

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Young people make up 20 percent of the population, but 100 percent of the future”.

Richard Riley, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education (February 1997).

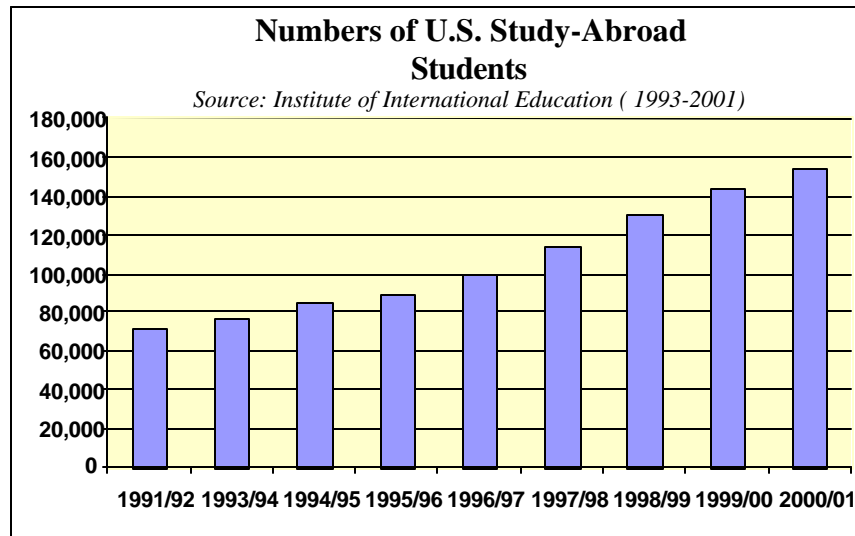
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE INVESTIGATION

Study-abroad is defined as “a student’s experiences in another country that sometimes involve academic coursework but often focus on acquiring language proficiency and a general knowledge of the host country” (El-Khawas 1994:93). Within the framework of the system of higher education in the United States (U.S.), study-abroad programmes play an integral part in the effort to internationalize education. In addition to foreign language acquisition, area studies and the recruitment of foreign students to U.S. campuses, study-abroad is considered to be a vital component of the globalization of American education (Hayward & Siaya 2001:1-3).

The need for developing a global perspective within the current education system has been acknowledged by most U.S. colleges and universities (American Council on Education 2000:1) and in fact, the prospective American college student expects that international training will be available (Hayward & Siaya 2001:3) to him or her upon entering higher education. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected and interdependent, the understanding of other cultures becomes more and more of a requirement (McCabe 1994:275).

There has been steady growth in the number of American undergraduate students participating in study-abroad programmes and according to the latest statistics (IIE 2002:16) over 150,000 American students participated in study-abroad programmes in the year 2001 (cf Figure 1.1). The Institute of International Education (IIE 2003a) states in the 2003 press release to its annual statistical report that there was a 55% increase of American students going abroad to study in the last five years and a 7.4% increase from 2001.

Figure 1.1



Although there appears to be a need and a desire to internationalize education in the United States, specifically that of higher education, according to the American Council of Education (2000:iv) there is very little in the way of documented data concerning the results or validity of programmes designed to further the goals of internationalisation, specifically that of study-abroad programmes. This could be due, in part, to the fact that there is no national body within the United States that has sole responsibility for educational policy or analyzing its outcomes. Standardization does not exist. Each tertiary institution decides to a large extent, on its involvement or lack thereof in the integration of internationalisation on its campus. Submission of data is haphazard at best and primarily organized by voluntary associations. Also, there is no significant funding for these programmes by the U.S. government (El-Khawas 1994:91).

1.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF STUDY-ABROAD IN THE UNITED STATES

The trend of American undergraduates studying outside of the United States can be traced back to the founding of the country, according to Dubois (1995:1) and Fantini (2002: 6). In colonial times, with roots still firmly established in Europe, the American undergraduate had strong ties to tertiary institutions on the European continent.

As the United States began to develop its own tertiary educational institutions, which

initially were modelled after Britain's Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Dubois 1995:1) and as people began to equate American postsecondary educational institutions as comparable to those in Europe, the need to go abroad to complete one's education became less and less mandatory. However, it was still desirable for some to continue to go abroad, and many students did so, albeit on an *ad hoc* basis. During the nineteenth century it was considered a necessary part of completing one's education for members of America's young upper class to experience the 'grand European tour' which often included time spent at a European university (Dubois 1995:1). The beginnings of formalized study-abroad programmes are found as early as 1920, when the term *junior year abroad* was invented by the ivied Eastern colleges (Bowman 1987:13).

Gradually, American institutions began to realize that some type of organisation and consistency within study-abroad programmes were necessary and the first conference, The National Conference of Study-Abroad Programmes, was held in Chicago in October of 1960 (Bowman 1987:17). Since the 1960's there has been dramatic growth in the study-abroad industry. Many organisations, both non-profit and proprietary, and within all levels of colleges, organize, sponsor and promote study-abroad programmes for American undergraduates. It has been estimated that almost two million American students have studied abroad as of the year 2000 (Altbach & Teichler 2001:7).

Traditionally, according to Hopkins (1999:36), study-abroad programmes focussed on language acquisition and many of the student participants in these programmes lived with a host family in the foreign country. In addition to enriching their language skills, students were exposed to a new way of life that hopefully added to their appreciation of the everyday life in another culture. Over the years, study-abroad programmes have evolved to include far more numerous opportunities involving a variety of learning experiences in almost all academic areas (Hopkins 1999:36).

1.3 THE ORGANISATION OF STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES IN THE UNITED STATES

According to Brockington (pers. comm. 2004) there are three formalized methods by which an American undergraduate can participate in a study-abroad programme. These

are:

1. *Through his/her university.* These types of programmes can fall under any of the following categories:
 - a. Reciprocal exchange. This is a one-for-one direct exchange between an American and a foreign institution;
 - b. Direct enrol. The American student organizes direct enrolment into a foreign institution through his or her own home institution;
 - c. Faculty led. This type of programme, as its name implies, is a study-abroad option where an American faculty member takes a group of American students to a foreign country. The faculty member can be an instructor, observer or counsellor, or a combination of all the roles;
 - d. Combination programme. These programmes have one of more of the above characteristics.
2. *Provider Programme.* These types of programmes can be done through either independent and/or proprietary programmes. Various foreign institutions have set up study-abroad programmes within their own institutions to provide the study-abroad experience for American undergraduates. There are also various American colleges that have campuses outside the United States as well as for-profit and non-profit organisations who run organisations, foundations and businesses, which facilitate study-abroad programmes for American undergraduates. These providers also offer direct enrol or the island type programme of study (cf 2.2.1), or a combination of both types.
3. *Direct enrol.* This means that the student organizes his or her study-abroad programme directly with the foreign university, without home institution assistance.

Many American colleges and universities provide programmes in conjunction with other universities through cooperative and consortia agreements. Institutions in the United States have formed cooperative agreements/consortiums amongst themselves in order to offer the widest possible choices to students and to facilitate academic goals and avoid unnecessary operational and financial duplication. These programmes are

then available to any student within the cooperative or consortia.

1.4 AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE PARTICIPATION IN STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES

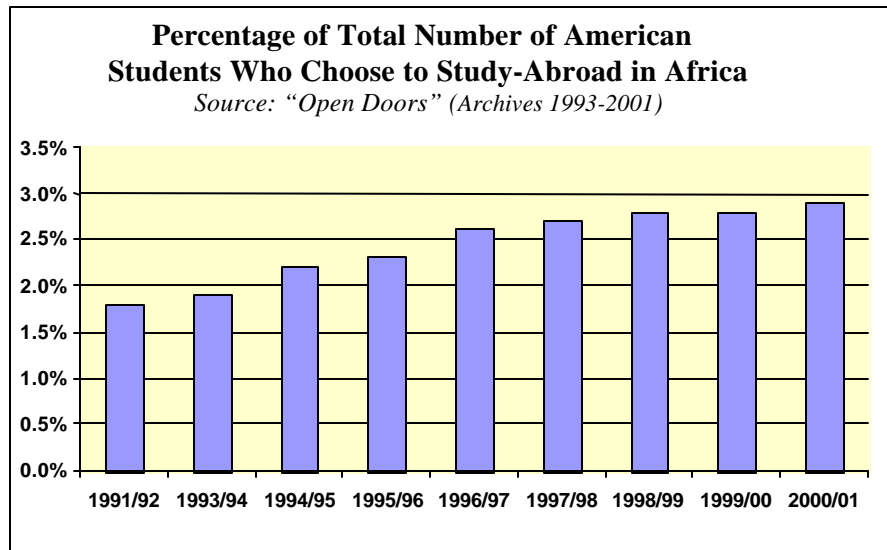
With historical trends indicating Europe as the destination for those going abroad to study (Bowman 1987:13), it was a natural progression to continue in this vein and up until today, the majority of American undergraduates still choose Europe as their study-abroad destination (Stryker s.a.:1).

Europe, the traditional destination for American undergraduate students who chose to study-abroad, has attracted and continues to attract the majority of American students due to the following, according to Landau and Moore (2001:1):

1. A perceived sense of greater antiquity and cultural prestige in the host country;
2. A general racial sameness between the majority (white) of U.S. study-abroad participants (cf 2.3.1) and their European hosts;
3. A historical and cultural divide in that there was rarely a familial connection between the student and the study destination;
4. A relative homogeneity among the U.S. students;
5. A relative economic equality of the sending and receiving countries;
6. A destination culture that historically is not affected by a foreign U.S. culture;
7. A destination culture that is relatively unaffected by a U.S. student presence.

While the number of American students who chose to participate in study-abroad programmes continues to grow (cf Figure 1.1), very few of the participants choose Africa as their destination of choice. As is illustrated in Figure 1.2, Africa is host to less than 3% of all American study-abroad participants. This trend holds true for all developing nations, with less than 5% of U.S. undergraduates studying in these regions, despite the fact that these countries make up three-quarters of the world's population (Stryker (2000:1).

Figure 1.2

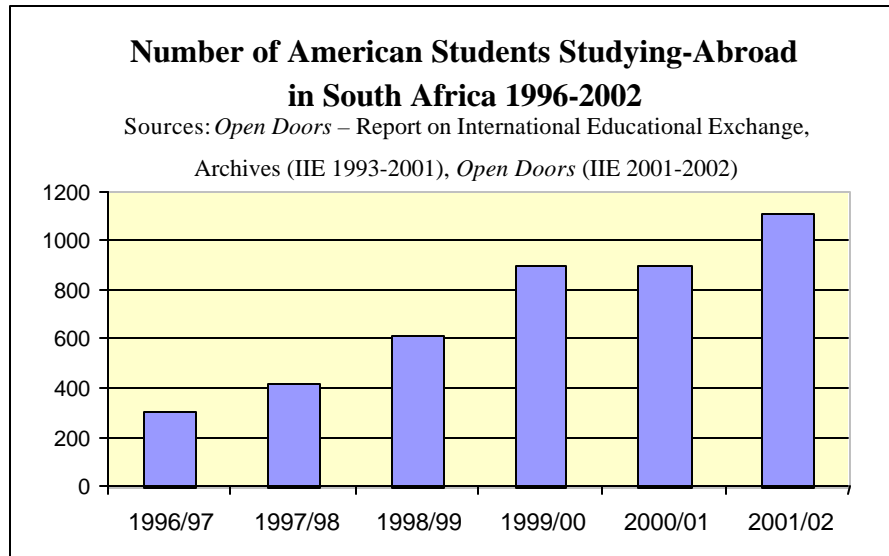


1.4.1 A Review of American Undergraduate Participation in Study-Abroad Programmes within South Africa

While overall participation by American undergraduates in study-abroad programmes continues to increase, the destination of choice, as mentioned above, is seldom the African continent (cf Figure 1.2). This could be due to the fact that historically, according to Lloyd (2000:4), study-abroad programmes in Africa emerged only in the late 1960's or much later. Or, as mentioned by Landau and Moore (2001:6), it could have to do with negative and/or erroneous perceptions of Africa in general:

Africa is still the "Dark Continent" in the States. You have to know it is one of the seven continents and that's pretty much all. And of course what you see on television. What you see are starving people, elaborate ceremonies with people in costumes, and war and political turmoil, and that's it.

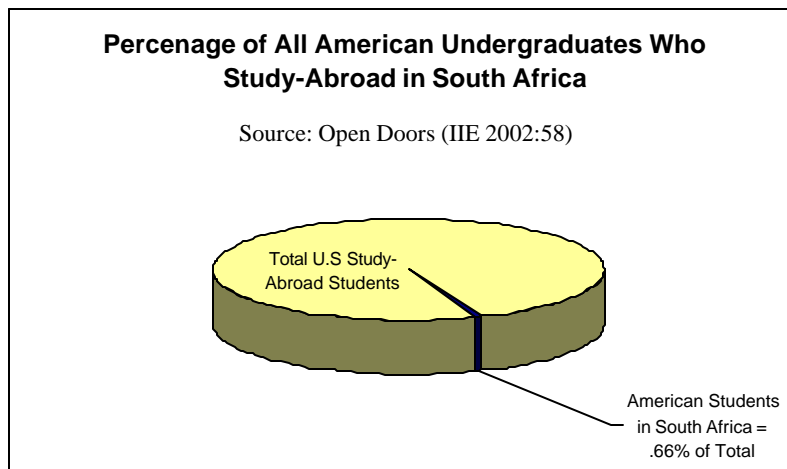
Figure 1.3



The picture in South Africa, however, is somewhat brighter (cf Figure 1.3). In the year 2000/01 for example, Africa as a whole had 4,540 American students participating in Study-Abroad programmes. South Africa hosted 1,107 of these students, which is a total of 24% of the continent’s total number (IIE 2002:58-59). The interest in South Africa as a destination for study-abroad is reflected in the statistics shown in Figure 1.3.

