feeling” (Myra); others described it as “an interest that came naturally” (Terisa), “something that I felt was for me” (Milana), and “a desire I have had for a long time” (Michael).

These expressions embody an “intrinsic” or “inner” quality of their desire to study abroad. It seems to spring from the inner world, a very personal place. Further reflection lead me to perceive their desire for study abroad as exhibiting qualities of an “intrinsic motivation” (Bruner, 1986). Stated differently, they desired the study abroad experience,
in most part, as an end in itself, not an instrumental means towards a specific set of goals to achieve from the journey.

My search to understand this inner quality of their motivation led me to think of it as a "conation." (Poulsen, 1991, p. 1). The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976, p.208) defines this as a "desire to perform an action, volition, voluntary action." It signifies a compelling desire. The Dutch psychologist and philosopher Poulsen (1991) explains why certain motivations should be seen as conations:

The word [conation] is rarely used in psychology, where the phenomenon is as a rule discussed under the headings of "motivation" or "need." It was precisely in the attempt to achieve clarity in the concept of motivation that I increasingly came to feel the lack of a conation concept. For motives are not conations – on the contrary, they are the causes of or reasons for conations (or intentions), which are elements in our actions. Nor does the concept of need match that of conation: we may well have a need for something without striving for it, willing it or wishing it (p. 1).

Poulsen (1991, p. 41) elaborates on his concept of conation by defining it as "the active striving to bring about an activity". By this definition, he distinguishes between the motives behind one’s desire for a particular experience and the act of striving for that experience. I have no doubt that motives and actions are inseparable. However, the next two paragraphs will reveal why Poulsen’s distinction between the two is useful for understanding the intrinsic quality of the desire for wanting to study abroad.

Poulsen asserts that in certain conations the person who is striving for a particular experience is aware of only its value, not the motives behind the conation. Said differently, the person may not have a specific set of motives for a desired experience,
but only a wish or curiosity to experience the phenomenon itself. Poulsen cites examples from Lewin (1926) to illustrate this attribute of conative activities. He writes, "we experience a bar of chocolate as something we absolutely have to sink our teeth in, we experience a particular landscape as tempting us to go for a walk, and the two-year old child experiences the stairs as a temptation to crawl on them" (p. 41). In each of these examples, the one who is wishing for the activity has no particular motives other than to experience something that generates curiosity and seems to have a positive value. It is similar to reading a novel because a friend suggested it; you have no knowledge of what you will discover in it or what meaning you will derive from it.

The above examples reflect the nature of the participants' desire for study abroad. As they set out on their voyage, only a few had any particular objectives in mind. In general, they were aware that this journey would bring personal change. However, they were unsure how they would experience it and what benefits they would derive from it. Milana explained:

It is something I felt was for me, something I wanted to do and something I needed to do. I cannot recall a specific time when I became interested in living abroad. It was something that was there always....there was always that interest and desire. I did not know how it will change me, I just knew it was something I should do.

(Milana, Sept. 26, 1996)

Anne reflected:

Going abroad to study was an itch compelling me to go abroad. I don't know when it developed, maybe during my primary school days. But for whatever reason, I really wanted to go abroad. I had this itch.

(Anne, Oct. 7, 1996)
Other Motivations for Study Abroad

As I indicated earlier, I have been using the term "desire for immersion abroad" synonymously with the "desire for cross-cultural immersion experience abroad". Here I want to slightly differentiate between these terms. "Study abroad" is a general term that describes the participants' experiences abroad (i.e. the phenomenon that pertains to this research). By using "cross-cultural immersion experience", I want to signify the experiential learning aspect of study abroad in terms of cultural interaction and immersion in a foreign setting for a significant duration of time. The desire for a cross-cultural experience in a foreign setting is at the heart of the other motivations for study abroad among the participants of this study. Figure 4.1 illustrates the centrality of this desire in relation to three other key desires that I discuss below.

Figure 4.1 The Centrality or Underlying Quality of the Desire for Cross-cultural Immersion Experience Abroad
In five cases, participants went abroad with other motivations, some overt and others less obvious. An obvious or clearly stated motivation was learning the language of the host country. More subtle, or less clearly stated, motivations included stepping out of familial, social and cultural boundaries constraining self-directed personal growth, and the desire for opportunities to reflect on and transform oneself and one's perspective. As Figure 4.1 shows, other motivations relate closely to the inner desire for cross-cultural immersion abroad.

Learning the Language of the Host Country and Career Direction

The motivation to learn the language of the host country was tied to participants' academic program, particularly participants' concerns about continuing with their academic program or career choices. Consider the following excerpt from Anne. You will discover in it that her goal to decide if she wanted to continue with "studying Chinese" is inseparable from her desire for a cultural immersion experience in China and to learn Chinese. She attempts to understand her desire by comparing it to the motivation of some other students in her exchange program.

I was homesick and wanted to come home, but maybe this was because of the kind of people that I was with. I was with one other person out of the eleven North Americans -- all Americans -- on the exchange that were there who wanted to go to China just because they wanted to go to China. I was like that. We were not escaping anything in our lives and it was not a means to an end, but some people were there to further studies in whatever so that they can get a better job. Such people went because they wanted to obtain something, take away something.
I just went because I thought it was interesting, because it may help me with my language and it would help me to decide if I wanted to continue with studying Chinese. I know Rob and I went because we wanted to discover the world. Rob had never left America before. He kind of went with a happy go lucky attitude. Whatever he can take from it, that's great, but not wanting anything in particular. I was the same. I went for the experience. Others who went with a particular purpose were more negative about their experience. They put down their surroundings and the conditions of living.

(Anne, Nov. 18, 96)

Anne's story reveals that she needed the cultural immersion experience in China to decide if she wanted to continue studying Chinese, highlighting the inextricable connection between her academic motivations for study abroad and her desire for a cultural immersion experience in China.

Six participants stated that learning the language of the host country was a motivation for study abroad. A shared dimension of this motivation is its connection with the desire to enhance the cultural immersion experience in the host country. For example, the following statement from Stephan reveals this connection between learning Spanish and his cultural immersion experience in Mexico.

It is dangerous to reduce the purpose of learning the language [language of host country]. It was learning to appreciate the culture. Language was a door for me that I needed to open to get access to the South American, particularly Mexican, culture. My work in Nicaragua was on social justice, and at that time, I knew that language was a door for other aspects of immersion in the culture.

(Stephan, Nov. 21, 1996)

Brian's story shows a slightly different connection between his motive for learning Japanese and living in Japan. He explained to me that, at the beginning, he was motivated to simply learn a foreign language, particularly German or French. So during high school he applied for exchange programs in Germany and France, but unfortunately
did not receive acceptance into these programs. In the end, Japan was one of the placements available for him. His participation in a short-term exchange program to Japan got him interested in pursuing East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. While studying towards an undergraduate degree, he decided to live in Japan again on a long-term exchange, and his motivation to learn Japanese became connected with what he called his interest in "learning about Japanese people and that part of the world."

The big part of it was to learn another language to a high level of fluency. That was a big part of it and to learn about the culture. As I said before, when I went to Japan, I knew nothing about Japan. Like I knew nothing. So it was learning, it was all new, it was to learn about Japanese people and that part of the world. You know, I did not first want to be in Japan, I was willing to go anywhere to experience another culture.

(Brian, Oct. 8, 1996)

Diana's story in particular substantiates the interconnectedness of various motivations (including learning the language of the host country) with her social circumstances at the time of the decision to study abroad. I invite you to reflect on her story before I make comments to illustrate my point:

I always have seen it [Germany] as a place that I would like to tour. I had known German people; I had an aunt who is German. My fascination first was for travel, I never ever thought of studying there. Then, Professor Winston whom I had developed a fatherly relationship with said I should go to Germany. My feelings for Winston were not something that I had with other teachers in the past. I have always chosen at least one male professor to be that sort of father surrogate and he very much reminded me of my grandfather who passed away when I was sixteen. Right from the very beginning he said he would normally not do this with other students, he was very honest with me. He thinks that I need to get out there, I need to pursue something that I have a talent in and interest in, and I need to defy all the odds that are against me. And in the class he was showing me pictures of Germany and the way he talked about it encouraged me. It was an entire course on German culture. I was interested in both the German culture and language.

But, it was more than that too. For me, I thought it was a perfect escape, it was the perfect excuse to get behind and put behind the process I have
been through. A grandmother raised me for 18 years. In turn, I was taking care of my grandmother for 14 hours. I would call her from school and come and visit her every evening. Dealing with her on weekends my school was sacrificed for my family in a lot of aspects and at the time of my applying I was working two jobs as well to keep the finances. And the opportunity to be away from all of the stress for an entire year was exhilarating. I thought for once that everything would revolve around me and for once not have to give any consideration for anybody else. It was a total selfish act, but one that I felt I deserved.

I guess I wanted to get out of the school in a sense too. From my studies I was in my fourth year and I was taking a few courses. I decided that I would go for a fifth year whether or not I went on the exchange. But, I was so tired of school I was on the verge of burnout. I was in school since I was two. And everything that was going on in school was just learn, learn and learn and everything around me was about what would come out of it. I was going to graduate with an Arts degree in History and German. Where was I going to go with it? So the exchange opened up an opportunity that well, perhaps, I was finally going to make a career choice whether I definitely wanted to go further in education or not. Or maybe I would stay in Germany and work. I had all these considerations. Maybe there was something out there for me, this was my way of finding it.

(Diana, Sept. 27, 1996)

Searching for a Transitional Experience

Diana’s story is unique to her academic, family and social circumstances. Yet her story illustrates a commonality with other participants’ stories: the interconnectedness of various motivations for study abroad to each other and to the self. These motivations are inseparable from who the participants were, who they are, and who they want to become: motivations are adjoined to their past, present, imagined and “preferred futures” (Pike and Selby, 1995, p.16). Inherent in these motivations is a subtle yet deep search for an opportunity for self-transformation. Once again, consider Diana’s story. Her interest in
Germany sprang from childhood contact with Germans and a German aunt. A turning point came with continued encouragement from her surrogate father to study in Germany. She wanted to learn German, to appreciate German culture, and to “get away from all the stress for an entire year,” “a selfish act, but one that I deserved.” Going away was an escape from everything that was “surrounding” her: school, family responsibilities and financial obligations.

Diana, like others, set sail to Germany because she was at a crossroads. It was a detour to reflect upon her self, who she was and who she would like to become. She would return to her family, friends, university, city and country. What was surrounding her before she went away -- stress, obligations to family, school, and an uncertain future -- might remain, but in a different form and shape. She might have gained the self-confidence, self-direction and skills to actively reshape her surroundings in her own way. Her story of leaving to study abroad introduces my next theme: stepping out of socio-culturally and personally constraining boundaries.

Stepping Out of Constraining Boundaries

The three excerpts below and the previous story from Diana feature four interchangeable dimensions of wanting to study abroad as an opportunity to step out of constraining socio-cultural boundaries. Greg’s story reveals his attempt to step out of the collective cultural expectation of what he called the “middle class thing.”
In fact, very much part of going abroad constantly is fleeing the middle class obligations of normalcy and mortgage and family here that— it's an easy way to flee all that. I, um, I have absolutely no desire or have had no desire to do the middle class thing here, so, I go abroad at the drop of a hat. (Greg, Oct. 16, 1996)

Greg was “fleeing” from socially structured cultural expectations, the life-course parameters set by his culture for someone in his social class and age group. These normative boundaries were limiting his construction of a unique and personal life course, his preferred future.

Linda’s story shows her attempt to depart from a more intimate set of boundaries, namely family and friends’ expectations of her career and lifestyle:

I have always been an independent person in some respect, but I guess I was sort of following the expectations that were the norm of the people I had been in contact with. I have got two completely different sets of friends, one group into getting more and more things. I don’t have a better term for this. My parents, in a way, wanted me to be that way. The other group was not really interested in accumulating more and more; they would rather enjoy life and live it rather than always sweating to get more. I think I kind of solidified that by going away I was going to be able to do what I wanted to do. I guess in that way I really was not independent. I guess we grow up with what was there and you just kind of go with the flow. (Linda, Oct. 3, 1996)

Diana’s story I shared with you earlier was also about trying to step out of constraining boundaries set by family roles and financial obligations.

Another important dimension is the recognition that others (i.e., society, family and friends) did not always construct such boundaries for the participants. On the contrary, participants played an active role in the construction of these boundaries. These are co-constructed boundaries by others and self. Consider John’s case. His study abroad
experience was motivated in part by an attempt to move away from a co-constructed boundary.

Yeah, I did want to learn Chinese and more about my cultural heritage by going away to Singapore. Of course, my parents are Chinese and Toronto, at least parts of the city, are very Chinese. I guess I could learn Chinese and experience the culture through family and Chinatown. But, I knew I would never be able to do this. Most of my friends, many of them are Chinese, do not live like Chinese. I also had many non-Chinese friends. I knew that by living in Toronto, I could never do it. It was not others' problem, it was my problem. So I left. (John, Oct. 4, 1996).

While these boundaries constrained or inhibited personal transformation, leading to a crossroads, they also compelled the participants onto a detour that would lead to personal change. In this sense, these boundaries are "liberating" just as they are constraining.

However, this concept of mutually liberating and constraining boundaries does not adequately explain why the participants in this study chose to study abroad. They could have alternatively moved away to another Canadian province, moved out of the parental home, or for that matter, joined a sub-cultural or fringe group in their own city to escape from societal norms and expectations. Why study abroad? This question takes us to the next part: the formation of the desire for study abroad.
4.4.2 The Formation of the Desire for Study Abroad: Influence of Family and Friends

It is not surprising that family, particularly parents, emerged as the dominant theme that affected participants' desire for and decision to study abroad. Each participant uniquely constructed her/his life experiences affecting the desire for study abroad around interactions with parents. Close relationships of a parental nature were experienced by some participants; such connections were not limited to biological lineage.

In nine cases, the father, mother, or other adults in a parental relationship indirectly nurtured the participants' desire for study abroad. Furthermore, all participants sought parental endorsement and emotional support and negotiated with their parents regarding the decision to live abroad. It is important to note that with the exception of three cases, going abroad also meant moving out of the parental home for the first time.

An interesting commonality among the participants' parents is their "immigrant" experience in Canada: eight of the participants' parents were first generation immigrants in Canada. At the time of selecting these participants for this study, I was unaware of their parental background. It is possible that my attempt to select a culturally diverse group of students may have caused this commonality. At any rate, it is important to note the shared immigrant experience of this ethnically diverse group of parents. Embedded in this shared experience are parental worldviews, values, and prior cross-cultural and
international experiences that influenced their children’s desire to study abroad. Such tacit forms of parental nurturing of the desire to study abroad are what I explore next.

Subtle Forms of Parental Influence

Parents encouraged their children’s desire for study abroad in both direct and subtle -- or tacit -- ways. Jonil, Michael, Brian, Terisa and Belinda’s stories offer variations of such tacit influences on children. Jonil reflected on his parents’ (particularly his father’s) indirect influence on his desire for travel:

If anyone influenced me to make the decision to study abroad, it would not be anyone from the University. It would be my family, more so my father. My father was well traveled, so he supported my decision to go. He really wanted me to travel. You should know that the highlight of my father’s life was the travels he did. He knows I had not been anywhere. He was aware of that fact, but I am not sure how he encouraged me, it was a subtle but strong encouragement. He said just go ahead and do it, as long as you can get school credits for it. The school was always the primary thing in his mind.  

(Jonil, Sept. 27, 1996)

While Jonil’s father’s own travels influenced Jonil’s desire, Michael offers a different perspective on a tacit form of parental influence:

Growing up with parents who are Polish immigrants, growing up listening to stories of their lives in Poland and Germany may have instilled in me an interest to experience living in Europe. I always knew they thought it would be a good idea to go abroad to experience another culture.

(Michael, Oct. 15, 1996)

Brian’s case represents yet another form of parental influence: a family setting with an “international flavour.” His parents were not immigrants, neither had they
traveled extensively nor lived abroad for an extended period of time. Furthermore, Brian was raised in a “well-to-do” white family that valued education. However, Brian recalls that his family setting also had an “international flavor” that helped him to explore beyond his own cultural confines.

You can say that my family had an international flavour. We speak French at dinner, or we try to speak German. Dinner table was important because it was the most important family time. My mom likes to cook all kinds of ethnic foods. For example, I learned how to use chopsticks when I was three years old. And they had friends from other cultural backgrounds. Sometimes we would go to the homes of these people for dinner. Also, I think my parents liked me having friends from various cultures, at least they did not mind or say anything about my friends, even though I went to a private school which was predominantly white.  

(Brian, Oct. 8, 1996)

Another form of parental influence were shared cross-cultural childhood experiences with parents, particularly travel. Terisa’s story at the beginning of this chapter’s section on the research findings describes a childhood experience with her mother that profoundly influenced her worldview and eventually her desire for study abroad.

Belinda’s story also points to shared childhood experiences with parents. It is both about international travel and moving across boundaries.

I think my interest in study abroad superficially started with my love for travel, exploring places and new cultures. You know that we are from a Chinese background. But, my parents spent many years in South America before they immigrated to Canada. I was born there and remember growing up in South America. As I said, my parents came to Canada when I was nine, and they first moved from place to place in Canada – I lived in three cities. So, I love traveling and moving; I like change.

(Belinda, Sept. 17, 1996)

Greg also reflected on a childhood experience that influenced his desire for cross-cultural experience abroad.
I can tell you very clearly when I developed an interest in other countries. I visited Hungary with my mom when I was 13 or 14 and I was suddenly exposed to a different and exciting world. I think I told you that my mother is an ‘economic refugee’ [immigrant] from Hungary. When I was 16 I went travelling alone for the first time to Europe -- I haven't told anyone about this stuff. I quit high school to go to Europe, and I did not tell my mother that I was leaving. This was very hard on my mother, but I was then a kind of a rebel. I had this romantic vision of travel, exciting stuff. I had this romantic view of travel and learning about other cultures. I don't have these feelings now. Then, for God’s sake, it was this spiritual thing. I wanted to go to India and now I am very ashamed of that, but at the time, travel always was exciting. Personal growth, I guess, was what I was after. You know, back in teenage-land it was personal and spiritual growth. (Greg, Oct.16, 1996)

Direct Forms of Influence

While tacit forms of parental encouragement or modeling created generally unintended influences, what I refer to as direct forms of influence are intentional suggestions, advice, and financial or emotional support. The absence of financial support as a key form of parental support surprised me. I expected to find financial support a dominant theme in the data because throughout my professional involvement with education abroad programs I had always assumed that financing the experience was a major hurdle. It still may be, but is not a significant part of the central motivation. Instead, parents' emotional support appeared as the most important form of direct support.

Daven and Diana’s cases show direct forms of encouragement from their parents. In Daven’s case, his father encouraged him to study abroad by suggesting the idea. In
Diana’s case Professor Winston, whom Diana has taken as her father, directly and persistently encouraged her to study abroad in Germany. Daven and Diana’s stories convinced me that these two participants would not have embarked on their journey without the encouragement of parents. Daven said:

While growing up in Ottawa, I never thought much about studying abroad. I remember always having an interest in international politics. But, I was really more interested in domestic politics, particularly about the Quebec issue. During my first year at the university, my father mentioned to me the idea of going abroad on an exchange program, this kind of planted the idea in my head but I did not think about it seriously. I clearly recall the day when I decided to apply for an exchange, I remember that very clearly. I was sitting around at Christmas in 1994, in my second year of university, and my father once again asked me if I had looked into doing an exchange abroad next year. And I said no, not really, but it would be a good idea. Then we started hashing back and forth where there would be good places to go and we decided that it would be France. The decision was made. (Daven, Oct. 15, 1996).

In Diana’s case, as noted, it was a person in the role of a parental figure who influenced her to study abroad. Diana reflected:

I went to Professor Winston’s for advice on continuing with German and he told me about student exchange possibilities in Germany and thought I should apply when my German was more advanced. I remember sitting in his office and telling him I cannot go to Germany because it is impossible for me to leave the country, I simply cannot do it. He said that this is not a matter of money, this is a matter of your own personal reasons that you need to go over. He said, “you have been studying German this long and it is important for you to cement the language”. And he sat me down and said there was potential here and that perhaps this is an experience I needed to discover for myself. His encouragement was very persuasive because I have developed a relationship with him that was like father and daughter; I sort of became his surrogate daughter and not having a father I turned to him for my academic advice. He said right from the beginning that he would normally not do this with other students, but he is going to be very honest with me. He thought that I needed to get out there and needed to pursue what I had a talent and interest in. And so when he said something to me I knew it was honest, and he knew my own personal emotions and how I functioned. (Diana, Sept. 27, 1996)
Subsequent conversations revealed that Professor Winston had studied abroad in Germany and continues to visit Germany frequently on research. And during my “significant other” research conversation with Daven’s father I discovered that he too had studied abroad: he completed four-years of doctorate studies in the United States. These two mentors had a shared common experience (i.e., prior study abroad experience) and obviously a shared perspective on the value of study abroad. Daven’s father told me that he knew from his experience that “study abroad was an eye-opener.” Like the other eight immigrant parents, they too had the “immigrant” experience of adjusting to a new culture. Directly and indirectly these mentors, similar to the eight parents with immigrant experience, encouraged and guided their children to follow in their footsteps.

Negotiating Autonomy and Relatedness

Diana’s story (p. 126) was about wanting an “escape” from family responsibilities she had assumed from childhood. Diana was looking for an opportunity to reconstruct her relationship to her family. Linda’s story illustrates the connection between reconstructing the relationship with her parents. In her desire for wanting to study abroad, she was searching for autonomy from the expectations of her parents. She explained:

Going away to Zimbabwe was part of a struggle or transition that I started about a year before I went abroad. The placement in Zimbabwe was, I would say the thrust, sort of, that started the momentum to keep up my transition. I should tell you how it all started. When I was growing up, I
was expected to go to the University. And it was always assumed by my parents that I will go into business and I really never thought about doing anything else. My mother is an accountant and my father, for many years, owned a hotel business. Everything was always centered around money and accumulating more things. It was decided for me when I graduated, I was doing well in sciences and math, that I was either doing Engineering or Commerce. That was how I thought I was going to make money. So I first enrolled in a Commerce Degree program. But, after one year, I said, no I didn’t want to do that. It wasn’t for me. The money thing was not important for me, I wanted something more, I wanted to be able to help other people and be more involved with people. Then I transferred into the Early Childhood Program. But, I still had some of that drive to get more money. After all, I was living with my parents; my father still talks about me doing an MBA. They just don’t get it, you know, its not just for me that sort of thing. I mean, I am close to my parents and that makes it worse. I wanted to get away from all of this and find my own way. At first I did not have the nerve to go away like that to another country. But I got courage from the fact that my university arranged this program. I needed to be in the right environment to grow. (Linda, Oct. 3, 1996)

Stephan also wanted to establish his identity outside of his parental home. His story is slightly different in that his father encouraged him to move away so that he could be “an independent person.”

My father is fiercely independent. He also taught me to be independent. He moved here [Ontario] from Ireland when he was very young and he established a life on his own: it was all hard work and determination for him. So, when I started university he encouraged me to leave home. But I did not leave home for a while because of financial reasons. But when the opportunity to go to Nicaragua came up, they were going to pay, I knew I must go to become an independent person. (Stephan, Oct. 23, 1996).

Although in part he went abroad to become independent, like others he too maintained a close relationship with his parents. The following excerpt shows that the parental relationship manifested itself when it mattered. Stephan’s story indicates that physical distance did not dissolve his bond with his parents.

When I was leaving Nicaragua, I did not have the tools to deal with the changes, I was emotionally drained, I was losing everything I had learnt.
For example, people were saying bye to me in Spanish and I couldn’t sum up the words to say bye in return. That’s when you really need your parents and their support structure. My reference points were miles away in Canada and there comes a point you get so tired you shut down. My parents helped me with many phone calls. (Stephan, Oct. 23, 1996)

Just as the process of autonomy from parents begins with the decision to study abroad, the process of maintaining relatedness begins at the same time: these two processes are mutually inclusive. The participants began reconstructing relatedness by seeking parental endorsement for going abroad and emotional support while preparing to leave. Parental endorsement was particularly important for participants whose study abroad journey was the first time they moved away from home. In twelve cases they described how they approached their parents to endorse their idea and for emotional support. Milana’s story is an example of someone who decided to study abroad independently and approached her parents for emotional support. She said, “I was not looking so much for their approval because I knew that they would like it, but I really wanted them to support me emotionally.”

Influence of Friends: Choosing the Study Abroad Destination

Friends also significantly affected the participants’ desire for study abroad. Unlike parents, they did not play a formative role in the development of the desire, but friends influenced the choice of the study abroad destination. A shared characteristic of the friends who influenced participants was their international experience; they lived abroad or were immigrants to Canada.
Family and friends mostly influenced the choice of the study abroad destination (i.e. host culture and country). In some cases, contact with the host culture began very early in life, usually through the ethnic and cultural background of one's parents. For example, John went to Singapore to learn about his Chinese heritage. Daven's decision to study abroad in France was in part influenced by his mothers' French Canadian heritage. By going to Africa, Linda connected with her father's African heritage.

In other cases friends played an important role in influencing the choice of the study abroad location. For example, Jonil studied in Jamaica, a very different culture from his own ethnic setting as an East Indian. Brian, Greg and Terisa lived abroad in settings that are different from their own ethnic background. In these cases, friends seem to have played a role in their choice of the study abroad destination. As described earlier, Terisa's interest in Cuba began with her experience living with Cubans and Latin Americans in Toronto. Brian talked about how a friend who had studied abroad in Japan helped him to accept Japan as his study abroad destination when he really wanted to go to France or Germany.

I was too late in applying to France or Germany. I wanted to go to these countries. But Japan was one of the countries that I could go. I had a friend who had been in Japan and she had a good time. And so I just decided to go to Japan. I really knew nothing about Japan but this friend, whom I really trusted, told me that I would have a great time in Japan.

(Brian, Oct. 8, 1996)

Jonil decided Jamaica as his study abroad destination because of his friendship with, in his words, "virgin Jamaicans." He enjoyed the company of his Jamaican friends,
understood and appreciated their subtle cultural differences, and he expected to see certain things in Jamaica.

I had some familiarity with the island. I had friends from the island who were constantly homesick and told me all about it. So, before I left, I had assumed that I had some understanding of people who are virgin Jamaican immigrants who had arrived here less than five years ago. I enjoyed and appreciated their way of life, subtle differences; I thought if I can enjoy their company and the way they are, then I can enjoy their country. My Jamaican friends told me what to expect, so I knew what to expect. They said you will see some awesome poverty, some wicked looking girls, ganja growing on the roadside, and serious culture shock and the incredibly relaxed pace of life there. But, when I got there I knew I was not prepared for it.

(Jonil, Sept. 23, 1996)

These stories show that in some cases the choice of destination was influenced by one’s own heritage (e.g., Linda going abroad to Africa to discover her African heritage). In other cases, friends played a key role in guiding participants toward study abroad locations.

4.4.3 Theoretical Hunches

At the beginning of Part One, I shared with you Terisa’s story of how she developed her desire for study abroad through her childhood travels and educational experiences. The eight patterns explored in Part One and Two were similar to her story. They encompass the motivations for study abroad and how prior experiences, parents and friends influenced and shaped these motivations. These prior experiences and the influence of parents and friends occurred in specific familial and socio-cultural contexts;
they fermented in the interactions between the person and their socio-cultural environment, between self and the world.

In this part, I further explore the dimensions of these complicated relationships in shaping participants' desires for study abroad. I approach this exploration through “theoretical hunches” that illuminate the findings discussed earlier. I call these “hunches” to signify that they are not definitive theories that explain participants’ desire to study abroad. On the contrary, these are inklings and perspectives that I bring to bear on the findings. No doubt, there are many more perspectives others can, and should, bring to these findings. My own perspective will also continue to evolve as I reflect upon my participants’ stories, and relate to these individuals as friends, well beyond the completion of this report.

I begin by conceptualizing the decision to study abroad as a transition process in the participants’ life-span. I propose that this is a “global transition” of self (one that transforms the participants’ cultural, social and emotional self), a transition that begins a process of reconstructing both autonomy from and relatedness to parents, family, and friends. I also argue that this transition took participants out of social structures that constrained their life course development and personal transformation. Finally, I use the concept of an ecological niche from cultural psychology to explore the dominant role of parents on each participant’s desire and decision to study abroad.
The Beginning of a Global Transition

Think of the transition of a rose bud blooming into a beautiful flower. The bud silently grows at the tip of a tiny branch of a tree. At the beginning, almost indistinguishable from the tree, it is completely embedded in the tip of the branch. As it grows it takes a shape of its own, evolving slowly into an identifiable bud, seemingly separating from the plant yet remaining connected to it. Indeed, it remains connected to the plant throughout its life course, receiving nourishment, support and protection under the cover of its leaves. When the time comes, when the bud is ready, and when the environment is suitable, it eventually blooms, transforming its relationship to the mother plant and the rest of the world. Others recognize it as a distinct entity, it marks its surrounding by its scent, yet remains connected to its roots, the rose tree. The transition gives the bud a form of autonomy, re-defines its relation to the world, allows it to mark its surrounding with its character, all the while remaining connected to the mother plant.

The themes I explore in Part One and Two reveal that the beginning of the study abroad journey is a “transition” for the participants -- one that resembles a bud blooming into a rose. It is a transitional experience that marks the personal time into “before” and “after.” The conation for a cross-cultural immersion abroad is the catalyst that starts this transition. As Milana said, it was “an urge to go abroad” that took her to Australia.

By defining this transition as a significant developmental life-course event, I am assuming that, in general, all of us construct our own personal, psychological and social
development through meaningful actions at various personal crossroads that entail “branching off” or “bifurcation” (Lawrence & Valsiner, 1997, p. 72). Peterson and Dubas (1996) say that this form of “branching off” is an important marker for the transition to adulthood. From this perspective, the participants’ transition that begins with study abroad is a bifurcation in pursuit of a self-imagined and self-directed personal change. It is similar to other social transitions such as moving out of one’s parents’ home, marriage and parenthood.

However, this transition is also qualitatively different from other social transitions. It takes the participants not only out of their parental home, but also out of their country, out of familiar ecological and socio-cultural settings, and away from the home educational institution. Individuals eventually return to the familiar settings that they left behind to find them strange, experiencing the re-entry process as one of paradox and confusion.

Let me call the transition beginning with education abroad as a “global transition” to represent its many dimensions. The word “global” embodies two meanings: “world-wide” and “pertaining to or embracing the whole” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, p. 453). It is a global transition because, on their journey, the participants crossed national, cultural, socio-economic and ecological/bio-regional boundaries. They also crossed boundaries of mind and perspective, transforming their emotional, social and cultural selves in the process.
Co-Construction of Life-Course Development and Change

The co-constructivist perspective on life-course development in cultural psychology is helpful in exploring why the participants of this study embarked on their journey. Starting from the work of Vygotsky (1987) on cultural-historical psychology, Cole (1990, 1992) and Shweder and Sullivan (1993) have been searching for ways in which "person and culture" unify in personal development and change. Cole (1992) uses the metaphor of "mutual interweaving" (p. 26) to describe the process in which culture and an individual relate. Interweaving reflects the dynamics in which "culture becomes the individual and the individual creates the culture" (Cole, 1992, p. 49) in a mutually forming spiral.

Cole (1995) illustrates how our mind and culture enter into the process of change at different periods in our lives. Here "culture" is taken in its broadest sense: "everything social is also cultural, because it is created by human beings and cannot be reduced to a fixed configuration of imposed biological elements" (Camilleri & Malewska-Pyre, 1997). Cole says that the process of change and transition occurs in certain periods because of a co-construction of meaning between a person and the cultural world. The cultural world here includes parents, friends, intimate relationships and societal norms which are collectively called the collective-cultural life space (Camilleri & Malewska-Pyre, 1997, p. 90). Hence, a co-constructivist perspective sees personal development and change as a culturally contextualized phenomenon.
From this perspective, personal change normally occurs with cultural "canalization", a metaphor that Lawrence and Valsiner (1997) use to characterize the bounded indeterminacy of personal change. In other words, the co-constructing agents (the person and the cultural world) set up mutual constraints that limit change. The individual's personal change usually occurs along canals of social, economic or religious boundaries that are often difficult yet possible to cross (see Fig. 4.2).

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Personal route of change within a canalizing boundary

Figure 4.2 A Canalizing Social Structure (adapted from Super & Harkness, 1997)

Hence, personal transformation is understood to be usually stable, constructed by a person within the boundaries set up by the collective-culture, the family setting, parental belief systems and peers (Valsiner, 1989). Boundaries are set by institutions (e.g. schools and universities) as well as informal groups (e.g. circle of friends). Furthermore, the co-constructivist perspective sees people moving along the canalizing structure as active creators of their life course, always contemplating ways to move beyond constraining boundaries. "Constraining" is not meant as a repression of freedom, rather, it simultaneously limits and enables a person to move forward. Fig. 4.3 illustrates how I
make sense of the participants’ decision to study abroad within the metaphor of canalyzing social structures.

In Fig. 4.3, a square bounds the collective-cultural life space in the home country and the host country. I imagine the participants’ home country, city and home institution as parts of the collective-cultural life space setting historical, ideological, social, cultural and ecological parameters around particular social structures (e.g., family, school). The decision to study abroad amounts to a decision to branch-off to a new collective-cultural life space in the host country. This branching-off is bi-directional, it also involves the participants’ re-entry to the home country and university.

The examples below illustrate the branching-off depicted in Fig. 4.3. Greg’s decision to travel abroad was “escaping” (in his words) from roles and responsibilities
imposed on him by the collective culture. Linda, on the other hand, moved away from family and friends' expectations of what she should become ("a well-to-do business person"). Diana moved away from her roles as a care-giver for her grandmother and the responsibility of family income-earner for the sake of her self-development. Jonil moved away from what he called the "rat-race" setting of his life.

In some cases, canalizing occurred within the academic program. For example, Stephan went to Mexico because he could not achieve fluency in Spanish while living in Toronto and attending the University of Toronto. Similarly, one of the reasons Anne decided to study in China is because this was the only way she could make a life-long commitment to Chinese studies; she needed to become fluent in Chinese and experience life in China before she could make this commitment. In these examples, the canalizing structures guided participants to an unpredictable but nevertheless imaginable future. As Belinda commented:

'It is difficult to anticipate the impact of study abroad because everyone experiences it differently and attaches a unique meaning to the experience. I tend not to do that [anticipate learning] because you never know what it's going to be like. But, you always imagine that something good will come out of it.

(Belinda, Jan. 20, 1997)

If I may add an autobiographical comment here, I too left the Maldives for the new collective-cultural space of Canada because the ecological, educational, familial, and cultural structures on a small island became constraining. I could not have predicted what would happen to me in Canada, yet at a subconscious level, the future beckoned in my imagination.
Negotiating Autonomy and Relatedness to Parents

Parents’ expectations, and family rules and regulations, become canalizing constraints as a child moves along the passage from young-adulthood to adulthood. During this transition, the child reconstructs her/his relationship with their parents by establishing autonomy and relatedness. The theme of autonomy and relatedness — or said differently, separation-individuation or individuality and connectedness — is a dynamic that surfaces in recent research on the parent-child relationship (Ryan and Lynch, 1989).

Autonomy (an “independence of thought and behavior”) and relatedness (“an involvement with and connectedness to others”, Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996, p. 16) are complementary. This is clear in the case of the participants in this study. In general, they maintained a good relationship with their parents during and after their education abroad experience; of course, there were times of re-adjustment and difficulty. Indeed, researchers have documented that young-adults who appear most autonomous and self-reliant report close, affectionate parental relationships (Allen, Hauser, Bell & O’Connor, 1994; Ryan and Lynch, 1989).

The participants’ decision to leave their parents, siblings, and intimate friends to live abroad can also be seen as a co-constructivist activity: the person who goes abroad and the people who remain at home jointly begin reconstructing their relationship to each
other. For example, when Greg went to Europe as a teenager his mother too began reflecting on her relationship with Greg.

The reconstruction of the child-parent relationship begins simultaneously with the “global transition” alluded to earlier. I would go so far as to say that the process of reconstructing the child-parent relationship and the global transition of self are so intertwined that they disappear into the nexus (or bond) of an interactive context. Let me say this differently: the study abroad participants’ self is connected to her/his parental belief system, values, practices (“ethnotheories”, Super & Harkness, 1997, p. 14) and a shared experience with parents. Hence, the self that transforms by going abroad is inseparable from the child-parent interaction that nurtured that self. Thus the next significant question is why parents play such a profound role in the participants’ desire for study abroad.

**Why Parents’ Play a Central Role in Children’s Desire for Study Abroad**

An enduring theme in cultural psychology and social anthropology regarding child development, across cultures, is that environment is a communicative medium (Super and Harkness, 1997). This metaphorical concept signifies the active interaction between the child and the contextual world. Perhaps there is no other contextual world that has a more profound effect on a child than that of the parental and familial environment. Hence, I begin by assuming that the parental cultures of the participants in
this study had a profound influence on these individuals' "cultural character" (Mead, 1972; p. 54). Super and Harkness (1997) propose an "ecological niche" (p. 26) to explicate the complexity of a child's environment and the role of parents in this environment. Fig. 4.4 illustrates the centrality of the child in this niche and the three key sub-systems that nurture and influence the child.

![Diagram of the Developmental Niche](image)

**Figure 4.4 Representation of the Developmental Niche** (adapted from Super and Harkness, 1997, p. 26)

The "ecological setting" represents the physical and natural setting in which a child lives. The physical setting may include one's family dwelling, it's location (e.g.
country or city), and the general physical surrounding. The natural setting includes the biological and geographical features of the landscape of one's surrounding. The concept of ecological niche assumes that the physical and natural surrounding influences customs, values and practices of people who live and grow in any particular ecological setting. Parents, significant others, physical setting, natural setting and cultural values all influence a child's development in her/his ecological niche. The family home, neighborhood, and school are parts of the ecological niche. The beliefs, values and practices of the collective culture form the broader collective-cultural space that both facilitates and limits a child's development. The parental setting involves parental belief systems -- ethnotheories (Goodnow and Collins, 1990), cultural practices (Miller & Goodnow, 1995) and activities shared with children (Miller & Goodnow, 1995). My focus here is to further explore the parental setting to understand the profound influence of parents on the participants' desire for study abroad.

As discussed earlier, the parents offered both tacit and direct encouragement for their children to study abroad. Subtle encouragement can be construed as tacit messages, tacit ways of communicating with children. Super and Harkness (1997) point out that cultural messages include ordinary behavioural routines and the everyday organization of living that is customary for parents and parent-child activities. Goodnow (1990) emphasizes the importance of tacit messages conveyed through the cultural environment:

When clocks abound in public space, for instance, and most adults wear watches, the message is clear that keeping track of time is important.... Regardless of the name given, I would like to see us pay particular attention to these less verbal ways of conveying messages. I would also like to raise the possibility that messages conveyed in this tacit, uncommented-upon form may have a particular impact. For instance, they
appear to have a particular objective validity and be least likely to be reflected upon and recognized as being matters of custom and value rather than nature (p. 281 – 282).

Themes I explored as subtle forms of parental encouragement in Part Two include daily routines, practices and shared activities that influenced the participants in this study. Furthermore, eight of the 14 families were immigrant families who have experienced the transition to a new culture and country. In essence, all the parents in this study value and share common experiences of travelling, cross-cultural encounters, and a personal understanding of the benefits of education abroad. Although these parents come from diverse cultural, racial and socio-economic backgrounds, they share a commonality in ethnotheories on cross-cultural experience abroad.

Researchers have documented such commonalities among people from various cultural backgrounds who share common experiences. Edwards, Gandini, and Geovainni (1996) explore parents’ and teachers’ expectations of preschool children in various cultural backgrounds in several countries. They conclude that teachers, irrespective of cultural background, reflect a professional culture shared internationally with other practitioners with parallel education, training and experience with children. Similarly, participants’ parents seem to value international experience for their children.
4.5 Conclusion: Moving On to the Journey

I began this chapter with four purposes. First, I introduced “journey” as a meta-theme that organizes how I present this study’s finding. Second, I introduced the study’s participants. Third, I explored their motivations to study abroad, as well as the experiences and people who nurtured and influenced these motivations. Finally, I looked at the findings discussed thus far through theoretical lenses to “give meaning” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) to them. I found that the underlying motivation to study abroad was a profound desire for cross-cultural immersion abroad, one that united other motivations such as learning the language of the host country and moving away from constraining socio-cultural boundaries. These theoretical lenses also helped me to uncover why parents played such a pivotal role in nurturing their children’s motivation to study abroad.

My purpose to understand motivations for study abroad is adjoined to my assumption that the study abroad journey’s beginning, in part, shapes its eventual impact and meaning. I leave this chapter with a sense of satisfaction that I have been fortunate to understand some key motivations and their qualitative dimensions. However, I also part with the recognition that it is, undoubtedly, impossible to fully comprehend and explain all the reasons why students decide to study abroad: students’ motivations are complex and holistic, and deeply rooted in where they have been, who they are, and what they hope to become. The important question for me now is “so what” -- where do I go from
here? In the next chapter I explore participants' experiences on their journey, and connect this experience to the journey's beginning.
CHAPTER V

Before, During and After

The journey inward becomes an ongoing process that leads outward to a more complete understanding of the human condition. Self-understanding is not merely a reflection on what we are but what we are in relation to the world.

Florence Krall

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the motivations and societal influences that set the stage for the participants' journeys. I emphasized their underlying motivation for wanting to study abroad as a conation (a strong urge that drives one to take action) for cross-cultural immersion. This motivation was nurtured by parental socialization, and reinforced by a desire to step out of constraining boundaries. In this chapter, I explore the course of their journey. I first name the participants as sojourners, and then trace their tripartite experience of preparing to leave, taking the journey, and returning home.

“A sojourn is a temporary stay in a new place with or among people”, according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976. Expatriate employees, explorers, military personnel, missionaries, researchers, spouses and children who travel with their families, study abroad students, and volunteers are just a few examples of sojourners. It is
important to reflect on the characteristics that distinguish the sojourners in this study. They were primarily undergraduate study abroad students. At the time of their sojourn, none were married, none had children, and, with one exception, all were in the process of choosing career paths.

They were "young adults" (Sherrod, Hagerty, and Featherman, 1993) in transition to adulthood. Sociologists define adulthood in terms of adult roles, such as finishing full-time education, setting up a household, getting married and starting a family (Maughan and Champion, 1990; Pickles and Rutter, 1991). Chohler and Musick (1996) write that the transition to adult roles is associated with restructuring relationships commensurate with the taking on of new responsibilities. Thus, these sojourners were not only students, but also young adults. As noted earlier, they were in their early twenties and pursuing undergraduate degrees. The period they spent abroad was critical for reflecting upon life directions, relationships, education and careers. The hallmarks of their self-directed journey would be increased self-awareness and a transformation of perspective (Mezirow, 1991) on academic and career directions as well as their relationships with others. Where they were in their life-cycle development (Pickles and Rutter, 1991) is inseparable from the meaning and impact of their journey.

Having named the participants as sojourners, I now turn to the course of their study abroad journey. I examine three phases of their experience: preparing to leave (before), taking the journey (during) and returning home (after). I include these three phases in a single chapter because they were inseparable for the participants in providing
the meaning of their journey. Meaning and impact are the focus of my research. As Anne expressed in one of our research conversations:

It [study abroad experience] was a learning experience for me, but what I learned makes sense during the re-entry process. I learned from the experience by reflecting on the power and privilege that I had as a white person, and a Canadian, in China. By reflecting on the opportunities it gave me, and the limits it set on me. I also had to think deeply about why I went to China in the first place, and what all of this means to me now for my future. (Anne, March 25, 1997).

For clarity and ease of presentation, I divide this chapter into four parts. In **Part One**, I present the *Pattern of Study Abroad Experience Curve* as an overview of the journey's course marking key phases of its passage. In **Table 5.1** below, I summarize how the remaining three parts relate to my guiding research questions.

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<td><strong>Part Three:</strong> Taking the journey</td>
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<td><strong>Part Four:</strong> Coming home</td>
<td><em>How do students experience the re-entry process academically, personally and socially?</em></td>
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**Table 5.1 Chapter Five's Relation to Guiding Research Questions**
5.2 PART ONE

The Pattern of Study Abroad Experience (PSAE) Curve

In Chapter Three, I described the use of illustrations to capture critical phases of the participants’ study abroad journeys. In these illustrations, each participant reflectively traced the meaningful experiences of her/his journey and assigned an emotional rating of “felt sense” to each meaningful experience (see Appendix C). Mezirow (1991) defines “felt sense” as the Heidegerian concept of Befindlichkeit -- “how we feel, how things are going, and how we see our situation” (p.14). These emotional ratings of felt sense, from 1 to 10, are not meant as a descriptive measure. To the contrary, these ratings are holistic indicators tracing the rhythm of emotions associated with various meaningful experiences along a sojourner’s journey. “The meaning of this felt sense is implicit”, states Mezirow, “it never equals specific cognitive units” (p. 14).

Asking the participants to indicate their felt sense at two week intervals, I developed the Pattern of Study Abroad Curve (PSAE-curve; see Fig. 5.1) by averaging the rankings of the participants. The vertical axis represents felt sense and the horizontal axis shows the passage of time along the journey’s route. I understand this curve to be an emotional rope that chronologically ties together the themes that I explore in this chapter.
Figure 5.1 Pattern of Study Abroad Experience Curve (PSAE-curve): Emotional Peaks, Plateaus and Valleys (Topography) of Study Abroad Experience
Tracing the journey along the PSAE-curve also provides an opportunity for participants to bring forth their personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) of various phases of the experience. As John commented:

Well, it has been a long time so it's really racking the brain to get all these events on this chart. But I think it's interesting to look back to see the ups and downs of my experience now. It's more like a distant memory now; it felt inconsequential at times. But when I was going through the experience, these events were very important. Completing this chart was a way of making sense of everything that happened. This is a useful exercise to give students who return from abroad. (John, Feb. 18, 1997).

While this curve is useful to chronologically present the pattern of study abroad experience, it also carries a number of limitations. The most significant in my view is its inability to present individual differences regarding each participant's individualized experience of their journey, this is true of any averaged measurement. Another limitation is that the division of the curve into three parts may suggest discrete phases with clearly defined boundaries. These phases are enfolded in each other and have no clear boundaries. The chronological arrangement of key experiences (i.e. the ups and downs) cannot account for the diversity of participants' experiences; indeed, not all participants passed through these phases in the same way. For example, Stephan did not experience culture shock in Mexico although he felt lonely after being there for two months. He attributed this lack of culture shock to his prior living experiences abroad.

All participants experienced the first phase of their journey in a similar way, leading to a common pattern during their experience of preparing to leave. Those with and without prior study abroad experienced the second phase of the journey (i.e. during) slightly differently. As seen with Stephan, the intensity of culture shock was relatively
lower for the three participants (Brian, Greg, and Terisa) who had previously experienced culture shock. They experienced a form of "homesickness" that Brian explained as a "longing for home." This suggests that one can learn to deal with culture shock.

Given these limitations, why did I use the PSAE-curve? As mentioned earlier, this curve portrays the three chronological phases as integral parts of a whole (i.e., the experience of studying abroad). My quest throughout this study has been to understand the phenomenological meaning and impact of this entire journey. Seeing the three phases together guides my search to uncover ways in which the phases are interwoven in the participants' understanding of the meaning of their journeys. I imagine the curve as a song, carried by both melody and rhythm; I hear it sung harmoniously by 14 individuals, their differences notwithstanding. The swaying of the felt sense, tracing emotional plateaus and valleys, is the rhythm of this song. The three phases are three verses; the lyrics of these verses are the themes that I explore in this chapter.

The PSAE-Curve's Relationship to Literature on the Cross-cultural Adjustment of Sojourners

I want to briefly discuss how the PSAE-curve fits with other research on the cross-cultural adjustment of sojourners. I arrange this discussion in accordance with the three phases of the curve. To my knowledge, the first phase (i.e. preparing to leave) has no particular relationship to any prior research. I was unable to find any research that specifically addresses the study abroad sojourner's pre-departure preparation. The only
reference that I discovered comes from Klineberg (1971) and is in the form of a proposition. He writes that pre-departure experience will likely influence what happens to a sojourner while abroad, which in turn will have an impact on the individual after returning home.

The second phase (i.e., taking the journey) relates closely to the generally accepted phenomenon of culture shock and the U-curve that is associated with this phenomenon. The idea of the U-curve is attributed to Lysgaard (1955) who concluded from a study of over 200 Norwegian Fulbright scholars in the United States that people go through three phases of cross-cultural adjustment: initial adjustment, crisis, and regained adjustment. The idea is simple: if one traces the sojourners' level of adjustment, adaptation and well-being over time, a U-shape occurs portraying how satisfaction and well-being gradually decline and increase again. Many researchers who study sojourners' adjustment abroad reach this same conclusion (Citron, 1996; Church, 1982; Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Torbiorn, 1982).

Notwithstanding the PSAE-curve's resemblance to the U-curve, there are subtle differences between the two. First, the concept of 'felt sense' in the PSAE-curve and the concept of 'adjustment' in the U-curve offer two different ways of looking at sojourners' adaptation to the host country. To elaborate this distinction, consider the following conceptualization of the U-curve by Gulhahorn and Gullahorn (1963):

Initially the sojourners report feelings of elation and optimism associated with positive expectations regarding interaction with their host. As they actually become involved in role relationships and encounter frustrations in trying to achieve certain goals when the proper means are unclear or
unacceptable, they become confused and depressed and express negative attitudes regarding the host culture. If they are able to resolve the difficulties encountered during this crucial phase of the acculturation process they then achieve a modus vivendi enabling them to work effectively and to interact positively with their hosts (my emphasis, p. 34).

As stated above, the concept of adjustment places emphasis on sojourners’ expectations and attitudes towards the host culture. In contrast, the concept of felt sense focuses on the participants’ self-understanding -- how one feels about oneself during various experiences of the journey. While the U-curve portrays one’s feeling towards others, the PSAE-curve portrays one’s feeling about oneself in the context of the study abroad experience. Furthermore, while an abstract U-curve generalizes the pattern of a sojourner’s adjustment, the “hindsight” of the PSAE-curve delineates the adaptation experience of the 14 participants in this study.

Likewise, the third phase (i.e., coming home) relates to the idea of the W-curve first proposed by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963). They found that once sojourners return to their home country, they often undergo a similar re-adjustment process, again in the shape of a U, hence the double U, or W. Similarly, Citron (1996) posits that “after adjusting to the host culture and reaching the top of the U-curve, a traveler then returns home and experiences a symmetric decrease and increase in adjustment to the home culture” (p.4). However, my discussion of the third phase in Part Four examines how the participants’ re-entry adaptation is qualitatively different from the adaptation to the host country.
A week before I left for Jamaica, I was too busy plotting and planning. I was busy making sure that I had a comb packed! Then I realized that I was going away to a place where I did not have a place to live. I might as well be going to the moon, except there are people on this moon.

I was getting butterflies in my stomach when I was preparing to study abroad. I was saying to myself, ‘Should I go?’ ‘Should I cancel?’ ‘Did I make the wrong decision?’ Then I said to myself, ‘I am human and I have weaknesses and strengths and that I was going to miss something and gain other things. I realized that time will pass and that I was going to survive it. So, I got excited although I was anxious and nervous in my belly.

The bureaucracy of U of T really made me feel badly about going. It was extremely annoying. I felt I was putting my neck on the line to go to some unknown country where you have no family or friends or anything. You know, we need all the support we can get from the university. When NASA sends astronauts to the moon, they are right behind them. But when U of T sends students abroad, nobody is beside them. Especially the bureaucracy over the transfer credits is insane. First they were talking about a Letter of Permission, then about a Transfer Credit Application and so on.

I anticipated what I would find in Jamaica. I imagined seeing poverty, having culture shock, and seeing ganja growing on the roadside. I also imagined that the UWI [The University of West Indies] was going to be a smaller version of U of T.

(Jonil, Nov. 12, 1996)
As learners, my participants were caught in their own histories, present circumstances and future aspirations as they prepared to leave. Preparing to study abroad is analogous to nascent sojourners cautiously and slowly “driving into the future with what has gone before as their principal frame of reference” (Pike and Selby, 1995, p. 16). These students were emotionally and academically launching forth from within “horizons set by ways of seeing and understanding” that they had “acquired through prior leaning” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 1). They imagined or pre-perceived the future because “change is possible” when there is “some understanding of an alternative” (Diamond, 1991, p. 49). Preparing to leave entailed imagining the unknown; it meant getting ready to confront the unfamiliar.

The participants’ pre-departure preparations evoked my own memory of preparing to come to Canada to study twelve years ago. For me, going to Canada meant leaving the Maldives; going to face the unfamiliar meant leaving the familiar. As I prepared to leave my home and my friends, I became anxious and apprehensive about my opportunity to study abroad. My anxiety would be calmed only by reading about Canada, going over the paperwork yet another time, and by dreaming of a new life abroad.

I imagined life in Canada through the frames of reference available to me: I began to know the unfamiliar through the familiar. I imagined the University of Manitoba as a single-building complex; I dreamed of graduating with an economics degree; I envisioned catching snowballs falling from the sky; I knew I would play rock music in
front of screaming fans; and I was determined to return home after four years in Canada. How could I have imagined anything else? Every school I had attended was a single-building complex, I saw snowballs falling from the sky in movies, and I was at the time a drummer in a Western music band. Twelve years have since past. I am still in Canada. I am still studying. And I am just as determined to go home. I now know that snow falls in flakes, not balls. I fulfilled my dream of earning an economics degree, although my academic interest changed towards education. And, while I did not play Western rock music in Canada, I have played the Maldivian “big drum” in front of large audiences. While I did not find Canada as I dreamed it would be, my pre-departure imagination shaped my experience in Canada. In other words, pre-departure imagination was the beginning of “learning as a process of experiencing the unfamiliar” (Barer-Stein, 1987).

My own experience of preparing to study abroad inspired me to explore the pre-departure experience of my participants. My own narrative agrees with Klineberg’s (1971) proposition that pre-departure experiences do shape what happens abroad. Therefore, I focus on the meaningful experiences of preparing to leave by exploring the following shared themes enumerated on Fig. 5.1.

1. **Becoming apprehensive: the transition of “felt sense” from ‘excitement’ to ‘apprehensiveness’**

2. **Practical preparation: financial, health, safety, and travel arrangements**

3. **Academic preparation: approval of courses to be taken in the host university**

4. **Pre-departure imagination: pre-perceiving the study abroad experience**
5.3.1 Transition from Excitement to Apprehensiveness

I provided an excerpt from Jonil’s account in which, after receiving confirmation about his study abroad placement in Jamaica, he asked himself, “Did I make the wrong decision?” With this question, he moved from feeling excited to feeling apprehensive about studying abroad. Jonil’s experience is not unique. Others also began to “second-guess” (Brian) their decision as they moved toward pre-departure preparations.

According to Sloan (1986) the act of “second-guessing” is a normal event in adult decision making. He studied the narratives of adults making significant life decisions to discover that the decision-making process continues beyond the conscious experience of having made a decision. He notes that “the first phase only announces that ‘I will go for this!’ or ‘No more of this!’ The transition phase serves to find answers to the question, ‘Now what?’” (p.108). In a similar vein, this study’s participants’ transition from excitement to apprehensiveness involved a shift from announcing the decision to study abroad to finding answers to the question “now what?” Their search for answers encompassed the entire pre-departure experience. For example, Stephan said “a feeling of doubting the decision remained with me throughout the pre-departure phase. And I felt worst the night before my flight to Mexico”.

The specifics of “now what?” revolved around: (1) “anticipating disruption of important relationships” (Brian); (2) “doubting the purpose of study abroad” (Michael), (3) “dealing with possible problems with the transfer of credit” (Jonil); and (4) “anxiety of facing the unknown” (Myra). Brian recalled having doubts about going to Japan that
arose from the anticipation of disrupting relationships. "Immediately after I was accepted into the exchange, I became worried about missing friends, and I developed a kind of pre-homesickness" Brian explained. Meanwhile, Michael continuously questioned the purpose of going to Germany while preparing to leave. He said, "even after I was accepted I still had doubts about going on an exchange. I had questions like ‘What will I gain from it?’ and ‘Am I ready for it?’" Similarly, Anne became “unsure and confused” about her reasons for wanting to study in China.

The experience of moving from excitement to apprehensiveness differed between participants who had a prior experience of living abroad and those without such experience. Those with prior experience were less affected by the anticipation of disrupting relationships. Instead, they seem to have actively negotiated the future of their relationships during pre-departure preparation. Anne, for example, provides an example of such a negotiation.

I knew that I was going abroad to have an experience for myself. It was a selfish reason that I was going over there for. I talked to my boyfriend, whom I had been with for three years, that we should change our relationship. I did not want to think badly that somebody was waiting for me at home. And, I did not want to think now what is he doing without me. I wanted to think he is getting on with his life and if he meets somebody else, then that’s too bad, but hopefully we will still stay as friends. Again, I made it so that we had no expectations of each other, which is something I learned from my experience in going to Australia.

(Anne, Nov. 18, 1996)

In addition, those with prior experience did not second-guess their purpose for studying abroad. As Stephan mentioned, "I did not question my decision to study abroad because I knew any experience abroad is a valuable one." Nonetheless, students with
prior experience abroad were equally affected by the challenge and uncertainty associated with the academic preparation discussed later in this section.

In closing, let me return to Sloan’s (1986) finding that the act of second-guessing is a normal event in adult decision making. He notes that how a person feels “at the threshold of a new life sphere is not unlike an infatuation. It typically fades as it is battered by actuality” (p. 122). Perhaps the participants’ transition of felt sense from excitement to apprehensiveness is comparable to the transition from infatuation to actuality. Initial excitement inevitably fades as one prepares to face the unfamiliar. This transition of felt sense holds the beginning of a learning process, a process involving a reflection on one’s relationship to others, and to one’s home country, as well as a reflection upon the purpose for studying abroad. It is also a process of finding the self-confidence to move forward into an unfamiliar journey.

5.3.2 Practical Preparation

Most participants received confirmation of their study abroad placements in February or March and departed in July or August. They spent the in-between four months on pre-departure preparations, i.e. *practical* and *academic* preparations. My focus here is on the practical preparations; I turn to academic preparations under the next sub-heading.
Practical preparations included obtaining passports, visas and other documents; arranging international travel; packing luggage; obtaining foreign currency; transferring money abroad; and preparing for health related issues by obtaining inoculations and adequate health insurance. These preparations make up the "nuts-and-bolts" of the logistical, health and safety considerations of studying abroad.

After completing the study abroad journey (i.e., during the re-entry experience), the time and effort that went into these practical preparations were simply construed as "busy work" (Milana). In other words, assembling the nuts-and-bolts of the logistical, health and safety considerations did not play an important part in the meaning the participants attributed to their journey. This in itself is paradoxical because everyone placed a high priority on such preparations. As Daven noted, "when you are preparing to leave, the most important things are practical stuff like packing your bag and getting your ticket. You don't want to think about culture shock and all those psychological aspects because you just want to get ready and leave." Similarly, John recalled that his preoccupation with practical matters "blurred" personal aspects of preparation:

I continued to be anxious. A big part of it was because I had no place to stay in Singapore. I had little control over many of the practical things. It was a lot of practical things like how I am going to get by abroad. Now when I look back, this stuff, I think, blurred the personal experience of spending time with friends and family as I was preparing to leave.  
(John, Feb. 18, 1997)

While practical preparations ultimately had very little influence on the meaning and impact of study abroad, I include this aspect to highlight the priority given to such preparations by the participants. This paradox suggests that what appeared consequential
during pre-departure preparation may become inconsequential upon later reflection on the meaning of a journey. The reverse is also true.

5.3.3 Academic Preparation

All but one of the participants were on academically endorsed study abroad programs. This meant that the home university (University of Toronto) expected them to obtain prior approval for the courses they proposed to take in the host universities abroad. Prior approval of courses was tied to the transfer of course credits from the host university to the University of Toronto upon their return home. Academic preparation therefore involved choosing courses in the host university that would fit with degree and program requirements at U of T and obtaining prior approval for these courses from respective academic departments and faculties.

It may appear that such academic preparations would be a trivial experience. This was not the case. Academic preparations were challenging for most participants, adding to the feeling of apprehensiveness discussed earlier. Moreover, institutional procedures regarding course approval and the transfer of credits, combined with the participants' interaction with professors regarding course approval, played a crucial role in how students ultimately construed the academic meaning and impact of their journey.
Institutional Context

Institutional policies and procedures concerning prior approval of courses and the transfer of credits set the context for academic preparations. Let me briefly outline these policies and procedures. Since U of T operates within a decentralized academic system, various academic divisions set their own academic policies and procedures. Therefore, these policies and procedures vary slightly among academic divisions. Nevertheless, in all cases it was the participants' responsibility to obtain prior course approval. It was also their responsibility to obtain transfer credit for the courses completed abroad by submitting appropriate documents upon their return. Generally, they took the following steps to obtain prior course approval: (1) choose courses to take in the host university, (2) obtain course descriptions for these courses, and (3) submit these descriptions to professors to assess the transferability of each course toward her/his degree program.