Despite a steady increase between 1996 and 2002 in the number of American undergraduates who chose South Africa as a destination for study-abroad, there is still a marked inequality in the overall global percentage, as is shown in the Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4



The importance of internationalisation in the South African higher education sector and in furthering South Africa as a destination for American students has not gone unnoticed. However, South African tertiary academic institutions have historically been disadvantaged due to their isolation from their worldwide counterparts during the years prior to the first democratic national elections in 1994. Only with the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 has extensive contact and full collaboration between South African institutions of higher learning and their international counterparts been possible (Thomas 2000:1-2).

Thomas (2000:1-2) goes on to say that in an interconnected global society and economy it is vital that educational institutions prepare their students and staff to compete and succeed in an increasing global society and that international exchanges play a vital role in this endeavour. However, since the South African economy makes it problematical for South African academics and students to gain experience at foreign institutions, it becomes more and more important that South African institutions encourage appropriate exchanges from foreign institutions, as their presence, in addition to providing great financial benefit to South Africa, also provides for a broadening of horizons, development of important contacts, and increased confidence to South African academia.

In addition to realizing the intrinsic and monetary values of fostering an educational system in South Africa that welcomes study-abroad students from other countries, what practical measures have been put in place by the international educators within South Africa to foster increasing numbers of foreign students arriving on their shores? In 1997, the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) was founded. According to Dr. Kisun (s.a.:1), the current president of the organisation, this was done to enable South African universities and technikons to respond to the unprecedented interest, since the 1994 elections, from the international educational institutions.

Study South Africa, (2004:online) a magazine published by IEASA, is available on the Internet as well as in paper format. In it, all of the universities in South Africa that accept foreign students are listed, along with contact details. Due to a merger of South African universities that took place in January of 2004, there are currently eighteen universities in South Africa, versus the twenty-one institutions that existed prior to the

merger (African Studies Centre 2004:Online).

Finding information on study-abroad programmes is not difficult. By doing an Internet search on one of the most common search engines, *Yahoo!*, a total of 646,000 results appear when the search term “Study-abroad in South Africa” is entered. South African institutional contact details, American institutions and consortiums as well as propriety study-abroad programmes and travel organisations are listed in the first twenty hits.

As mentioned previously, (cf 1.3) institutions in the United States as well as consortiums, non-profit and proprietary organisations exist for the sole purpose of matching a student with an appropriate study-abroad programme. South African tertiary institutions are numerous, offer a wide variety of majors and faculties (African Studies Centre 2004:Online) and according to the *Study South Africa* website (2004:online), the majority of South African universities have the necessary infrastructure and appear to be well organized for promoting and receiving residential foreign students.

1.5 EVALUATION OF STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES

Along with the realization of the need to formalize study-abroad programmes (c.f. 1.1), it became apparent that a methodology was needed which would enable the standardization of the quality of the programmes as well as a method by which to evaluate the effectiveness of such programmes. The first such effort was undertaken in 1965, when the Council on International Educational Exchange issued the *Guide to Institutional Self-Study and Evaluation of Educational Programmes Abroad* in an effort to assist institutions with such a methodology (Abrams & Heller 1978:5).

Over the years, many more articles, reports and books have been written about the need to evaluate the academic validity of study-abroad programmes, such as *Colleges Need Better Ways to Assess Study-Abroad Programmes* by Gillespie (2002) and Rubin’s *Short-term Study Abroad: Managing Growth, Ensuring Quality* (2002) as well as Immelman and Schneider’s *Assessing Student Learning in Study-Abroad Programmes: A Conceptual Framework and Methodology for Assessing Student Learning in Study-Abroad Programmes* (1998) to name but a very few. Yet, while these reports covered

the academic validity of study-abroad programmes, very little has been written over the years about the experiences or non-academic involvement of the American undergraduate abroad and how they have impacted on the student (Stephenson 1999:1).

As long ago as 1987, Bowman (1987:36) stated that “sponsors of programmes have long felt that the experience of living in a foreign culture provides a significant portion of the educational value of study-abroad programmes”, yet today, almost twenty years later, very little research into that ‘value’ exists (Stephenson 1999:1).

According to Stephenson (1999:1-28) in her study of transformational experiences as a result of study-abroad by American undergraduates in a developing nation, experiential learning was the main outcome of the endeavour. Sachdev (1997: 58) defines experiential education (cf 1.10) as a form of learning that involves applying classroom knowledge to real life situations and interactions. Levy (2000:75) adds that experiential learning; even in the traditional study-abroad destinations is the prime component of the sojourn and that at least three new major learning areas are opened up as a result of the experience: learning which involves the host culture, a new perspective on the student’s own culture, and self learning. Levy (2000:75-76) goes on to state that students soon realize that, despite expectations, academic learning and coursework is the smallest part of their learning experience and that dealing with new situations, relationships and their own reactions to circumstances form the bulk of their education while on a study-abroad programme.

1.6 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study is not an attempt to measure or define pedagogical or curricular outcomes, but rather to describe the life experiences of the American undergraduate who has chosen to study-abroad in South Africa.

Therefore, the problem statement for this thesis is *‘What are the life experiences of the American undergraduate who participates in a study-abroad programme in South Africa?’* As mentioned earlier (cf. 1.5) very little is known about experiential learning of those who choose to study-abroad, and even less about those who choose to do so in

South Africa. This research will attempt to look at the variables that form the study-abroad experience.

This problem statement also includes the following sub-problems:

- 1 What is the historical background to study-abroad in the American context? How does the study-abroad programme fit into the U.S. system of higher education? What types of programmes exist and how are they structured? Why is study-abroad considered to be of value, and in particular with reference to those who chose to study-abroad in South Africa?
- 2 What are the experiences of a small sample of American undergraduate students in a study-abroad programme at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus?
- 3 What recommendations can be made to improve not only the quality of such programmes but the access to them?

1.7 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

According to the statistics presented (cf 1.4.1) South Africa is extremely underrepresented in the study-abroad worldwide percentages, yet is fully equipped to promote and receive interested American undergraduates. Although Africa is a fairly recent study-abroad destination (cf 1.4.1), it would seem that enough time has passed, and many programmes completed, so that the experiences of those who have participated should have filtered down to successive student population groups, if not by written reports, then at least by word of mouth.

The purpose of this research was to explore the life experiences of the American undergraduate while participating in a study-abroad in South Africa, and by so doing, fill an obvious gap in current research as outlined in Section 1.4.

The research objectives were to:

- A. Describe the history of study-abroad in reference to the United States, what the system and organisation of such programmes are as well as identifying the

method by which an American undergraduate participates in study-abroad programmes and their perceived importance in the American educational system with specific reference to South Africa.

- B. Explore the various life experiences of a small group of American undergraduate students who spend a semester studying at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard Campus;
- C. Make recommendations, which would hopefully improve the quality of such programmes, as well as exploring ways in which access to these programmes could be increased.

This investigation is based on the premise that it is not the academic experience alone that defines a successful study-abroad. In evaluating the success and impacts of such programmes, the out-of-class life experiences, perhaps even to a greater extent than the in-class experiences have profound impacts on the study-abroad student.

1.8 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Working in the field of international education for the last sixteen years as the Educational Adviser for the United States Consulate in Durban, South Africa, has had a profound effect on my life. I strongly believe that experiencing education beyond one's own shores has so many inherent advantages, especially in today's world, that it has almost become a necessity.

South Africa has much to offer in terms of its educational, social and cultural environments. Despite this, its share in the American study-abroad programmes is not all that it should be. I believe that both South Africa and the United States could mutually benefit from a greater degree of participation in study-abroad with American undergraduates. There have been few, if any, previous investigations reporting on student experiences in a study-abroad, and none, that I am aware of, deal with the experiences of American undergraduates who choose to study-abroad in South Africa. I hope to break new ground in this area and assist both South African institutions and American study-abroad directors with the results of the research of this project.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was conducted by means of a literature review and an empirical investigation. The literature review was undertaken to identify appropriate writings, books, articles, reports and statistics that were relevant to the field of study-abroad, with specific reference to South Africa. This formed the background of the empirical investigation.

The empirical investigation used a qualitative approach as it was believed that this was the most appropriate means by which the goals of this research could be achieved. A brief rationale and description of the qualitative research undertaken is contained in the following paragraphs. An in-depth discussion of the research methodology will form the topic of Chapter Three.

1.9.1 Rationale for Qualitative Research

As stated by Seidman (1998:7), “the choice of a research method ideally is determined by what one is trying to learn”. When attempting to learn of the experiences of others, and how those experiences affected them, qualitative research, specifically that of interview research is called for according to Weiss (1994:9-12).

Since qualitative interviews by their very nature, accumulate vast amounts of information, the research is normally based on a sample very much smaller than that of a quantitative survey. Since the findings and analysis of interview research cannot be categorized as easily as that of numerical findings, the reporting of findings in interview research rely more on narration, case descriptions, interpretation and summary (Weiss 1994:3).

Since the goal of this study is to examine the life experiences of American undergraduates who chose to study-abroad in South Africa, it was determined that the most appropriate research method was that of qualitative case study research using semi-structured, descriptive interviews. As stated by Hopkins (1999:38) “Students themselves are the most articulate sources of information about the value of study-abroad.”

1.9.2 Choice of the Population Groups and Samples

The first population group, chosen through nonprobabilistic purposeful sampling is the:

Study-Abroad Focus Group. The study-abroad focus group comprised seven professionals within the study-abroad framework of U.S. institutions, such as Directors of International Programmes at public and private four-year institutions.

The second population group, chosen through nonprobabilistic, purposeful, convenience sampling (Merriam 2001:62) is the:

Student Participant Group. This group was comprised of six American undergraduates, from various parts of the United States and from two sending bodies (a non-profit organisation and university consortiums) who chose to study-abroad in a semester-long programme at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus from January to June, 2004. The students were in an immersion type programme, living in on-campus dormitories and where the language of instruction was English. In the selection of the six student subjects, every attempt was made to ensure that a diverse representative sampling of men and women of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds was achieved.

1.9.3 Data Gathering

Data gathering involving the two population groups in this study consisted of the following:

Study-Abroad Focus Group. During the annual Association of International Educators Conference (NAFSA) in Salt Lake City, Utah in May of 2003, an unstructured interview was held with this focus group to gather data, which would assist in the determination of what aspects of this study they deemed important. The interview was then transcribed and coded to establish common elements themes of interest that related to the empirical study.

Student Participant Group. A series of three, 90-minute semi-structured interviews was conducted with each of the students. These interviews took place during three critical time periods: immediately upon arrival, halfway through the programme and at the programme's conclusion.

Prior to the interviews taking place a pilot study was conducted, using the same parameters outlined above, but involving only one student who attended the same South African institution from July to December 2003.

All interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

1.9.4 Analysis of Data

The procedure by which the analysis of data gathered through the interviews of both population groups, which is dealt with extensively in Chapter Three, was accomplished in the first instance by transcribing the recorded interviews into word processing documents. Then, careful reviewing and comparing of each transcribed document to define themes, categories and sub-categories in order to find specific units of data was undertaken both manually and using computer software. The various categories were defined, or coded, reflecting areas that responded to the research aims and questions and finally reduced to data that pertained to the predefined categories.

The topics of the study, as outlined in Chapters Three and Four, which defined the experience as a whole, were examined and continually re-examined using the coded, transcribed interviews as obtained from both population groups.

1.9.4.1 Trustworthiness of Data

The importance for reliability or trustworthiness in a qualitative study as well as a thorough review of the methodology used to establish such trustworthiness is covered in Chapter Three. The various methods employed during this research to ensure trustworthiness included: substantive literature review, formation of a pilot study, formation of a focus group, formation of an interview guide, careful choice of participants, use of the three semi-structured interview design, verbatim tape recording of the interviews and verbatim transcription, strict methodology for data analysis and interpretation, and use of computer analysis software.

1.10 TERMINOLOGY

Experience: Refers to, in terms of this study, how the student perceived his or her

involvement in the various participant arenas, inter alia; social, academic, cultural and logistical.

Experiential Education: Learning that involves increasing one's overall knowledge by applying what has been learned in the classroom to real life. Study-abroad is one of the most popular examples of this type of learning, other examples including: field trips, internships, and living and learning communities (Sachdev 1997:58).

International Education: all educational activities of any kind, (i.e., teaching, studying, doing research or providing technical assistance), involving people of two or more nations, either individually or in formal programmes (Arum 1987:8).

Internationalisation: A broad range of intellectual and experiential activities designed to help individuals understand the global environment in which they live, communicate across borders, and acquire an understanding of the cultural, social and political systems of other nations and the interactions between nations (Hayward & Siaya 2001:43).

Junior Year Abroad: A period of study-abroad, which takes place in one's third year of study at a 4-year college or university in the United States (Bowman 1987:13).

1.11 CHAPTER DIVISIONS

A brief history as well as the organisation of study-abroad in the United States is given in Chapter One, followed by the statistical information on the flow of American students to various study-abroad destinations, and South Africa's participation within the study-abroad arena. Africa is extremely underrepresented as the destination of choice for American students, as is South Africa, to a lesser extent. The fact that previous studies on the topic of study-abroad are mainly on the academic outcomes is mentioned as is the fact that the non-academic experiences of participants are not well documented. Chapter One also covers the motivation for the study, the aims of the research, the research design and terminology used in this study.

Chapter Two investigates the literature surrounding study-abroad, with specific reference to South Africa and other non-traditional locations, including the validity and importance of such programmes, programme quality issues, and the effects on participants of various ethnic backgrounds and gender issues. It also looks at previous study-abroad studies and the various methods by which the programmes are evaluated.

An explanation of the research is covered in Chapter Three, including the rationale and justification for such research. The sources of the data, the sample size and selection as well as issues of validity, the tools for data collection as well as the format for data collection are covered.

Chapter Four reports on the findings of the research. It is divided into the findings for the Focus Group followed by the findings from the student subjects. A comparison of the findings between the two groups is made, outlining the patterns of common concerns and interest of both groups. The relevance of the findings is discussed and a summary presented.

A summarization of the research is the topic of Chapter Five. Along with the synopsis of the findings, recommendations for improvement of practice and directions for future research are given.