Professors on the whole used four principles to determine the transferability of courses from abroad to U of T degree programs. First, the courses completed abroad should meet the student's degree and program requirements (i.e., requirements for the major and minor fields of study). Second, these courses were judged according to the same standards for courses offered at U of T (i.e., similar expectations with regards to course content, contact hours, assignments, papers and exams). This principle is referred to as the principle of equivalency. Unfortunately, this principle fails to recognize the academic traditions of host institutions and undermines the diversity of comparative academic systems. Third, no grades but only academic credits were transferred for
courses taken abroad. Fourth, the prior approval of a course did not mean confirmation of transfer credits for that course, it only meant that provided the student completed the course in good standing the credit would likely be transferred to U of T upon submission of a transcript from abroad.

The principle of equivalency meant that the participants had to pursue courses abroad that were similar in content and teaching method to courses offered at U of T. This was the “safe approach” (Milana). Thus, their inability to take courses that were “radically different” (Jonil) to courses offered at U of T, or the inability to choose “courses about the host country” (John) meant that for many the academic experience abroad was not particularly different from their experience at U of T. “Courses I took there and the courses I take here are not much different” recalled Belinda. In addition, knowing that grades from abroad would not be transferred to U of T meant that there was no “incentive to get good grades” (Anne and Michael). Furthermore, the complexity and length of the procedures involved in obtaining prior course approval left students feeling a sense of “frustration” (Myra) and “uncertainty” (Daven) about the academic value of studying abroad.

While the institutional context outlined above provided unintended and subtle forms of academic discouragement for studying abroad, some professors and staff with prior international experience provided crucial motivational support. I now turn to these dimensions of discouragement and support within the institutional context.
Unintended Discouragement

Procedural Discouragement

Participants confronted two forms of unintended discouragement: procedural and attitudinal. *Procedural* discouragement manifested itself in the complexity of assessing the transferability of courses pursued abroad and was discussed above. Difficulties arose from the separation of responsibilities regarding prior course approvals among different academic departments, faculties and colleges. This separation of procedural responsibilities is (my opinion based on experience) an unavoidable outcome of a complex and decentralized academic environment such as the one at U of T.

Let me illustrate a manifestation of procedural discouragement. Most participants were undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. While pursuing their academic program in the Faculty, they were registered in one of the colleges at the University. These colleges provided general academic counseling on matters such as degree and program requirements. Thus, to determine if degree requirements would not be adversely affected by studying abroad, participants first had to obtain approval from their College Registrar. They then met professors in their respective academic departments to assess the transferability of courses they proposed to pursue in the host university. Having received assessments of transferability, they consulted the Faculty
Registrar’s Office to ensure that courses taken abroad met Faculty’s standards in terms of contact hours.

From the Faculty’s perspective, these steps were important to ensure that a student’s academic program at U of T was not jeopardized by studying abroad (Study Elsewhere Handbook, 1997). From the participants’ viewpoint, the complexity of prior course approval amounted to academic discouragement. When Jonil said “the bureaucracy of U of T really made me feel badly about going”, he was referring to the procedural complexity of obtaining course approval from relevant departments, faculty and his college.

Attitudinal Discouragement

Attitudinal discouragement occurred within the interaction between the participants and University employees (professors and student services staff). For example, when some professors either overtly or tacitly expressed lack of interest in studying abroad, participants became discouraged about the academic value of their plans. It also had an emotional effect on their motivation for wanting to study abroad. When participants met with their professors to discuss the transferability of courses, they were also subconsciously seeking their professors’ endorsement. Instead, as Myra recalled, some participants received a “nice and diplomatic let down” of their “idea to study abroad.” As Michael pointed out, “my professors eventually gave me approval for
courses but I was disappointed that no one enthusiastically recognized what I was going to do as valuable."

Ten out of the fourteen participants experienced attitudinal discouragement. The following examples illustrate the overt and tacit manifestations of such discouragement.

Terisa recalled:

First of all, I felt resistance for my idea to study in Cuba from the University. I mean I would have given up a long time ago if I were not committed to the idea. I think it would have been easier, with a lot less resistance, if I had wanted to study in the United Kingdom or the United States. Most professors were not interested in what I wanted to do, I don't think they knew what I would gain from studying abroad. But one professor, Professor Anderson [not the real name] was very supportive. She had a brother who had studied abroad in Japan for a year, and she also had some experience studying abroad in high school, I recall. She talked about what a wonderful experience it had been for her brother. But, I had many professors who told me straight out, 'No, why would you study abroad?' I think it is a terrible idea! 'It does not make sense to leave U of T to pursue excellence elsewhere.' Of course, it is dampening for your spirit when professors, whom you have learned to value their judgement highly, tell you these things. You have to be darn strong to go abroad.

(Terisa, Nov. 28, 1996)

Similarly, Brian recalled:

I was supported to get courses approved before leaving to Japan. When I went to see professors, they weren't really interested; they did not know what they were talking about. To be fair to them, I don't think we could expect them to understand the value of studying abroad, especially if they had not studied abroad themselves. So, my experience of trying to get support from professors was kind of muddled. So, I ended up choosing the courses I wanted to take and submitted them to the Registrar's Office without approval from professors. Of course, I took a big risk, but I figured that even if I did not get credit for some courses, the experience would be worth it.

(Brian, Nov. 20, 1996)
Similar to the experience of Brian, procedural and attitudinal discouragement moved others to feel that studying abroad was about taking academic risks. Such discouragement may also have contributed to the paradox of being unable to give significant academic meaning to the study abroad journey. Comparing Diana’s experience with that of the other participants illustrates the powerful role of meaningful academic interaction with professors during the pre-departure stage. Among the 14 participants, Diana was the only participant whose professor enthusiastically encouraged and directed the academic aspects of her study abroad experience. Therefore, Diana flew to Germany convinced of the academic value of the courses she would pursue there. In turn, she returned home feeling that her study abroad journey “cemented” her “academic career interest in History and German language.” Others, having received mixed messages from professors, began their journey feeling that academic courses were not the focus of their sojourn. In many ways, the beginning marks the end: these participants returned without realizing significant academic meanings from their journey.

The following excerpt from John is an illustration of how, from the outset, academic courses became disconnected from his journey’s meaning.

I always knew that I could go away and not learn anything academically important and still have an important experience. So, when I left to Singapore, academics were not important. As long as I got by [i.e., receive transfer credit] when I come back, as long as I haven’t lost a lot of ground [i.e., does not need to take too many additional courses to graduate] I would be happy. How could I think of academic gains by going abroad to study in Singapore? I was told that U of T has one of the best programs around in Engineering. So, if I were thinking of academics, I wouldn’t want to go anywhere. (John, Nov. 12, 1996)
What are the reasons for the mixed messages that students received from their professors? It is possible that the mixed messages a participant received related to the perceived lack of fit between her/his study abroad program and have institution’s degree requirement. Does the amount of encouragement professors give to a student correlate to the apparent closeness of the study abroad program to the student’s degree program of study? For example, Diana’s study abroad program had a high level of closeness to her degree program. This may be the reason that she received encouragement from her professors. However, many other participants’ study abroad program also closely related to their degree programs. For example, John, who was enrolled in Civil Engineering, went to Singapore to pursue engineering courses. Brian was pursuing a degree in East Asian Studies and went to Japan to study Japanese and courses related to East Asia. Myra, specializing in Sociology and Anthropology pursued related courses in Jamaica. The degree of encouragement that participants received from professors seem to relate more to how well a professor knew a student, including their academic and career interests. As discussed below, encouragement from a professor correlates with her/his personal experience with study abroad.

Sojourners Among Professors

I do not want to create the impression that the participants received no encouragement from professors. This would be inaccurate. It would also be unfair for those who enthusiastically endorsed and encouraged the participants to study abroad. As
the participants narrated their stories they eagerly pointed to professors who encouraged them to "follow their dreams" (Belinda) of studying abroad. Their collective story portrayed a commonality among such professors -- these professors had also been sojourners. Many of them had studied or worked abroad, or had emigrated to Canada. Terisa, in her quote above, referred to such a professor: "Professor Anderson was supportive...she also had some experience studying abroad when she was in high school." Similarly, Brian recalled:

There were two professors, those whom I got my reference letters, who were very supportive. I think this was because I was white and he was white and I was going to Japan and he had already done some studies in Japan when he was a student. The other professor also had gone away to study somewhere abroad when he was in university.

(Brian, Nov. 20, 1996)

Furthermore, Daven reflected on why some professors were more supportive than others:

I think the people who understand the benefits of going abroad will bend over backwards and will do anything to help you. Others are not necessarily suspicious of what you want to do, but they want to make sure you meet the departmental standards and tight program requirements. I think that was the difference. Those were the two extremes.

(Daven, Dec. 2, 1996)

Apart from professors, some counseling staff also provided overt and tacit forms of encouragement; they too had been sojourners. Jonil, for example, referred to the tacit encouragement he received from a counselor. He said:

No one told me that it was a great idea to study abroad, not even the professors or the staff in the Registrar's Office. But there was this person in the Student Aid Office who was very supportive. I remember having a really good feeling about going abroad after I talked to him. He was not even Jamaican or West Indian. When I returned I went to see him again to simply thank him. Then, I discovered he immigrated to Canada in his twenties, and he stills travel a lot around the world every summer.

(Jonil, Nov. 12, 1996)
Reaction of Fellow Students

In research conversations, participants referred to their fellow students as friends. Encouragement and discouragement from fellow students (i.e., “friends”) was discussed in our conversations. Myra, for example, recalled:

When I was thinking about going to Jamaica, I got a lot of support from two friends. One of them was raised in Toronto but had lived in Jamaica with her parents when she was a teenager. The other was from Jamaica. They really confirmed that I would have a great time in Jamaica. So they really pushed me into going. (Myra, Oct. 11, 1996)

Terisa also reflected:

My South American friends had a big influence on me going to Cuba. You know during my first year I lived in a co-op with many students from all over the world. Some were from South America. When I told them I was thinking of going to Cuba they were very excited. They thought it was a cool idea. Some warned me about the shortage of supplies in Cuba, but everyone was really supportive of me going to Cuba. (Terisa, Nov. 28, 1996)

Belinda commented:

I was active in the Global Development Network when I decided to go to India. You know about this Network, right? We do a lot of activities on campus about developing countries. Many of my campus friends were in this network. They really thought it would be an excellent learning experience for me to go to India. But I also got discouraged from the reaction of other friends on campus. You tell them that you are going to study abroad and they would say to you “that’s so cool”. “But can you afford that?” “Would you still graduate on time?” You get the feeling that they think you are really rich and that you don’t care about studying hard. But that is not the case at all. I am not rich. But I really wanted to have this experience. (Belinda, Dec. 5, 1996)

In general, it seems that fellow students who had either lived or studied abroad encouraged my participants to embark on their journeys abroad. Among such students
were foreign students as well. In Belinda's case, the support came from students who were interested in international development issues. Belinda was going away to a developing country. Fellow students who were supportive shared certain common experiences (i.e. prior experience of living or studying abroad) and interests (i.e. significant interest in other countries).

In subtle ways, fellow students also discouraged my participants. Michael recalled his experience: "after a while you begin to wonder if you are doing the right thing because classmates and friends were not interested in your plan to study abroad. I started thinking that I was stupid to go abroad to study." As in the examples from Belinda and Michael's experience, fellow students related to study abroad through their own lenses. Those who had no prior experience of studying or living abroad reacted in a manner that discouraged participants' motivation. They talked about the risks of studying abroad such as slowing down an academic program. Unenthusiastic reactions of fellow students led my participants to second-guess their studying abroad and wonder if it was a "wise thing to do" (Brian).
5.3.4 A Bittersweet Time

The research question that guided my analysis here was "how do students prepare for their study abroad experience?" Alternatively, I could have asked, "how do they experience their pre-departure preparation?" The answer to this question would be that pre-departure experience was awash with mixed emotions -- "a bittersweet time" (Myra). Pre-departure simultaneously embodied excitement, apprehension, anticipation, encouragement, discouragement, anxiety, loneliness and friendship. It is a time when "you are determined, anxious and excited" recalled Milana. Meanwhile, Myra focused on nuts-and-bolts practical preparations and called it "simply busy time". For others, the mix of often contrasting emotions made them reflect upon pre-departure with neutral emotions. Stephan experienced it as a "floating time" and Jonil called it the "waiting period."

5.3.5 Imagining

As mentioned earlier, during pre-departure preparation participants swayed from excitement to apprehensiveness and from certainty to uncertainty in an attempt to grapple with what lie outside of their familiar experience. *Imagination* of the unfamiliar was the lens through which they could capture a glimpse of the journey ahead. They imagined the natural and cultural landscapes of their host country, as well as themselves living in these
landscapes. Through these imaginings they kept their motivation and dream alive during times of ambivalence regarding their journey ahead. Diana remembered:

Before I went abroad I wanted to have a realistic sense of what my program of study would be like in Germany. I constantly perceived what it would be like. I had these visions in my head, all the time. I had visions of other exchange students and I living in a quiet little castle and we would have formed a wonderful little family. I had visions of wandering walks and hiking in the early morning and looking at the mountains. And you know, I had these dreams of running into really rural German people and forming these friendships with them. From the German students I had talked to I developed the idea that the university that I was going to was located near the Swiss border. So I had these dreams of waking up in the morning and kind of walking to the university and looking at the Alps through my classroom windows. I had these visions of stereotypical German culture and that's what I wanted to hear and see.

(Diana, Nov. 26, 1996)

And Greg recalled:

I had a romantic view of travel and living about different cultures and people, it was like a religious thing. Now I see that world through a different set of filters, now I am more critical. At the time when I went abroad, people abroad to me seemed less American. They weren't homogenized as Americans. They had more culture. I guess I was projecting everything I despised in my society, that sort of utopian thing, onto other cultures. When I went there it was like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

(Greg, March 28, 1997)

Like Diana and Greg, others also imagined how they would experience their journey. Their imagination created pre-interpretations of their study abroad experience filtered through available “meaning perspectives” (Mezirow, 1991 -- “structures of assumptions within which one’s past experience assimilates and transforms new experience”, p. 42). Alternatively, their imagining can be seen as a projection of the journey based on “personal constructs” (Kelly, 1955), “templates that human beings create and attempt to fit over their realities.” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 52) As Greg noted, he was “projecting everything he despised in this society onto other cultures.”
These pre-interpretations or projections of the journey ahead not only constructed a private view of the world but also set limits beyond which participants could not perceive. As projections based on personal constructs, they enabled and constrained, and facilitated and restricted (Diamond, 1991) the range of what could be seen and done; that is, pre-departure imagination both facilitated and constrained the experience of the journey abroad. I come back to this point in Chapter Six when I discuss the experiences that shaped the meaning and impact of the study abroad journey. For now, let me briefly state that the participants’ imagination of the unknown did influence how they would experience it.

My participants’ imaginations were interwoven with the initial motivations for wanting to study abroad. Let me revisit Diana and Greg’s story. One of Diana’s key motivations for studying abroad was to “free” her from constraining family, financial and work responsibilities (“a very hectic life”). In turn her imagination of living in a castle and taking wandering walks and hikes in a valley reflect a free and peaceful self—a very different life from the hectic pace and responsibilities she struggled with in Toronto. Her imagined life in Germany was the antithesis of her life in Canada. Greg, on the other hand, wanted to “escape” from cultural expectations placed on him by his society in Canada. The “sort of utopian things” he wanted to find in other cultures would free him from cultural expectations placed upon him.
5.3.6 Concluding Thoughts

“Second-guessing” (Stephan) accompanied the mixed emotions of pre-departure. The dominant question for many participants was ‘am I doing the right thing?’ To find answers to this question, they reached out for others’ encouragement of their desire to study abroad. Some received encouragement from a few professors, but the institutional climate also provided many tacit forms of discouragement. Students also received support from parents and friends. Just as parents nurtured the desire for wanting to study abroad, their support was important during pre-departure. As Daven’s father told me during the significant-other conversation, “as parents we [mother and father] were planning the trip with him. We were planning to visit him during Christmas; we jointly decided where we would be travelling in Europe.” Friends too remained supportive, particularly those who had prior experience abroad.

Among pre-departure experiences, imagination of the journey ahead embodied a formative place in a learning process of meeting the unfamiliar. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, the participants’ journey abroad was a global (i.e., holistic) learning process. If the desire for cross-cultural immersion abroad was the seed that gave birth to this learning process, pre-departure imagination was the formative shoot from this seed. Writing on transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) notes “imagination is indispensable to understanding the unknown” (p. 83). As adults, we “imagine alternative ways of seeing and interpreting the future as we embark on new learning experience” (p. 83). Similarly, Barer-Stein (1987) observes that intuitive imagination plays a key role in adult learning,
particularly when intentions involve a conative and affective dimension. Perhaps the conative nature of the participants’ desire to study abroad was what gave imagination a formative place in their learning process. What they imagined, in turn, shaped how they experienced their journey. In the next section on ‘Taking the Journey’ I explore how they experienced the journey abroad.
In my case the efforts for three years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes; they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin; it was an affectation only.

T.E Lawrence (of Arabia)
in *The Seven Pilars of Wisdom*

When you get to a new country, everything is new and exciting. You are so busy getting things organized, you don’t have time to be homesick. But, before you know, there comes that point when everything is on the verge of becoming normal. You get into a routine; you wake up at a certain time, walk to the university on the same road, you talk to the same friends, and you eat in the same place. That’s when your brain has time to think about things that you have not been able to think before. It’s like a delayed reaction of homesickness. This is when you start missing home, home food, and company of family and friends. You realize that this new country and its people are very different from what you are used to. Sometimes you also question why they do certain things in certain ways. You begin to see the differences between you and them and you also see similarities that are common to human nature. You start to think about why you went abroad. After a while these feelings go away and you settle in again for the second time. This time you feel more comfortable. And before you know it, you have to return home. Then you feel really depressed knowing that you may never be able to return to this country again.

(Brian, Jan. 13, 1997)
In the above excerpt, Brian reflectively traces his experience of adjusting to living and studying in Japan. His experience seems to follow the stages of the U-curve pattern of cross-cultural adjustment; most scholars agree that the sequence consists of “the honeymoon, culture shock, recovery and enjoyment in ascending order towards cross-cultural adjustment” (Taylor, 1994, p. 156).

The focus of the U-curve has usually been on “culture shock” (Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kohls, 1986; Oberg, 1960). Culture shock as a construct was first proposed by Oberg (1960) and it refers to the “confusion and disorientation that many sojourners experience when they enter a new culture” (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 234). According to Church (1982, p. 540), culture shock is generally understood as “a normal process of adjustment to cultural stress involving symptoms of anxiety, helplessness, irritability, and longing for a more predictable and gratifying environment.” In Brian’s case, the period that he described as the “delayed reaction of homesickness” accompanying “a malaise feeling” is probably related to culture shock.

While acknowledging that a sojourner’s cross-cultural adaptation includes stress, anxiety and helplessness, I approached this study with an alternative perspective on the phenomenon of culture shock. Based on my lived experience, I understood cross-cultural adaptation as a learning experience. I saw culture shock as necessary “growing pains” that eventually lead to emotional and intellectual growth and a wider global perspective. My understanding is also clearly influenced by Adler’s (1975) suggestion that sojourners’ cross-cultural adjustment is a learning process that needs to be understood by considering
“internal” changes (inner changes in attitude, identity, perception, self-concept and values). Similarly, Weaver (1994, p.1) observes that in a new culture, “sojourners become more aware of what makes them different and [they] consciously examine culturally embedded values, beliefs, and thought patterns”. He asserts that sojourners “gain greater awareness of their home culture and greater awareness of the individual ‘self’ and of what is important to them.”

My attempt to understand cross-cultural adjustment as a learning process compelled me to devote one of the six guiding questions of my study to this theme. I asked: 'What type of experiences are most meaningful for students during study abroad?' This question guided my exploration of participants’ experiences in the host country that were central to their reflective meaning and impact of studying abroad. I explore four themes pertaining to meaningful experiences:

1. Arriving and settling in
2. Culture shock as a transformative learning process
3. Ways of adapting to the host culture
4. Feeling at home abroad

As these themes follow the participants’ experience in the host country from the beginning to the end, it may appear that I am chronologically tracing their cultural adjustment pattern. However, my focus is not on cultural adjustment per se; it is on significant experiences that relate to the meaning and impact of their journey. However, I
discuss cultural adjustment because it is part of the development of the meaning of studying abroad. These experiences are analogous to learning activities (i.e. processes) where the reflective meaning and impact discussed in Chapter Six can be seen as curricular outcomes of the lived-experience of studying abroad.

5.4.1 Arriving and Settling In

I remember very clearly that I took my bags, took them myself, and came out of the airport and stood in the hot sun. It was hot and humid, and the buildings, people, and even cars looked so different. It then suddenly hit you that you are sixteen hundred miles away from home. Then you realize you are nowhere near to where you used to be. You have no friends in this place. You also realize that you don't really know how to do things in this place. You have to find a place to live, quickly register for courses, find a way to cook your own food, and make some friends. So, that is what you do first, it is a busy time.

(Jonil, Jan. 20, 1997)

According to the literature on cross-cultural adjustment (Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kohls, 1986; Oberg, 1960; Weaver, 1994), sojourners initially experience a period of excitement and exhilaration (for one to two months) when they enter another culture (i.e. the honeymoon period). "They are fascinated with the newness of everything and are meeting people who want them to feel welcome" asserts Weaver (1994, p. 1). Similarly, most participants in this study felt the excitement and exhilaration of arriving in their host countries; the felt sense peaked just as they arrived in respective host countries (Figure 5.1, p.150). However, I found that this initial
excitement was short lived (a few days in some cases and a few weeks in others) compared to what the research literature suggests. Excitement also accompanied the challenge and stress of settling in the host country. After completing their journey, most participants considered overcoming the challenges of settling to be more meaningful than the exhilaration of arriving in the host country. Hence, my focus is not on the ‘honeymoon period’, but on overcoming the challenges of settling in.

Unlike business people, foreign diplomats or tourists, the sojourners in this study faced the challenges of settling in the host country with minimum resources and little help from others. Only a few received support from their host universities in finding accommodation and in getting oriented to the new environment. My earlier comparison of these participants to solo navigators captures this experience. Like solo navigators, they began their experience by observing the new physical and natural environment, “getting a feel of the surroundings” (Stephan), “developing a daily routine” (Brian), and “finding your way around” (John).

Connecting with the Physical and Natural Landscape

I expected that the very first meaningful experience of ‘settling in’ would be overcoming the challenge of finding suitable accommodation. However, contrary to my expectation, the first meaningful experience for most participants was a physical and mental adjustment to the new natural landscape of the host country. The initial reaction to
this was an emotional confirmation of one’s arrival in the host country that also signaled detachment from the familiar surrounding of home. The above excerpt (p.181) is Jonil’s reaction to the landscape of Jamaica as he first encountered it at the airport. Similarly, Diana explained: “for the first few days in Germany, I did not mentally leave Canada, I don’t know why. Then, all of a sudden, I looked outside and saw the mountains and realized that I was living in a valley. It mentally and emotionally confirmed that I was in Germany and that I had left Canada.”

A pattern worth noting is that participants with prior international living experience placed less emphasis on their initial reaction to the new landscape of the host country. However, most participants (with or without prior experience) went through a slow process of adapting to and forming an emotional attachment to the landscape of the host country. As Dodge (1990) affirms, when we live long enough in a particular bioregion -- an ecologically defined natural landscape including the socio-cultural environment arising out of this landscape -- we begin to form an emotional attachment to our place of life. The degree of this emotional attachment is manifested in the participants’ longing for the bioregion of their host country after returning home (I discuss this dynamic in Part Four of this chapter). Thus, the initial reaction to the new physical and natural landscape can be seen as the beginning of an emotional attachment to the bioregion of the host country.

Another dimension of this reaction to the new bioregion is that it occurred simultaneously with the participants’ initial reaction to the social and cultural landscape.
of the host country. The following multi-layered story from Linda illustrates how landscape, people and place are intertwined in her initial reaction to Zimbabwe. The analytic notes I have inserted in brackets comment on how the emotional attachment to the bioregion is layered with other experiences.

If you want me to give details, I can try to recall my first few days. I arrived on a Thursday, so I clearly remember the first weekend. We spent the weekend in Matare — it was absolutely beautiful. Matare is a small village surrounded by hills — absolutely beautiful. It was the kind of place I dreamt of just the opposite of the busy and hectic life that I wanted to escape from [experience of the landscape and its ethos is connected to her motivation for wanting to study abroad]. Coming back from Matare to the city, I saw the most beautiful sunsets I had ever seen. A beautiful orange mixed into a pink. We watched the sun go down as we were driving through the hills. I felt immediately a connection to this land [beginning of an emotional attachment to the landscape]. The next day was stressful. We went to the pharmacy in Harare, because I was feeling sick. I had to get used to the food. We waited for a cab, we waited and waited and no one would stop. So, it was really frustrating [encountering cultural differences]. But, we laughed, compared Zimbabwe to Toronto, and accepted that we were in a new place [humour and openness to cultural differences are useful strategies for adapting to the host culture]. When we went to the pharmacy, the person in the store was really nice. We enjoyed our conversation with this man, this made us really happy [connecting with people is a meaningful experiences in the host country].

(Linda, Jan. 10, 1997)

Overcoming Challenges of Settling In

Just as they began adapting to the new landscape, sojourners had to confront the challenges of “settling in” (Michael). These students recalled the “stress of getting things organized” (Anne), “finding accommodation” (Greg), “finding your way around the city” (Belinda), and “registering for courses in the host university” (Stephan). Those with and
without prior international living experience equally felt the stress of settling in. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis dissertation to describe how individuals overcame the challenges of settling in. What is important to highlight is that overcoming these challenges was a significant accomplishment, providing opportunities for greater development of self-confidence and self-autonomy. I will limit my comments on the development of self-confidence and autonomy, as I will return to a full discussion of this topic in Chapter Six.

Overcoming the challenges of “settling in” involved plunging ahead by relying on prior learning and thoughtful action without critically reflecting on taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. Sojourners unpacked, found accommodation, registered for classes, and found their way around by relying on learned behavior from their home country. As Michael described, during the initial phase “you just get done what you have to do without thinking too much about it.” Apart from instances where they compared how things were done at home and abroad, the experience of settling in cannot be characterized as a period of critical reflection.

Becoming Lonely

Just as life was on the verge of becoming normal again (settling into a routine), the participants began to feel lonely and eventually homesick (the onset of what has been called culture shock). Everyone recalled feeling lonely just as they “conquered” (Jonil) the challenges of settling in. “The stress of moving into a new house and registering for
courses was made worse because I was at the same time getting used to an unfamiliar surrounding with no crew to hang out” recalled Daven (my emphasis). Similarly, Michael “felt really lonely because there was no company to hang out with.” Meanwhile, Myra experienced the “fear of not fitting in and doubts about making good friends.”

As depicted in Figure 5.1 (p.150), the stress of settling in and the accompanying loneliness meant that the participants’ felt sense of studying abroad lowered. The excitement of arriving in a new country gave way to the stressful challenge of settling in the host country. Just when they had developed daily routines, the loneliness became more pronounced. A “longing for home” accompanied loneliness, taking the participants into the phenomenon commonly called “culture shock.”

5.4.2 Culture Shock: A Transformative Learning Experience

Paradoxically, loneliness in the host country also meant anonymity. As Greg eloquently stated in the following dialogue, anonymity gave a “space of freedom” to explicate and transform one’s “meaning perspectives” (Mezirow, 1990).

Greg: When you are abroad, because you are anonymous, you face the pressure of settling and getting used to things. It’s a double-edged thing. You are not accepted, yet, you are given a space of freedom. “Oh, he can do that, he is an outsider.” So you’re given incredible freedom if you behave. Now you recreate yourself, yet, you recreate yourself within your old cultural confines and the new cultural confines. But, again, the new cultural confines give you space where you are the “other”, and because of your “otherness” whatever you do is, kind of, accepted. You won’t be judged. Does that make sense?
Shougee: Yes, Yes. Does it relate to the fact that as an outsider you can always leave the context of your host country?

Greg: Oh, yes. You try a new identity and you are not stuck with it. Absolutely! It is like playing different roles. Converse.

Shougee: How? What do you mean by different roles?

Greg: There is a contradiction here, right? The alienation is also freedom to try new roles and is exhilarating and you can try new things and you have this freedom. Yet at the same time you are free-floating and you are rootless. Back home, expectations are oppressive, yet expectations still give you roots and a sense of belonging. So that free-floating, trying on a new mask and new roles, while it is exhilarating and freeing also produces anxiety and lack of ‘belongingness’ . So it is a double-edged sword. You get freedom and yet you are very lonely.

(Greg, Feb. 4, 1997)

Greg’s experience with anonymity captured my own narrative meaning of being anonymous in Canada. Before coming to Canada, I lived in an island community where I was known and familiar; I made no effort to be anything different, special, or change myself. I was what I was, everyone knew me, and they had expectations from me. When I moved to Canada, no one knew me, or even cared about who I was. The things that made me unique -- my education, my speech, my clothes were meaningless to them. I had to, and I was able to -- with stress, anxiety and loneliness -- write myself once again. Re-writing was the way to make others understand me, and how I understood others. But writing oneself all over again in an unfamiliar culture is difficult, challenging, and ultimately rewarding. Just as I had arrived in Canada with no identity but “Maldivian”, my participants arrived in their respective host countries with no identity but “Canadians” of various ethnic backgrounds. Their experience of culture shock was the beginning of rewriting themselves in their host country.
There is no doubt that a “space of freedom” (Greg) and anonymity to “recreate oneself” embodies “anxiety” (Michael), “depression and homesickness” (Brian) “longing for home” (Greg) and “frustration” (Myra). However, such feelings—which have been traditionally associated with the phenomenon of culture shock—emanate from one edge of a “double-edged” (Greg) phenomenon. The other edge is a very personal process of transforming oneself and one’s worldview. Unfortunately this second edge has not been adequately explored in the research literature on cross-cultural adaptation. In effect, like the two poles of the globe, these two edges of culture shock are inseparable from each other. It is a symbiotic relationship. This complex process, reduced to negative feelings associated with culture shock, is inherently embedded in and crucial to the personal transformation that occurs from facing the unfamiliar. Fullan (1991) notes that real personal change involves “loss, anxiety and struggle”. Myra, in the following excerpt, illustrates how anxiety and frustration can translate into a process of learning about self and others.

It was hard how I experienced the low point. I thought it was also funny because I was raised in a culturally sensitive family. Before I went to Jamaica, I thought I was really international and that I will have no problem adapting to another culture. I have many friends in Canada from various ethnic backgrounds. My friend Haydee [another exchange student from Canada] and I talked a lot about this in Jamaica. One of the things that I learned was, there were so many things that frustrated me in Jamaica. I knew it wasn’t Jamaica’s fault that I got frustrated, it was my fault. I was coming into a new environment so I was the one that needed to deal with anything that frustrated me because it doesn’t frustrate anybody else there. But, of course there were so many things that really frustrated me. The way people deal with business transactions. I was not accustomed to having to do all kinds of small talk with people before you get the bank teller to help you. So many times, I thought “God, I hate this place”. I guess I shouldn’t even admit I said that because it’s not politically correct. Anyway, what I want to say is that I learned from these frustrations.

(Myra, Jan. 28, 1997)
Explicating “Meaning Perspectives” or Familiar “Frames of Reference”

Why should there be anything frustrating for Myra about small talk with a bank teller? Isn’t talking a means of befriending the teller? Myra was frustrated with small talk because she had to interpret the bank teller’s expectations by relying on her existing “view of the world” (Greg) or “frame of reference.” In Canada, Myra expected to undertake a bank transaction efficiently without chatting with the bank teller. In Jamaica, Myra faced the inevitable reality that sojourners have no other framework to interpret the views, actions, and language of people in the host country other than their own frame of reference acquired through socialization in their home country. In his book on *Loss and Change*, Marris observes (1975, p. 22) that “new experiences are always initially reacted to through familiar, reliable constructions of reality” to which people must be able to attach personal meaning. He sees this as a human “impulse” (p. 22) compatible with personal growth. Furthermore, Khols (1986) notes that “deep down we assume that, under normal circumstances” everyone “perceives the world in basically the same way.”

Greg explained his experience of coming to understand and accept cultural differences:

I would say to you that as a white male I quickly learned that I was different. You understand these differences when you travel abroad. What I have learned is that there is more than one way to view the world. I can no longer ascribe to the liberal or conservative view of human nature that we are all fundamentally the same...A common thing is, after you go abroad, after a while, you find out that ‘these people are rude.’ They’re not polite, or even appear to be polite. I see it this way because I have a certain view of the world.

(Greg, Feb. 4, 1997)
I too remember my “culture shock” when I tried to interpret behaviour through my frame of reference. I was literally shocked to see people drinking alcohol in public places in Canada. I was socialized in a Muslim culture that forbade the use of alcohol and punished those who drank in public. My emotional reaction was disgust and a fear of witnessing something “haram” (forbidden by God). I thought of how the use of alcohol would be detrimental to the moral fabric of society. I repeated in my mind “Why can’t they be like me?” Although I still do not consume alcohol, within a year I became convinced that people should be able to drink in public. A fundamental change in my belief system was not necessary to adapt to Canada. However, as someone who could not sit at a table where others drank, I now sit with friends and comment on the sweet smell of wine. The sight of people drinking no longer threatens my Muslim faith. This experience changed some of my perspectives and values.

Variations in the Experience of Culture Shock

Two variations emerged from the participants’ experience of culture shock. First, the degree of felt emotions (e.g., anxiety, frustration and loneliness) varied between those with and without prior international living experience. Those with prior experience (for example, Anne, Brian, Belinda, Greg, Stephan and Terisa) generally felt less frustrated, lonely or homesick. Their prior experience of confronting the unfamiliar obviously provided a familiar framework for dealing with culture shock. As Stephan pointed out, he
“knew what to expect and how to deal with culture shock from prior experience.” He added, “culture shock attacked me in a more friendly and gentler way in Mexico because this was the second time that I had lived abroad. The first time I was in Nicaragua and I was so tired and frustrated I wanted to come home.”

Second, the transformative learning dimension of culture shock was influenced by the social status of the participants’ racial background in the host country. Daven, Diana, Michael and Milana described themselves as “whites” who studied abroad in countries that are predominantly “white”. Linda described herself as “African-Canadian” and studied in a predominantly “black” country. And John who is “Chinese” studied in a predominantly “Chinese” country. These participants immediately recognized similarities between themselves and the people of their host country before encountering cultural differences. Linda, who had never previously been to Africa, first felt “close” and “similar” to people in Zimbabwe because of her “Africaness.” Similarly, Diana noted: “I first thought that differences between Canadians and Germans are very minor. I only began to see differences much later when I started to make close friends. German friendships are very intense, we tend be more aloof. It accounts for why Canadians find it difficult to make close friendships with Germans” (March 18, 1997).

On the other hand, Anne, Brian, Belinda, Greg, Stephan and Terisa studied in countries in which their respective racial backgrounds held a minority status. They began to see cultural differences from the very beginning of their adaptation to the host country.
In addition, although none experienced negative racial discrimination, Anne and Greg became "uncomfortable" (Greg) with "reverse discrimination". Anne explained:

I found it really disturbing that they treated white Canadians and Americans very differently. The American-born Chinese were inferior to us white people in their eyes. We were the ones they targeted. Our marks were made higher, there were concessions made for us. I felt really bad. I wanted to come home because I knew I could not change anything about this.  

(Anne, Feb. 18, 1997)

5.4.3 Ways of Adapting to the Host Culture

Culture shock marked the beginning of a transformative learning process; it initiated a process of adaptation that required sojourners to be reflective of their "meaning perspectives" (Mezirow, 1991) or "taken-for-granted cultural assumptions" (Bowers, 1993). Mezirow (1991) illustrates the dynamics of such a learning process:

Learning may be understood as the extension of our ability to make explicit, schematize (make an association within a frame of reference), appropriate (accept an interpretation as our own), remember (recall an earlier interpretation), validate (establish the truth, justification, appropriateness, or authenticity of what is asserted), and act upon (decide, change an attitude toward, modify a perspective) some aspect of our engagement with the environment, other persons, or ourselves.” (p.11)

However, explicating our taken-for-granted cultural assumptions is not easy because we are often unaware of these assumptions and expectations. It is only when our assumptions are confronted that we become aware of them. At such times our natural reaction is often an urge to go back to the familiar "social world of everyday life" (Bowers, 1993 p.35) or familiar "cultural confines" (Greg). Perhaps it is this urge that
manifests as a “a delayed reaction of homesickness” (Brian), a “wanting to go home” (Linda). Yet this “longing for home” (John) or “culture shock” (Terisa) did not prompt the participants to prematurely end their journey and return home. Unlike many other sojourners, they did not withdraw into themselves or an expatriate subculture (Storti, 1990). To the contrary, they actively began the process of adapting to the host culture by focusing on forming a community of friends. Terisa commented:

I cannot say culture shock does not exist. It does. But it is not, ‘Oh, these people are strange.’ Or, it is not about adjusting your clothes and make-up to fit in. It is a matter of adapting to your environment. It is complicated, but it is the same as adapting to a new house in the same city you were raised. As human beings, we adapt to our own environment and part of the stimulus of that environment is people around us. It was for me about meeting people and making friends.

(Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

The Character of the Adaptation Experience

Terisa is right. A sojourner’s adaptation to the host country, in some ways, is not very different from adapting to a new house. It is just another transition in life; we change our personal culture and daily routines, for example, when we get married and become parents. By going abroad, these participants did not undergo a fundamental shift in how they approach life transitions. They observed their surroundings, listened to others, participated in activities and developed meaning out of their experience, just as they did when they first went to primary school.

However, in some ways, their adaptation to the host country was different from prior life transitions, particularly for those who had no prior international living
experience. They encountered a situation on a scale they had never experienced before. This made the adaptation a transformative learning experience. However, the scale and complexity of the transition also made it difficult to know “where to begin” (Michael). As Michael discovered:

During pre-departure orientation, they [University staff] told us about culture shock and adjusting to the host country. But, when you get there you realize that the host culture and country is big and vague. All of this culture shock stuff means nothing because you don’t know where to begin. (Michael, Jan. 24, 1997)

While it was difficult to know where to begin, sojourners did not passively accept the social and cultural realities defined by others; instead, they actively tried to “fit in” (John) and make meaning from their experience. The strategies they employed (ways of adapting) were neither intentionally planned nor carried through in any sequential order. Instead, sojourners adopted these strategies quite naturally with emotions or felt sense guiding their adaptation to studying abroad. As Michael remembered, “when you feel down you find ways to make yourself feel better”. Two sub-themes emerged as meaningful experiences from their adaptation experience: self-reflection and forming friendships. These sub-themes would be repeated, with different dimensions, during the participants’ re-entry experience.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection was what made the journey outward also a journey inward. As Jonil noted, “I anticipated that this experience was going to be about myself; what I did not realize was how much soul-searching I had to do during the study abroad period”.
And, as Stephan commented, the “the most difficult part of living abroad is that because you loose your frame of reference you have to understand what that reference is. So you have to reflect on who you are and what you believe.” Like Jonil and Stephan, participants began making sense of their environment not only by observing others but also by reflecting inward. Through this process they transformed their identity, changed their perspective of the home country, contemplated “their place in the world” (John) and developed greater self-esteem (Myra) and self-confidence (Belinda). I do not want to elaborate on this sub-theme here because I return to it in Chapter Six.

Forming Friendships

It is important to build that network of friends in order to survive emotionally. You should begin to make friends as soon as you arrive. (Diana, March 18, 1997)

It is the people that you meet that make the biggest difference. I know my friends in Japan were very different people from my friends in Canada... If I had similar friends in Japan I would not have changed as much. (Brian, Feb. 27, 1997).

By analyzing the sub-theme of forming friendships, I observed the formation of two distinct friendship groups: the first group consisted of other sojourners (international students and fellow Canadians). The second group consisted of people from the host country. For lack of better terms and the need to name them, let me call the first group *sojourn friends* and the second group *host culture friends*.
The Sojourn Friends

For the first few weeks, I hung out with people who went on the exchange with me. I had the good fortune of running into two other exchange students. We helped each other to settle in and we went swimming, walking and shopping around. After a week, we hooked up with two other exchange students from Canada. So for the first month you hang out with people who are like you because you have so much in common with them. You don’t know this new place so you try to discover the place with other exchange students. After a month, I started to make friends with Jamaicans. I met them in the classes, I had to make a bit of an effort, but when we became friends, they were really nice. People in Jamaica are very friendly. You start talking to them and they say ‘where are you from man’ and you build rapport.

(Jonil, Jan. 20, 1997)

Like Jonil, many other participants began forming friendships by “hanging out” with other sojourners. These included people from one’s home country as well as other international students. Diana narrated: “some of my best friends first were international students; we hit all of the clubs, we went to movies regularly, and I was fully involved with helping other international students on excursions.” And Myra recalled: “I really connected with other foreign students and two foreign professors. I don’t know why. They were very helpful and I spent a lot of time with a couple of these professors.”

These friends shared the experience of being sojourners. They played a crucial role during “settling in” and “culture shock.” These friendships were part of a supportive community the participants could relate to and discuss their experiences with. As Myra described:

I think it was a culture shock issue. It was easier to spend time with people I could talk to about the experience I was having and I couldn’t talk about everything that I wanted to say about Jamaica. I was afraid that some of
the things that I wanted to say would be negative about Jamaicans. I had things to complain about. (Myra, Jan. 28, 1997)

These sojourn friends continued to play a supportive role throughout the participants’ experience abroad. This supportive community of fellow sojourn friends was particularly important for those who had difficulty in adapting to the host country. Unlike other participants, Belinda never felt at home in her host country (India). The degree of cultural differences between Canada and India, especially in her living situation, was too great to feel at home during her nine months in India. She said “I never felt at home within my host family in India. The differences in language and culture never went away entirely.” Hence, Belinda relied on her sojourn friends’ company throughout her experience in India. She said, “when I felt down, I always relied on the company of other exchange students.”

After developing a supportive community of sojourn friends, most participants befriended host nationals. Many noted on their PSAE-curve that finding host culture friends was an important part of “feeling at home” (Michael). In other words, the formation of meaningful host culture friendships was, for some, synonymous with feeling at home.

Host Culture Friends

It may seem obvious that sojourners would naturally develop meaningful relationships with host culture nationals. However, this is not necessarily the case. Research literature supports the notion that sojourners may not develop meaningful
relationships in the host country. Studies conducted in late the 1970s and early 1980s consistently show that the least salient network of friends are "bicultral" ones (Furnham & Bochner, 1982), i.e., friendship bonds with host nationals. They found that close links with British people accounted for only 18 percent of the friendships of 150 foreign students in Britain. American data also show a similar trend; only 29 percent of the friendships of international students consisted of bonds with host culture members (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1977). Furthermore, Citron (1996) reports on a study in which sojourners in Spain on a short-term exchange did not have any real meaningful relationship with Spanish culture. He concludes that these students lived in a "third culture", one that was neither Spanish nor American (their home country).

However, with few exceptions, most participants in this study reported having meaningful relationships with people from the host country. In a few cases, they developed these friendships during the first few weeks. In general, most participants developed friendships after beginning to move away from culture shock into the active process of adapting to the host culture. At this point they had also found a supportive community of sojourner friends. As Terisa explained in the following excerpt, the formation of friendship bonds with host nationals was the most meaningful experience of adapting to the host culture.

Based on my experience, I would think that the most moving experience of being abroad, or just learning, about a society is trying to live in close contact with people of the host culture. I tried to live with as many people as possible...so the more human contact that you can have the better. This is essential to truly learn about a culture. You learn small things like it takes seven to ten minutes for a Cuban to brush their teeth, and that they take many showers a day. These may seem minor, but they are important to understand a culture. Before I went to Cuba, I thought I knew a lot
about the country and its people. These were things that I read on paper, they were not the heartbeat of the country. My perspective of Cuba completely changed when I started to make friends with Cubans. (Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

The host culture friends were *facilitators* of the participants' adaptation to the host country. They facilitated adaptation to the host country through activities such as casual conversation ("just talking and talking for hours about nothing specific" [Daven]); and recreation and sports ["partying" Terisa]; "going out to clubs" [Diana]). Such learning interactions predominantly happened out of the academic arena (i.e. outside of classrooms or other academic activities such as learning for exams or writing papers). Meaningful interaction with professors also occurred outside the formal academic arena. Diana, for example, recalled that "one of the most important things that happened to me was that I cemented my interest in becoming a professor in the future. This was influenced very much by my own personal relationships with professors outside the classroom, they really gave me confidence to go ahead."

Host culture friends were also *cultural mediators* who introduced the participants to the culture of the host country. Through various learning experiences -- casual conversations, recreational and sports activities, travel within the host country and bonding -- the participants learned about their host culture through these friends. In other words, host culture friendship was the social avenue for meaningful learning experiences abroad. As they bonded with host culture nationals, they began to understand the taken-for-granted assumptions and values of the host culture. They began to make sense of people's actions. Another apt example comes from Terisa's experience. She said:
This is just one example, there are many like this. I remember the first time my Cuban boyfriend said to me “give me water”. I thought, “God, you are so rude, what the hell is going on.” I said to him, “Am I your slave?” There are so many little things like this, not only with my boyfriend but with others as well. I would call my mother in Canada and say “Oh, I want to go home. I don’t want to stay here.” Later I realized that in Cuba, between friends, and especially between very close friends, there is no use of ‘please’ can you give me some water. They do it this way and you wouldn’t find out until you start living with them.  
(Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

5.4.4 Feeling at Home Abroad

As I mentioned earlier, bonding with host culture friends was, for some, synonymous with “feeling at home.” Feeling happy and comfortable in the host country also meant coming to the realization that a passing familiarity with or mere acceptance of cultural diversity is not the same as adapting to another culture. Sojourners also realized that putting oneself into someone else’s shoes is not easy. As Stephan felt, “yes, you can put yourself into someone else’s shoes, but it is your own feet that you would feel.” Hence adapting to the host culture was like walking in a pair of shoes that would, for a long time, feel foreign. Myra captured this essence of feeling at home:

I don’t think that I became more intercultural through the process of adjusting to Jamaica. The reason that I wanted to go on the exchange was because I felt international and intercultural to begin with. But, in an indirect way it made me more aware of things that I could not have learned just by reading. It made me aware of the reality of living and adapting to a developing country at a realistic personal level. I realized that I could never become Jamaican, I will always be Canadian. Although I love Jamaica, it does not mean that I can whole-heartedly embrace
everything Jamaicans do. It's a funny thing; I love Jamaica and I want to go back again, but I know I can never feel Jamaican.

(Myra, Jan. 28, 1997)

Thus, feeling at home, or adapting to the host country, was not the same as belonging to the culture of the host country. As Greg reflected “there is always an ambivalence when you are abroad. We can never really belong to our host country; being self-reflective, that's how I feel.” While adaptation is clearly different from belonging, the participants knew they had adapted when they began to “feel at home”. Forming meaningful friendships was crucial for reaching this phase. Greg echoed the centrality of friendships to the experience of all participants when he said, “without the friends, I would have felt completely abandoned because I had no other way of belonging to the place, nationally, culturally, ethnically.”

5.4.5 Concluding Thoughts

Have I left the reader pondering the lack of reference to the participants' actual academic experience abroad? After all, these were study abroad students attending host universities. I did not describe their academic experience here because I discuss it in Chapter Seven (pp.298 - 301) in my concluding comments. I decided to reflect on academic experiences abroad in the final chapter because participants did not consider formal academic experiences (i.e. course content and classroom experiences) as important aspects (i.e. meaningful experiences) of their journeys. This lack of significant meaning attributed to formal academic experience abroad is a paradox that needs further
discussion; I return to it in Chapter Seven to reflect on the need for further research on this issue.

At this point, let me recapture how far I have traced the journey of the participants. In Part One, I provided an overview of the participants' meaningful experiences along their journey in the form of the PSAE-curve. In Part Two, I explored their experience of preparing to leave (i.e. the 'Before' phase of the PSAE-curve). In this part (Part Three), I explored meaningful aspects of living and studying during abroad. In Part Four, I continue to trace the participants’ journey by exploring their experience of re-turning (re-tuning attention to) home.

Among the four themes discussed here, culture shock as a transformative learning experience underlines the entire process of adaptation to the host country. It provides the impetus for trying to form friendships, for self-reflection, and for the re-writing of self. The participants qualitative experience of culture shock allows them to see it as period of "cultural disequilibrium" — a period of incongruency (Taylor, 1994). From a learner’s perspective, it is a situation in which one’s “personal constructs” (Kelly, 1955) are no longer adequate to make meaning of the new environment and interactions with people in this environment. It is disorienting to have the harmony of self disturbed, yet the problem was neither understood or named by the participants when they struggled in it (Keane, 1985); the participants gained an understanding of this situation much later upon reflection during the re-entry experience.
My new understanding of culture shock reinforces Adler (1975), Yoshikawa (1987), and Kim's (1991; 1992) assertion that culture shock should be seen as a learning process. However, literature is weak on the ways, strategies, and meaningful experiences of sojourners' adaptation to the host country. The findings discussed above strongly indicate self-reflection and the formation of friendships as two key strategies for sojourners to utilize in adapting to their host country.
5.5 PART FOUR

After: Returning Home

After living abroad, you never really come home again.

(Jonil)

Research refers to the challenges that sojourners encounter upon returning home as "cross-cultural re-entry" (Citron, 1996; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Koehler, 1986). Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963), who first coined the term, conceptualized cross-cultural re-entry as analogous to the three stages of sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment abroad: honeymoon, reverse culture shock, and re-adjustment. As noted earlier, they also developed the concept of the W-curve by extending the U-curve to include the re-entry experience (p. 165).

At the heart of the conceptualization of cross-cultural re-entry is the "reverse culture shock" (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). The re-entry experience is seen as a process of recovering from the reverse culture shock. Adler (1976) challenged this conceptualization by advancing an alternative perspective on re-entry. She calls her perspective the "growthful re-entry theory" and suggests that re-entry should not be seen as a debilitating difficulty but as part of a broader intercultural learning process leading to personal development. Others (Behrens & Bennett, 1986; Martin, 1984; McCabe, 1994) have joined Adler in advancing the same perspective.
While concurring with Alder’s observations, I paid special attention to the participants’ re-entry experience within the study abroad/re-entry cycle. In other words, my conceptual framework assumes that each participant’s motivation for studying abroad, their experience of preparing to leave, the cross-cultural adaptation experience abroad, and the re-entry experience dynamically interact to provide the personal meaning of studying abroad. Within this overall framework, two questions guided my pursuit to understand the participants’ re-entry experience:

1. How do students personally, socially and academically experience re-entry?
2. In what ways do temporal dimensions (before, during, and after) connect in students’ interpretations of the meaning and impact of studying abroad?

I examined these questions through the following five chronologically arranged themes:

1. Re-turning to home: preparing to go home
2. Arriving home
3. Strangers at home: mourning and the reconstruction of relationships (reverse culture shock)
4. Academic re-entry
5. Feeling at home again
5.5.1 Re-turning to Home: Preparing to go Home

In a strict sense, cross-cultural re-entry begins when the sojourn ends (i.e. when the sojourner returns home). However, “re-turning” to home -- that is, re-directing one’s attention to home -- begins several weeks before the sojourn ends with practical and psychological preparations to go home. Amidst the emotional peaks and plateaus (or emotional topography) of the PSAE-curve (Figure 5.1), the valley labeled “preparing to go home” marks a complex and bittersweet experience. Research has generally ignored this aspect of re-entry.

A Bittersweet Time

The feelings of participants when preparing to go abroad (Part Two, pp.172-173) is comparable to how they felt when preparing to return home -- both were bittersweet times. The joyful anticipation of going home entwined with the sorrow of leaving the landscape and friends of the host country. As Brian recalled “coming home was definitely the worst time because there were totally mixed emotions. Like most people, I was extremely sad to leave the country that I have enjoyed but also excited to go home to see everyone.” And Stephan summarized, “just as you get excited about going home, you become ambivalent about leaving the host country.”
While "bittersweetness" is the essence of the experience of preparing to go home, a comparison of Belinda and Jonil's case suggests that the intensity of this experience relates to the participant's level of adaptation to the host country. Jonil adapted well to Jamaica and had this to say about coming home:

I began to have doubts about coming home. When I was thinking of coming home, I almost changed my mind because I could sustain a reasonable lifestyle in Jamaica. There was no reason to come except for friends and family.”

(Jonil, Jan. 20, 1997)

Meanwhile Belinda struggled to "feel at home" in India. Towards the end of her sojourn, she experienced fatigue and a definite urge to go home. She explained:

I did not feel at home until towards the end of my program. At this stage I felt comfortable and learned more things. But, towards the end, I was starting to feel more homesick. And I still didn’t really feel at home in my house because I wasn’t really close to my host family. So that made me feel always out of place. When I was getting ready to leave, I was sad to leave, but I was not too sad because I was tired and exhausted. The tiredness was mental. There was nothing that I wanted to do at that point, I had taken everything that I had wanted to take in and I couldn’t develop a closer relationship with my host family. So, I had no mixed feelings of going back home, the time was right for me.

(Belinda, March 3, 1997)

All participants experienced the exhaustion Belinda described towards the end of their sojourn. This fatigue signaled the end of their sojourn. As Michael said, “toward the end I was exhausted knowing that the end of the cycle had come.” “It’s like a runner coming to the end of a marathon” recalled John. The participants boarded their flights home exhausted with mixed emotions, yet they arrived home refreshed and excited.
5.5.2 Arriving Home

As noted earlier, research on re-entry highlights three stages of readjustment: honeymoon, reverse culture shock, and readjustment (Austin, 1986, Citron, 1996; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Koehler, 1986; Kohls, 1986; Martin, 1984). As I discuss the remaining themes in this chapter, I refer to these stages and other research findings that relate to the re-entry experience.

The theme of "arriving at home" relates closely to the honeymoon stage. This honeymoon stage is generally characterized by excitement and the exhilaration of returning to one's homeland after an extended sojourn (Austin, 1986). Research literature also suggests that, generally speaking, sojourners experience the honeymoon stage during the first two or three weeks of the re-entry experience (Kohls 1986; Citron, 1996). Apart from the excitement of returning home, other qualitative dimensions of sojourners' initial experiences of returning home are not addressed in the research literature.

Beyond a Honeymoon

Based on prior findings, I expected participants to experience the first week or two of arriving at home as a happy time, consisting of visiting family and friends and telling stories of their sojourn abroad. Half of the participants experienced the
honeymoon stage as I expected whereas the experience of others revealed the complexity of arriving home. Take for example John’s case. He said:

I arrived on a Saturday morning and my parents picked me up from the airport. They drove me home, I had breakfast, then went to sleep, and probably did not speak to anyone for about two days. After two days, I took a couple of phone calls, but I did not call anyone for a week. I was sort of retroactive for two weeks, not ready to jump right back into life back here. I reflected on my experience in Singapore and kept to myself.  
(John, Feb. 18, 1997)

In a different way, Diana tried to remain connected to her experience in Germany.

Immediately after returning home, I went through this thing of reorganizing the entire house. I was so intent on trying to make it the way that I had it in Germany. I wanted to change every place and everybody around me so they would conform to the way I had changed. The second thing was calling everyone and wanting to talk about my experience to my mom and friends.  
(Diana, March 18, 1997)

Terisa’s experience was marked by the emotional dissonance of perceiving the landscape of home as a strange place.

I landed in Montreal, where there were many billboards, advertisements. And I remember spending an excessive amount of time just looking at them. Feeling contaminated by visual pollution. Because I got used to seeing palm trees, beaches and lovely architecture, beautiful scenery in Cuba. The first thing I saw was a “Windows95” advertisement. It was a shock. And another thing that shocked me was the shape of buildings. The architecture was very ugly. They were giant shoeboxes. Things I didn’t even know existed before. Of course, I came back with a different perspective and I can’t even identify these things now. I remember being shocked by commercials on TV that I used to watch. I felt ‘God, so much propaganda’. ‘So much consumerism.’ But I realized that our lives here are very empty. It was depressing. I realized our culture is based so much on selling things.  
(Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

These three stories, similar to other stories, do not entirely fit the descriptive framework of the honeymoon stage; they collectively paint a much broader and complex
picture beyond the initial excitement and exhilaration of arriving home. These stories illuminate multiple and personal ways in which participants experienced re-entry. These three stories alone depict three different dimensions of arriving home: (1) solitary self-reflection (John), (2) actively trying to remain connected to the experience abroad (Diana), (3) explicating taken for granted assumptions of home (Terisa).

It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed analysis of how each participant experienced re-entry; I therefore focus on shared experiences. Two experiential threads run through individual stories of arriving home: (1) the beginning of a process of mourning and (2) the beginning of a process of reconstructing one's relationship to "home" — a place that holds a much deeper meaning than simply one's place of birth. I return later to a discussion on the meaning of home (pp. 219 - 220). These two mutually inclusive processes are embedded in the continuum of the initial desire to study abroad, preparations to leave, cross-cultural adaptation abroad and the return home — the entire study abroad/re-entry cycle.
5.5.3 Strangers at Home:

Re-entry as Mourning and the Reconstructing of Relationships

The two processes noted above (i.e. mourning and reconstructing) can be seen as occurring within what has been called “reverse culture shock” or “re-entry transition stress” (Weaver, 1994). Weaver describes reverse culture shock as follows:

On the return home the sojourner passes through another adjustment period often termed the “reverse culture shock”. The limited evidence suggests that this experience is even more severe or protracted than culture shock and it sets in much more quickly (p. 1) . . . The transition periods of stress are somewhat analogous to the common cold. Culture shock and reverse culture shock are not terminal, yet there is no “cure.” The “symptoms” are similar for each person but also vary with the individual, as does the severity and duration. Recovery does not provide immunity; one can suffer the experience many times. . . . As people develop culture shock, they develop coping strategies to help them minimize its severity and duration. Many of these strategies are just as useful for dealing with reverse culture shock (p. 2) . . . The breakdown of communication causes frustration and pain, which, in turn, lead to the physical and psychological reactions associated with stress. Because the stress is not expected, reactions are usually more severe than those of the entry culture shock. Initially, many returnees engage in “flight” behavior. They may withdraw from others, fantasize about returning overseas, or sleep a great deal. The returnee is often perplexed by these subconscious reactions to the breakdown of communication (p. 5).

This lengthy description illuminates multiple elements of the current understanding of reverse culture shock. These elements include:

1. *Reverse culture shock as a stressful situation of suffering (a clinical view of culture shock)*.

2. *Reverse culture shock as somewhat analogous to culture shock*

3. *Reverse culture shock as being more severe than culture shock*
4. A breakdown in communication as the main cause of reverse culture shock

5. Withdrawal and depression as the primary symptoms of reverse culture shock

I want to situate “mourning” and “reconstructing” as two processes that build upon the current understanding of reverse culture shock. Moreover, my findings see reverse culture shock as a learning opportunity instead of a debilitating state of suffering requiring prescribed coping strategies to overcome its symptoms.

I begin by stressing that, similar to cross-cultural adaptation abroad, re-entry is a double-edged phenomenon. On one edge are symptoms associated with reverse culture shock discussed by other researchers (Austin, 1986; Citron, 1996; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Koehler, 1986; Kohls, 1986; Martin, 1984). On the other edge are mutually inclusive processes of mourning for the loss of one’s study abroad experience while reconstructing meaningful relationships at home. The merging of these two processes during the re-entry experience creates a transformative learning context – an opportunity for the returnee to reflectively consider the personal meaning and impact of the study abroad journey. Like two colours mixing to form a new one, the merging of these two processes moves the returnee towards developing a new meaning of home. Let me first consider these two processes independently and then discuss their merger.
Re-entry as Mourning

When you come home, you are mourning. Actually, you are mourning for yourself, you are mourning for a life that you will never have again. You are mourning for a loss of life that you created because you were living abroad. That is what it is. Another reality destroyed by coming home. When it is a pleasant reality, you don’t want to be destroying it.

(Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

When I first came back, it was nice to be able to eat food that I had grown up with, and then after a few weeks, I was really missing the rice and beans that I used to eat in Jamaica.