1.12 SUMMARY

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the topic as well as providing a brief historical and statistical perspective to the study undertaken. The organisation of study-abroad programmes within the United States is addressed as well as providing information on American student participation within these programmes, specifically that of participation within South Africa. South Africa's capacity to receive American undergraduates is covered, as is the availability of information regarding such programmes. The methodology of the evaluation of study-abroad programmes is addressed, in which the lack of descriptive analysis of the experiences of study-abroad students is stated. The problem statement, as well as the aim of the research is stated and the research methodology is outlined. The chapter concludes with an outline of the

chapter divisions that comprise the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

AMERICAN STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES WITH REFERENCE TO PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

“The quest for understanding is never finished.”
Robert B. Sherman (1988)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One supplied information regarding the history of study-abroad in relation to the United States and gave a brief overview of the research methodology of this study. In addition, the problem statement and aims of the study were listed.

The goals of this chapter include defining study-abroad in its American context by briefly explaining the educational system of the United States, and describing both the typical American study-abroad student and the non-participant student. The relevance and importance of study-abroad, the challenges and benefits of study-abroad programmes as well as an overview of the process involved in applying for and participating in study-abroad programmes are also dealt with. Finally, this chapter describes Africa as a destination for study-abroad with specific reference to the socio-political and economic status of South Africa and how these factors relate to South Africa as a destination for study-abroad.

2.1.1 A Brief Overview of the System of Higher Education in the United States

In order to put the concept of study-abroad in the United States into its correct context within the American educational system, an overview of the higher education system in the United States is described below.

Education in America is governed by the state in which it exists, rather than at a federal level (American Council on Education 1999:1). Federal control of education in general and tertiary education in particular, does however exist in a limited way, in the following areas:

- The use of federal funding granted to tertiary institutions and students attending those institutions;
- Implementation of legislation such as the Civil Rights Act, which affects tertiary education;
- Program development in areas such as foreign language training and area studies programmes;
- Special programmes designed to make tertiary education more accessible to people with disabilities;
- Federal funds for research level (American Council on Education 1999:1).

The academic year normally runs from late August or early September through to late May or early June with breaks at Christmas and Easter (Sjogren 1986:42). The months of June to August are referred to as *summer session*, when it is possible to attend a limited amount of courses (American Council on Education 1999:29). The majority of American study-abroad participants either begin their studies abroad in January or in August (IIE:2002) and complete a full semester of study. The minority of American students participate in shorter summer session study-abroad programmes (cf Table 2.1).

Higher education in the United States is offered through two systems; the two-year community college system and the four-year college and university system.

2.1.1.1 Two-year Community and Junior Colleges

According to Lundquist and Hunter (2000:1), two-year community and junior colleges are unique to the United States as they offer academic programmes that are comparable to the first two-years of university work and can be applied toward a four-year college degree. In addition, two-year community colleges are distinctive in that they also offer general education courses, technical education and vocational training courses, which prepare students for immediate employment (Lundquist & Hunter 2000: 1). Today, there are over 1,100 such institutions in the United States and nearly 55% of all first-time freshmen begin their higher education at a two-year college (Two Year Colleges 2001:2).

Since their goal is to offer education to everyone in the local community who desires it, the community college admission structure is usually non-competitive and most

students who meet basic requirements are allowed entry (United States Information Agency 1991:20). This affords the students who attend these schools a wide array of options at relatively low tuition cost.

Community and junior colleges award associate degrees after successful completion of a two-year programme of study. The Associate of Arts (A.A.) and the Associate of Science (A.S.) degrees are offered in a wide variety of liberal arts and science subjects designed to meet the requirements of the first two-years of a baccalaureate degree. Degree requirements are established to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to continue toward a bachelor's degree, transferring for their final two-years to a four-year college or university (Two Year Colleges 2001:3).

Due to the fact that community colleges cater for all segments of the community, including older and returning students, most of whom are over the age of 28, as well as being part time learners who work an average of twenty hours per week (Falcetta sa:7), the participation level in study-abroad programmes from this segment of the education sector is by far in the minority.

2.1.1.2 Four-year Colleges and Universities

Although not identical in terms of formal definition, the terms 'college' and 'university' as well as 'school' are most often used synonymously in the United States to refer to tertiary education (Barnes 1991:32). There is no legal or official control over the institution's option to choose a particular designation as part of its name (United States Information Agency 1991:21).

A college offers a four-year programme of study leading to a bachelor's degree. Most colleges in the United States fall into the 'Liberal Arts College' definition (Four Year Colleges 2001:12) with an emphasis on the humanities. A college or school may be independent or a part of university and focus on a specific faculty such as architecture, business, or education. For example, the School of Business at the University of Richmond in Virginia is one of the seven colleges within that university (University of Richmond 2001:1). Another example is Newcomb College, the nation's first coordinate college for women within the larger setting of Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana (Tulane University 2001:1).

Universities emphasise research and often include professional schools such as law and medicine, undergraduate colleges of arts and sciences, and graduate schools which offer Master's as well as Doctoral programmes and post-graduate studies which offer both pre-doctoral, professional and post-doctoral programmes of study (Rodenhouse 2002:xix).

There are over 2,000 four-year colleges and universities in the United States and each of these institutions determines its own goals, emphases and admissions standards (Carnegie Foundation 2000:55-59). Liberal arts colleges, for example, emphasize excellence in teaching basic subjects such as humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and languages.

Historically, some colleges have admitted only male, only female or only black or American Indian students; however, most are open to all academically qualified students who apply. Other colleges have a particular religious emphasis and some may focus only on particular fields of study such as the arts or sciences, while others, referred to as 'institutes', such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which usually specialize in a broad field of study such as science or the arts, offer both bachelor and graduate degrees (Gernand & Tuller 2001:10).

Colleges and universities may be public or private. Institutions of high quality are found equally among public and private institutions; the principal difference is one of funding (Lundquist & Hunter 2000:1). Public institutions are funded partially by the government of the state in which the institution is located and partially by student tuition payments and private donations. Private institutions are funded for the most part by private endowments, donations and student fees.

Since state governments support public institutions, they give preference in enrolment and tuition charges to students from that state. The total cost, however, is usually lower at most state institutions than at private institutions, even for those who are not residents of the state (United States Information Agency 1991:20-22).

The majority of American undergraduate study-abroad participants originate from four-

year institutions (IIE 2002:58-68).

2.2 STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES

As mentioned in Chapter One (cf 1.2), according to Dubois (1995:1) and Fantini (2002: 6), the development of study-abroad programmes in the United States can be traced back to colonial times. The study of the effect of study-abroad programmes is a far more recent occurrence (cf 1.5) with early evaluations of such programmes beginning in the 1960's (Abrams & Heller 1978:5).

The realization that a need existed for standardization and goal orientated outcomes within the study-abroad field was the subject of the first conference of its kind, which occurred in 1960 in Chicago. The National Conference on Study-Abroad Programmes was organized and sponsored by four organisations: The Association of American Colleges, the Council on Student Travel (later known as the Council on International Educational Exchanges), the Experiment in International Living and the Institute of International Education (Bowman 1987:17).

Dr. Stephen Freeman summarized the twelve main findings of the conference to be:

1. There must be a clear statement of academic objectives relevant to the objectives of the home institution;
2. There must be a careful preparation of a curriculum designed to achieve these objectives;
3. There should be cooperation among American colleges to avoid duplication of programmes;
4. There should be a clearinghouse of information about programmes abroad;
5. There must be careful selection and preparation of students.
6. Part of the preparation must be the acquisition of an adequate knowledge of the language;
7. Immersion in the culture of the host country to the extent possible is an essential part of any programme;

8. While underclassman may benefit from study abroad, arrangements are difficult, and the experience is more valuable if postponed until the junior year or as part of graduate study;
9. Achievement of substantial credit toward the A.B. degree is essential;
10. The careful selection of a director is of major importance;
11. Costs must be low and scholarships available to avoid limiting the programmes to those with greater financial means;
12. There must be evaluation of the results for the student, the institution and for the nation (Bowman 1987:18).

It is primarily the last of these findings that is the topic of this study.

2.2.1 Types of Study-Abroad Programmes

Primarily, there are three main types of study-abroad programmes in which most American undergraduates participate. These are:

- *Immersion Programmes.* These types of programmes involve direct enrolment into a host country's indigenous system of higher education.
- *Island Programmes.* Self-contained micro-campuses of U.S. institutions in foreign centres.
- *Hybrid Programmes.* U.S. accredited offshore universities offering U.S. style programmes (Hanouille & Leuner 2001:1).

This study involves U.S. undergraduates who participated in an immersion type programme, however, regardless of the type of programme, the process of applying to take part in a study-abroad programme remains more or less the same.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES IN THE UNITED STATES

Historically in the United States, the traditional college student was a young person who:

- Was 18 to 24 years old;

- Was financially dependent on his or her parents;
- Attended college full time;
- Directly after high school.

Over time, this ‘traditional’ student has become less than typical, with only 27% of the nation’s collegiate students belonging to this group (Green 2003:3). The remaining students form the population group which Green (2003:3) refers to as ‘the non-traditional college student’, even though they make up 73% of the American undergraduate college student body.

This section will examine the descriptors of each population group in relation to their participation in study-abroad programmes.

2.3.1 The Typical Study-Abroad Participant

The typical American student who participates in a study-abroad programme, according to the *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange* (IIE 2002:58-68), and as reflected in Table 2.1, would be a:

- Caucasian female;
- In her junior (third-year) year of college;
- Who chooses to study in the United Kingdom;
- For one semester;
- In the field of social sciences.

This typical study-abroad student in the United States, ‘Miss Study-Abroad’ is drawn from the ‘traditional student’ pool (cf 2.3). In addition, Hayward and Siaya’s (2001:7-8) survey showed that she would have the following characteristics:

- The family income would be \$40,000 per year or more;
- She would have travelled outside the U.S. in the past;
- For not more than a month;
- To Mexico or Canada;
- On a family vacation.

‘Miss Study-Abroad’ as defined above is the typical American who chooses during her

university career to participate in learning outside of her native country. She is one of the slightly more than 1% (NAFSA 2003:ii) of all U.S. undergraduates who choose to study-abroad, out of a student population of more than 14 million (Fantini 2002:18).

The 1% of all American undergraduates in the United States who participate in study-abroad programmes have defining common characteristics. Table 2.1 highlights the typical American student participation in study-abroad and illustrates the percentages relating to destinations, gender, race, academic level, programme duration and field of study.

U.S. STUDY-ABROAD: A SNAPSHOT

(Source: NAFSA 2003:8)

Table 2.1

Top Destinations	Number of Students	Participation	Number of Students
United Kingdom	30,143	Total	160,920
Spain	17,176	Duration of Programme	Percentage
Italy	17,169	One Semester	39.0
France	12,274	Summer Term	34.4
Gender	Percentage	Academic Year	7.8
Female	64.9	Fewer Than 8 Weeks	7.3
Male	35.1	January Term	6.0
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage	One Quarter	3.9
Caucasian	82.9	Other	0.6
Hispanic-American	5.8	Calendar Year	0.5
Asian-American	5.4	Two Quarters	0.5
African-American	3.5	Field of Study	Percentage
Multiracial	2.0	Social Sciences	21.9
Native American	0.4	Business & Management	17.6
Academic Level	Percentage	Humanities	13.8
Junior	40.7	Fine or Applied Arts	8.5
Senior	20.4	Foreign Languages	8.5
Sophomore	13.6	Physical Sciences	7.6
Bachelor's Unspecified	11.0	Other	5.2
Master's	4.7	Education	3.9
Graduate, Unspecified	3.3	Undeclared	3.8
Freshman	3.2	Health Sciences	3.0
Associate	1.5	Engineering	2.9
Other	0.8	Math & Computer Science	2.2
Doctoral	0.7	Agriculture	1.1

2.3.2 The Non-Participant in Study-Abroad Programmes

The remaining 73% of American college undergraduate students are not ‘traditional’ students, that is, even though they form the majority of all college students in the United States, they do not fit into any of the traditional student descriptors listed above. They are often part time learners or returning students in older age brackets who generally are self-supporting.

Booth (ed.) (1991:40) and NAFSA (2003:10) define the underrepresented American student in study-abroad programmes, or ‘Mr. Stay-at-Home’ as belonging to the non-traditional student population pool, which forms the largest percentage of American college students. These students have one or more of the following characteristics:

- A male;
- Who belongs to an ethnic and/or racial minority;
- Who majors in certain academic disciplines (e.g., the sciences, law, engineering, business, education, pre-med, and agriculture);
- Who has a disabilities;
- Who studies at certain types of institutions (e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, community and technical colleges, institutions that enrol large numbers of low and middle income students and non-traditional students);
- Who is a low income student;
- Who is older;
- Who is part-time student with or without dependants;
- Who is a campus leader and athlete;
- Who is a student without a second language;
- Who is a commuter student;
- Who comes from or lives in certain geographical areas;
- Who works full time or he is financially independent.

Since the typical American undergraduate participant in study-abroad programmes does not come from the largest population pool of American undergraduates, it would appear that there are certain constraints that limit the participation of the majority of American undergraduate students. These challenges are examined in detail in section 2.6.

2.4 THE IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF STUDY-ABROAD: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

The world is fast becoming more interconnected and more interdependent. World leaders are recognizing that knowledge and understanding of other cultures is vital to their continued existence, while educators are faced with the demand for graduates who can perform in an ever-changing, increasingly interrelated global environment. The need for sensitivity and understanding of other cultures and races is becoming more apparent to many of today's leaders. In the report *Securing America's Future: Global Education for a Global Age*, (NAFSA 2003:ii) former US. Senator, Paul Simon states: "The nation learned on September 11, 2001, that we must become much more sensitive to the rest of the world. We are four percent of the Earth's population, yet we are the military and economic giant." He goes on to say that implementing strategies for improvement and expansion in the field of internationalisation within the United States system of education is vital.