(Myra, Jan. 28, 1997)

“Mourning for a life that you will never have again” (Terisa) is a dimension of the re-entry experience that calls into question a simple analogy between cross-cultural adaptations abroad and the re-entry adaptation to home. During adaptation abroad, the participants emotionally and psychologically expected to return home. In contrast, during re-entry they had no specific plans to go back to the host country. Hence, they mourned the end of their study abroad journey.

The participants mourned the end of the entire lived-experience abroad. As Milana said “when you come home you mourn for what feels like intangible things; you basically miss your entire experience -- your freedom, your excitement, new friends and the places that you have grown to love.” “Letting go” (John) of two forms of attachment to the host country (i.e. people and landscapes) was most obvious in the experience of
mourning. Linda, for example, recalled, “I knew I would have to say goodbye to the places and people in Zimbabwe that I enjoyed so much, after coming home.”

Landscapes

Nine out of the 14 participants described the “struggle of letting go” (Daven) of their emotional attachment to the physical and natural landscape of the host country. Mourning for the landscape of the host country is a slow process of saying goodbye. Linda explained: “enjoying the lush and fertile landscape of Zimbabwe, and living in that landscape, had a major impact on me. After coming home, one of the hardest things for me was not to be able to go to the garden, pick my own food, come home, and cook it with friends.”

Letting go of the landscape of the host country occurred concurrently with reconstructing a new relationship to the landscape of the home country. For example, consider Myra’s story:

Coming back to the concrete jungle of Toronto was a drag. I think that was the worst thing about coming back. But, there is a good side to this. I became more sensitive to the greenery we do have in Toronto. I notice it more. Now I look for greenery in Toronto and encourage others to do the same. I guess it is one of the things I miss from Jamaica, so I sought it out here. (Myra, Jan. 28, 1997)
In other words, Myra actively mourned for the loss of the lush landscape of Jamaica by searching for greenery in Toronto (her home city). And in the process, her attachment to and perspective on Toronto’s landscape changed.

People

As noted in Part Four, the formation of friendships was central to adapting to life in the host country. Participants would attempt to maintain friendships formed abroad while trying to re-adapt to home. They connected with their friends in the host country through long-distance communication (letters, e-mail and telephone), personal memories, and pictures. For five participants, such friends included “girlfriends” and “boyfriends”, intimate and meaningful relationships that developed during their study abroad journey. However, the passage of time strained such relationships; at the end of this study (i.e. eight months after returning home) three of these intimate relationships had ended. As Stephan expressed, “long-distance relationships are difficult to maintain.” Mourning for the loss of such significant others made the re-entry mourning especially painful.

While the gradual loss of intimate attachments was painful, the slow process of “letting go” of other meaningful friendships was also difficult. As Linda explained:

My attachment to people seems to have disappeared over six months. I was attached to both the country and the people. I wanted to continue my connection with people. I wrote and they wrote back. The number of letters we wrote decreased gradually. With time we lost connection, gradually and slowly. (Linda, Jan. 10, 1997)
The gradual loosening of attachment to the landscape and people of the host country does not mean that the participants cut all their ties to the study abroad experience. At the end of my study, many continued to maintain their connection to some friends in the host country. I assume they will remain connected to the study abroad experience through personal memories of both landscapes and friendships abroad. However, the loosening of attachments to the host country provided the opportunity to reconstrue their relationship to the study abroad experience, thus leading to personal change.

Mourning as Personal Change

Beginning with Freud (1957), many have written about grief and mourning as a process of breaking ties to significant others. "Significant others" are not only people, but also places and experiences. Breaking ties to meaningful people, places and experiences is a basic phenomenon in human life. Bowlby (1969) refers to this fundamental phenomenon of mourning in human experience when he writes "above all, if we deny grief, we deny the importance of the meaning each of us has struggled to make of life" (p. 103). Bowlby's work emphasizes mourning as a process of rebuilding a new equilibrium of self through which a person relates to his/her environment due to a failure to recover a "lost object" (significant people, places and experiences).
Geddes (1992) relates Bowlby's concept of grief to the personal change that comes from loss. She states that mourning is about forfeiting identities, wants, beliefs, and significant others in response to transitional experiences. She sees everything that we are emotionally attached to as having the potential to become a loss, thus leading to a process of personal change. During the re-entry process, intense attachments to the host country became losses for participants of this study.

Bowlby (1969) and Geddes (1992) see mourning as a process of reconstructing one's relationship to others following a loss. According to Geddes, at the end of the mourning process, we achieve ownership of the loss, "reaching a new awareness where one could maintain a semblance in life. It is a state of being able to say, 'this is my new world', 'this is who I am', and 'this is how I fit into this new world'" (p. 12). Bowlby and Geddes' perspectives on loss, mourning, and reconstructing self closely resemble the re-entry experience of the participants in this study.
Re-entry as Reconstructing Relationships

The process of mourning and the process of re-adapting to home are like two parallel lanes of a single road. They are connected to each other. Mourning as a process of taking ownership of change meant participants personally reconceptualized attachments to the host country. The re-adaptation to home that occurred concurrently with mourning was a process of re-constructing one’s relationship to the home country. As John reflected in his final research conversation with me:

Reintegrating to home is realizing that it is difficult to keep looking both ways. Singapore is now almost a year ago. I learnt from that experience and I have to go on with my life in Canada. But, making that decision to move on came after struggling to remain connected to the experience abroad while trying to get back into the loop at home.

(John, Feb. 18, 1997)

Michael reflected on the same struggle:

The difficult period is now. It is now a few months after I came back. I am caught between Germany and Canada, it is a difficult place to be. I haven’t lost my attachment to the experience in Germany, but I am beginning to think that if I want to feel really comfortable again in Toronto, I have to let go of my attachments to Germany. But, I don’t want to lose it, I am determined to remain connected to my experience in Germany. But, I am already losing some of my attachments; I find it annoying that some little places that naturally sink into my memory are fading away. Nobody wants to talk to me about my experience. I have to go back to being normal again here in Canada. If I want to stay in Canada, I have to focus on life here.

(Michael, Jan. 24, 1997)

But, “going back to being normal again” (i.e., feeling comfortable in one’s homeland) is paradoxically a difficult plateau to reach. By definition, home is unlike a foreign culture that required participants to adapt. However, the transformation of ones’
identity and perspectives by living abroad means that one has to re-construct a relationship to home, a challenge unlike any prior life experience.

Meaning of Home

"Home" was the place that the participants returned to, the place where they were born and socialized, the place where people speak their native language, and the place where others behave more or less the same way. Home also means much more. It is the place the participants expected to be known and where they knew others; a place of routine behaviors and interactions; a place where they knew they would belong and feel safe. Simply put, it is the place where they expected to feel "at home" (Daven), a context of familiar places, people and routines.

However, returning home was unexpectedly stressful and disorienting. As Milana felt, "returning to a normal life at home was more stressful than anticipated". The "home" they expected to return to was not the home they experienced during re-entry. The familiar places, people and routines were perceived through a new set of lenses acquired by living abroad. Furthermore, people, family and friends had also changed over time. "It became very difficult to pick up from where I left off with friends and family. I had to come to know my family and friends all over again, develop a new form of relationship with family and friends" Stephan explained. In addition, because daily routines consist of familiar places and people, once "familiar" routines were suddenly disrupted while reconstructing relationships. For example, Jonil explained that "before going away I
always went out to clubs on Friday nights with my friends. After coming home I was, for some reason, not so interested in partying like that. I thought it was a childish thing to do. My friends found it difficult that I had changed. To summarize, participants momentarily became strangers in their homeland. As strangers, they began a process of re-constructing their relationship to parents, friends and the cultural and natural landscape of their homeland. In the process they developed a new meaning of “home” and “abroad”.

Reconnecting with Parents

Re-constructing one’s relationship to family, particularly with parents, was a significant dimension of the re-entry experience. Eight participants resumed living in their parents’ homes when they returned. Three who had lived with their parents before going to study abroad decided to live on their own after returning home. For these three participants, living outside of their parental house was an important way to hold onto their new sense of “autonomy from parents” (Jonil). For both those who returned to live with parents and those who moved away, the parents played an important role as facilitators of their children’s re-entry adaptation. In addition, all participants had a similar experience of re-establishing autonomy and relatedness to their parents.

As facilitators of the re-entry experience, parents played a central role by listening to their children’s study abroad stories. They were eager to tell their stories and most
parents were eager to listen to them, at least during the first few weeks of re-entry. Story
telling was crucial during re-entry because it was the most meaningful avenue for the
returnees to communicate to parents and others about how they had changed. It was also
an opportunity to create shared stories of the study abroad period when there were limited
shared experiences between children and parents.

Telling stories filled the “time gap” (Daven) of when the children were away. Without bridging this “gap”, “getting used to living with parents” (Brian) was difficult. Many of the participants had not shared the same life-space with their parent/s for eight to ten months. As Brian described, “at first both you and your parents try to respect each others’ space, but eventually there comes a time when you have to deal with the reality of living together again. In my case, my parents and I had to get into an argument where I explained to them how I had changed and why I liked to do things differently.” While Brian had an argument with his parents, for others this was a gradual process “of slowly getting used to each other” (Myra).

While most parents were keen listeners to their children’s stories, there were also exceptions. For example, Milana expressed the disappointment she felt when her parents did not express interest in her stories. She said to me:

You are the first one who is really deeply interested in my stories. People are generally not interested in knowing what happened to you while you are abroad. My parents have not seen all my pictures. Like friends, they also ask superficial questions and want to hear answers that are on the surface, not real deep stories of how I have changed as a person. I think my parents don’t really know me now. It is emotionally difficult. I don’t know how to tell them how I have changed. (Milana, March 24, 1997)
Such exceptions confirm how parents play an important role in their children's re-entry experience.

Reconnecting with Friends

Reconstructing friendships is an underlying and integral aspect of the re-adaptation experience. This is because, as Jonil commented, "friends are at the centre of [their] lives as university students. In some ways, socially and culturally, friends play a more important role than parents." Indeed, as noted earlier, this study's participants were young adults whose social and cultural lives revolved around friends. For them, re-integrating to the home university and city meant "getting back into the loop of friends" (Anne). As Brian wrote in his journal:

It's been two months after I have been back. The hardest thing is to get back in the loop with friends. My friends understand me most of the time, but sometime I feel I am still on the outside of the circle. When I first came, I knew no new songs, TV shows, or movies. I didn't know which club to go to and what was "in" and what was "out". All I knew was about 13,000 km away. (Brian, Sept. 18, 1996)

Getting "back in the loop" was about reconnecting with friends. John called it "jumping back into friendships at home." It was difficult for them to quickly reconnect with friends because they were concurrently mourning for the loss of attachments abroad. Brian wrote "sometimes I just think 'how am I going to get back in the loop?' I love Canada, and my friends, but my heart is in another country. I may be Canadian by birth, but my heart is forever in Japan."
In addition, reconnecting was also difficult because friends who remained at home found it challenging to understand how the returnee experienced the host culture. As Terisa reflected, “it is hard for others to understand or get excited about something that did not happen to them.” Further, Greg and Michael explained the difficulty of engaging in meaningful conversations with friends. Michael said, “generally people you know ask you factual questions like how many night clubs I went to, superficial questions. Not many people ask you meaningful questions like how did the experience change me as person.” Greg commented, “I came back full of things to resolve in my mind and explore, and I was excited to talk about it and nobody gives a damn. Fair enough, they haven’t had the experience and you are talking about that weird thing.”

The following quote from Cable and French (1943), in their book The Gobi Desert, eloquently captures the experience of participants trying to communicate with friends. They write:

All too soon we shall be back among the crowds who, understanding nothing of its purpose, would measure our whole journey in terms of an adventure. They would question us, but when we replied, they would be seeing it all from such a different point of view that the undertaking, as we viewed it, would be incomprehensible to them” (p. 287).

Being unable to meaningfully communicate with others, many participants developed what Terisa called “standardized” answers to expected questions – habitual answers that are meaningless. She explained:

They ask you, “how was your year abroad?” You say, “Fine”, because you know any more elaboration gets to be boring for others. Then they say, “Where did you go?” I reply “I went to Cuba.” They say “Oh really, why
did you choose Cuba?” Then I have my A, B, C and D answer that I repeat to everyone out of habit.  
(Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

Yet the ability to communicate effectively with friends was crucial to their re-adaptation experience. As Myra explained:

Friends and family say, “wow, I can’t believe you are back.” “We want to hear all about it.” Then I find out that they want me to say about three sentences, and then just get on, pick up where we were when I left. But, if I cannot explain to them what happened abroad, they cannot know the person that I had become. It’s a catch 22 situation. But, even if they are interested like my mother, they don’t know how to ask the right questions. But, without finding people who could understand you, you can never really adapt to home again.  
(Myra, Jan. 28, 1997)

I do not want to lead the reader into believing that the participants returned home friendless. To the contrary, there were some friendships at home that facilitated their re-entry. For example, Diana explained:

I lost some friends, and I gained some friends. I have gained two of my best friends. Nothing really changed with them. These best friends listened to my stories over and over again. With some friends I sort of lost contact, basically they felt their life and my life had very little in common. I also know that some felt a bit jealous because I always wanted to tell them about the wonders of my life in Germany. They just felt that I had changed too much.  
(Diana, March 18, 1997)

Like Diana, others felt that “best friends” (Brian) and “childhood friends” (Linda) remained unchanged during the re-entry experience. Such friendships were meaningful: these are friends who wanted to hear about the returnees’ stories of their study abroad experience. Many participants, like Diana, also became closer to such friends during re-entry. Milana further explained the nature of such friendships:
Milana: I feel more alone now, more independent, and I don't feel anyone understands me. I still get along with friends, but it is just a different relationship now.

Shougee: Have any friendships been meaningful?

Milana: Yes, one friend of mine.

Shougee: What distinguishes this friend from others?

Milana: Well, she's my closest friend, I think she understands me better than others, and I trust her. I have known her since I was thirteen. She is genuinely interested in how I have changed.

(Milana, March 24, 1997)

However, such meaningful friendships were limited in general to one or two childhood friends. Hence, being unable to meaningfully communicate with others made the re-entry experience a lonely process. "Coming home, trying to fit in, making sense of what happened, is a lonely affair" explained Belinda. Milana said, "re-entry is a very personal and private affair." Similarly Terisa remarked, "I feel really lonely. There are times when I have been literally reduced to tears and I say 'why can't I be happy going to night clubs, dancing, drinking and talking about things that matter to others?'" This loneliness meant that re-adapting to home was generally a very private and personal process. It also meant that the returnees reconstructed the meaning of home and abroad in what Jonil referred to as a "space of your own". The reconstructing of relationships with parent/s and friends was "like starting over again, a complete new beginning, a chance to make up for any past mistakes" (Diana). Jonil commented, "it's a new lease on life." And Linda said "re-entry was like starting my life all over again with a new relationship with my family and friends."
Participants also sought new friends because of how they had changed. Linda recalled: “After coming home, I became interested in working with immigrants and immigrant children. I also found new friends among immigrants. They really understood my experience abroad.” Diana explained “I began volunteering to help students who were planning to study abroad. I made many great friends this way. Most of them are studying abroad now”. Furthermore, Belinda said, “I am finding some new friends among others who also have traveled abroad like me.” These new friends understood the participants’ experience of studying abroad. In general, they were either immigrants to Canada or Canadians who had lived or studied abroad. Formation of new friendships was important in reaching a point of feeling at home again.

Reconnecting with the Cultural Landscape

A child of newly divorced parents may first compare them as she attempts to reconstruct separate relationships with both parents. In a similar manner, the participants compared and contrasted their respective host countries and Canada during their re-entry experience. An underlying dynamic of this comparison is the explication of their taken-for-granted assumptions about Canada. Said differently, during the study abroad journey the participants transformed their culturally acquired “meaning perspectives” (Mezirow, 1991). “Personal constructs” (Kelly, 1955), the templates through which they understood their homeland, transformed in the process of adapting to the host country abroad. This transformation of meaning perspectives allowed them to critically view the cultural landscape of Canada through a different set of lenses.
For most participants the initial comparison between Canada and the host country evoked both disapproving and approving emotions of Canada. While unpleasant, disapproving emotions were not "negative" because they played a role in creating a transformed relationship to the cultural landscape of home. Disapproving emotions led participants to name and reflect upon the object of their emotions. As Anne commented:

When you begin to see differences between Canada and China [her host country], you first begin to dislike some things in Canada. You question how people do things. Then, after a while you start to look for reasons people in two countries behave and think differently. Ultimately, you want to remain connected to both and find good things in both countries.

(Anne, Feb. 18, 1997)

Similarly, Michael explained:

I saw big differences in how people interact in Canada and how people interact in Germany. I think we tend to interact in Canada in more superficial ways, it's very American. I don't like this now. But, I also have a new understanding and appreciation of Canada. After all Canada is my home and this is where I would want to be buried. I realized that there are not many countries like Canada where people live in harmony, in other countries like Germany, they try to live in harmony but they are really not succeeding.

(Michael, Jan. 24, 1997)

Furthermore, John commented:

There are so many things that people take for granted, there are so many great things about Canada. You begin to see negative things first about Canada, but as time passes, as you reflect more, you begin to know the good things that you subconsciously always knew about Canada. When you can compare Canada to another country, you begin to appreciate what you have in Canada.

(John, Feb. 18, 1997)
Hence, comparing and contrasting between home and host country was essential to reconnecting with the cultural landscape of Canada. In the process, sojourners came to a new understanding of Canada. I elaborate on this theme in Chapter Six (pp.278 - 279).

5.5.4 Academic Adaptation

Having explored the participants’ personal and social experience of re-entry, I now turn to their academic re-entry experience. This is an integral aspect of re-entry for study abroad sojourners and is often overlooked in prior research. Participants experienced academic re-entry in their home institutions. This study included 12 study abroad students from the University of Toronto (U of T), one study abroad student from Ryerson Polytechnic University (RPU), and one work abroad student from U of T. (pp. 174 -175 for a discussion on the rationale for this mix of participants).

The academic experience of returning to the home institution is two dimensional: it involves (1) transferring credit for courses completed abroad to the home institution and (2) academically integrating what one learned abroad to learning at the home institution. The first dimension is procedural and the second dimension relates to the instructional culture of university classes.
Transferring Course Credits:
An Anxious, Unhappy and Uncertain Experience

The U of T’s Report of the Provostial Task Force on International Student Exchange Programs (1995) concludes:

The present emphasis on transfer credits results in labour intensive processes which seem wasteful of faculty and staff resources. As well, students are often deterred by what they perceive as a barrier to studying abroad. A streamlined and more “user-friendly” approval process for transfer credits would likely increase participation. For University-wide exchanges, this could be accomplished, in part, with greater divisional involvement in the exchanges and improved communication to students and faculty about their responsibilities in credit transfer approvals. (p. 12).

Although the transfer credit procedure did not deter these students from going abroad to study, obtaining credit for courses completed abroad was challenging. Nine out of twelve U of T students in this study felt that the complexity and length of time it took to complete the credit transfer procedure was “frustrating” (Brian, Michael, Myra, Terisa), “challenging” (Belinda, Daven), “difficult” (Anne) or “overwhelming” (John). The work abroad student did not have to obtain transfer credits and the remaining four students found the transfer credit procedure relatively easy.

Jonil and Myra captured the essential elements of the experience of transferring course credits faced by the nine participants: unhappiness, anxiety and uncertainty. Jonil said “the U of T bureaucracy made me very unhappy. I had a long and drawn-out saga to get transfer credits.” Meanwhile Myra focused on the anxiousness and uncertainty associated with the experience. She said, “I had problems with transfer credits. I became
very anxious and uncertain about graduating on time; at the time I felt that study abroad jeopardized my entire future."

The unhappiness, anxiousness and uncertainty contributed to the emotional "valley" associated with reverse culture shock in Figure 5.1. In addition, for some participants the complexity of the transfer credit procedure led them to believe that the institution "did not value the academic courses" (Anne) they pursued abroad.

A cross analysis between the experience of the nine participants (those who found transferring credit frustrating) and the four participants who found transferring credits relatively easy illustrates a connection between pre-departure and re-entry academic experiences. Those who obtained transfer credits easily during re-entry also received enthusiastic endorsement for studying abroad from professors in their "home department" during pre-departure preparation. In other words, these four participants studied abroad with the full support and endorsement of some of the professors in their academic departments. When they returned home, the same professors helped them to obtain transfer credits.

This in itself is a 'common sense' finding because faculty members' evaluation of courses completed abroad is the key to obtaining credit transfers. However, this finding also points to the reality that without support from professors (which amounts to an attitudinal change about the value of studying abroad) students are unlikely to realize the full academic benefits of studying abroad. In addition, this finding also points to the
reality that department-specific programs (i.e. study abroad programs integrated into a specific department/discipline as opposed to institution-wide programs that do not reside in any one academic department) may offer greater potential for participants to academically benefit from studying abroad.

Academic Integration

From an institutional standpoint, study abroad is “primarily an academic experience” (University of Toronto’s Task Force Report on International Exchange Programs, 1995, p. 6). An explicit direction that arises out of this standpoint is that “academic considerations should govern the choice of exchange programs” (p. 7) offered to students and such programs should be “integral to students academic experience.” In light of this institutional viewpoint, I sought to understand if and how students actively integrate their academic experience abroad with their academic experience at U of T during their re-entry academic year.

Most participants, with two exceptions (i.e., Greg and Linda; I discuss their situation later), were unable to connect their experience abroad to their re-entry academic experience at the home institution. I began by asking: “Are you able to make any connection between the academic content of the courses you took abroad and the courses you are taking at U of T now?” Except for the two aforementioned participants the answer was a consistent “no”. Half way into my study, I realized that I had been asking
an inadequate question. My question assumed that the academic outcome of studying abroad pertains to gaining procedural knowledge (facts, ideas and thoughts). It also assumes that such procedural knowledge could be easily integrated into the academic content of the courses sojourners were pursuing during the re-entry year. In other words, in my question was an inherent assumption that, like two parts of a puzzle, the participants would be able to firmly fit what they learned abroad to what they were learning at home -- an assumption that, presumably, is commonly made by professors and others working in the institution.

The fact that I had made these assumptions meant that my prior “scientific” perspective on knowledge had undiscernibly crawled into this research. This is a perspective that sees subjective emotions and values as “contaminants” destroying the purity of knowledge. However, contrary to this perspective on knowledge, the academic outcome of studying abroad (as I detail in Chapter Six) is multi-dimensional and includes attitudes, perspectives, values and worldviews. In addition, as opposed to formal classroom experiences, it is the experiential interaction with people and places in the host country that provides such attitudinal perspectives and value changes. Hence, I changed my question to pursue how participants integrate their multi-dimensional learning abroad to their academic learning at home.

Coincidentally, Greg and Linda -- the two “unusual cases” in this study -- were the only participants who were able to integrate learning abroad with learning at home through classroom activities and course assignments. Greg, who worked abroad, was
enrolled in a graduate program in Education during the duration of this study. Some courses in this program allowed him to bring some of his experiences abroad into classroom discussions. Linda, on the other hand, returned to complete her degree in Early Childhood Education. She too was able to discuss her experiences in classroom discussions. In addition, she was also able to reflect upon her sojourn through a course assignment. She explained:

One of my professors’ asked me to write a journal of my experience in Zimbabwe as a course paper. I was so surprised because I didn’t know if this would be acceptable. I wrote a very long journal, about 25 pages, on what I found as the differences and similarities between Early Childhood Education in Canada and Zimbabwe as I found them. This was the most valuable academic experience that I can think of that related to my re-entry.

(Linda, Jan. 10, 1997)

Unlike Greg and Linda’s case, other participants’ re-entry academic experience occurred in large (theatre style) undergraduate classrooms with a very different instructional culture. As Jonil described, at the core of the instructional culture of these classes was a “one-way flow of information” that muted any interactive dialogue. Terisa, in her journal, vividly described this instructional culture. She said,

It is not necessarily the setting, I mean the classrooms, that discourages academic integration. In a class of 120 students, even in the fourth year, we are mere student numbers to professors. I don’t blame the professors for this, it is just the size. The professor stands up in front of the board, and gives you lessons, shows overheads and lectures. They have a lot to cover in a class. Many professors and fellow students don’t know that you were away. You can’t get up and tell them that you were on an exchange last year, that would be embarrassing. There is no place for discussions in such classes. I think you also wanted me to write about doing papers. Well, it’s difficult to write anything about my experience in Cuba in a paper because that would not be academic enough for a good grade. Plus, as I told you the other day, professors give you the topics to write papers and you know that they expect you to write academic type papers. You can’t write your personal opinion in academic papers, can you? (Terisa, February, 22, 1997).
As Terisa outlines, such classroom settings inhibited the sharing of lived-experience, feelings, perspectives and opinions. Connelly and Clandinin (1992) provide an apt metaphor for the instructional culture of such educational settings. They refer to Reddy's (1979) assertion that the dominant “communication structure” (i.e. teaching method) could be understood through a conduit metaphor. Johnson (1987, p. 59) summarized the elements of this metaphor as follows:

1. Ideas or thoughts are objects

2. Words and sentences are containers for these objects

3. Communication consists in finding the right world-container for your idea-object, sending this filled container along the conduit or through space to the hearer, who must take the object out of the word-container.

Seen through this metaphor, the professor’s lecture in such a classroom setting is the conduit that sends ideas and thoughts to the learners. And such classroom settings cannot facilitate the integration of learning abroad into learning at home.

5.5.5 Finally At Home Again

In her book Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life, Sheehy (1977) says that human beings as they go through crises can be compared to hardy crustaceans. "The lobster grows by developing a series of hard protective shells. Each time it expands from within, the confining shell must be sloughed off. It is left exposed and vulnerable until, in
time, a new covering grows to replace the old” (p. 29). Going through pre-departure apprehension, culture shock and adaptation abroad, and finally mourning and re-adapting to home, the sojourners in this study shed their protective structures and were left exposed and vulnerable — “but also yeasty and embryonic again, capable of stretching in ways... [unknown] before.” (p. 29)

When sojourners reached the plateau of “feeling at home again” (see Figure 5.1), they had gone through the process of shedding protective shells and forming new ones. A lobster shedding its shell remains fundamentally the same, except perhaps more mature with a slightly different shape and colour. Similarly, the participants came to the end of their re-entry experience as basically the same people with new ways of seeing the world, transformed identities, and alternative conceptions of home and abroad.

Not everyone reached the plateau of feeling at home at the same time, or in an orderly fashion. However, in general, most participants reached this plateau within six to eight months after coming home. As Myra commented, “it took me a while to fall back into a routine and feel really at home. It took me longer to readjust here than it took me to adjust abroad.” For a few participants, reaching this emotional plateau did not mean feeling happy about living at home. For example, in Linda’s case, just as she began to feel at home after eight months she also realized that she was “back in the rut” — she had returned to the “stressful environment of Toronto.”
However, most participants knew that they had reached this plateau when they felt comfortable, relaxed, and generally happy at home. They reached this point by reconstructing their relationship to home. The home that they returned to was not the one they expected. After returning, Greg noted:

When I was abroad, I missed the Canadian outdoors, especially in the autumn. I returned to find this autumn. I missed the outdoors dearly and passionately, sometimes even more than the culture and people. Autumn speaks to me very spiritually. My first autumn in Canada after coming home was a disappointment. And I wrote back to my friends in Singapore -- they were Canadians. I said, "the memory of leaves is better than leaves." In a sense, your mind creates this idea, and the reality can never be as perfect as the dream. (Greg, March 28, 1997)

Although the home they came to was not the one they expected to find, participants finally began to admit that certain Canadian things are desirable and certain things abroad may be more pleasant. Greg said, "Canada is my space. This is where I feel most comfortable." Similarly John wrote in his journal:

In Canada there are so many things that I took for granted, there are so many great things about Canada. You only subconsciously know these great things about Canada before you go away. I now feel really happy in Canada. This is my home. But, I also want to go abroad again so I am preparing to go to China next year." (John, March 15, 1997).

Greg further noted:

If I could combine the friendship and income in Singapore with progressive work in Canada, it would be a heaven. So you know, you live and die -- what's it all about? There's some level of alienation that always exists. There is always ambivalence. You can never fully belong to anywhere. We are fooling ourselves (my emphasis). (Greg, March 28, 1997)
Everyone experienced the “ambivalence” (Greg) of being emotionally engaged between home and abroad as they re-adapted to home. This ambivalence metaphorically mirrors a tree that sways gently with the blowing wind. Just as the tree is rooted in its place of birth as it sways with the wind, the participants continued to sway emotionally between home and abroad while remaining rooted in their own cultural identities. This swaying had a mellowing effect on their personalities, enabling them to be flexible. As Myra said, “even though I am back at home now, I am more mellow, less excitable, more realistic about the world and my place in it.” All participants, in different ways, described reaching such a mellow state of mind when they reached the plateau of “feeling at home”.

Is this part of a global mindset? This may relate to Lambert’s description of a globally competent person. He writes, “many of us feel in our bones that there is a special personal quality produced by international education, particularly overseas experience...What we have in mind is a personal transformation, a kind of mellowed patina that marks the civilized person, a salubrious personal growth” (p. 11). This may also be part of the emotional landscape of the conundrum of “multiple citizenship” (Heater, 1990) or “plural and parallel identities” (Selby, 1994). I search for answers to these questions in the next chapter.
5.5.6 Concluding Thoughts

I began this chapter by providing a composite map of the participants’ meaningful experiences (i.e. PSAE-curve in Figure 5.1) during the three phases of their journey (before, during and after the study abroad experience). This curve is an emotional route that mapped and tied the emotional peaks, plateaus and valleys of their journey. Using this curve as a guide, I have explored the participants’ specific experiences of preparing to leave, taking the journey, and returning home.

As I explored the passage of these journeys, my focus was to capture meaningful experiences (i.e. the means) that relate to the meaning and impact of (i.e., the ends) of studying abroad (see Chapter Six). The curricular outcome (i.e. ends) from the experiential journey of studying abroad is formed through the gradual blending of meaningful experiences (i.e. means) of the three temporal dimensions (before, during and after). Hence, ends and means are inseparably intertwined. I made the decision to separately discuss the means in this chapter and then explore the ends in the next chapter only because it would be awkward to discuss the two in one chapter. However, I begin the next chapter by noting a model that integrates the curricular means and ends of the study abroad experience.

The curricular framework of study abroad that I propose in this thesis embraces Dewey’s notions of “situation” (the participants’ personal situation plus the study abroad context), “experience” (lived experience in study abroad contexts, abroad and home), and
"continuity" (continuous construction of the meaning of studying abroad). The concept of "continuity" as it applies to study abroad relates to what I believe is an important fourth temporal dimension of the participants' experience (i.e. the "future") -- the personal meaning of the study abroad journey as organic and evolving with one's life course.