The tragedy that befell the United States on September 11th, 2001 might have had some positive results. While 25 years of various reports and commissions condemned the lack of global awareness, knowledge and foreign language ability, they did little to foster the cause of internationalisation of education. However, September 11th, 2001 brought national attention to events outside the U.S. boundaries (Green 2003:2). Green goes on to say (2003:2) that whether or not the events of September 11th will have any permanent impact on the American educational policy, the world as a whole has changed so radically that these changes must impact on the nation's future, specifically in education.

In addition to realizing that there is an importance to learning and appreciating other cultures, the rapid and ever-changing advent of multiple technologies, the increase in international trade, and the interdependence of global economies have changed the demands of the workplace and of the educator and student. More and more companies are expanding internationally and demand workers who can perform in the international arena. As a result, colleges and universities are being called upon to expand their curricula and train students and faculty to operate in such a new environment (Burkart et al 2001:1).

The growing global perspective in education is a direct result of increased global connectedness and interdependence and reflects to a great extent, the desired outcome of international education (McCabe 1994:275). Prior distinctions that have existed between foreign and domestic matters in the United States as well as in all other countries are quickly becoming intertwined as most domestic problems today also have international ramifications. The rapid and evolving changes in global economic, technology and security issues are altering the way that most nations go about their business, life and work. The increased availability of global markets and the manner in which trade is conducted has profound implications for the manner in which American businesses practice and compete in today's world. In order to be able to do so with the required expertise mandates that there be a greater importance placed on global content, including foreign language skills and specific country expertise at all U.S. educational institutions NAFSA (2000:1).

Many educational researchers agree (Altbach & Teichler 2001:5, Burkart et al 2001:1) that with the advent of the Internet and other global technologies, becoming a member of the global village is inevitable and that the focus in the educational arena should reflect these needs by preparing students for a world in which global competencies are commonplace (Fantini et al 2001:i).

In addition to the need to adapt to an ever-changing and increasingly global environment, there are inherent benefits in doing so, both on the institutional and student levels. These benefits are the topics of the following sections.

2.4.1 Benefits of Internationalisation to Higher Education

It would seem that not only is internationalisation (cf 1.10) inevitable, but that higher education is in a favourable position to adapt to these new circumstances and benefit from a number of factors such as:

- A common academic model worldwide that stems from the medieval European university, with one or two exceptions that stem from the Paris model, and these common historical and structural roots foster internationalisation;
- An increasingly global academic marketplace for both students and staff;
- The use of English internationally not only for the communication of research

but for teaching purposes;

- Distance education and the use of the Internet for teaching and research;
- The trend of academic institutions in one country partnering with institutions in other countries, the creation of ‘offshore’ campuses, and the franchising of educational programmes and degrees;
- The ‘harmonization’ of degree structures, courses credits, and related mechanisms of the evaluation and measurement of academic progress (Altbach & Teichler 2001:6).

It would appear that the growing globalisation of the world and the resultant interdependency between nations requires new strategies and methodologies on the part of American academic institutions. The efforts involved in achieving this, however, will ultimately improve the quality of the institutions and their academic offerings and will increase the level of institutional participation in the global arena.

2.4.2 Benefits of Internationalisation to Students

In addition to the benefits that educational institutions derive from internationalisation, students themselves benefit greatly from the experience of living in another culture in a foreign land. For decades studies have shown how poorly Americans do in general in regards to knowledge of international matters when compared to other countries.

Studies have also shown that travel abroad has had the greatest influence on internationalising a student’s knowledge, a finding that has significant relevance for the advocates of study-abroad (Hayward & Siaya 2001:3).

Students who participate in international education have discovered and begun to develop a global skill that increases their competitiveness in most job markets. Students who have international experience can adjust better to strange circumstances, converse in languages other than English, and usually have the ability to meet new challenges and offer new solutions to problems (Moffatt 2002:2).

Marcum (2001:1) declares similar thoughts in his report on the American Council on Education. The survey indicated that more than 75% of the one thousand students

surveyed indicated that they believed study-abroad would give them opportunities and learning advantages that were not available elsewhere and would uniquely prepare them for a new and global job market. Hayward and Siaya (2001:2) state that in a national survey, 8 out of every 10 respondents indicated that the presence of international programmes would positively influence the choice of college or university for them or their children.

Participating in an educational programme abroad can be one of the most valuable assets for assisting students to face the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world that demands intercultural skills and knowledge (NAFSA 2003:4) Returning students have found that not only did they return with fond memories and more knowledge of the host country, but also a range of new and useful skills (Green 2001:2).

Since the inception of formalized study-abroad programmes in the United States during the 1960's (cf 1.2), hundreds upon hundreds of articles have been written about the variety of benefits obtained by participating in them. In the past it has been a matter of choice and perhaps a bit of a luxury to study in a foreign country, but now, although the benefits might remain the same, there is an added imperative to learning about new cultures and the land in which they exist. It would seem that we have reached a stage where global education, both on the part of the institution and on the part of the student is no longer a matter of choice, but one of necessity.

We have reached the stage where globalisation affects us not only on the educational level but also in everyday events of our lives. Shannon (1995:1) states that "even if life's path never takes one to a foreign land, even if one never studies or works abroad, chances are that a citizen of some foreign land may become a neighbour, an in-law, a loved one, a boss, a teacher. We simply don't live in monocultures anymore. Learning to accept, enjoy, and respect the differences in other cultures is the very basis of civility, without which life is dreary at best, tumultuous and violent at worst".

2.5 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS IN THE UNITED STATES OF PARTICIPATING IN A STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMME

As stated in Chapter One (cf 1.3), there are three main facilitators in the United States of study-abroad programmes. A student may choose to participate in a programme organized by his or her own university, or through an independent and/or proprietary programme, or through direct enrolment into the foreign institution.

2.5.1 Choosing a Programme

Deciding which programme to participate in must be one of the most difficult parts of the process. When doing an Internet search using the term *study-abroad* on two of the most common Internet search engines (Yahoo! and Google) over four million results (Yahoo Online:2004) and almost six million results (Google Online:2004) are displayed respectively, listing a variety of information from providers, to other links to directories of programmes. The information is truly abundant and must pose a confusing information overload for the unassisted novice.

A more helpful means of deciding which programme would be the appropriate one can be found on most institutions' own web site, by doing a similar search. The University of California Education Abroad Program Systemwide Office (University of California, Santa Barbara 2004:Online), an educational system known for its abundance of programmes and which is headquartered at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is an example of one of many institutions with user friendly data base search programmes for study-abroad options. Their search programme is designed to assist students with the decision making process, including, amongst others, the variables of subject, language and country choices, which makes it easier to narrow down the resulting selection choices. By inputting various parameters, an appropriate list of study-abroad destinations will be shown.

The Council on International Educational Exchange, a study-abroad programme provider, urges that the setting of academic goals be the first consideration when choosing a study-abroad programme (CIEE 2004:Online), followed by determination of self-sufficiency and personal requirements for independence, as various programmes require different levels of independence. It is important to realize that the selection of

an appropriate programme should be made in conjunction with personal interests, career and study goals as well as language interests (Alt 2003:2).

Early planning is essential and students should begin considering which programmes would be appropriate for them as early as their last year in high school as it might affect which college they will attend. Students also need to look seriously at what type of experience they would like to have. Do they want to participate in programmes that offer homestays, dormitory living on-campus, traditional classes or real world experience? The application process is a lengthy one and that there is so much paperwork involved that only the truly dedicated stay with the process (Vaccaro 2002:2).

2.5.2 The Application

Once a student has a study-abroad destination in mind, he or she must fill in the appropriate application, and supply supporting documentation that can include one or more letters of recommendation from various faculties, essays from the student, and occasionally, interviews. Some programmes are extremely competitive (Southwestern University 2004:Online) and some institutions accept more than one application per student, in case particular programmes are full.

Many institutions require a deposit when making application; this can range from \$50-\$100 per programme application, which may affect the student's ability to apply to more than one programme (Brockington pers. comm. 2004).

2.5.2.1 Grade Requirements

Most institutions have a minimum grade point average or GPA that a student must meet in order to be accepted into the programme (Michigan State University 2004). A GPA is a system whereby academic grades are recorded based on a numerical average of the grades attained in each course. Although there is no national system of grading the most common form would be: A=4.00, B=3.00, C=2.00, D=1.00. For example, the University of California at Santa Barbara (2004:Online) *Education Abroad Programmes* (EAP) consortia states that in order to participate in EAP programmes a student must maintain the requisite GPA ranging from 2.5 to 3.5 (a C+ to B+ average), depending on the programme.

2.5.2.2 Language Requirements

Some study-abroad programmes also require language learning or prior language proficiency before being accepted into a programme. According to Baumann (1975:251) many students underestimate the time it takes to become proficient in a foreign language, proficient enough to undertake studies in that language. She goes on to say that it is not true that an intensive course of a few weeks or even months will result in mastery of any foreign language to the extent that study in it would become possible. Even if the student had studied the language in the past, he or she should allow for weeks or months of revision in the host country in order to be capable of understanding academic coursework.

According to Brockington (pers. comm. 2004) many institutions and organisations require a language placement exam, or other proof of language competency, such as sufficient coursework in a given language prior to approval of an immersion programme (cf 2.2.1) of study in a non-English speaking country as well as requiring intensive language training prior to departure (Rhodes s.a.:Online).

Island programmes (cf 2.2.1) may require no such language proficiency as by their very nature, all classes are conducted in English, other than language classes, regardless of their country of participation (Baumann 1975:254).

2.5.2.3 Health Requirements

Most institutions and organisations provide students with copious amounts of reading material on health and safety issues when accepted into a study-abroad programme (Michigan State University 2004:Online). Check-ups by a doctor for general health purposes are often required and all health issues are considered that may affect the successful and complete participation in a programme. Brockington (pers. comm. 2004) states that for liability reasons, institutions are more frequently referring students to the website of the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia for information regarding what is needed in terms of immunizations etc., and making less of their own recommendations regarding appropriate vaccinations such as hepatitis, cholera and yellow fever. It is then left up to the student to decide what precautions he or she wishes to take.

2.5.3 Acceptance

Once a student has completed all the necessary requirements, he or she must then wait for programme approval, which is usually done through the study-abroad office in conjunction with the student's academic adviser. Having received programme approval, he/she is notified of acceptance into the programme (Michigan State University 2004:Online). The next step would be making a deposit to ensure placement into the programme, if this has not been done already (Brockington pers. comm. 2004).

Once accepted into a programme, students then receive information regarding course enrolment, necessary travel arrangements, including visas, flight details and costs (Michigan State University 2004:Online).

2.5.4 Costs

Costs for programmes vary almost as much as the programmes themselves (Study Abroad.com). Costs are dependant on a variety of factors, including:

1. *Type of programme.* Island programmes, where everything is specially arranged for the U.S. group are usually more expensive than immersion programmes as U.S. style services generally cost more (cf. 2.2.1). According to Brockington (pers. comm. 2004), the main reason for the additional expense of the island programme is that provision must be made for an academic and student life infrastructure similar to the one on the student's home campus (e.g. computer lab, library, dorm or housing office, meals, exercise equipment, academic and personal counselling, etc.). If the programme also uses professors from the home institution, then the costs can become enormous;
2. *Duration.* The longer the programme, the greater the cost. However, in terms of cost-per-day, the short term faculty led programme are the most expensive, normally \$3,500 to \$5,000 for 3-4 weeks duration (Brockington pers. comm. 2004);
3. *Housing.* Cost of homestays can be less than dormitory costs, especially since 1 to 3 meals per day can be included in the cost;
4. *Home Campus Tuition Policy.* While tuition fees at foreign universities can be lower than home institution fees, it is often the policy to charge home institution rates for the study-abroad experience regardless of where that experience takes place. As Brockington (pers. comm. 2004) states: "There is a great deal of

discussion about this still in the profession. The argument for home college fees is that the student stays enrolled at the home institution, receives home institution credit and accesses many of the home campus' services, even while away – and of course, the home institution still has to keep the lights on and the staff fed and watered while the student is overseas. Others say it's exploitation”;

5. *Location of Program.* Western European programmes can be more expensive than programmes in the developing world, depending on the type of programme. However, a programme in the developing world where the U.S. college has to provide the infrastructure and where there may be only a few students quickly becomes more expensive to operate (Brockington pers. comm. 2004);
6. *Transportability of Financial aid or Scholarships.* Financial assistance for study in the United States takes one of two forms. It can be either merit or need based aid. Need based aid, which can take the form of a loan (repayable) or grant (non-repayable), is usually referred to as financial aid. Financial aid is obtainable from universities, banks and other lenders, as well as the federal government. If the aid is obtained from the federal government it is then transportable for use in a study-abroad programme, according to U.S. law. If the financial aid is from a bank, lending institution or the home institution, it may or may not be transportable, depending on the terms of the loan or grant. Scholarships, money that is given on merit, can be obtained from the home institution or a third party such as an association or society. This type of aid is normally in the form of a grant or tuition reduction and is not usually repayable. It may or may not be transportable, depending on the terms of the aid (Brockington pers. comm. 2004).

Payment of costs usually covers the following, but may vary widely by programme:

- *General:* application fees, administrative fees, tuition and other academic fees, books and other supplies, use of labs and libraries, use of computers;
- *Room and Board:* accommodation and food, housing and key deposits, residence permits;
- *Transportation:* round trip airfare (this may or may not be included in the total cost, depending on the programme), commuting costs to and from campus, programme related travel, optional travel;

- *Travel documents*: passport fee, visa if required, immunizations, and international student identity card;
- *Insurance*: health and accident insurance, travel insurance for lost or stolen items;
- *Miscellaneous*: admission to cultural events, gifts, fluctuating exchange rates, postage and phone calls;
- *Personal*: laundry, dry cleaning, personal care products, additional clothing (Study Abroad.com:Online).

These payments are made either to the programme provider, or directly to the host institution, depending on the type of programme enrolment (cf 1.3).

Considering the wide array of options *vis a vi* cost implications to study-abroad programmes, it would appear that a student would need to be very well informed of his or her options prior to making any decisions regarding the most appropriate study-abroad programme so as to minimize the cost factor. The issues of cost in relation to barriers in study-abroad are examined again in section 2.6.1.