"... Past, present, and future," write Pike and Selby (1998, p. 3), "are not discrete periods but are deeply embedded, one within another."

Let me leave the reader with the epilogue of Diana's journal to provides a glimpse of how situation, experience and continuity blend to create the meaning of her experience:

It is April 21st and this is my last journal entry. In retrospect, this journal has been useful in my transition back to Canadian life. I have spent the school year reacquainting myself with friends, learning to accept the life I have here, and realizing that not everything can change, just because I have. In my academic life, I have learned that the faster pace and stricter requirements in Canada may be better academically, but not psychologically, for students. At a personal level, mother and I have compromised a lot in living together, but we have become closer in maintaining a relationship with more freedom. I no longer mourn for Germany. I know that it is up to me to make the changes necessary to have part of what Germany gave me. I was accepted to York University with a scholarship, and I have applied for a residence in a bachelor or one-bedroom apartment. The kittens have all gone to new homes, and the cats have returned to the owner. I am content. Am I? Yes. The thing is to take each day and focus on priorities and not what may happen or needs to be done in the future. Most importantly I have learned to take time for me, to do something I enjoy, and have fun among the stress that surrounds me. Coming to this conclusion is the legacy of my study abroad experience. The exchange changed me, my life, my philosophy on life; it didn't change the world around me, but I can.

(Diana, April 21, 1997)

Clearly it is not only the kittens who have found a new home, nor is it only the cat who is reconciled with her roots.
CHAPTER VI

The Journey as a Whole: Its Passage and Meaning

Because we are capable of reflecting upon ourselves, we are committed, willy-nilly, to an artistic enterprise in the creation of our own personality

Frank Barron

6.1 Introduction

"Much of human striving, beyond mere survival needs, appears to me to be directed toward the creation of meaning in life" writes the pioneering art therapist and psychologist Harriet Wadeson (1980, p. 3). Like Kelly (1955), she emphasizes the creation of meaning, not the discovery of meaning in human striving. The study abroad journey explored in this dissertation is such a human striving - an experiential journey with certain intrinsic characteristics where meaning is integrated and construed by its travelers. Having discussed the experiential characteristics of this journey in Chapters Four and Five, my focus here is two-fold: (1) to describe the participants' personally construed meaning of the journey and its impact, and (2) to offer a curricular model that describes the journey as a whole. The respective research questions that pertain to this chapter are:

(1) What are the meanings and impact of studying abroad?

(2) How do the temporal dimensions (before, during and after) connect with each other?

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I divide this chapter into two parts. **Part One** provides participants' artistic and narrative images of the underlying meaning and impact of their journeys. I begin this by expanding my discussion on the use of graphic images as a research technique. In **Part Two** I bring together the themes detailed in **Chapters Four** and **Five** into an integrated curricular model of the entire journey. This model cojoins the temporal dimensions (before, during and after) into a whole. I argue that *perspective transformation* is the theme that unifies the participants' experiences and I explore the following related sub-themes:

1. **Self-awareness**
2. **Self-confidence**
3. **Autonomy and relatedness**
4. **Belongingness to Canada and one's place in the world**
5. **Inclusive worldview**
6. **Life direction**
6.2 PART ONE

Images of Meaning

The Use of Personal Imagery

As noted in the introduction, I have sought and examined artistic and narrative images of the underlying meaning and impact of my participants’ journeys. Let me begin by stating how I arrived at the decision to use artistic imagery. A year before beginning this study, I interviewed 40 study abroad returnees while doing research for a video production. These interviews revealed a peculiar characteristic of the personally construed meaning of studying abroad: the returnees profoundly felt the meaning yet it was difficult for them to express it verbally. The saying “if I could only put this into words” captures the struggle to verbalize the meaning of their experience. In this study, finding a medium to linguistically capture the participants’ underlying meaning of their journeys became an immense challenge. As Michael commented, “the experience has a deep impact on me. But, for some strange reason, it is very difficult to explain in words.”

So I turned to my thesis supervisor for guidance on finding a medium for participants to experience their meaning and impact of their journey. He suggested that I see if participants are able to better articulate meaning through artistic illustrations. As the fourteen images below will soon reveal to the reader, artistic imagery helped the participants to cross the chasm and communicate at a deeper level. Eisner (1991) explores the use of arts-based representation as a valuable technique in qualitative inquiry in educational studies. Furthermore, educational
psychologists have adapted techniques from art-therapy to explore meaning in students’ experiences (Schaverian, 1992; Silverstone, 1997).

What’s in an Image?

Perhaps the participants’ difficulty of vocalizing the meaning of their journey is due to the depth of their involvement in the experience. The themes in earlier chapters (e.g. the motivation to study abroad as a conation, cross-cultural adaptation, attachment to landscape and people, re-entry as mourning) reflect the depth of self-involvement in their experiences. As Barer-Stein (1987) states, an anomaly arises out of such profound involvement in any learning experience. She calls this the “paradox of involving”: “the more profound the involvement, the more is appropriated and taken for granted” (p. 101). Ironically, “the better you know something, the less you are aware of knowing it” (p. 101).

Said differently, the personal meaning and impact of their journeys had to some degree taken the place of tacit knowledge. Landgarten (1981) asserts that imagery is important to symbolically express “tacit dimensions” of this meaning. Hence, the images below explore tacit dimensions of the participants’ meaning. They are non-discursive expressions of feelings, thoughts and meaning. As Freud (1963) observes: “I could draw it, a dreamer says to us, but I don’t know how to say it” (p. 90).
The difficulty of linguistically expressing meaning is also related to the way we experience meaning. Mezirow (1991) writes, “meaning is not experienced symbolically in comprehension, as it is in perception.” (p. 22). Indeed, each of us construes meaning in images before we use words. “We could recognize mother before we could say ‘mama’ writes Wadeson (1980, p. 8). Mezirow refers to such a construing of meaning as “presentational construal” (p.24) in contrast to “propositonal construal” (p.24). Presentational construal involves feelings, imagination, intuition and dreams that bring it into awareness. Propositional construal, on the other hand, involves cognition and the ability to linguistically express meaning. Therefore, the artistic images below are symbols of the presentational construal of meaning; narratives emerging from these images are reflective expressions of presentational meaning.

Also embedded in these images are the participants’ efforts to express the holistic (i.e. interconnected) meaning of their experience. This involves an effort to describe the whole “without atomizing it” (Grumet, 1976, p. 32) into individual units. Unlike verbalized linear communication (“we say one thing, then another”, Wadeson, 1980, p. 11), art allows for the holistic and spatial expression of meaning. Wadeson writes:

Sometimes this form of expression more nearly duplicates experience. If I were to tell you about my family, I would tell you about my mother, then about my father, then about their relationship to each other, then about my brother and his relationship to each of them, then about each one’s relationship to me. Obviously, I experience all of this at once. And in a picture I can portray it all at once. I can show closeness and distance, bonds and divisions, similarities and differences, feelings, particular attributes, context of family life ad infinitum. (p. 11)

Finally, these images display the essence of each participants’ meaning (i.e. the core, or underlying or enduring meaning) of studying abroad. In other words, they display
phenomenological meaning of their lived experience. I said to each participant: “Take as much time as you want and draw for me the core meaning of your experience.”

I now elaborate on the image-making process used in this study. Each participant individually created her/his image in my office where I conducted all of the research conversations. I removed posters, paintings and pictures in this room to minimize distraction. I began by discussing with participants the need for art-based research in my study. I informed each participant that her/his image would be included with the text of my dissertation. Then I provided a standard sheet of printing paper with three black-ink markers. I asked the participant to take five to ten minutes to reflect on her/his core meaning of studying abroad before beginning to draw. Then I left the room to allow the participant to create her/his image in privacy. I returned after twenty minutes to conduct a research conversation around the picture. I first asked people to explain their image, its components, and what it depicts. The narrative quote included with each image comes from participants’ self-interpretations of the images during these research conversations.

I further explored the image with the participant. I asked, for example, “Why did you decide to put yourself in the image?” and “Can you say more about these arrows on your image?”. I focused on facilitating self-interpretations of images because I wanted to be person-centred in my research. I believed that the creator of the image knows its meaning best. However, later I sought the help of a friend, an art-therapist, to learn ways of interpreting these images. Later in this chapter (p.262) I provide my own interpretive observations about the images.
One important point to note is that these are "embodied" images (Silverstone, 1997, p. 86). Each image is a depiction of a preconceived mental image; each one embodies the participant's mental image of the meaning and impact of studying abroad. However, in the process of transforming the mental image to a pictorial one, the participant likely transforms the meaning of her preconceived image. Thus "the picture is not a likeness of the initial mental image, although it may evoke similar effects. Rather, it is as if the intensity of the pre-conscious and unconscious mental image is articulated in the pictured forms...it transcends what is consciously known" (p. 87).
6.2.1 Fourteen Journeys: Fourteen Images

Having outlined what they contain, I now turn to the fourteen images. At the outset I want to say that I agonized whether to provide all fourteen images, or to present only the shared dimensions. In the end I decided to present all the images because each image is unique. Each one relates to its creator's motivation for wanting to study abroad, her/his experience in the host country, and personal experiences during re-entry.

Each image is also a very personal interpretation of its creator's meaning of his/her journey. In creating and narrating the image, each participant became a co-researcher and co-interpreter of her/his lived-experience. Belinda commented:

It [creating the image] made me realize, just as I started to draw, that I should try to find a balance between the two worlds [see Image 2 for her depiction of the two worlds]. I could easily reject the western culture and idealize the other. Or I can do the opposite and forget the experience and fall back into where I was before. What I need is a balance."  

(Belinda, March 3, 1997)

I comment on these images in the concluding section of this chapter.
Anne: “Realization that I have an impact on My Own Life”

The most enduring meaning and impact of my experience in China was the realization that I can have an impact on my own life. It is the realization that I have some control over my own destiny. In China I became aware of how strong a person’s own actions and attitudes influence the success and happiness of one’s own life. People in China have little choice. They have very little control over their own lives. As a foreigner, I had a lot of influence in China and could easily sway some decisions to my favour. Chinese students in my classes cannot do that. The majority of Chinese people have very little control over their lives. I realized the freedom and choices that I have in Canada after I came back. My drawing shows my realization of how little Chinese people have influence on their lives compared to how much influence Canadians and Americans have on their own lives. This is what I learned in China. I will always try to appreciate the choices that I have and make the best use of them. I now know how lucky we are in Canada. (Anne, Feb. 18, 1997)
Belinda: "Knowing what a sense of freedom can bring out in me"

These two worlds and I in them show the core impact of the experience of going to India. When I was in India, I was free, the world was a big and strange place. I was very small compared to the rest of the world. I really found that "I" and "Canada" play a very small role in the world. I realized how little control we as Canadians have on things. But the most important thing for me was that sense of freedom that I got while I was there. I became more aware of my own strengths and weaknesses. I realized what I really wanted to do in life. After coming back, I came into a very restricted and small world. See, I can barely fit into this world, I cannot move around in it. This is my reality in Toronto. The arrow that goes back and forth shows that I still move in these two spaces even after coming back. That sense of how small I am in the world in Canada is still there. But, I feel that my life again is restricted. So, the most important impact is this realization and knowing what a sense of freedom could bring out in me. (Belinda, March 3, 1997)
This circle represents a thing that is encompassing. It shows that now I am able to look at things from many sides as opposed to my own. I had many ideas to do for my diagram. I wanted to do something with jagged edges and one that is a circle. I was going to say that I am like a circle; I am well rounded now after the experience. I am also now a more softer person. But, this does not mean that I am a soft person, it means that I am now a more understanding person than I was before. This represents how all rounded I am. For example, today someone told me that I am more analytical. Before I went away, I don’t think anyone would have told me that I am analytical. It seems that I am now more understanding of others' points of view and more analytical as well. I think I look at people in a different way than I did before. Now I see people in more dimensions, before I went I viewed all people as one-dimensional. The arrows show how unidimensionally I found the world before I went abroad. I don’t think I will do that anymore. I also see issues in multi-dimensions. For example, let’s do foreign aid. Before I was for foreign aid, now I am both for and against aid. From what I have seen by travelling in Asia, I don’t think that aid does anything. For the country giving the aid, they can get a better return on their investment. (Brian, Feb. 27, 1997)
The meaning of my experience is many. So I have divided them into several parts. You know, all of these are kind of about the same thing, getting new ideas and ways to look at many things. The picture shows how I am at the centre of the world and influenced by many things. First of all, I gained a more critical view of Canada. After living in France for a while, I now have a lot more sympathy for what people in Quebec want from Canada. I now see Canada very differently. I also now understand a lot more about the rest of the world. So, just as I can understand Quebecois aspirations, I now better understand and relate to other people and countries. Before I left I had moved from teenage idealism to pragmatism. But, after spending a year in France, I think I am once again more idealistic. I have certain ideas, people from various cultures could live together, and a respect for human rights that are more solidified. This could be a type of idealism. (Daven, March. 10, 1997).
Diana: “There is a nice balance now in my life”

My image is split up into three different parts, before, during and after the exchange. Before the exchange there is this cloud and lightning above my hands and I was tied with family and school responsibilities, it really was a tug of war. One side was my obligation to my family and my relationship to them and the other side is the stress of school. During the exchange you see the big sunshine. The sun is coming down on me. The little cloud is there with a little bit of lightning because there was some level of challenge with school and work in Germany, there is always that little amount of stress. But, this stress was not enough to overpower me. Coming home, I have both, and you can see that instead of my arms being pulled in different directions, it is well balanced and under my control. There is a nice balance now in my life. I am now able to find a balance between the two [family and self] and an inner peace. The happy face is not as big a smile as it was when I was in Germany, but it is a contented smile. Sunshine and clouds are my way of imagining feelings. I like to imagine feelings in terms of moods. Rainy and cloudy days bring my mood and feelings down. Everything hangs on emotions for me. My emotional well-being changes tremendously during the experience. (Diana, March 18, 1997)
Greg: "As easy as it is to live abroad, I don't really belong out there."

Here [after returning to Canada] I am inside the middle square. The square is in my head and in my heart now. There is also one light bulb. Overall, friendship and community is missing. Income is missing. What is around the square is a phenomenal amount of companionship, celebration, travel and affirmation. That's what abroad was like.

Below is the post-colonial privilege that I experienced in Singapore. I had an income and I was clearly overpaid and privileged because I was white. That is a shadow of the imperialism. I hate that. Also there is tourism going to Bali. I love Bali, but how much is Bali a creation of my desire to have the "other" as pure and innocent? The other shadow below contains the goofy imperialist expatriates around me.

I do not have a community here [Canada], and I am very lonely. But, I prefer this than to be one of those privileged expatriates. Here [Canada] is home for me and I do belong here in some sense. As easy as it is to live abroad, I don't really belong out there. I belong here. Now I realize that. When you are abroad, there is also that lack of identity. So, there is an ambivalence of not dwelling. In a sense living abroad gives you the freedom to be what you want to be. At home you have all those expectations of family, job, RRSP, income and everything that goes with the home territory. Abroad, you do not have these pressures. (Greg, March 28, 1997)
This picture shows the core meaning of my study abroad experience. Over there, that is before I went, is a “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle” [a character in a popular children’s program]. Over here, that is after I came back from studying abroad, is the “Splinter” [a character in the same children’s program]. Splinter is the spiritual guide of the teenage mutant ninja turtles. You know, these ninja turtles are rough, they go and “kick butt” and stuff like that. Splinter is like their parent, sort of calm, wise and gentle. He is the wise guy, which is exactly it. I have me as a mutant ninja turtle before going and after coming back I am quasi Splinter like. What this represents is that before I went, I was like a ninja, very hyper and rushed and full of quick lines and juvenile personality. Splinter, on the other hand, - even though I am not old like him - is old and wrinkled like a grandparent, he is almost spiritual. He is a lot more relaxed and calm and very dignified of course. These guys [ninja turtles] are empty up here [pointing to head]. He [Splinter] is a lot calmer and a lot slower. He thinks and reflects a lot more. So, I am like Splinter now after I came back. I am more relaxed and wiser. (Jonil, March 6, 1997)
Image 8

John: "My place is the entire world"

The main meaning that I got out of the exchange is my perception of what my place is in the world. Not what's my duty or role, but where I could be and how I relate to the rest of the world. Before I went, I always felt that I could only fit in or be comfortable at home. So the "before" part of this picture shows how I was tied to home and wanted to go away. The tension on the string that ties me to home shows that even after moving some distance, I would be yanked back to home. But in the second drawing [after], there is no tension on the string, it is kind of elastic. After coming back, I know that I will always remain connected to home, but I am free to roam around. I think I could even live somewhere else. Now, although I can live here, I would like to live and work abroad for some time. In other words, now I know that my place is the entire world. (John, Feb. 18, 1997)
Linda: "I needed to be in the right environment to start my growth process, I am still growing from the process that started there"

I find it surprising that what came to my mind as the core meaning of my experience is a plant, nurtured by rain and sun. The idea of gardening, plants and nature weren’t things that I was interested in before. When I went to Zimbabwe I was completely overwhelmed by the amount of gardens, everyone had a garden. So gardening had a really strong influence on me. Nature had a big influence on me. What happened to me was like what happens to a growing plant. It was a whole growth process. The experience showed me more potential for growth in a lot of different ways. Like this plant in the picture, I needed to be in the right environment to start my growth process; I am still growing from the process that started there. The placement abroad was like the thrust that pushed me forward on a transition that had started before I left to Zimbabwe. (Linda, March 14, 1997)
Michael: “I became complete as a person”

Basically what I am trying to explain is that my exchange experience opened my eyes and broadened my horizons. Before going on the exchange my attitude was one-dimensional. Exposure to a different environment, and a new way of life, changed my life. In Germany, people have a very different attitude to life. For example, the social life in Germany is very different from people here. In North America people don’t spend much time on social life. German people know how to separate work from social life. So the experience of living in Germany made me realise that there is more to life than I thought. It also made me critical of the life here in Canada. I question if I want to live the life as I am doing now or make some changes. I made some changes. I became more people oriented. Before the exchange, I was more withdrawn to myself. During the exchange, I was so free and happy that I actually liked spending time with people. After I came back I was missing that so I tried to make more friends. I became complete as a person. I became more assertive. I discovered a lot about my personality. So, the box represents the new dimensions of my personality that I found as well. The new things I found about myself are that I was able to overcome some challenges that the exchange imposed on me. I really became more self-confident and creative.

(Michael, March 6, 1997)
I divided my picture into two parts: before and after. The before picture represents myself depending on my parents and friends. So I was inside a circle with parents and friends. The question mark on my head shows how I was then always wondering if I could go away somewhere and live on my own. It is like saying to myself, “can I break from this circle?” The lines on the left are representative of living a day-to-day routine and counting up the days rather than living. The after picture shows a really big head. This head represents new-found knowledge about myself; the wider eyes are new perspectives; the muscle on my arms represents mental strength; the hammer in my hand shows that I have the tools to now do whatever I want. The footprints show that I have made my mark in my own life. The horizon above me shows the world and my place within it – I see myself as a small part of a very large whole. Before I went abroad, I did not see far beyond this circle that I had drawn in the before part. (Milana, March 24, 1997)
My metaphorical meaning of the experience is very simple. It is climbing a mountain for bravery and personal accomplishment. I feel more confident and braver. I am proud to say to people that I lived in Jamaica. Since I was able to handle Jamaica, I now know that I can handle many more things. It has given me the confidence to go into graduate school so I am now applying for graduate school. Before going, I was not that confident about myself. Now, I am on the top of the mountain and looking at the valley and ocean below and the horizon above me, contemplating my next adventure. I actually want to go away somewhere. I think that I will do some graduate studies abroad or work abroad as well.

(Myra, Feb. 27, 1997)
Stephan: "The new principles are my own unique way of seeing the world"

Basically this is a building. On the right is an elevator that it is going up by floors. Along the way there have been certain developments [explained below as stages] in the way I have come to see the world. The first stage threw a lot of my theories into anarchy. At first, I was seeing things only in black and white and in an orderly way. In the second stage, I was scrambling to find order where there was some order previously. So, it was a stage of loss of order and confusion. You realize that it gets more and more complicated as you ask more questions and you find less order. Eventually, you do figure things out and the lines all form certain types of patterns. In the third stage, things are no longer tangled like the way they were in the second stage, but there was also no black and white kind of order. In this stage you begin to see everything relative to everything else. There is nothing that is superior to anything else. I went through this stage. Then, you eventually get to the stage that where I am now. At this stage, these ideologies and principles that order your world still exist, but some principles have broken away from the rest. These principles have become free flowing, different from the other ways of looking at the world. At this stage, you believe in relativism, but you also have some core values that provide you with some meaning. The new principles are my own unique way of seeing the world. It maintains some of the original shape, but they are out there and not controlled by anything. The idea of standing up on the building is to say that now I see things from bird's-eye-view, I see the big picture and I am not trapped on the second floor. This has been the meaning of study abroad for me.

(Stephan, March, 7, 1997)
Terisa: "Before I went to Cuba I did not know to what extent that the world was really in trouble"

This is a rose of hope that sprung from the island of Cuba. It is set in front of the world. You can see a faint outline of the world that is crying from sadness. For me this symbolises the accumulation of my personal experiences. What I am trying to show is my hope for Cuba and people in the rest of the world. Unfortunately, I see the state of the world as a sad affair, I think we are headed towards destruction. Before I went to Cuba I did not know to what extent that the world was really in trouble. In terms of self-analysis, I simply realized how important it is to make sure that the world does flourish and grow. The intention and open-mindedness that I carried to Cuba helped me to get this new perspective. I went to Cuba wanting to find how people can live together and survive. The hope that I am trying to describe is the hope for basic fundamental rights. The flower represents peace just as it represents my hope. We need to stop fighting and we need to provide children with milk. The sad thing is that after coming back, I realized that the principles we have in the Western Hemisphere are not going to lead to a better world. In Cuba, I was beginning to understand the root of the problems we face. That is why I drew so many roots.

(Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)
My Observations About the Images

Having provided the fourteen images, I now make a few general observations about them. An image of a person (i.e. self) appears in eight of the fourteen images (Images 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12). In addition, Images 9 and 14 metaphorically depict self as a growing plant. Thus, in total, ten images are about “self”, referring to an aspect of self-transformation. An obvious dimension of these images regarding “self” is the emphasis placed on the ‘head’ (note the proportionately large size of head in the representation of self in relation to other parts of the body, with the exception of Image 7). This emphasis on the head suggests that the core meaning of studying abroad is located in the ‘inner’ or ‘mental’ world of the participants. In the next section, I discuss the recurring themes self-transformation in these images: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-confidence/self-esteem, (3) autonomy and relatedness, (4) belongingness to Canada and place in the world, (5) inclusive worldview and (6) life direction.

Images 1, 3, 10, 13 depict a transformation of perspectives. Anne (Image 1) shows the realization of the freedom she has relating to the direction of her own life path. Brian (Image 3) shows his ability to perceive issues from multiple perspectives after studying abroad. Michael (Image 10) depicts how his perspective developed from “one-dimensional” to “multi-dimensional” as a result of studying abroad. Finally Stephan (Image 13) shows the progression of his perspective on things from “black and white” on to “confusion” to “relativism”. These images tell a story in which the transformation of
perspective on "others" is inseparable from a changing perspective of oneself (i.e. self-development). I explore this theme later under the subheading of 'self and the other.'

6.3 PART TWO

The Journey as a Whole

As I begin this section, I take the first step in ending a long and rewarding thesis journey. I feel as if I am changing gears to land a plane in which I have flown with 14 travellers. This flight began on a cold night in December 1995. I was walking home after the final seminar of a qualitative research methods course at the end of a busy workday. I was exhausted. As I left the class my mind was preoccupied with the search for a thesis topic, as it had often been for the past three months. While crossing the Front Campus (a circular open field at U of T) a research topic emerged out of the open space. My search for a personally meaningful study ended at that moment. And I asked "why didn't I discover it earlier?" The gist of this topic, after all, had been in my consciousness for many years - informed by my career, my academic studies and personal experience. That moment revealed to me the insight of an academic advisor's comment: "The search for a thesis topic is organic. If you stay out there long enough, the topic will eventually find you."

I now prepare to end my thesis journey after being "out there" for two and a half years. In The Doctoral Thesis Journey, Diamond (1994) writes:
Once you begin, resist the urge to hurry home to the safety of the known. You can become a traveller only by staying 'out there,' on the margins. And you will arrive. (p. 60)

My co-participants also stayed “out there, on the margins,” while they were abroad and also during their re-entry. They also stayed “out there” with me as co-participants and co-researchers for ten months. Their artistic images and narratives of meaning depict how they had changed when they eventually arrived “home”. The “home” they arrived at was not simply the place of birth but also a state of equilibrium and an acceptance of a transformed self and perspective. I now begin the process of building a whole out of the multiple phases of their collective story by creating an integrative representation of their diverse yet overlapping narratives.

6.3.1 A Model of the Collective Journey: Weaving the Strands Together

The image in Fig. 6.1 (see p.265) holistically represents a four-branched tree. ‘Setting the Stage’ is analogous to the ecological environment that nurtured the tree’s growth. The ‘Motivation for Wanting to Study Abroad’ in Fig. 6.1 is the first branch of the tree. ‘Pre-departure Experience’ is the second branch; ‘Taking the Journey’ is the third; and ‘Returning Home’ is the fourth. ‘Meaning and Impact’ are at the core of the trunk connecting these branches as parts of a whole. The six sub-themes inside the trunk are like rings growing into each other to form the trunk. I offer this image as an alternative framework for understanding the impact of study abroad because it portrays a complex learning experience that is simultaneously global, holistic, multi-dimensional and transformative.
During: Taking the Journey (Chapter Five, Part Three)
- Arriving and settling in
- Culture shock as a transformative learning process
- Ways of adapting to the host culture
- Feeling at home

Meaning and Impact (Chapter Six)
Study Abroad as Transformation
- Self-awareness
- Self-confidence
- Autonomy and relatedness
- Belongingness to Canada
- One's place in the world
- Inclusive worldview
- Life direction

Motivation for Wanting to Study Abroad (Chapter Four)
- A conative desire for cross-cultural immersion abroad
- Stepping out of constraining boundaries
- Learning the language of the host country and findings academic direction

Formation of the Desire for Study Abroad (Chapter Four)
- Direct and subtle influence of parents
- Influence of friends
- Socialization

Before: Pre-departure Experience - A Bittersweet Time (Chapter Five, Part Two)
- Transition from excitement to apprehensiveness
- Practical preparation
- Academic preparation
- Imagining

After: Returning Home (Chapter Five, Part Four)
- Re-turning home: preparing to come home
- Strangers at home: mourning and the reconstruction of relationships
- Academic re-entry
- Feeling at home again

Figure 6.1
Study Abroad Journey as Transformation
Assumptions

A tree stands on the earth that sustains its growth. The foundation of this model consists of the assumptions informing this study's conceptual framework (Chapter One, pp. 14 - 22). Let me very briefly return to two related curricular frameworks and illustrate how they blend to form this model's foundation. These frameworks are (1) curriculum as currere and (2) global education.

Curriculum as currere is "one of the most recent positions to emerge on the curriculum horizon" (Schubert, 1986 p. 33). Rather than interpreting curriculum etymologically and nominally as a course to be run, advocates of this position emphasize the root infinitive currere to stress the activity of running (Graham, 1991). This highlights an individual's capacity "to reconceptualize her or his autobiography" (Schubert, 1986, p. 33) as curriculum. Dewey's (1938) idea that curriculum should not be composed of activities that set pre-determined learning outcomes relates to this position. Currere allows us to conceive of curriculum as a process of construction and reconstruction, a process of "active reflection on one's own experience in the service of self-realization" (Graham, 1991, p. 120). From this perspective, the curriculum of study abroad is embedded both in the lived experience of study abroad students and in their active reflection upon this experience.

As the curriculum of study abroad is embedded in reflection and lived experience, global education provides a necessarily holistic framework to understand and discuss the
meaning of this experience. There are many divergent conceptions of global education. Lamy (1991) warns against reductive and simplistic definitions of global education. He advocates the development of multi-faceted conceptual frameworks. I strongly share this view.

As noted in Chapter One (pp.14 -22), the foundation of this study is built upon Pike and Selby’s (1988; 1995) conceptualization of “person-centred, planet-conscious learning” (1988, p. 43), or simply stated “global learning”. The image in Fig. 6.1 is also built on this particular conceptualization. Pike and Selby’s (1988) four-dimensional model of global education illustrates four key dimensions of global learning: (1) spatial (2) issues, (3) temporal and, (4) inner. The experiential learning process of studying abroad embodies these four dimensions. “The spatial dimension focuses upon global interdependence and the increasingly systematic nature of the contemporary world” write Pike and Selby (1995, p. 7). The development of an inclusive worldview that I later discuss (p.280) shows how the meaning of studying abroad includes the spatial dimension. The issues dimension includes three aspects: (1) learning about key global issues, (2) becoming familiar with opinions and perspectives brought to bear on specific issues, and (3) applying holistic thinking to global issues (Pike & Selby, 1995): The temporal dimension is about “temporal globality” (p.15); “past, present, and future are perceived of as in dynamic relationship” (p. 15) to each other. I incorporate the temporal phases (before, during and after) of studying abroad into this study’s conceptual framework to acknowledge the temporal dimension of global learning. In addition, the theme of ‘life direction’ (p.282) shows how studying abroad continues to influence
participants' life decisions (i.e. future). Finally, the themes I discuss under self-awareness (p.273), self-confidence (p.274), autonomy and relatedness (p.276), and life direction (p.282) explore "inner" dimensions of studying abroad.

The image in Fig. 6.1 also connects these four dimensions to other characteristics of global learning, including learning that is experiential and affirmative of self and of others (Pike & Selby, 1988). The theme 'self and others' (p.271) shows how studying abroad brings together the awareness of self and others.
The Trunk of the Tree: Transformation as the Core Meaning

My use of "transformation" has a specific meaning. It does not simply indicate change — "substitution of one for another" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976, p. 165). Instead, transformation means "change in form" (p. 1232) — a gradual evolution of one's prior frame of reference or meaning perspectives. It is a slow and incremental process akin to a caterpillar changing into a butterfly.

Transformation of "self" ("a person's own individuality or essence", Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976, p. 1030) and transformation of one's "perspective" are two dynamically interrelated themes that encapsulate the meaning and impact of participants' respective journeys. Image 7 is an apt example of such a personal transformation of self. In it Jonil depicts how he transformed from the aggressive "Ninja" to the calm and wise "Splinter".

Why was the study abroad journey a transformative learning experience? The unfolding of the participants' experiences in each consecutive phase (i.e. before, during and after) illustrates a gradual yet profoundly transformative experience. To represent this, let me draw the reader's attention to the common patterns of experience appearing in each phase as depicted in Fig. 6.2.
By suggesting that Fig. 6.2 represents a common process in each phase, I risk diminishing the very complexity and depth of experience that I have painstakingly portrayed in Parts Two, Three, and Four of Chapter Five. However, a non-reductive focus on commonality can help us to understand why transformation occupies a central place in the participants' experiences.
Pre-departure saw participants moving between excitement and apprehensiveness. They imagined the journey ahead to try to make sense of their desire to study abroad (Part One, Chapter Five). The emotional experience of adapting to host countries as well as re-adapting to home mirrors the process in Fig. 6.1. Periods of disequilibrium abroad (culture shock) and at home (reverse culture shock) impelled participants to make adjustments, restructure relationships, and regain an internal equilibrium. Mezirow (1991) writes that any major challenge to an established perspective “results from a series of dilemmas or in response to an externally imposed epochal dilemma such as death, illness, separation or divorce...or from efforts to understand a different culture with customs that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions” (p.168). Hence, the experience of culture shock and reverse culture shock are analogous to “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow, 1991) in transformative learning theory.

The “Self” and the “Other”

The participants’ perspective transformation can be construed as “person-centred, planet conscious learning” (Pike and Selby’s 1988, p. 34). It is person-centred because it embodies learning about self that emerges from introspection (“thinking about self”, Mezirow, 1991, p. 107) during times of disequilibrium. It is planet conscious because the transformation emerges from reconstructing relationships to home and abroad, leading to the development of a worldview that is inclusive of other cultures, countries and people. Hence, an expanded awareness of the “other” is enhanced through a deeper awareness of self - the journey outward is also the journey inward (Pike and Selby, 1988).
The kinship between the “inner” and the “outer” worlds is manifested in 9 of the previous 14 artistic images. These images contain a picture of “self” in relation to the outer world. Consider Greg’s image (Image 6). At the centre is himself in relation to Canada (represented by a maple leaf). As a whole, this image is about Greg’s relationship to friends (people), the meaning of “post-colonial privilege abroad” (issues of race and power), and landscapes (places). The substantive question in his image is “where am I now?” (my emphasis) in relation to Canada and abroad.

### 6.3.2 Rings Around the Core

While transformative learning experience is at the core of my tree’s trunk, six sub-themes (outcomes) inform the breath of this experience. These sub-themes are:

1. self-awareness
2. self-confidence
3. autonomy and relatedness,
4. belongingness to Canada and place in the world
5. inclusive worldview
6. life direction

The four three sub-themes fall within the inner dimension (i.e. person-centredness) of the learning experience of studying abroad. The fifth sub-theme (inclusive worldview) falls
within the outer dimension of the learning experience. Finally the sixth sub-theme (life direction) is about the continuity – future dimension – of the study abroad experience.

Self-awareness

Although increased self-awareness is an impact shared by all participants, the meaning of this increased awareness of self unfolded uniquely and contextually (i.e. tied to the personal context of the participant and the cultural context of the host country) for each participant. For example, Anne became aware of the power of her own “action and attitude” on the “success of her own life” while living in China (Image 1). Belinda, on the other hand, became more aware of “how little control” she has on what happens around her during her re-entry experience (Image 2). Linda commented that “by going to Zimbabwe I gained a greater awareness of what it means for me to be a black woman.” Greg’s self-awareness was about realizing that Canada is where he feels a “sense of belonging” (Image 6). Michael “discovered a lot about [his] personality” by living in Germany (Image 10), and Milana said that the “head” in her picture (Image 11) “represents new-found knowledge about myself.” These are just a few examples of the many expressions of self-awareness in this study.

The development of self-awareness is an inevitable outcome of cross-cultural immersion abroad. As Kauffmann et. al. (1992) write, “understanding and transcending culture cannot be accomplished without some degree of self-awareness” (p.100). Living abroad provided these participants with potent new experiences that gave ample
opportunities to see themselves in a new light. Self-awareness also arose out of reflecting upon and reconstructing one's autonomy, values, relationships and place in the world. Hence, awareness of self and the awareness of the other were inseparable.

Self-confidence/Self-Esteem

A symbiotic relationship exists between the development of self-awareness and the development of self-confidence. Myra's image (Image 12) illustrates the mutual dependency between the two. She gained a greater awareness of her ability to overcome personal obstacles by climbing the mountain of "bravery and personal accomplishment" depicted in her image. When she reached the top she became "more confident and braver." In a similar vein, Michael (Image 10) explained: "the new thing I found out about myself is that I was able to overcome some challenges that the exchange imposed on me. I really became more self-confident and creative." Diana became "confident and assured of pursuing graduate studies" by discovering that she would enjoy a career as a professor of German. Others also experienced this symbiotic relationship between self-awareness and self-confidence as an "outcome" (Daven) of their journey.

As evident in the examples above, the development of increased self-awareness and self-confidence relates to the participants' experience of overcoming challenges presented by their journeys. As Bandura (1986) indicates, self-confidence increases when a person successfully meets a number of challenges. Participants' challenges during pre-
departure preparations, cultural adaptation abroad, and re-entry have been detailed in Chapter Five.

The experience of overcoming these challenges, in combination with the self-directed nature of their journey abroad (recall the metaphor of the solo navigator in Chapter Four), place participants’ experiences in the domain of “experiential learning”. Commenting on experiential learning, Pike and Selby (1988) write:

The two key elements [of experiential learning] are the direct involvement of the learner, who is not controlled or guided by an external agent, and the change that takes place in terms of the learner’s awareness and understanding of self. Experiential learning essentially involves an exploration of personal feelings, attitudes and values through which development of cognitive skills can take place, either during the experience, or on reflection thereafter. (p. 45)

The participants’ journey clearly encompasses these two elements; there is direct involvement by the learner and a change of awareness and understanding of self.

Development of self-confidence is inseparable from the development of self-esteem, a positive image of and respect for oneself (Silverstone, 1992). Jonil (Image 7) explained how he became “quasi Splinter like” – “more relaxed and calm and very dignified.” This new self-image is one that Jonil holds in high esteem. Michael (Image 10) depicts how he became “more complete as a person”. He also came home with an image of himself as a “complete person” that he valued and respected. Milana’s image (Image 11) tells the story of her new self-image: “the wider eyes are new perspectives; the muscles on my arms represent mental strength; the hammer in my hand shows that I
have the tools to now do whatever I want.” This self-image of a strong personality provides her with high self-esteem.

**Autonomy and Relatedness**

In *Chapter Four* I explored the theme of negotiating autonomy and relatedness to parents as a key motivation for the desire for study abroad (pp. 127 – 129). I now continue this theme to explore how autonomy and relatedness unfold at the end of the study abroad experience. Let me illustrate how participants presented the development of self-autonomy through a few examples. Diana, John and Milana’s images (*Images 5, 8, & 11*) depict three different expressions of negotiating autonomy. Diana’s image (*Image 5*) illustrates the achievement of an adequate balance between self-autonomy and relatedness to parents. John’s image (*Image 8*) shows a loosening of attachment to home and parents. Milana’s image (*Image 11*) tells the story of moving out of a circle of dependency between parents and friends as a result of her journey abroad. Brian also provides an example of how self-autonomy played out during his re-entry experience. He narrated:

*Before I went, I was independent. I never had a curfew from my parents. But, when I came back I developed a nagging sensation about my parents not recognizing my independence. For example, when I came back it annoyed me when my mother says ‘have you done your homework?’ Before I would say ‘yeah whatever’. It didn’t bother me then. But now it really bothers me when she does that. I feel like I had been away for a year and I have become independent.* (Brian, Feb. 27, 1997)
In Chapter Four I defined autonomy as "independence of thought and behaviour" and relatedness as "involvement with and connectedness to others" (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996, p. 16). While this definition of autonomy focuses on "independence", Parks (1986) provides an alternative perspective that centres on "dependence." She writes that dependence is an inevitable dimension of the dynamic between self and other. In other words "humans are always and necessarily interdependent beings, but the form, experience, and awareness of dependence changes" (p.77). She claims that the evolution of dependence in human development follows three phases: other-dependence, inner-dependence, and inter-dependence. In other words, during the human maturation process a person whose sense of the world "is dependent upon an uncritically assumed authority" develops, after several in-between phases, to the point where the "locus of primary trust now resides neither in the assumed authority of the inner self. Rather, trust is now centred in the meeting of self and the other" (p.101). Trust becomes centred in inter-dependence.

The interconnection between self-autonomy and relatedness becomes apparent when self-autonomy is analyzed in light of Parks’ perspective on dependence. As noted earlier, Diana’s image (Image 5) depicts the achievement of a balance between her relatedness to her mother and her self-autonomy. Similarly Daven commented that “I became closer to my parents and at the same time I also became more independent.” Myra also said that she became closer to her mother, yet she moved out of her mother’s apartment to maintain autonomy. These participants seem to have moved towards the
phase of inter-dependence as a result of their study abroad journey; their self-autonomy is intertwined with relatedness. Parks captures this intertwining in the following statement:

The motion of meaning-making is located in the oscillation between ‘two great yearnings’ of human beings: the yearning to be distinct - to exercise one’s own action in the world, to stand alone, to differentiate the self from the other – and the yearning for connection, inclusion, belonging, relation, intimacy and communion. (p. 63).

Belongingness to Canada and Place in the World

These “two great yearnings” were also present during culture shock and during reverse culture shock. Commenting on the experience of culture shock, Belinda wrote, “when you feel that you don’t belong there [India] you begin to know you are foreign, different, a Canadian, and you affirm your Canadianess. You long for home” On the other hand, while reflecting on re-entry, Brian said:

It’s hard to explain. I love Japan like my own country. But, this love for Japan also kind of confirms that Canada is really my country. It’s really hard to explain. You see, if I have to take sides in a war between Canada and Japan, I would have to take Canada’s side because this is where I belong. Of course, I will try to stop the war first. (Brian, Feb. 27. 1997)

Belinda in the above quote was yearning for connection to home while Brian was yearning to remain connected to Japan. In the midst of these two yearnings, the participants transformed their perspective on Canada. As John commented, “there are so many great things about Canada, but it is when you leave Canada that you appreciate them.” Similarly, Brian recalled, “one thing that I want to say before I forget is that you
learn more about your own country when you live abroad than you learn about your host country. It made me think of who I was as a Canadian and what that meant to me."

In contrast to John and Belinda, Jonil’s experience made him perceive Canada through a critical lens while affirming his belongingness to Canada:

In Canada, we live a sheltered life. We also enjoy a standard of living that’s second to none. And our behaviour reflects that. We don’t have to rely on the ‘macho man’ attitude to survive. We don’t have to try to succeed by stepping onto your friend. We can be softer gentler beings. There is no place for softness in Third World poverty. But my image of Canada is tarnished, if nothing else. As Canadians we are complacent. We can afford to be soft and gentle because we are privileged. But, we do not share with others, as we should. I am still proud of my country. Canada is my home, this is where I belong. But, yeah, I have a different image of Canada. (Jonil, March 6, 1997)

The transformation of participants’ perspectives on Canada occurred concurrently with a reconstruction of their “place in the world” (John). As depicted in John’s image (Image 8) the core meaning of his journey was the discovery of his “place in the entire world”. Brian explained further what it means to transform how he related to the world:

I no longer have a particular place that I think I feel I ought to live. I want to live everywhere. I know I can live anywhere. I have a very international view of things. Japan and Canada have been my focal points just because I lived in these countries. But I would now like to live somewhere else. The essential thing is that I now look beyond the borders of Canada. (Brian, Feb. 27, 1997)

Belinda’s image (Image 2) expresses the emotional tension of belonging to two worlds, the world at home and the world abroad. She drew an arrow between the image of two worlds to show her emotional oscillation between them. She explained:
By going abroad, in one sense the world became a larger place for me. But, at the same time it became smaller because I now have an emotional link to, and friends in, other parts of the world. The world doesn’t seem as foreign. But trying to go back and forth between the two worlds is a real challenge. (Belinda, March 3, 1997)

Inclusive Worldview

The participants’ reconstruction of their place in the wider world is obviously dynamically woven into and changes the matrix of their inner worldview - one transforms the other. Ong (1969) states that worldview refers to a personal perception of “what is and how it is” (p. 4). Newton and Caple (1985) explain that worldview “defines, organizes, and brings order to our lives” (p. 163). By placing the adjective “inclusive” in front of worldview, I am representing a worldview that is inclusive of other cultures, people and the issues that affect people globally. Alternatively I could place the word “global” in front of worldview to illustrate this perspective. The journey abroad interlaced a thread of world-mindedness into the fabric of each participant’s worldview.

In the following excerpt, Jonil describes the infusion of a global perspective into his worldview:

When I say I am now worldly, what I mean is that I now see more of the world. I grew up in a world that was secluded from the rest of the world. Things happening outside Canada did not affect my life in Canada. Now that I have gone abroad, the world outside is real. World to me is like a space with a whole lot of people in it. Because we all do not live in the same circumstances – I mean economic, environmental and so on - we turn out different. It is the environment that creates the culture. People who live in different countries and cultures are different. It is a good thing.
But we are also connected in a sense because we are all human. We all feel the same way about some things. But what concerns me is that we treat each other like crap.  

( Jonil, March 6, 1997)

While Jonil’s worldview takes into consideration the interdependence of nations and cultures, the following quote from Brian shows that the development of empathy is another dimension of such a worldview. He commented:

My experience abroad inspired me to be more inquisitive, to ask more questions. One of my most favourite things to talk about now is being a minority. Having lived as a minority abroad, I know what it’s like being a minority. I can relate to it. And I feel I can talk about it and obviously understand it better.  

(Brian, Feb. 27, 1997)

Terisa’s image (Image 14) shows yet another dimension of an inclusive worldview. Her image embodies her sadness for “the state of the world.” As we also hear in her narrative, Terisa’s view of the world consists of a strong emotional commitment to and hope for a better world that she can imagine because of her experience in Cuba. Concern for the “state of the world” is a dimension of an inclusive worldview that Terisa shares with Anne, Greg, Jonil, Linda, Milana, Myra and Stephan.

The development of an inclusive worldview manifests itself in participants’ behaviour, making it an impact apparent to others. Many significant others observed such an inclusive worldview in action. For example, John’s “significant other” told me that “John is more interested in world affairs. I know that because he now wants to read and listen to world news all the time. Before he would read engineering magazines, now [after returning from the exchange] he reads the Economist.” In a similar fashion, Daven’s father also commented about Daven’s interest in world politics. In a less positive
interpretation, Milana’s friend commented on Milana’s “continuous and annoying interest in all things foreign – foreign food, clothes, people and movies.”

Finally, let me draw the attention of the reader to Stephan’s image (Image13) where he eloquently portrays a three-staged process of developing a uniquely personal worldview. Recall the image of the elevator moving up through three floors. He created this image while reflecting on his work abroad experience in Nicaragua and his study abroad experience in Mexico. He says that the first stage represents an ethnocentric perspective where his view of the world was in “black and white”. The second stage could be construed as an ethno-relative view of the world in which “everything was relative to everything else.” Finally in the third phase he forms a personal view of the world. This final stage can be seen as a worldview that integrates self and others. I strongly suspect that study abroad facilitates the development of such integrated worldviews.

Life Direction

An increased awareness of self, greater self-confidence, a transformation of belongingness, and the development of an inclusive worldview undoubtedly influence participants’ life directions. This influence provides continuity to the meaning of their journey. This is demonstrated by participants’ desire for subsequent immersion abroad experiences. Several participants have once again gone abroad to work or study. This continuity also unfolds in participants’ career directions and commitment to academic fields.
Finding a career, or vocation, involves finding a fit between one’s unique and emerging self and the larger global community. The experience of the participants underscores the influence of study abroad on career direction. Their experience reveals the challenge and complexity of finding one’s place in society, especially one that is viewed more globally.

The influence of study abroad experience on career or academic direction (i.e. a profession) is two-fold: (1) some participants narrowed their career options and committed to an academic field; (2) others, who went abroad while committed to a profession, reflected upon their professional practice. The first group of students seems to have participated in the journey abroad to explore if they would like to continue with their chosen academic discipline. Anne and Diana are examples of this. One of Anne’s motivations for making her journey was to reflect and decide if she wants to continue with Chinese studies. She subsequently confirmed her commitment. Similarly Diana went abroad to study German and explore if she could make a professional commitment to become an “academic” in German studies. She also made a commitment to pursue graduate studies in German. Both Anne and Diana attribute their study abroad journeys as having contributed to their decisions.

The second group of students reflected upon placing their lives in general, and careers in particular, within the larger society. For Greg, in Image 6, the central question during re-entry was “where am I now?” Embedded in this question was a search for his
life direction with respect to his international experience. Greg made the commitment to start a life in Canada and to continue to be active in global issues. Linda too decided to begin her professional career as an early childhood educator in Canada. But she made a commitment to “stay away from the hectic life driven by materialism.” She wants to work with “disabled and marginalized children.” Stephan also decided to focus on establishing a teaching career in Canada, but he also wants to “do development work in South America during summer holidays.”

Diana, Daven, Jonil and Milana are continuing their graduate studies. Diana, as noted, is pursuing a doctoral degree in German studies and expects to be in Germany to conduct research. Daven has moved to the United States to complete a Masters Degree in International Relations. Jonil is pursuing an MBA and hopes “to work abroad one day.” Milana is pursuing a second degree in Tourism Studies and hopes to establish an “international” career. Terisa, who is pursuing Medicine, had this to say about her career:

I have come to the conclusion that the way I can do my development work is through Medicine. The more social activism I do, the more it takes me away from my goal to do Medicine. I think I can be involved in change in a more productive way through Medicine. (Terisa, Jan. 30, 1997)

John and Michael have started their careers abroad. During my last research conversation, John reflected on his career:

It is not easy. I am an engineer. Openness to the world is challenging the status quo of my life. Why do I live here? I have lived here for a long time. It would be easy to continue living here. I could probably be very happy in Toronto. There is nothing wrong with that. But, now I am able to say that I may want to go somewhere else. It may not be Singapore again. It may be Ottawa. That’s the whole new perspective. It’s a new perspective on how I look at my options. (John, March 6, 1997).
Today John is in China working as a volunteer Engineer. Michael is in Poland, the native country of his parents, working for a German (his study abroad country) bank. Myra will be leaving for Belize to do research for her graduate degree in Environmental Studies. And I am preparing to complete my own journey by returning to where I began it.

6.4 Concluding Thoughts

I have landed the plane. I have come to the end of writing the stories of my fourteen co-participants. These travelers joined my thesis journey as strangers, then they became co-participants, and finally co-researchers of their own experience. They became my friends. I have been privileged to travel in their company – they have shared their “private experience” (Milana) of their journeys with me. Some of them have also reviewed and commented on the way I have portrayed their collective story. Most of all, they have illuminated the meaning of my own journey. I share in their oscillation: “Where am I now?” (Greg). Why do I feel rootless?

I came to this study with a personal quest to understand the holistic experience of a small group of study abroad students. My dream was to understand the unfolding of their journey from its beginning to end, to consider their experience from their motivations to travel, preparations to leave, and the actual journey, to returning home and considering a continuing meaning and impact. I have lived through and worked on my dream for two years and have come to a better understanding of my participants’
experiences and dreams as well as my own. However, the end of this study is not the end of dreaming. New quests beckon on the horizon.

My search was also about finding an avenue to trace the study abroad experience while moving away from the reductionist and objective scientism that has dominated much previous research on study abroad. The design of this study has allowed me to reveal the participants’ experience as complex, relational and context bound. In the next chapter, I continue to reflect on this study, consider its findings, and make suggestions for future research and practice.

In summary my study was about 14 young adults who entered into life transitions that continue to influence the trajectories of their lives. They entered this transition with the support of their parents and close friends. They moved outward by risking and trying “to become what they might become for the sake of renewal, for the sake of loving a deeply resistant world” (Greene, 1988, p. 52). And they came out of this transition having transformed both their selves and their perspectives. Their journey outward was and is also a journey inward.
7.1 Introduction

Recently I told a friend that I was coming to the end of my thesis. He asked “How do you know when you’re done?” I replied: “I think you know when something inside says you have gone as far as you can and you begin to think about what your dissertation means for future research and practice.” In this chapter I reflect on my thesis journey and look to the future. I look back by recalling the twists and turns in my research process. I look ahead by considering the study’s implications for research and practice. In looking back and forth I strive to answer two questions that arise at the end of a study. The first question is “what did I learn?” My son’s teacher phrased it differently: “What are the major findings of your research?” My wife dislikes my pondering the second question: “What further research needs arose from this study?” She thinks I am finding excuses for a second thesis.
First, I explore this study's contribution to study abroad research. I chronicle and summarize the findings and their contributions in the following order:

1. An alternative conceptual framework
2. A case for increased qualitative research
3. My findings and their scope
4. The journey's beginning
5. Preparing to leave
6. The journey's passage
7. Returning home
8. Relatedness among phases
9. Continuity of meaning

Second, I reflect on the study's implications for practice. I make suggestions regarding:

1. Increasing study abroad opportunities
2. The broadening of study abroad locations
3. Revisiting the issue of academic quality
4. Reconsidering criteria for transferring credits
5. Providing opportunities for academic re-integration
6. Conducting pre-departure and re-entry orientations
7.2 A Chronicle of the Study's Contribution to Research

Completing a dissertation is like creating a painting. One can't – and it is better not to – know exactly what the painting will look like until it is complete. Despite this, one gently creates a painting by tirelessly imagining its final look. Likewise, I imagined the shape, size and structure of this dissertation when I began to construct it. The research process inevitably revealed many surprises – unimagined findings and insights. The final product that evolved from my researching, analysis, and interpretation – a perpetual mental engagement with the data - is not entirely what I had imagined. It is more complex than I had expected. I now turn to summarizing its contribution to the field of study abroad research.

An Alternative Conceptual Framework

This research topic is an experiential thread woven firmly into the fabric of my autobiography. In Chapter One I described how I arrived at the topic by tracing the origin of this thread. Then I advanced two research needs. I wanted to understand: (1) how study abroad students experience their journey; and (2) what meaning and impact they construe from it. The “how” question is about the process of experience and the “what” question is about the outcomes of this process. In study abroad research, experience and outcome have generally been treated separately (Chapter Two, p.26).
Thus I began with the hope of bringing them together to shed some light on how they relate to each other.

My first task on the road to accomplishing my goal was finding a fitting conceptual framework. This meant having to construct a structure that incorporated the temporal dimensions (before, during and after) of the study abroad experience. I created a framework that addressed: (1) students’ motivations for wanting to study abroad; (2) pre-departure experience; (3) socio-cultural and academic adaptation abroad; and (4) the re-entry experience at home. I built this framework with the assumption that study abroad is a dynamic, experiential and holistic learning process in which meaning is construed by reconstructing lived-experience. This structure in itself contributes to study abroad research— it is an alternative conceptual framework for understanding the experience and outcomes of studying abroad.

I first examined this framework in the light of existing literature on study abroad. I brought together prior findings regarding the outcomes and process of studying abroad in a literature-based model of the experience, meaning and impact of study abroad (Fig. 2.2, Chapter Two, p. 56). This model integrated the temporal dimensions of studying abroad. It quite naturally called for the use of qualitative research. I responded by employing a research design that included research conversations, journals, and artistic imagery (Chapter Three).
A Case for Increased Qualitative Research

I began with an intuitive feeling that study abroad research needs qualitative inquiry. Torney-Purta’s (1994) call for qualitative research on the impact of study abroad confirmed my inclination. She discusses the challenge of measuring the impact of study abroad and recommended qualitative research to advance understanding of students’ experiences. This recommendation is particularly meaningful because she has been involved in several impact assessment studies on study abroad (Cogan, Torney-Purta and Anderson, 1988; Torney-Purta, 1982; Torney-Purta, Brown, and Cloud, 1986). Reading additional literature reconfirmed the need for qualitative inquiry into study abroad research (Chapter Two).

Then came the challenge. As a requisite for choosing a particular research methodology I had to declare the “foundations” of my research design. Justifying the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the topic and its research design was an intriguing challenge (Chapter One, pp. 17 – 18). In addition, I had to choose from the relevant traditions of qualitative inquiry: case study (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995, Yin 1994), ethnography (Atkinson, 1990), grounded theory study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), life-history (Cole, 1994), narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985) and phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Although each perspective would have been relevant and useful for my topic, each would offer a slightly different focus for the study. I understood that the tradition I chose, and my assumptions regarding the research phenomenon, would not only influence how I researched but also what I discovered. Having read the works of Merriam (1988) and Stake (1995) repeatedly, I chose multiple
case study (with a phenomenological orientation) because I judged this to be the most appropriate for my interests (Chapter Three, p. 71 - 72).

This research design allowed me to explore the complexity of my participants' experience. As Torney-Purta (1994) states, research on study abroad relies "primarily on quantitative measures, that is, responses to paper and pencil questionnaires that can be scored (knowledge) or scaled (attitude) to provide numerical scores for individuals" (p. 260). My design allowed me to do something very different. It focused my attention toward the process and quality of my participants' experiences. As Eisner (1981) comments, "to know a rose by its Latin name and yet to miss its fragrance is to miss much of the rose's meaning" (p. 9). My approach compelled me to recognize and reveal participants' experiences as relational, context bound, and emotional. My research design also allowed me to explore the phenomenological meaning of their journeys. Untimely it demanded that I write my findings in the voice of my participants.

I am compelled to suggest that we need further qualitative inquiry on study abroad. I have been able to explore only the tip of an iceberg, one that carries enormous depth and weight. The complexity and quality of student experience begs further study. We need research that focuses on one or two areas of students' study abroad experience (e.g., academic, intercultural, the development of a global perspective and transformation of self) and their interface. We also need research on multiple groups of students (based on, for example, program or level of study, ethnic background, age, and location of study). Furthermore, studies fashioned under multiple traditions of qualitative inquiry
(e.g. "life-history" and "narrative inquiry") will uncover different aspects of the study abroad experience.

Life history is a way of understanding life as lived in the present and influenced by personal, institutional and social histories (Cole & Knowles, 1995). It is useful for locating critical incidents in lives, "the points of profound change and influence" (Cole & Knowles, 1995, p. 141). Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) claim that a life history study is usually about one single life. It is designed to explain, describe and reflect upon a life to make meaning of a person's life. A life history study of a single student who participates in one or more study abroad programs would be useful to develop in-depth understanding of the ways in which the temporal dimensions (past, present and future) of study abroad interconnects with each other.

Similarly, narrative inquiry takes into consideration the time and place of human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Narrative inquiry recognizes that "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 416). The emphasis in narrative is on the way we tell our stories and how (and what) we give meaning to these stories. The use of narrative inquiry in study abroad research will help us further understand how and what meaning students give to their study abroad experiences.
My Findings and Their Scope

My findings embrace the experience of 14 sojourners. These were young adults (Chapter Five, p.147). They shared certain common family influences that nurtured their desire for studying abroad. All except one came from the University of Toronto. And all except one were enrolled in undergraduate programs (Chapter Four, Table 4.1, p. 101). They studied abroad in different locations for one academic year. It is their collective story that I have explored; my findings are not meant to be “generalizable” to all study abroad students. The story of these 14 sojourners does not predict how others will experience their study abroad journeys. But this story gently illuminates how others with similar characteristics may experience their journeys. In other words, my findings paint a picture that others who are going abroad could look at to better imagine the journey to come. This painting is not a road map. It could, however, be a guide.

The Journey's Beginning

I began writing my participants' story in Chapter Four. I initially portrayed it as a ‘journey’ – a solo navigation to an unfamiliar destination. This ‘journey’ then became not only an overarching metaphor for the participants’ collective stories but also became the study’s umbrella-theme (meta-theme). In its shade I followed the journey’s twists and turns to grasp the eventual outcomes of my participants’ experiences. In addition,
throughout my writing I have engaged with the theoretical perspectives and findings of other researchers to enlighten my findings.

In Chapter Four I reported my finding that the participants' underlying motivation for study abroad was a conative desire for cultural immersion abroad. I explored two other motivations that were built on this desire: (1) learning the language of the host country; and (2) stepping out of constraining boundaries. Then I made the case that parental socialization nurtured the formation of the desire for immersion abroad. Further, in light of theoretical hunches, I suggested that students embarking on their journeys began a transitional event in their life-course development.

These findings contribute to existing research by expanding our understanding of students' motivations for studying abroad. As Carlson et. al (1990) point out, we know very little about the development of student interest in study abroad and what they expect to achieve from their experience. I have also shed some light on the influences that shape students' desire for study abroad. My findings lead me to suggest that further research is needed on the motivation of various groups of students (e.g. based on age, ethnic background, family background, and nationality).
Preparing to Leave

From initial preparations to the return home, in Chapter Five I explored "meaningful" experiences (i.e. critical junctures or turning points) in my participants composite journey. I placed these experiences on the PSAE-curve (Fig. 5.1, Chapter Five, p. 150). This profiled the emotional peaks, valleys and plateaus of their composite journey. In Part Two of Chapter Five I examined pre-departure experience and highlighted my finding concerning the transition of “felt sense” from excitement to apprehensiveness. Then I discussed how academic preparation was affected by institutional context, particularly by the attitude of faculty members toward study abroad. I also explored my finding that pre-departure experience was awash with mixed emotions – a bittersweet time. Finally I reported how my participants prepared for their journey by imagining its course.

These findings have implications for both research and practice. It is clear that research on students’ pre-departure experience is limited. In my review of literature I did not encounter any study on pre-departure experience. The lack of attention to pre-departure experience is likely because pre-departure has been seen as an insignificant phase of the study abroad experience. However, my findings in Chapter Five suggest otherwise. They disclose the experience of preparing to leave as a meaningful one; they portray pre-departure as a phase where emotions and expectations are battered by the actuality of confronting the unknown. My research points to institutional factors hindering my participants’ excitement of leaving. In addition, these findings underscore
the importance of sound pre-departure orientation programs and advising/counseling. I return to this point when I discuss this study’s implications for study abroad practice.