2.5.5 Pre-Departure and Arrival Information

Most institutions and organisations have pre-departure programmes for the students who intend studying in a foreign country (University of Michigan 2004:Online), while others do not (InterStudy 2004:Online). The content and presentation style of these programmes vary tremendously. Some programme providers will provide students with travel and cultural information in a face-to-face presentation format, while others will rely on booklets to form their pre-departure package. Some institutions and organisations mandate that the student attend these programmes in order to be able to participate in the study-abroad programme (University of Michigan 2004:Online).

Virtually all programmes, regardless of type, have some type of arrival orientation on the host campus, which usually involves compulsory attendance. The receiving institution often provides arrival orientation programmes, which can include outings to areas of interest and discovery excursions of the local city or town, as well as classroom style presentations. Many propriety and island programmes offer additional in-country orientations to assist in the adjustment to the host country. These orientations can be as simple as a one-day programme or may continue throughout the programme on a

regular basis (Brockington pers. comm. 2004).

2.6 BARRIERS TO THE STUDY-ABROAD EXPERIENCE

A variety of challenges face the prospective American study-abroad applicant. These challenges can also have greater or lesser impact depending on a student's ethnicity (cf Table 2.2). Factors which are considered to be the main barriers include: cost, personal constraints, lack of information, lack of support either on the home front or within the academic arena, as well as a multiplicity of other considerations. Hembroff and Rusz (1993:23) defined these challenges during their study, and compared them to students from White, African-American and other race groups. These barriers will form the topic of this section and are delineated in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2

Factors Important in Decision NOT to Study-Abroad by Race/Ethnicity			
Source: Hembroff and Rusz (1993:23)			
Factors Important in Decision	White American	African American	Other
Couldn't afford to go	69.2	81.3	63.2
Needed to work during summer	66.4	62.5	3.8
Concerned about language differences	17.1	29.5	17.1
Concerned about cultural differences	5.5	10.7	2.6
Lack of support from friends	4.1	8	5.1
Lack of support from family	15.6	16.1	29.1
Lack of support from advisors	13.2	24.1	16.2
Program offered in undesirable locations	7.3	8.9	10.3
Did not offer topics of interests	19.2	25	24.9
Lack of fit in academic programme	29.9	26.8	16.2
Fear of the unknown	11.1	17	7.4
Fear of discrimination	2.3	14.3	3.4
Didn't know anyone going	23.7	33.9	25.6
Still considering studying abroad	44.4	38.4	44.4

2.6.1 Issues of Cost as a Barrier to Study-Abroad

It would appear from the data illustrated in Table 2.2 that cost was the primary barrier for all race groups. Although it may often be the case that it is cheaper to spend a semester abroad than to remain on the home campus, it is still perceived by many students that cost is the main inhibiting factor relating to participation in a study-abroad

programme (NAFSA 2003:9).

However, students who do not study-abroad tend to be in the lower income category (cf 2.3) and as such face inherent barriers in regard to the issue of the cost of a study-abroad programme. With the average annual American income being \$37,800 (CIA World Fact Book: 2004) and the minimum annual family income of the typical study-abroad participant being \$40,000 (cf 2.3.1), it would appear that study-abroad is only for the above average income group of American undergraduates.

The Council for Opportunity in Education, a non-profit organisation in the United States, which was established in 1981 and dedicated to assisting low-income and first generation college students to attend college, conducted a study to determine the barriers as well as the opportunities in regard to study-abroad programmes. Believing that low-income students should have the same opportunity to partake in international educational experiences as their more prosperous counterparts, the Council undertook to ascertain the perceived barriers to such programmes by surveying directors of study-abroad programmes (Norfles 2003:3).

The results of this research project also indicated that of all the challenges, cost was perceived to be the major barrier to a student's interest and participation in study-abroad programmes by directors in the field of international education (Norfles 2003:14). Elaborating further, one director stated in a response to an open-ended question: "They can't afford it. Period. We never get much beyond that" and that students were not willing to take out additional loans to fund a study-abroad programme especially if the credits earned from such a study were not applicable to their degree programme. (Norfles 2003:14). The majority of the students who belong to the low-income and minority segment of the student population do not attend the institutions cited in the *Open Doors* (IIE 2002) report that have high numbers of students studying abroad. The cost of attending these institutions may be a variable that precludes low-income and minority students' enrolment, and, therefore, participation within study-abroad programmes. According to the study, most students work while attending college and are hesitant to lose the money they could be making should they decide to participate in study-abroad opportunities as there is no opportunity to work while studying in a foreign country (Norfles 2003:15).

NAFSA (2003:9) adds that the expense of many campus-based (cf 1.3) and third party programmes is inordinate (cf 2.5.4) and that inherent to the programme should be options that lower the barriers imposed by cost, such as: scholarships and fee waivers, shorter term programmes and overseas work opportunities.

The constraints of cost are compounded by the fact that many students attended college supported largely by financial aid and some research indicates that this aid is not portable, that is it cannot be used by the student to participate in study-abroad programmes (Booth ed. 1991:40, 43). However, Bailey (1991:23) contends that it is not so much a matter of cost being the barrier, but that lack of understanding and relevant information regarding available financial assistance as being the true barrier.

In addition, lack of funding for international study and travel is worsened by the lack of importance placed on international education on many campuses. When institutional budget cuts occur, travel is usually the first to be negatively affected as it is perceived to be a luxury that can be done without (Green 2003:14).

However, one must consider that in certain countries, primarily in the developing areas of the world, the cost of study-abroad programmes can be cheaper than staying at home. Sommer (1997:3) comments that in areas of Asia and Africa academic programmes can cost considerably less than their U.S. counterparts. Although study-abroad was once considered a privilege of the financially secure, it is no longer. Vaccaro (2002:22-24) states that students have reported to her that the cost of studying abroad was substantially cheaper than remaining at home, and that financial aid was becoming increasingly transportable.

2.6.2 Lack of Information as a Barrier to Study-Abroad

The task of internationalisation of American academic institutions is the responsibility of the faculty and demands strong support of the leaders of those institutions (Green 2003:1). Taking this supposition as true, then it follows that the dissemination of information regarding the importance and existence of study-abroad should also rest within the faculty and institutions. However, internationalisation on many campuses is poorly integrated and as a result, forms a disjointed mixture of information,

programmes and activities, which are marginally, if at all, incorporated into the institution and result in little impact or benefit (Green 2003:15).

If there is not a strong belief in the validity and importance of study-abroad programmes on the institutional level, and if the students are not educated to understand the short and long-term benefits of an international education, there is very little chance of students seeking more information and making the decisive step in perusing the often long and complex process of studying abroad (Perdreau s.a.:2).

Allocation of resources plays a vital role in internationalisation on U.S. campuses (Green 2003:17). Funding is a major factor in this area, and as funding can hinder a student's ability to participate in study-abroad programmes, so too can it prohibit institutions in making the most of international experiences for its students (Green 2003:20) by impeding successful marketing and promotional campaigns which advertise study-abroad programmes (Booth ed. 1991:8). Institutional presumptions that there is no interest or adequate qualifications on the part of the student body which would allow them to participate in study-abroad programmes results in a student body with no awareness of the opportunities that exist or even that there is an office on campus that deals with such programmes (Booth ed. 1991:9).

The Institute of International Education (2003(b):7) conducted a survey in August of 2003 on the obstacles to study-abroad. In addition to the obstacles of finance, academics, health and safety, and personal issues, the survey also found that lack of information in the form of 'misinterpretation' regarding study-abroad was an additional barrier. Such misinterpretations included: lack of information about costs of study-abroad, academic issues, safety; lack of knowledge how study-abroad fits into academic experience; fear of unknown; the belief that it was impossible; the supposition that it was too much work and effort and that the college tacitly discourages study-abroad by making it difficult for students to demystify the process. In a study conducted by the Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE 1991:15) that dealt with historically underrepresented students in study-abroad, it was reported that only a very small percentage listed family, social or university barriers. The overall majority (55%) reported that they were unaware of any international programmes offered by their institution.

2.6.3 Attitudes as a Barrier to Study-Abroad

In addition to the barriers of cost and lack of information, which seem to form the major challenges to study abroad, literature suggests that a student's attitudes as well as their family attitudes and the nation as a whole, play a major role in lack of participation in study-abroad programmes. Although Green (2003:10) states that less than 12% of all students surveyed showed no interest in study-abroad, Perdreau (s.a.:1) seemingly contradicts this statement by stating in reference to attracting '*Mr. Stay-at-Home*' (cf 2.3.2.) into a study-abroad programme that she believes the major barrier to study-abroad many students, especially for those of colour who may be the first in their family to attend college and who have overcome many barriers to do so, that the idea of study-abroad is just not part of their mindset.

The issue of students of colour, especially African-Americans, in relation to study-abroad is a topical one. As shown in Table 2.2 the percentage of barriers faced by students when contemplating study-abroad are increased in the African-American student sector. In addition to the main barriers of cost and the need to work, the issues relating to attitude are strongly represented. Many African-Americans have difficulty grappling with their own concerns regarding feeling at home in the country in which they were born, and that the thought of going to a foreign country, where the reception is uncertain, where the language might be different is a difficult concept to promote (Hurd 2002:1). Often minority students hold the belief that study-abroad is only for the rich, White majority in the United States. In addition to this, there are the parental concerns of minority students who view study-abroad as a frivolous luxury which interferes with the more important task of getting a university degree, or who believe that the minority student will be the victim of racism abroad and not have the family assistance nearby in order to cope with such an experience. These issues are also viewed as main barriers to the inclusion of more African-Americans into study-abroad programmes (Carter 1991:9).

Another segment of the American undergraduate student population, those attending two-year community colleges (cf 2.1.1.1), face additional barriers. On the community college campus, Falcetta (s.a.:7) states that the semester abroad concept is an alien one and that the typical community college student, who is 28 years old, a part time student who works an average of 20 hours a week, and who is most likely a first generation

college student, gives little or no thought to spending even a semester abroad. He goes on to mention that even younger learners at these institutions will most likely find it extremely difficult to study-abroad, as the cost of the programme is usually prohibitive and most all student work to defray the cost of their education.

Another issue in regard to attitudes as an inhibiting factor to study-abroad are those fostered by the average citizen of the United States. Although the public is supportive of the idea of an internationalised programme of education, it is not demanding it from the educational institutions or from the government. (Green 2003:11). Perdreau (s.a.:2) believes that the mindset might even be negative towards the idea of study-abroad if the family background does not include members who have had international travel experience, or members who have had bad experiences with what international travel they did have. The general population mindset and the mindset of a student's family, whether it is for or against study-abroad, is a determining factor to the acceptance of such an idea by the student. Green (2003:12) states that student's motivation to become involved in internationalisation is reliant on his or her family reactions as well as those of friends and acquaintances as to what value the student will place upon international learning.

In addition to parental attitudes towards study-abroad in regards to the importance placed upon it, another issue parents face is that such a programme might delay graduation and thus delay the student's entry into the workforce. Riley (s.a.:2) comments that parental negativity towards the idea of study-abroad is often based in the concern that spending time abroad will delay graduation and hence increase the costs of their child's education, which is also a concern of many students. Parental concerns can also be often related to the perceived safety of the study-abroad destination. In regard to Africa as a destination, Landau and Moore (2001:6) state that one student surveyed reported, "It took a lot of convincing to get my parents to let me come. My parents were like, there's disease there... we have air conditioning, electricity and running water, why would you want to go there?"

Some students may believe that English is the common language around the world and if that is so, that there is no longer any need to learn a foreign language. Students may also think that the world is becoming "culturally homogenous through globalization"

negating the need to experience other cultures (Green 2003:12).

Attitudes towards relevancy of academic coursework are also important considerations when examining the constraints involved in study-abroad. Students may believe that in their particular academic area of study, global competence is non-important and that the primary goal of their academic career is to acquire academic and technical competence in their specific field and that study-abroad is therefore extraneous to their personal and academic goals (Green 2003:12).

A sense of indifference to the many cultures that inhabit this planet by the average American may also play a part in a negative or neutral attitude towards study-abroad. Doyle (s.a.:1) states: “We Americans know little and care less about foreign cultures; content with our own culture, superpower and world cultural arbiter, we remain relentlessly provincial. Indeed, the enduring symbol of American cultural indifference is our relentless monolingualism.”

2.6.4 Curricular and Academic Barriers

Professional degree programmes in the United States such as engineering, nursing and architecture have viewed study-abroad as a challenge to the curriculum as it poses problems to the already overloaded course structure (Robinson s.a.:1). Nursing programmes, Robinson goes on to state, have a particularly difficult time including an international factor into the existing programme, as there is a clinical component to the structure of the curriculum each semester. Programmes of engineering face many of the same challenges, in that each institution has so many prescribed courses that it becomes difficult to emulate these on campuses abroad. This may be the reason that less than half of all students studying abroad (cf Table 2.1) are from fields other than business, social science and the humanities (Rubin 1995:2).

Although it may appear that the opportunities are endless in terms of variety and availability of various study-abroad programmes, the reality is that most academic disciplines, especially in the pre-professional and professional degree programmes have so many degree requirement courses that most students in these fields have little flexibility to allow them elective subjects, which may be part of the study-abroad programme. Study-abroad may fit naturally into the schedule of a language or areas

studies major, but curricular demands may preclude others from leaving campus for a semester, let alone two, unless they are willing to stretch their undergraduate education into a fifth year (NAFSA 2003:9). According to Lyster (2000:1), since men form the majority of engineering students in the United States and since there are fewer opportunities for study-abroad for engineering students, then fewer men will be able to study-abroad, which she contends, explains the fact that the majority of study-abroad students are women since the sciences and professional fields are largely the domain of men.

If the student does manage to find a programme of study-abroad which accommodates his or her curriculum needs, the student must also ascertain that the credit, or *academic currency* earned for the programme abroad are transferable back to his or her home institution (Riley s.a.:2).

Another academic barrier to study-abroad is the fact that there are significant differences between the American and foreign university systems and this poses difficulties for American students who enrol as regular students abroad. Most foreign universities follow the British or European continental system and only a few have imitated the American system with its liberal arts colleges (Brockington pers. comm.:2004). Most foreign universities generally specialize in their studies. The Institute of International Education (2003(b):6) states that respondents replied to their survey indicating that foreign universities' class formats and structures as well as the academic calendars can all differ which makes it more difficult for the American undergraduate to participate and adapt.

Another academic barrier to be considered is that some American faculty members discourage students from participating in foreign study because they suspect that the academic programmes abroad are not challenging or equal to the academic level on the student's home campus (Monaghan 1990:2).

2.6.5 Personal Constraints

The complexities and realities of life often intrude into the plans and dreams of individuals. While many students find that their college years are amongst the most carefree, others battle with a host of obligations and responsibilities. Among the

students surveyed by the Institute of International Education (2003(b):7) the majority responded with the following as personal barriers to studying abroad:

- Boyfriend or girlfriend issues. Students reported that they were unwilling to leave a personal relationship to pursue study-abroad;
- Military obligations. Some students attend post secondary education as part of a military funded programme and as such, they have commitments during the academic year to the branch of the military that is supporting their education;
- Family obligations. Students reported that they were obligated to work in a family business or assist in the financial support of their families, which precluded their participation in a study-abroad programme;
- Work obligations. Many students are self supporting and cannot afford to take the time off work to pursue other interests;
- Living obligations. Students are unable to find a sub-lessee for an apartment;
- Financial obligations. Students reported that repayments of car and home loans and other on-going expenses were a major factor in non-participation in study-abroad.

One of the major benefits of attending an American post secondary institution is that there is a seemingly endless array of opportunities for involvement in various arenas. This major benefit to U.S. education can however result in major barriers for certain students, who wish to study-abroad. For example, involvements in leadership positions within the school can deter students from participating in study-abroad programmes, as conflicts of interest can and do arise. Other personal issues that preclude student participation in study-abroad programmes include on-campus jobs, sports and various other on and off-campus extracurricular activities (IIE 2003(b):7).

Fear is another personal factor that can and does inhibit participation in study-abroad programmes. The fear that participation in such a programme would result in unbearable homesickness and missing all that is familiar is a very real concern for many American undergraduates (Hurd 2001:1). Hurd (2001:1) contends that fear is probably the overriding factor in student's decision not to study-abroad. Not the fear of flying, but the fear of the unknown in that exploring the unfamiliar in the form of an alien country, a new culture and perhaps a new language can be an unpleasant and

occasionally terrifying notion for most people. Brown (2002:1) states in her article that personal barriers also include the fact that students are fearful of interrupting the flow of their education, fearful of interrupting relationships and their comfort zone and that some students are also afraid of flying.

2.6.6 American Post Secondary Institutional Challenges

Another barrier to consider is the challenge that U.S. post secondary institutions face regarding the promotion and administration of international programming. Although there is very little data available on the staffing patterns at tertiary educational institutions in the United States, the 1987 Anderson data suggests that the majority of four-year colleges and universities had some level of senior administrative support for internationally orientated activities and that the level of support at two-year community colleges was lower, with only 38% of institutions providing staff. About 73% of four-year colleges reported having some type of administration staff to support study-abroad programmes (American Council on Education 2000:16). As a result, 62% of community colleges and 27% of four-year institutions are without any form of institutional support for study-abroad on their campuses. On those campuses that do have some type of support, the issue of adequate support is also one to consider when discussing the barriers that U.S. academic institutions face.

2.6.6.1 The Role of the Study-Abroad Programme Administrator

On most four-year college or university campuses, as outlined above, there is some type of administration support for international education. One and sometimes many experts and administrators exist on an American college campus to promote and maintain study-abroad programming (Rhodes 1997:4). As an administrator of study-abroad programmes may be responsible for some or all of the tasks as outlined in Table 2.3, the question of adequate administrative support arises. Various educational regulations and laws require that procedures in fostering and applying international education on campus, from statistic keeping to educating students according to the Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act, to supporting students with special needs following the Americans with Disabilities Act, to supporting students privacy rights based on FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) (Rhodes 1997:4) must be followed and strictly adhered to. In an office with a minimal staff of one or two people, the roles of the study-abroad administrator seem inordinately vast as shown in

Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3

Responsibilities of the Study-Abroad Programme Administrator Source: Rhodes (1997:4)	
Academic Freedom Advocate	Academic Program Developer/Advisor
Admissions and Enrolment Officer	Academic Records Officer
Budgetary Officer	Bursar
Computer Centre Manager	Contract Developer
Course Development Review	Course Evaluation Administrator
Crisis and Emergency Manager	Cross-Cultural Issues Counsellor
Currency Exchange Expert	Drug and Alcohol Counsellor
Equipment Manager	Program Evaluation Officer
Evacuation and Repatriation Liaison	Financial Aid Officer
Grades Department Administrator	Housing Rental Agent
Insurance Counsellor	International Communications Expert
International Law Expert	Internship Program Developer and Sponsor
Librarian	Loan Officer
Minority Student Advocate	Non-Traditional Major Participation Promote Orientation
Program Administrator	Paralegal
Parental Liaison	Personal and Professional Counsellor
Personnel Administrator	Program Developer and Closer
Public Relations Officer	Recruiter
Risk Manager	Student Affairs Administrator
Student Conduct Judicial Officer	Students With Disabilities Manager
Student Health Professional	Testing Administrator
Textbook Manager	Translator
Transportation Supervisor	Travel Agent and Tour Operator
Visa and Immigration Specialist	Women's Issues Advocate

2.6.6.2 Institutional Attitude Towards Study-Abroad

An additional consideration in the area of institutional barriers to study-abroad also exists in the area of the attitude of the college or university. While the administrative structure may exist which allows for the pursuance of study-abroad on most campuses, the philosophy at many of the public colleges and universities is that study-abroad is not a necessary component of the higher education process, but merely an add-on and peripheral to the core of the departmental and degree curricula and as such might not receive the necessary support and encouragement from the top administrators of an institution (Robinson s.a.:1). There is an abundance of evidence, which implies that a major problem exists in the form of institutional lethargy and professorial unresponsiveness to the importance of study-abroad, suggesting that American culture has little awareness or concern regarding foreign cultures. (Doyle s.a.:2). Doyle also

contends that whatever the imperative, be it economic or intellectual, it cannot overcome cultural indifference to foreign study.

2.6.6.3 Structural Barriers within the Institution

Inherent in the unique structure of the American system of education (cf 2.1.1), each postsecondary institution in the United States has its own educational philosophy and mission plan (American Council on Education 1999:2). Depending on the emphasis given to the importance of international education on any given campus, so too would be the inherent support for such education. The various structural barriers that can and do exist on American campuses include scarce resources, including human resources, on-campus structures such as a mission plan inclusive of support for such programmes and the ability and willingness of staff and faculty to integrate international education into the fabric of their programmes (Green 2003:1). Green goes on to state that only a quarter of institutions surveyed in her report included internationalisation as a top strategic priority, while just over one-third had made it a part of their mission statements.

There are both intentional and unintentional institutional barriers to study-abroad. The intentional barriers include;

- Absence of an office that provides programming or advising;
- Absence of clearly stated faculty commitment to education abroad suggesting the home institution offers all a student needs academically;
- A stated policy that institutional financial aid cannot be used to study-abroad on programmes administered by other institutions;
- Permission to study-abroad granted for only a few programmes.

The unintentional barriers include:

- Transfer credit may be possible, but nonetheless a difficult process;
- Federal financial aid may be difficult to use;
- Faculty may be neutral to education abroad or indifferent;
- The international office may have minimal staffing with few institutional expectations to increase the numbers of students studying abroad;
- Study abroad may be viewed as a fun thing to do and therefore worthy

of only minimal support and little oversight (Pearson s.a.:17).

Two-year community colleges (c.f. 2.1.1.1) with much shorter enrolment times and the additional barriers of a student body comprised primarily of commuter students, adult students and other non-traditional students, face a much greater challenge in attempting to provide an international experience for its students (Robinson s.a.:2).

In the area of structural barriers, Doyle (s.a.:2) contends that far too many American postsecondary institutions make a complicated procedure, such as study-abroad impossible due to bureaucratic lack of interest, ignorance and a confusing mass of procedures. Far too many American institutions of higher education make the process of studying abroad so extremely difficult that only the most dedicated and determined students will continue on with the process.

However dire Doyle's (s.a.:2) statements are there is evidence that there is some organisation within various institutional frameworks that prescribe policy and administration towards the lessening of these perceived institutional barriers. Michigan State University President, Mr. Peter McPherson was appointed to lead a commission, The Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program Commission, on October 4th, 2004 (Gendreau 2004:1). This newly formed commission, with seventeen bipartisan members appointed by President Bush, is tasked assuring support and cooperation for the internationalisation of U.S. education by developing national study abroad guidelines and support. In addition to this endeavour, many colleges and universities within the United States have on their websites a study-abroad policy, set by The Commission on Colleges, an organisation of voluntary accreditation in the United States (University of Oregon s.a.:1). The fifteen guidelines listed in this statement of policy, reflect best practice strategy for promoting, implementing and administering study-abroad programmes.

Although there may be major criticisms regarding the various structural barriers at postsecondary institutions within the United States, it would appear that this fact has been noted and appropriate measures are being put in place to address many of these concerns.

2.7 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE STUDY-ABROAD EXPERIENCE

Once the student has overcome the various hurdles that seem to go hand-in-hand with the pursuance of a study-abroad programme, and embarks on his or her sojourn to a new country and culture, will the experience be a successful one? Will expectations be met? Will cultural adaptation and immersion be accomplished? Will sexual identity, racial background and gender affect the student's experiences? Were academic experiences all that were hoped for? Did the student perceive any benefits at the end of the programme? These areas form the main factors that influence the study-abroad experience and will be examined in this section.

2.7.1 Student Expectations

Martin and Rohrlich (1991:39) define expectations, in the realm of study-abroad, as predeparture concerns about salient aspects of the sojourn. These expectations include interactions with individuals of the host country, the anticipated ease with which adaptation will take place, general living conditions and similar issues that affect the student's cultural and general adaptation (Martin et al 1995:87).

The influences on these expectations, according to Martin et al (1995:92) are gender, prior experiences and the location of the sojourn. With reference to location of sojourn, Landau and Moore (2001:4) state that the concept of the African experience leads to its own set of particular expectations and that through the years, Africa has developed a set of myths, such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the thought of the continent as one of the last untouched, mysterious and traditional places.

Although there have been relatively few longitudinal studies comparing pre-sojourn expectations with post-return evaluations of the sojourn (Martin et al 1995:88), especially within Africa, Landau and Moore (2001:2) conducted one such study on the fulfilment of expectations concerning American undergraduates who studied at the University of Ghana and found that in spite of the high expectations American students had for their sojourn to Ghana, and notwithstanding the great potential for cross-cultural learning on the part of both U.S. and Ghanaian students, such expectations were commonly not fulfilled. The student response to the survey conducted by Landau and Moore (2001:6) stated that expectations concerning Africa are not racially divided,

but based on a common American media misperception of Africa, one that included starving people, intricate ceremonies with people in costumes, political unrest and turmoil. The fact that a city such as Accra, where normal life continues to thrive, very much as in most Western cities, is not portrayed either in the media or to the students prior to departure and so affects the fulfilment of their expectations.

Martin et al (1995:87) in their longitudinal study of U.S. student expectations in study-abroad programmes, state that the hypothesis of their study was that individuals hold expectations about specific events, relationships and behaviours when they study-abroad. Based on these expectations, and whether or not they have been fulfilled, they then form the basis of an evaluation methodology to define if the event has been a success.

The results of the study showed that violations of expectations were influenced most by location of the sojourn and somewhat by gender. The hypothesis was supported in that there was a positive relationship between the degree of expectancy and satisfaction with the trip.

The results of a study conducted by Weissman and Furnham (1987:323) on expectations and short-term travellers seem to confirm the study conducted by Martin et al (1995:87) in that it was suggested that there is a fine line between forming too ambitious expectations versus forming too low expectations of the study-abroad experience. On one hand, if a student has exceptionally high expectations of the ease by which cultural adaptation will occur, he or she could be setting himself or herself up for disappointment. On the other hand, if expectations are unrealistically low, it may be that the person does not seek out the opportunities to fully realize the potential of the environment and may, by a self-fulfilment strategy, feel a sense of lack of fulfilment with the entire experience.

2.7.2 Adaptation

Studies show that the levels of adaptation into a study-abroad programme can be linked to the ability or lack thereof of a student to overcome certain barriers inherent in a prolonged stay in a foreign country as well as the level of immersion into that country's culture (Church 1982:554).

Shannon (1995:1) contends that study-abroad begins, in its true sense, when a child leaves home for his first foray into the unfamiliar, on his first day at school. He or she must learn how to adapt in a strange, new world and begin to develop the first of their numerous identities. The child must begin by discovering who is a friend or ally, such a teacher or other child and who is the enemy, such as an aggressive or disloyal child and how to deal with the various people he or she meets in life. Venturing into the unfamiliar, leaving behind all that is comforting, they must learn the skills that will enable them to adapt. Shannon goes on to say that the same skills, although a bit more polished and mature, will be used when that child embarks on his or her first study-abroad programme in a foreign country. Some, Shannon believes, make the journey more smoothly than others. For some it is an adventure and becomes a successful experience, yet for others it can be a frightening experience.

2.7.2.1 The Role of Culture Shock in the Study-Abroad Experience

What can impact on the successfulness of a study-abroad programme is the student's ability to deal with culture shock. Culture shock has traditionally been thought of, according to Adler (1975:13), as a type of apprehension that results from the confusion of commonly professed and understood signs and symbols of social communication in a new environment. Adler professes that culture shock is mainly a set of emotional reactions to the loss of these normally understood signs from one's own culture, and a reaction to novel cultural stimuli which have little or no significance in the new cultural setting.

Oberg (1960:177) states that these signs and symbols are the everyday occurrences in our daily lives, such as when to shake hands, what to say when greeting people and how we deal with normal day to day occurrences, such as shopping and socializing. When a person enters a new culture, these behavioural cues disappear and new and confusing ones replace them.