The Journey’s Course

In Chapter Five I also discussed my findings concerning my participants’ collective experience abroad. I reported that the initial settling in period is generally a non-reflective process of finding accommodation and one’s way around the host university and city. I found the first significant encounter with adaptation to be the beginning of emotional attachments to the physical and natural landscape of the host country. Then I traced the experiences of “becoming lonely” (pp.185 - 186), the inset of “culture shock” (pp.186 - 189), and forming meaningful friendships. I discussed the helpful and distinct roles played by “co-sojourn friends” (pp. 196-198) and “host culture friends” (pp.198 - 200) in facilitating adaptation.

The most consequential finding was the “double-edged” nature of culture shock. On one edge were anxiety, homesickness, and loneliness. On the other was a very personal process of transforming oneself and one’s worldview. One edge informs the other, and the two edges embody a symbiotic or coactive relationship. I used Mezirow (1991) and Bowers’ (1993) work on explicating and transforming taken-for-granted perspectives to make sense of the transformative dimension of culture shock. From this, I have advanced an alternative interpretation of culture shock that is significant for future
research on study abroad. This interpretation helps to understand how and why study abroad can become a profoundly personal and transforming experience for many students.

This alternative interpretation has implications for international student advisors, personal counselors, and study abroad advisors. If culture shock is seen as a problem – a debilitating difficulty – then practitioners are likely to help students find quick and easy ways to relieve this pain. On the other hand, if culture shock is seen as an inherent phase of an intercultural and transformative learning experience, advisors are more likely to engage students in a self-reflective learning activity.

What happened to the Academic Experience Abroad?

The reader will have inevitably noticed the lack of reference to academic experience in Chapter Five. My inability to detail my participants' academic experience abroad is a regret that I take with me as I conclude this study. How did it happen? During data collection I did strive to understand my participants' formal academic experience in their host universities (Appendix A, Interview 2). However, with very few exceptions, they paradoxically felt that the formal academic experience abroad was an insignificant aspect of their journey.

Let me illustrate a few cases that refer to the academic experience abroad. Diana, Myra, and Linda became self-directing or self-initiating learners (changing in learning
style) while abroad. Jonil gained a "new insight into development economics" (his "academic minor"). Michael, John and Jonil felt that courses abroad relating to the host country or region were "interesting and useful" (John). Examples of such courses are "Asian Business Practice" in Singapore or taking "German History" in Germany. But - to my surprise - nobody construed these experiences as either profound or crucial to the meaning and impact of their journey.

Study abroad is without a doubt an academic journey. Prior research asserts that I could expect study abroad students to gain substantive new knowledge and skills (Lambert, 1994) pertinent to living in a multicultural and interdependent world. Let me speculate why my participants did not narrate their academic experience abroad as a significant aspect of their journeys.

First, the dominance of the "personal" - the transformation of self and perspective - may have overshadowed less personal aspects of participants’ academic experience. Second, since these students were selected based on their academic merit they were academically strong students throughout the study abroad journey. Subsequently, they did not seem to have faced difficult academic challenges (i.e. they ‘coasted’ abroad). Third, they had declared their major and minor academic fields of study before they went abroad. They had therefore already completed many of their "major" degree requirements at the home university. This leads me to suggest that, with the exception of a few cases, the courses they pursued may not have been central to their areas of academic concentration. Finally, it is conceivable that the lack of attention to academic meaning
has something to do with their initial motivation for studying abroad. They embarked on their journeys because of an underlying desire for cultural immersion abroad. The meanings they construed from their experience relate to the nature of their initial desire for studying abroad.

It could also be that the qualitative methodology that I chose led to a higher profiling of personal issues. In contrast, earlier quantitative studies discussed in Chapter Two led to a higher profiling of academic issues. It is also possible that my sojourners did gain new knowledge and skills, but did not acknowledge these as academic. My hunch is that, considering the totality (i.e. holistic nature) of what they learnt abroad, the ‘personal’ and the ‘academic’ are intertwined and have become fused in their memories.

Let me suggest that further research may help us to get a better grasp of the academic outcomes of studying abroad. First, it is possible that academic experience abroad would have a significant impact on first-year students (i.e. those who have not declared their major or minor area of study). Additional research on such students would suggest how study abroad might influence the students’ choice of academic majors and minors. Second, those who partake in co-developed programs between home and host universities (i.e. joint academic programs between two institutions) may have very different academic experiences. Third, further research on academic motivations for wanting to study abroad would help us to understand how study abroad motivation relates to the academic experience abroad.
Returning Home

In Part Four of Chapter Five, I detailed the participants' experience of returning home. I began by briefly reviewing research on re-entry and reverse culture shock. I began by exploring the experience of preparing to come home; this was an emotional attuning to home laden with mixed emotion – a bittersweet time. Then I explored the experiences of arriving at home, reverse culture shock, academic re-adaptation, and the eventual reaching of a point of feeling at home again. I found academic re-entry to be an "anxious, unhappy and uncertain experience" (pp.228 - 234). I return later to this finding in my discussion of the implications of this research for institutional study abroad practice (p. 305).

My interpretation of reverse culture shock as a process of mourning and reconstructing relationships is a useful contribution to study abroad research. I built this interpretation on Adler's (1976) suggestion that re-entry should be seen not as a debilitating difficulty but as part of a broader intercultural learning process. I found that reverse culture shock includes mourning for the loss of the natural and cultural landscapes of the host country, mourning for friendships left behind, and mourning for how (intense and engaging) life was abroad. At the same time re-entry was also a process of reconstructing relationships at home. This included reconnecting with parents, friends and the cultural landscape of the home country.
Relatedness Among Phases

One of my interests in this study has been to understand the interconnectedness between students’ motivations for study abroad, pre-departure experiences (before), the passage of the journey (during), and returning home (after). I wanted to reveal a relationship (continuity) between past, present and future dimensions of studying abroad. In my review of existing literature I came across no studies that incorporated all three temporal dimensions. Thus the integration of these temporal dimensions (before, during and after) may offer a fresh approach to study abroad research.

In the PSAE-curve (Fig 5.1, p.150) I overviewed the shape of my participants’ experiential thread connecting the three temporal dimensions (before, during and after). Taken as a whole this curve depicts their experience as an “emotional roller coaster.” The image of a four-branched tree (Fig. 6.1, p.265) merged from the spectrum of participants’ experience (before, during and after) to reveal the core transformative meaning and impact of their journey. Embedded as well in this image is the continuity (future) of the experience; a tree dynamically evolves and gives birth to offspring. Each participant’s study abroad experience continues to influence their “life direction” (p. 282), giving birth to new international experiences and perspectives.

I was, however, unable to detail how experiences in one phase affect experiences in other phases. To uncover such relatedness one must conduct a detailed analysis of the fibers weaving the experiential thread of the PSAE-curve. I have shed some light on these fibers. My findings show that “culture shock” and “reverse culture shock” are two phases
of the same learning continuum. In other words, I have shown how the adaptation experience abroad is connected to the re-adaptation experience at home. However, pertinent questions beg further study. How does the motivation to study abroad influence one’s experience abroad? How does an individual’s unique experiences in all three phases affect the construed meanings and outcomes of their journey? This study clearly indicates that the construed meanings and outcomes of studying abroad reside in each participant’s subjective experience. Research that carefully explores the lived-experience of a few sojourners (e.g. one to five participants) would be particularly useful for approaching these complexities. As noted earlier, narrative inquiry or life history studies on the experience of a few participants would reveal in-depth relatedness among phases of experience, breaking ground for a holistic theory of the experience and meaning of study abroad.

Evolution of Meaning and Impact

I reported the impact of my participants’ experience in terms of increased self-awareness and self-confidence, establishing autonomy and relatedness, and the development of an inclusive worldview. I considered these impacts – the transformation of self and perspective – as rings around the core meaning of their journeys. Everyone felt this transformation uniquely (as depicted in their images of meaning in Chapter Six. Thus the personal meaning of study abroad is difficult to predict in detail. My findings echo the following statement by Goodwin and Nactch (1988):
The justification for the largest number of study abroad programs today is that any exposure to a foreign environment during one’s formal education is better than none. Students will be faced overseas with ‘difference.’ The defenders of this goal speak especially of a personal metamorphosis in those who partake – a gestalt change that varies with the individual, cannot be predicted in detail, but is enormously important as an outcome. Students in this way become, it is said, more mature, sophisticated, hungry for knowledge, culturally aware, and sensitive. They learn by questioning their own prejudices and all national stereotypes. They ask the meaning of national culture. Their horizons are extended as they gain a new perspective (p. 12).

The outcome of study abroad is dynamic. The image of each participant’s meaning of his/her journey in Chapter Six is necessarily a depiction of meaning captured at a given time. The meaning of one’s experience evolves over time, influencing one’s life-course development. The real impact is in how study abroad continues to shape one’s reflection, perspective and life decisions. The finding I explored under “life direction” (p.282) showcases this evolution of meaning. Research could expand upon this by longitudinally following the experience of a few returnees over several years. A related research focus would be to explore the interconnectedness of a first abroad experience to a second experience abroad, i.e. what are the experiences/learning processes of those that study abroad for a second time?
7.3 Suggestions for Practice

In Chapter One I asserted that the effort to “internationalize” university education (pp. 5 - 8) in Canada is the institutional rationale for expanding study abroad opportunities for students. Canadian universities increasingly emphasize study abroad as a vehicle to prepare internationally knowledgeable graduates (pp. 5-8). At the beginning of this study I expressed my hope for suggesting ways to enhance study abroad practice in Canada. As an international education practitioner I also hoped to strengthen my own practice by grasping a deeper understanding of students’ lived-experience. I now take the liberty to reflect upon my suggestions.

Can We Shift Our Paradigmatic Perspective on Study Abroad?

In Chapter One I briefly traced the development of study abroad programs in Canada (pp. 3 - 7). I explained that the increased interest in the development of study abroad programs is built on the assumption that those who partake in study abroad acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes pertinent to living and working in an interdependent and globally competitive world. I argued that universities are embracing study abroad for ‘global competitiveness’ reasons. Behind this lies an ideological/paradigmatic perspective on the value of education. I now comment on this paradigm because my findings call for a shift in our perspective on the value of sending students to study abroad.
It could be argued that the institutional rationale for developing study abroad programs is situated in what Swee-Hin (1993) calls the “technocratic paradigm in global literacy” (p.10). He identifies four themes that describe this paradigm. Let me introduce the first three themes to illustrate how the institutional rationale for creating study abroad programs relates to this paradigm. “The first theme is a philosophical orientation of liberal appreciation for the culture of others” (p. 10). This theme essentially recognizes that that many kinds of peoples, nations, and cultures exist in the world and that it is valuable to relate to others, and learn about how others live. The second theme is about the notion of “interdependence”. This theme recognizes that economics, trade, finance, culture and immigration connect nations to each other. The third theme is about an explicit focus on a “management interpretation of interdependence” (p. 10). This interpretation sees the world beset with “multiple problems and crises, involving nation-states of diverse traditions, ideologies and systems. It is a dangerous world and the crises need to be managed.” (p. 10). Swee-Hin writes:

When deconstructed, this technocratic notion of interdependence is essentially self-centered. Selfish interest is the bottom line and those already well-off in the planetary hierarchy require understanding of the world affairs in order to cope with the problems.... Furthermore, in Canada and other countries scrambling for a bigger share of overseas markets, there is an economic interpretation of interdependence which is especially functionalist. This is the argument that we need to know better the cultures of existing or prospective trading partners. (p. 11).

It is not difficult to see that the rationale for developing study abroad opportunities has been shaped by this technocratic paradigm of global literacy. Study abroad is seen as a vehicle to develop internationally relevant knowledge, skills, and
attitudes in students (Knight, 1997). These students are expected to have acquired the competencies to live, work and do business in multiple cultures and countries. From a curricular viewpoint, the technocratic paradigm of global literacy amounts to what Miller (1985) calls the “transmission position”. In this “there is one-way movement to inculcate the student in certain skills and values”. (p. 97)

I have a confession. As a practitioner involved in study abroad, I did accept this paradigm and advocated for the development of study abroad programs based on the global employability of study abroad participants. ‘Competitiveness’ reasons for studying abroad appeal to university administrators’ and the business community. The concept of increased employability in a global market place is an enticing message for promoting study abroad programs to students. I know that many of my colleagues continue to embrace this view of the value of study abroad.

This study led me to embrace a very different perspective on the value of study abroad. All my findings suggest that study abroad is primarily a transformative experience for participants. Study abroad may not necessarily lead to the development of a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies. But it certainly provides a profoundly personal learning experience. I wish to recognize the ‘transformative’ reasons for providing study abroad opportunities. Recognizing the transformative dimensions of study abroad means shifting our paradigmatic perspective. In Swee-Hin’s (1993) words, we need to embrace a “transformative paradigm of global literacy” (p. 11). This paradigm interconnects self-development with our understanding of the world. Swee-Hin writes:
"We become more fully human when we seek to understand the global family of which we are a part, and when we apply that understanding into personal, social and political acts consistent with human liberation and emancipation" (p. 12). My findings both explicitly and implicitly refer to the personally transformative dimensions of studying abroad. Specific suggestions made below reflect this new perspective on my transformed rationale for providing students with study abroad opportunities.

(1) *Increasing Study Abroad Opportunities*
My findings show that study abroad provided a profound learning experience for my 14 participants. Although the precise nature of the academic impact is unclear, I have shown that study abroad boosted self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness. Further, my findings suggest that for some students studying abroad is a transitional experience in their life-course development, leading to an inclusive worldview, ethno-relativism, and increased self-awareness. These findings are themselves a strong rationale for expanding study abroad programs.

(2) *Broadening of Study Abroad Locations*
Most universities take care in choosing their study abroad partner institutions. Most institutions I know in Canada look for two key conditions in choosing partner institutions: (1) academic quality and rigor of courses (judged by the home institution's standard); and (2) students' personal safety in the host institution. Consequently our institutions send their students primarily to industrialized Western countries, although programs in less developed countries have recently
increased. My findings suggest that sending students to less developed countries would be equally, and in some cases more, beneficial. Jonil, Linda and Terisa went to developing countries. Their experiences were not any less profound than those of others. In fact, immersion in cultures and academic systems that are considerably different may be more beneficial. My findings regarding culture shock suggest that it is the participants’ experience of coping with difference that brings out profound learning and personal change.

(3) Revisiting the Issue of Academic Quality

Who ultimately decides if coursework taken abroad is creditworthy? In most universities this responsibility falls within academic departments. Even if an institution is committed to study abroad, negative faculty or administrative attitudes can create barriers. My participants’ pre-departure and re-entry academic experiences attest to this reality. Some faculty members may fear that study abroad will take away some of their best students. Others may fear that programs abroad are academically less rigorous (in a Canadian sense) than home-institution studies, thus perpetuating the myth that study abroad programs are lax. If upon return students report that they had fewer contact hours in class, spent less time in libraries, wrote fewer papers, or took fewer (perhaps only oral) exams per course, faculty doubts may increase even when students perform at the same level as their classmates abroad. These are legitimate concerns. But it is important for institutions to readdress these concerns by considering their blindspots and
misperceptions, and by reflecting upon the experiential and holistic educational value of studying abroad.

(4) **Reconsidering Criteria for Transfer Credit Evaluation**

The evaluation of transfer credit(s) is not immune to faculty and administrators' perceptions of the value of studying abroad. In Chapter Five I discussed how procedures for prior approval of study abroad courses and transferring credits (pp. 228 - 231) affected my participants' overall experience. Students in other institutions may face similar procedural obstacles. It would be useful for universities to revisit their procedures to find ways of easing their complexity. In addition, during pre-departure, students need clear instructions about how courses abroad will be treated when they return home.

A key decision concerning the ease of transferring credits is whether courses taken abroad must be held to the same standards as home-campus courses (i.e., similar expectations regarding contact hours, assignments, course content, papers and exams). Expecting conformity between academic standards and practice here and abroad means searching for academic homogeneity as opposed to diversity. Immersion in a different cultural and natural landscape is what gives study abroad its profound cultural and personal meaning. Similarly, immersion in academically different systems may provide study abroad students with a profound academic
experience. Thus, revisiting the basis of transfer credit evaluation is a necessary and valuable exercise.

(5) Providing Opportunities for Academic Re-Integration

In Chapter Five I described the challenges faced by my participants in integrating academic learning abroad with learning at home (pp. 231 – 234). Teaching methodology in large undergraduate classrooms (i.e. the lecture method described on pp.233 - 234) seems to be the greatest obstacles for integrating learning abroad with learning at home. As class sizes are likely to remain the same, if not increase, professors have to continue their reliance on the lecture method. Therefore opportunities for classroom discussions that incorporate individual experiences and perspectives will remain rare. Given this, I suggest an alternative approach to helping returnees to integrate academically. My suggestion is to offer a credit-bearing course for returnees (Linda, for example, was enthusiastic about writing a reflective journal on her experience as partial requirement for a course). Such a course would focus on students’ personal experience. In terms of academic content it could include issues concerning cross-cultural/intercultural development, human development and identity formation, as well as various international problems. It could be cross-listed in several departments (e.g., anthropology, cultural studies, education and sociology).
Such a course could incorporate pre-departure and re-entry orientation (discussed below). This means that students would begin this course as soon as they are accepted into study abroad programs and complete it after they return home. It could be divided into three parts. The first part could incorporate pre-departure orientation. The second part could consist of a reflective journal kept during study abroad. The third part would include re-entry orientation plus academic content mentioned above.

(6) Conducting Pre-departure and Re-entry Orientations

Pre-departure orientation and re-entry debriefing are usually treated as separate activities although they are clearly part of a study abroad continuum. Pre-departure orientation is intended to prepare students for meaningful and successful educational experiences abroad. Re-entry orientation facilitates returnees’ re-adaptation to the home country and university. Pre-departure orientation needs to be more wide-ranging. It should encompass practical concerns (appropriate vaccinations) as well as deeper questions concerning one’s personal motivations for studying abroad. A wide-ranging program could include the following:

- Essential practical information
- Opportunities for students to learn about their host country, culture and institution
- A focus on the development of cultural sensitivity
• Curricula promoting an awareness of the cross-cultural adaptation process and related issues (perhaps through cross-cultural simulations such as BafaBafa, Pike and Selby, 1998).

• A forum for students to discuss and explore what they expect to achieve from studying abroad

• Encouragement for students to engage in imagining their study abroad experience

I suggest integrating pre-departure orientation into the study abroad course outlined above.

Re-entry debriefing is an integral part of the study abroad continuum. Institutions usually pay much less attention to re-entry than to pre-departure. This is because of the assumption that students returning to a familiar environment do not encounter problems. This study’s findings strongly suggest otherwise. Students need the support of their institution even more during re-entry. My suggestion is to offer re-entry debriefing as a program with several components, possibly by integrating it into the study abroad course mentioned above. A sound re-entry program should:

• Help students to re-adjust to their home city, country and institution

• Provide a supportive forum for students to reflect and articulate their experiences and perspectives to others

• Help students find ways to assimilate what they learned abroad to their on-going studies at the home institution

• Encourage students to see their reverse culture shock as a learning experience
7.4 Every Ending is a Beginning

I have now come to the end of my thesis journey. I have reflected on my study’s contributions to research and practice. Where do I go from here? I have mostly been a co-participant in the background. I introduced myself at the beginning of the study by explicating my own study abroad experience and reflecting on my assumptions regarding the research phenomenon. I have also occasionally moved to the front in referring to my own story. But mostly, like the canvas of a painting, I have remained in the background. Much like the fabric of canvas remains in the background, yet holds the painting, my autobiographical narrative will continue to keep holding onto the meaning of my findings.

The ending of this study not only means that I can now become a researcher, it also confirms that I want to become a researcher. I will continue to build on this study by researching the experience, meaning and impact of the international experience of students. The end of this particular study also means that I have taken a step closer to the end of my doctoral studies. At the end of my studies I will be returning to where I began my own study abroad journey. In effect, writing this thesis was a preparation to go home, and I will continue to write this dissertation in the telling of my own narrative.
APPENDIX A

Participant Interview Question Guide
Duration of Each Interview: 60 to 90 minutes

Interview 1

Focus: Experiences that motivate students to participate in education abroad programs and pre-departure preparation

1. Where did you study abroad last academic year? How long, one semester or the entire academic year?

2. Could you describe how you came to the decision to study abroad? For example, did life experiences, family, friends and professors play a role in your interest in studying abroad?

3. How did you find out about the opportunity to study abroad? Please describe the application process? Did you find the process an easy and supportive process or was it a difficult process? Tell me how you felt about the application process?

4. How did you prepare academically to study abroad?

5. Did you have to get prior approval to take courses in the overseas university? If so, how did you get approval? Please describe this process?

6. How did the faculty and professors support your academic preparation?

7. How did you imagine the overseas university and your learning in this university?

8. What are some of the things that you hoped to gain academically by studying abroad?

9. Did you think of how you would integrate your academic learning to the home institution’s program after returning to Canada?

10. Were you looking forward to anything academically during your study abroad period and after coming to your home institution?

11. Apart from academic matters, what other things did you do to prepare to go abroad?

12. From whom did you receive guidance or advise about preparing to go abroad? Was there any formal orientation organized by the university to help you to prepare to go abroad?
13. In retrospect, what areas of preparation may have enhanced your international experience?

14. Prior to studying abroad, have you traveled to the country of your study abroad?

15. Before going to study abroad, how much contact did you have with people from your study abroad country?

16. Could you recall your thoughts on your study abroad, people, culture and how you will relate to people in the country?

17. What were you hoping to gain personally by studying abroad?

18. How would you describe your feeling about going to study abroad? (e.g., excited, calm, nervous, afraid, etc.)

19. If I asked you to describe yourself before you left, what would you have said? In other words, who were you?

20. Before going abroad, did you have a clear idea of a professional area of interest?

21. Was your decision to go abroad to study based on a professional interest? If so, how?
Interview 2

Focus: Adaptation to the Host Culture, Personal Change and Cultural Awareness

1. Can you recall and describe your feelings, thoughts and perhaps any significant event during the first few days in your host institution?

2. Where were you staying?

3. Apart from university classes, what other things did you do to occupy your time?

4. How did you feel about the people and the country during your first two months? Were they just as you expected?

5. How did you begin to relate to your new friends and campus?

6. If I would have asked you who were you after the first three months, how would have described yourself? Did your identity, interest, values, career aspirations and any thing else change?

7. Was there a point when you can say that you started feeling more comfortable, or a changing time in the host country? Please describe this phase or stage?

8. Were there any ways that in which you changed within the six months?

9. Did your perspective on the country and people change in any way after a while?

10. How did your Canadian identity change during your exchange experience?

11. Did any of your values change during the exchange experience?

12. What are some of the experiences that you would always remember from you study abroad experience?

13. Did you see any cultural differences between the people of the host culture and Canadians? How?

14. When did you start thinking of coming back to Canada and your home institution? What were you feeling?

15. Did you in anyway prepare to come back to Canada and your home university?

16. How were you feeling as you were leaving?
Focus: Academic Adaptation

17. How did you find the teaching different in your host culture from your home university in Ontario?

18. Describe your professor's teaching style?

19. What were the evaluation criteria like?

20. How did you interact with fellow students in your classes or on academic issues?

21. At first, did you like, dislike or was neutral to the new teaching and learning environment?

22. How were the facilities in your host institution? Did lack of or availability of certain facilities change the way you learn?

23. Describe how you adapted to the new academic environment?

24. Did you find the content different from what you would expect in Canada? How?

25. Would you say that you gained a new perspective on your major during your study abroad program? How?

26. Academically, was your study abroad program worth it? How or how not?

27. What were your hopes and dreams for your next academic year as you left your study abroad setting?

28. Through your classes, papers, discussion with friends or through any other experience, did you gain a different perspective on any issues?

29. What are some of your significant academic experiences abroad?
Interview 3

Focus: Re-entry, cultural and academic re-adaptation

1. Could you tell me about your first few weeks coming back to Canada. What did it feel like? How were the first contacts with friends and family?

2. What was it like coming back to your home university? What was the first day like? What was going through your mind? Who did you meet? What did you think of the home university?

3. How did you feel during the first few weeks in the home university? Did you miss your host institution abroad?

4. What are the first things you did after coming back to the home university? Did you have to choose courses for the academic year?

5. In choosing courses, did you in any way think about your academic experience abroad?

6. Did you have to get approval from professors or departments to make sure that courses you took abroad did not overlap with your courses in the home university?

7. Describe your first contact with professors and support staff on academic or personal matters? Did they ask about your overseas experience? How did they react to you?

8. What are the “good” and “bad” things of coming back to your home university?

9. Did you have to do a lot of paper work to get your transfer credits? How was the process, please describe?

10. Have you felt any confusion?

11. Have you felt any frustration?

12. Who are you friends on campus? Were they generally the same friends as you had when you left?

13. What are your on-campus activities now? Have they changed from what you were involved in before you left to study abroad?

14. Are you finding ways to talk about your overseas experience or incorporate that into your campus activities?
15. Describe your first classes? How did you feel about the teaching style and course work?

16. Are you having to re-adjust to ways learning and doing your course activities?

17. Have you talked to your professors about your international experience? How have they reacted?

18. Have you been able to include any of the things that you learned abroad into your present courses?

19. Are you trying to integrate what you learnt abroad or your new perspectives that you developed abroad into your present courses? How are you doing it?

20. Is there any thing else that captures your experiences returning home?

21. What was your first term like, did your marks improve or remained the same from the year before you went abroad to study?

22. Did you get your credits transferred successfully into your current program? How was the experience of doing this?

23. Were you able to write a paper or do any type of work related to your overseas experience?

24. What courses are you taking during the second term?

25. Does your course selection in the second term relate in any way to your academic experience abroad?

26. Did you get any feedback from professors in relation to your international experience or perspective?

27. What kind of activities are you involved on campus now?

28. Are you still trying to integrate your international experience to learning and university life? Or have you kind of given up on this?

29. After coming back, how is your relationship with family members and friends outside of university?

30. What has changed in your life since the last interview?

31. What’s changed in your life since a year and half ago? Which of these would you attribute to having studied abroad?
32. Have you been thinking about what to do after you graduate? Do you think your study abroad experience would help or hinder your future plans?

33. In what ways would you say that the home university is a facilitative environment for you to integrate your international experience to learning and campus life?

34. In what ways is the campus a difficult place to adapt to after studying abroad?

35. How have you changed after coming to the home university this year?
APPENDIX B

Significant Other Interview Guide

1. How long and in what capacity have you known the student?

2. What past experiences do you think might have interested the student to go abroad?

3. How would you describe the student’s experience in preparing to leave? Did s/he talk to you about going abroad?

4. Did you keep in touch with the student while s/he was away? How, letters, telephone, or e-mail? How would you describe the experience of the student abroad from your perspective? Did you visit her or him abroad?

5. How would you describe the experience of the student after returning from studying abroad?

6. Do you see any ways in which the student has changed after studying abroad? Interests, company of friends, values and perspectives?

7. Do you think that the student’s career interests have changed as a result of studying abroad?

8. Has your relationship with the student changed in any way as a result of the student’s study abroad experience?

9. What do you think is the most significant impact of the study abroad experience on the student?
Emotional Ranking Scale

EDUCATION ABROAD PROCESS CHART

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER: RE-ENTRY (up to April 97)
APPENDIX D

Letter of Informed Consent
From the Researcher and Research Participant

Dear ____________________,

I am a graduate student doing my research for a dissertation in conformity with the requirements for the Ph.D degree at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

The purpose of my study is to explore the meaning and impact of education abroad opportunities for post-secondary students in Ontario. I am gathering data on the personal, professional and academic change before, during and after the education abroad experience and how students integrate this change into the home institution’s academic program and campus life (i.e., the re-entry experience). I will seek information on why and how you decided to go abroad to study as well as personal or professional change resulting from the international experience. The process of re-entry to Canada and the host institution will also be discussed.

I am seeking your participation in my study based on your study abroad experience during the past year and that you are continuing your academic program in your home institution this year. Your participation includes:

Interview meetings
Between Oct., 1996 and April 1997 I would like to meet with you to conduct three interviews. Interview questions will relate to your personal, academic and professional experience abroad and the process of re-entry into Canada and the home institution. You may refuse to answer any of the questions.

Journal Writing
I would like you to write a bi-weekly journal that focuses on your re-entry experience between Oct. 96 and April, 97; I will be providing you with further information on keeping a journal. You may choose to withhold any part of your journal entries.

Focus Group Discussion
I would like you to participate in a round-table/focus group discussion. The focus group is an opportunity for 10 students to reflect on what I have discovered from the study after a preliminary analysis of the data. Each member would be asked to sign a letter of group confidentiality.

Document analysis
I will be asking you to share with me documents such as pictures, letters and application forms. You may refuse to share any such documents.
I assure you that information gathered through the above activities will be kept in confidence. Your information will be stored under a code name and I will be the only one with the access to these code names. All information will be kept locked in my office or home. The result of the study will be written as such that no individual input from a particular student can be recognized.

Although I sincerely hope that you would agree to participate in my study, I would like to inform you that your consent may be refused without any adverse consequence. As well, you may choose to withdraw your participation from the study at any time and ask me not to use any of the information provided by you.

Unfortunately, given that I have no funding to conduct this research, I am not able to financially reimburse you for the time you spend on this study. However, I will provide you with a copy of my thesis when it is completed.

Thank you for your interest and help.

Sincerely,

Mahamood Shougee

Student Signature: ____________________
Student Name: ____________________
Address: ____________________
Tel: ____________________
APPENDIX E

Letter of Informed Consent from
From Researcher and Significant Other Person Known to Research Participants

Dear __________,

I am a graduate student doing my research for a dissertation in conformity with the requirements for the Ph.D. degree at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

The purpose of my study is to explore the meaning and impact of education abroad opportunities for post-secondary students in Ontario. I am gathering data on the personal, professional and academic change during the education abroad experience and how students integrate this change into the home institution’s academic program and campus life.

You have been selected by one of my research participants as a “significant other” who may provide your perspectives on the impact of study abroad on the participant. The purpose of the interview is to gather information about your perspectives on the personal, academic and professional change of the research participant. The information gathered is only for research purposes and no evaluative judgment on the participant will be made in the study.

I assure you that the information gathered through the interview will be kept in confidence. Your information will be stored under a code name. I will be the person one with the access to these code names. All information will be kept locked in my office or at home. The result of the study will be written as such that no individual input from a particular person could be recognized. You may choose to withdraw your participation from the study at any time, and also ask me not to use any of the information provided by you.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Mahamood Shougee

Signature____________________
Name______________________
Address____________________
Tel______________________
E-Mail____________________
REFERENCES


Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto. (1997). *Study elsewhere handbook.* University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.


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