Oberg (1960:178-79), who defines culture shock as an occupational disease, believes that it has four definite stages:

1. *The "honeymoon stage"*, which is characterized by fascination, elation and optimism lasting from a few days to six months, depending on how

- soon real immersion into the culture begins;
2. *The second stage*, which is characterized by a hostile and aggressive stance towards the host culture and where dependence on increased association with fellow countrymen is common;
 3. *The “recovery” stage* where increased knowledge of the culture and characteristics occur, an ability to adjust and live in the host country begins to surface as does the sojourners sense of humour;
 4. *The “adjustment” stage* where acceptance of the customs of the country is undertaken and differences viewed as just another way of life and that the environment is not the changing factor, but the attitude of the participant is. (Oberg 1960:179).

Weissman and Furnham state that the degree of the culture shock suffered is largely dependent not only on the type of sojourner, that is, long or short-term resident, but also the degree of difference in the cultures. Languages differences, food, climate and so on play a large role in the ability or lack thereof of the sojourner to make the adaptation a successful one (1987:315).

Students in a foreign country have a variety of problems in adjusting to a new culture in addition to culture shock. The foreign student needs to develop mastery of four main areas:

1. As a foreigner with special cultural learning problems;
2. As a student adjusting to the stress common to all beginning students;
3. As a maturing, developing person concerned about purposes, meanings and goals;
4. As a national representative sensitive about his or her ethnic background and national status (Church 1982:544).

Cultural adaptation, which involves various levels of culture shock can indeed be stressful to students. Students are not only forced to deal with new and unfamiliar ways of doing things, both culturally and academically, in order to be accepted into the new society, but also they are compelled to examine many of their own basic beliefs and assumptions, some of which they may not have realized as being a part of their belief system (Fantini 2002:8). Such stress can be reduced by having an appropriately trained

member of staff at the receiving institution (Adelman 1988:183) with whom the sojourners' may interact and find a network of social support. Adelman suggests that the resultant search for meaning that new and unfamiliar signs and symbols demand is assisted by a 'sense-making' strategy of seeking out others to provide feedback and assistance. The role of the receiving institution in this aspect becomes a necessary adjunct to the sojourner's experience (1988:185).

Anderson (1994:293) contends that there is a need to put cross-cultural adaptation back into perspective in that it is a common process, far from being culture specific, it is simply a reaction to frustration and that all adjustments are of a recurring nature involving the process of conquering obstacles and solving problems in present-environment dealings. It is up to the individual to choose how to respond, and in so doing creates his or her own adjustment. Cultural adaptation is a continuous course of development in which sojourners exhibit a broad range of degrees, modes, and levels of adaptation. Adaptation is also more than the sum of the sub adjustments that compose it.

Learning to adjust and become comfortable in a new culture can result in fundamental changes to the student especially when the adjustment process is extensive and/or particularly difficult. Through the process of adaptation the sojourner can be "reborn" by the process in that increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem are developed (Anderson 1994:293).

Although Oberg (1960:177) defines culture shock as an occupational disease which perhaps might imply a negative connotation, others look on it as a prospect for a positive disruptive influence and perhaps the main opportunity for experiential learning (Laubscher 2000:8 & Richard 2001:7) forcing students to reflect on their meaning of the world in a new and often challenging environment (Sommer 1997:1). Fraga (1999:4) adds that when culture shock is not viewed as a hazard, there is the occasion for self-learning and for converting shock happenings into occurrences which add value to one's life and that the search for meaning through the complexities that are viewed as culture shock actually allow for greater cross-cultural understanding. The majority of learning, in the form of personal development, which occurs as a result of a foray into a new culture, is that of self-learning as a direct result of the challenges faced by being

forced to make decisions and deal with the different demands of daily life in new culture (Gmelch 1997:475).

Whether or not the subjects of this study viewed their confrontations with a new and complex society as a positive or negative experience and to what extent this was seen as an opportunity for self-learning, as well as what role the receiving institution played in this adjustment process will be examined in Chapter Four.

2.7.3 Cultural Immersion

Stewart and Talburt (1999:163) contend that with the proliferation of various study-abroad programmes, researchers have begun to question the assumption that immersion into a foreign culture automatically creates cultural learning and understanding. They believe, since there is little in the way of research which documents these occurrences, it is important to examine the opportunities students have for extended, meaningful interactions which allow them to make significant gains in cultural and language learning.

Variables, which impact on the degree of engagement or immersion within the host culture, can depend on the programme type as well as on the programme length.

Wortman (2002:60) believes that students who participate in immersion programmes (cf 2.2.1) have greater opportunities to explore various levels of diversity than students in mixed and island programmes. Church believes that the number, variety, and depth of social encounters with the host culture may be the most important variable in the success of the sojourn experience (1982:551).

One of the criticisms of island programmes (cf 2.2.1) is that they do not allow for, and often times completely lack any type of cultural integration, on both social and academic levels. Island programmes have been accused of being ghettos of U.S. culture in a foreign country, in that they are a microcosm of both American academic staff and students and as such make it difficult to have significant interactions with the host culture and community (Hanouille & Leuner 2001:2).. Hanouille and Leuner (2001:2) believe that such a programme is contradictory by its very nature to the purpose and experience of undertaking study in a foreign country.

Apart from what type of programme the student participates in, the degree to which the student chooses to intermingle with the host culture is also important. Shannon (1995:8) states that in her experience, teens visiting or studying abroad in an organized programme often don't reach out beyond the peer group with whom they arrived.

Due to the fact that there are inherent anxieties related to study-abroad, such as culture shock (cf 2.7.2.1), many American undergraduate study-abroad students form groups of fellow Americans as their friendship base while abroad (Church 1982:551). These enclaves determine the extent, often limited, to which the sojourner will become involved in the host culture. Bochner et al (1976:275) state that the person most likely to be an overseas student's best friend will be an individual from the same sex and culture.

Homestays, says Baty and Dold (1977:63), allow students to have the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the host culture by providing opportunities to cross economic and social as well as cultural boundaries and give them an experience that is far from the normal university setting. Their study showed that students who participated in the homestay programme showed higher levels of confidence than their pre-test levels.

The length of time in the cultural immersion experience is a major variable in the adaptive process and questions arise as to whether those of short duration, those of a semester or less, allow for acquisition of any cultural learning or do sojourners spend the majority of their time adjusting to and dealing with culture shock? In their study, Jones and Bond (2000:44) found that improvements do occur in personal adjustment, language acquisition, and culture learning in short-term immersion programmes. Participants with differing lengths of stay showed similar patterns, which tends to support the validity of short-term cultural immersion programmes.

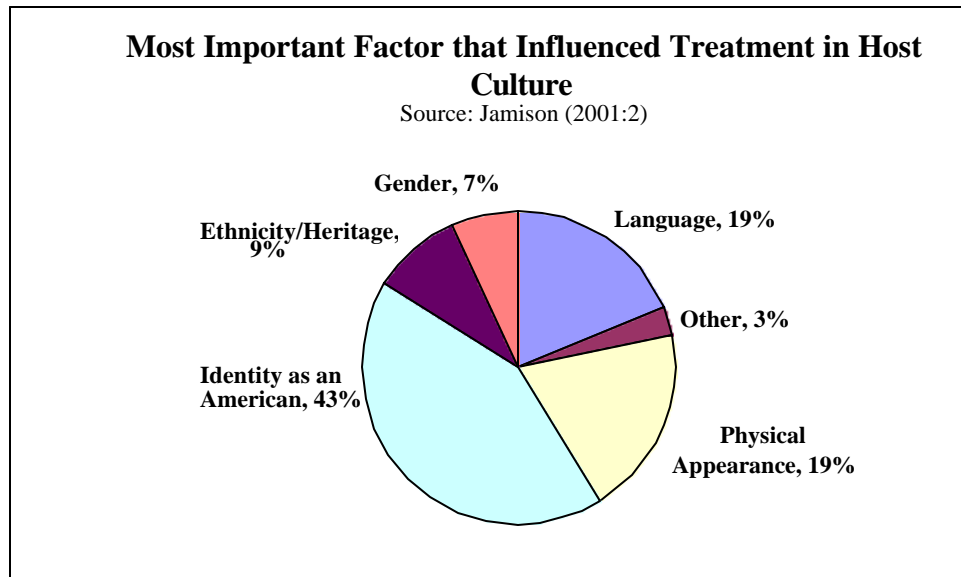
Characteristics of personality play an important role in the type of student who decides to study-abroad and successfully immerses themselves into the host-culture. The attributes of sensation seeking and achievement, in various levels, can be found in those examined in a study conducted by Schroth and McCormack (2000:533). The men and women surveyed in their study showed higher levels of the "experience seeking"

subscale than their stay-at-home counterparts. Thomas (s.a.:2) states that study-abroad students tend to “live on the edge of the unfamiliar and love it.” She attributes this to the fact that risk taking is a characteristic of the study-abroad student who is also willing to put him or herself in unusual situations with the ability to overcome the fear of the unknown.

An additional factor, which can also act as a barrier to immersion within the host culture may be the perception the host culture has on America and Americans, according to Shannon (1995:5). Recognition of a student as American may result in an extremely negative reaction, and make the task of gaining acceptance much harder. For many students, studying-abroad in a country that for whatever reason is hostile to America can be one of the most challenging aspects as well as one of the most salient learning aspects of the journey. Students, she goes on to say, must guard against becoming too defensive, but may feel duty bound to be the ‘good American’ and defend his or her home country. However, this can be a very complex aspect of the sojourn to navigate, as often the American student is perceived to be personally responsible for all the perceived faults of the American system (Kirn 2003:1).

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the most common factor that has influence on an American undergraduate’s experience in a foreign country is his or her identity as an American, which can also then impact on issues of gender and race (cf 2.7.4.1 & 2.7.4.2). The impact of nationality on study-abroad students from the United States when viewed as the most common factor that affects their experience while participating in a study-abroad programme is extremely relevant to this study, when feelings of anti-American sentiment are reported by a variety of sources to be at an all time high in South Africa (Ronge 2002:1, Phillips 2003:1, Leonard 2003:1 and Mills & Hughes 2003:1).

Figure 2.1



2.7.4 Experiences Shaped by Gender, Race and Sexual Identity

According to Stewart and Talburt (1999:164) understanding the impacts that race and gender have on the learning processes in study-abroad programmes will enable a rethinking of the curricula in a manner that will allow for learners' differences and cultural experiences to become part of the formal curriculum. Stewart and Talburt (1999:164) have found, with few exceptions, that current research has tended to generalize student's experiences abroad, giving scant attention to the specifics that can shape their interactions and cultural learning. The omission of this focus in current research not only limits a full understanding of the methodology and effects of study-abroad but also ignores the needs of students whose race and gender may negatively impact on their potential to meet their goals for study-abroad.

2.7.4.1 Issues of Gender

Despite the lofty goals of study-abroad that expound the values of cultural understanding, global awareness and increased language ability, for many women the experience is not such a pleasant one (Twombly 1995:1-24). According to Dr. de Armas Wallace (Twombly 1995:1) today's young American women, who have been educated and brought up with a heightened consciousness of sexism, oppression and harassment, may find that new cultures, with different social values, traditional sex roles and stereotypes of American women a difficult situation to cope with. De Armas

Wallace continues on to say that as a result of her interviews with women who experienced a study-abroad programme in Central America, the first four months of the programme were not an immersion experience, but an alienating one in which gender was the responsible factor and which impacted negatively on the American women's impressions of their host country (Stewart & Talburt 1999:164).

A review of existing literature suggests three main areas of concern in relation to gender differences outside the United States:

1. *Differing relationships between and amongst genders.* Twombly (1995:1) states that *piropos* or gender related comments directed towards American female students were a major cause for concern. These types of comments, which would be considered as sexual harassment in the United States, are prevalent in certain areas of the world. Another area of concern was the absence of friendships amongst host-country women. The perceptions of American women (Gass sa:1) outside the United States vary tremendously, but often involve perceptions of them as being "loose or easy" (cf figure 2.1), while the majority of American women perceive themselves as being capable, independent and having the right to do anything that a man can do.
2. *Differing classroom experiences.* Studies have found that foreign female students experience more difficulty in adjusting to host-country academic life, which may be due to the fact that in some countries, especially on the African continent, higher education has been more or less reserved for males (Maundeni 1999:28).
3. *Differing levels of adjustment.* Very few studies have examined the role of gender in adjustment (Church 1982:546); however, there are studies that suggest women have more adjustment problems than men, which could be tied to their higher levels of expectation (Martin & Rohrlich 1991:44). In the homestay situation, suggest Baty and Dold (1977:75), men tend to experience greater adjustment problems than women. They contend that women are usually more comfortable in their role in the homestay situation and have fewer problems adapting than men.

This issue plays a significant part in the success of programmes as women comprise the

vast majority of those American undergraduates who choose to study-abroad (cf 2.3). While it is neither desirable nor possible to change the host country, it is important to assist women in understanding how gender roles differ in other countries so that they may be better prepared to deal with the issues as they arise (Twombly 1995:2).

2.7.4.2 Race

Looking at the latest study-abroad statistics (IIE 2002:62) only 3.5% of all students who participate in study-abroad are African-American and only 5.4% are Hispanic-American and Asian-American. Perhaps learning more from the experience of underrepresented minorities would do more to increase their participation in these programmes (Hembroff & Rusz 1993:1).

Some studies suggest that African-Americans experience unfavourable treatment overseas (Green 2001:1). Desruisseaux (1992:2) states that it is important to prepare students appropriately for what is to be expected in that if African-American study-abroad students choose to participate in a programme where there has been little or no former contact with African-Americans, then the students should expect initial curiosity regarding customs and habits. Other returnees report having been elated to find that, for the first time in their lives, their skin colour or ethnic heritage was not an issue and may find revelations about their heritage and a variety of new learning experiences: "I am of African descent, yet I think that my identity as an American influenced the way I was treated more than anything else (cf figure 2.1). Being of African-American descent and going to Ghana made me definitely realize how African-American I am. While my culture has definitely retained many African influences we have also created our own culture out of our own experiences" (Study Abroad.com:Online).

For others, it may be the first time that they have to deal with being in the ethnic minority, especially for White students who choose to study-abroad in Africa or Asia and the adjustment to becoming part of a minority might be a considerable one for some students. In addition, perceptions due to nationality and ethnic background, for example being White and American, could result in assumptions regarding wealth and privilege (Jamison 2001:5). Jamison (2001:6) recommends that students who study in Africa should not bring any American racial etiquette with them as racial differences in America are politely ignored, while in Africa racial roles are distinctly defined and

extremely difficult if not impossible to overcome (Jamison 2001:6).

2.7.4.3 Sexual Identity

For those students who are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual, study-abroad brings an entire new set of challenges. Very little is known about the effects of sexual identity on study-abroad programmes. NAFSA (the Association of International Educators) has a SIG (special interest group) within its membership, LESBIGAY (Indiana University: 2000), which focuses on the interests and issues of the lesbian, bisexual and gay communities within international education. The *Rainbow* SIG within NAFSA states as its goals: “to counsel international students and study-abroad students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered; to support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered professionals in international education; to combat homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia within NAFSA.” It does appear then, that there is some support within the international education arena for those who are not heterosexual.

What does being lesbian, gay or bisexual mean to the experience of the study-abroad student? Tierney (1992:43) has found that in addition to occurrences of prejudice dealing with race, studies at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) suggest that lesbian, gay and bisexual students are considerably more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to come face to face with incidents of harassment and discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Several past participants in study-abroad programmes within Africa corroborate Tierney’s findings. An American student in Botswana states that homosexuality is illegal (Jamison 2001:5). An American student in Tanzania says “Sexuality is not discussed, everyone is assumed to be straight, although there are plenty of gay Tanzanians” (Jamison 2001:6). A White American female in Zimbabwe states, “In terms of sexuality, there is no such thing as being gay. Being gay does not exist. Almost no one in the country is “out” and as a student studying there, if you are gay, it is safest to keep that to yourself – some students on the programme really struggled with this” (Jamison 2001:7).

2.7.5 Learning Experiences

The term study-abroad as defined in Chapter One (cf 1.1) implies that some type of learning takes place during the programme. The nature of and scope of this acquisition of knowledge that occurs during a student's sojourn in a foreign country is the topic of this section.

Due to the increased emphasis on the importance of participation in a study-abroad programme not only by American postsecondary institutions but also by the United States government, it is becoming increasingly important to understand not only the nature of what type of learning that takes place, but also how it occurs in order to maximize the learning opportunities and benefits for study-abroad participants (Whalen 1996:1).

Although much of what a student learns while participating in a study-abroad programme has been derogated by academics as less than scholarly attainment, this *experiential education* (cf 1.10) can and often does involve a high degree intellectual achievement in not only understanding a foreign culture but learning to live within it (Abrams & Heller 1978:7).

As students become immersed into a new culture, it opens up at least three major areas for learning. These are:

1. Learning about the host culture itself;
2. Learning a new perspective on their own culture;
3. And self-learning (Levy 2000:75).

Learning in the classroom during the study-abroad experience is, as students soon find, is just one very small part of the overall learning experience, and that the experiences of having to cope and learn to deal with new situations, people, culture and the student's own reactions to this new stimuli forms the greatest part of the leaning experience during the sojourn (Levy 2000:75). Hopkins (1999:36) agrees this finding in that he found that the experiential learning that occurs during a study-abroad programme is of immense benefit in that it allows for learning by doing twenty-four hours per day, and offers opportunities for extensive self-learning.

To maximize and enhance the possibilities of experiential learning for both the

American student and his or her foreign national host students, Allaway (1987:6) recommends that placing the American student directly into the host culture university coursework, via an immersion programme (cf 2.2.1), not only allows the students an opportunity to interact directly with other students on academic terms, but also provides a comparative element to the academic experience, allowing for interaction with students from an American academic viewpoint. Allaway (1987:6) also mentions one main concern with the placement of American students into the host country universities and that is, in countries where space at universities is at a premium, the American student could be displacing a host country student.

In addition to the attainment of knowledge through experiential education, there is also research, which tends to confirm that the academic learning component is enhanced through the study-abroad experience. A study conducted by Sutton and Rubin (2001:1) revealed that students who had studied abroad had attained more academic based knowledge than those who had not in the following areas:

1. Knowledge of world geography;
2. Knowledge of cultural relativism;
3. Knowledge of global interdependence.

Further analysis of the results of the students concluded that these gains in knowledge are not attributable to the characteristics of the students, but rather to the study-abroad experience.

It would seem, therefore, that the benefits of study-abroad include high levels of not only experiential learning but also incidents of increased academic attainment.

2.7.6 End of Programme Outcomes

At the conclusion of the programme, other than what are hopefully fond memories, what does the study-abroad student take home with him? According to Sell (1983:137) and Martin and Rohrlich (1991:39) it largely depends on what they brought with them in terms of expectations. As mentioned in 2.7.1, expectations play a major role in the study-abroad experience. Expectations also play a key role in the evaluation of the programme at its conclusion in that if the expectations were fulfilled, the programme becomes a success, if not, then the student will judge the outcome to be less than

satisfactory (Sell 1983:137).

Perceived outcomes to the study-abroad programme are reliant on a variety of factors. Martin and Rohrllich (1991:40) have defined three areas of variables, which influence the outcome of the sojourn experience:

1. *Previous experience variables*: students with prior travel experience adjusted more easily than those who did not and tended to influence the programme outcome;
2. *Background variables*: sex, age, student status and major area of study have been identified by several scholars as having influence on the programme;
3. *Sojourn variables*: type of programme, prior expectations, location and duration of the experience seems to be particularly important in determining how sojourners anticipate and later evaluate their experience.

Sell (1983:134) reports that of the students surveyed in the Abrams' study, 92% believed that the intercultural experience had confronted their perceptions of themselves as Americans. Dolby's study on *Encountering the American Self* (2004:150-173) states that the primary encounter during study-abroad is with one's self and that the outcome, which agrees with Sell's report (1983:134), is a changed perception of the identify of self as a national of the United States. Sell's report goes on to state that students became more academically focused, went on to graduate school in larger numbers than those who did not study-abroad, travelled more, and had more professional colleagues in other countries.

The findings of a study conducted on issues of sojourner change as a result of study-abroad (Comp 2000:7-57) state that there were four major areas in which change occurred:

1. *Intellectual Change*: personal changes relating to increased capacity for understanding and the acquisition of knowledge, such as a foreign language;
2. *Psychological Change*: personal changes relating to emotional, mental or behavioural traits of the sojourner during and as a consequence of the study-abroad experience, such as experiences of culture shock and negative experiences encountered while on the programme;

3. *Social Change*: personal changes resulting from interaction with a new culture and social environs such as learning to function in a society that is completely different from one's own;
4. *Physical Change*: occurrences that affect the student during the programme, such as ill health, changes in habits or behaviour such as increased alcohol intake or smoking, body piercings, or contraction of a chronic disease such as malaria or a sexually transmitted disease.

While little literature exists on the formation of personal value and cultural perception changes in students as a result of study-abroad experiences, Stephenson (1999:1) found in her pilot study that cultural patterns and beliefs are tightly formed within most individuals prior to the sojourn and are not as susceptible to change as many people might believe. This is not to say that culture is not amenable and open to change, but one should not make the assumption that cultural change will automatically take place as a result of a study-abroad experience (Stephenson 1999:26).

Students who hope that the study-abroad experience will change inherent personal problems will no doubt be disappointed. "Students who are bored with studies and life at school or not doing well in class work will probably be bored with life in a new home, and their academic achievements will not improve. If they are aching from a broken relationship, the pain will not lessen in another country. Many students fall into the trap of thinking that being 'foreigners' makes them into more exotic figures than they are in their own land, but unfortunately this doesn't happen" (Shannon 1995:6),

One of the most frequently stated goals and assumptions concerning the outcomes of study-abroad are that students will exhibit greater levels of international understanding and concern (Carlson & Widaman 1988:2). In a comparison study conducted with students who had spent a year abroad and those who remained on the University of California campus, results showed that there were higher levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest, and cultural cosmopolitanism than in those who did not study-abroad. Also, those who studied abroad stated significantly more positive, yet also more critical attitudes towards their own country than those who stayed at home.

A study conducted by Douglas and Jones-Rikkens (2001:55-66) concluded that one of the outcomes of the study-abroad experience was an increased level of worldmindedness, which is defined in their study as the belonging to humankind, rather than to one specific ethnic group with the ability to think beyond one's borders of national, religious or ethnic perspectives. Douglas and Jones-Rikkens (2001:64) summarize that this increased level of worldmindedness leads to enhanced levels of organisational effectiveness and career success. However, in an earlier study which assessed attitude change on worldmindedness and support for the United Nations, as well as two psychological variables, self-esteem and tolerance of ambiguity, conducted by Hensley and Sell in 1979, the findings revealed that only on the variable of self-esteem did any perceptible change occur. It was felt that these findings were consistent with the results of earlier studies on the impact of overseas programme outcomes on attitude change, in that most of the research conducted in this area; studies have found comparatively scant evidence of considerable attitude transformation (Hensley & Sell 1979:406).

Although there are a variety of studies that have attempted to measure the end of programme outcomes in the field of study-abroad, some of which demonstrate conflicting findings, all studies seem to have a common finding: that in terms of outcome, some type of sojourner change has taken place as a result of the study-abroad experience.

2.8 SOUTH AFRICA AS A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAMMES

Africa as a continent and South Africa as a country have specific issues which impact on a student's choice to study-abroad in these regions. This section examines these specific issues.

2.8.1 Background Information on South Africa as a Recipient Nation for International Students

As illustrated in Figures 1.2 through 1.4 (cf 1.4.1), Africa and the country of South

Africa, rank in the bottom sector as a study-abroad destination for U.S. undergraduates. Bowman (1987:47) suggested seventeen years ago that the expansion and successful operation of study-abroad programmes in Africa were still very problematic for American colleges and universities. Programme failure and closure is evidenced in the fact that of the sixteen study-abroad programmes established in Africa in the 1980's, five were terminated within five years, and had on average nine participants, whereas in the same time period programmes in Western Europe had an average of thirty-three participants and 279 study-abroad programmes with fifteen closures (Bowman 1987:53). One of the purposes of this section is to examine what changes have occurred since 1987 when Bowman commented on the dire situation in Africa regarding study-abroad, and how these changes, if any, impact on South Africa as a destination for American undergraduate study-abroad students.

Despite the previous disheartening statistics, there seems to be a growing body of students with the necessary enthusiasm and spirit of adventure for learning about unique destinations, and who possess the dual abilities of being self reliant and able to cope with a lack of familiar comforts. It is such students who would benefit immeasurably from an educational and cultural experience in non-traditional locations according to Stryker (2000:2). Stryker's comments seem to be confirmed by the fact that the Institute of International Education's Fall 2003 Survey (IIE 2003(b):2) showed that 29% of the responding educators reported that they have seen an increase in the number of American students studying abroad in non-traditional destinations. Furthermore, several educators reported that destinations often become popular choices among students due to the efforts of specific faculty members who establish new programmes or who ardently support study-abroad. One of the largest increases in participation was South Africa who experienced an increase of 32% in the amount of American students who chose it as a study-abroad destination in 2002 (IIE 2003(b):1).

In addition, students are beginning to realise that unless they have a future with the Peace Corps, opportunities to spend extended time in non-western destinations will be rare once the college experience ends (Alt 2003:1). Alt (2003:1) believes that the benefits of choosing a non-traditional location such as Africa as a destination for study-abroad include an abundance of self-learning opportunities. The privileges of living in a first world country and the inherent prejudices that come with such a lifestyle, force

students when studying in a non-traditional locations, to challenge their own perceptions as no other destinations could. Students are faced with such dramatic changes in culture and lifestyle that they begin to reflect on the accuracy of their former opinions, which were primarily based on media coverage and curriculum studies. Students soon begin to realize that each country has complexities that cannot be fully understood until one becomes, even for a short time, a part of that culture.

The Liaison Group for International Education Exchange reported in 1990 that the goal in study-abroad should be that by the year 2000, the proportion of U.S. students going to Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East should increase to at least 35% of the study-abroad total (Fantini 2002:6). The report acknowledges the fact that a serious imbalance exists in the understanding and awareness regarding these parts of the world. The fact that some three-quarters of the world's population resides in these areas and that they account for all wars in which the U.S. has been engaged since World War II, including the current war in Iraq, in addition to the fact that these areas provide more than one-third of all U.S. imports and exports, makes them extremely important areas for the people of the United States. Although the prescribed goal was not reached by the year 2000, the focus on non-traditional locations and their importance continues to be a main focal point for study-abroad administrators.

2.8.1.1 A Brief History of the Postsecondary System of Education in South Africa

In order to be able to place South Africa in a clearer context as a recipient nation of foreign students in general and American undergraduates on study-abroad programmes in particular, it is first necessary to have an understanding from a historical perspective of the postsecondary educational system in South Africa. The following section will give a brief overview of the history of South African universities.

The first South African university, according to South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA s.a.:1) was the University of Good Hope, which was founded in Cape Town in 1873 under the authority of the British colonial administration. Initially, the University of Good Hope acted only in a supervisory capacity and not as a teaching institution, instituting syllabi, conducting examinations and awarding degrees for the various colleges in South Africa such as the South African College in Cape Town, founded in 1829 and the Victoria College in

Stellenbosch which was founded in 1865 (Welch et al 2004:320).

As a result of the University Act of 1916, provision was made for the establishment of a countrywide examining university, the University of South Africa, which was founded in Pretoria and incorporated the University of Good Hope and regulated a number of university colleges. From 1916 onwards, an increasing amount of these university colleges became independent universities. The South African College in Cape Town became the University of Cape Town and Victoria College became Stellenbosch University. From 1916 till the early 1950's the major universities were established in South Africa, all of which catered only for the white population. In 1951, the University of South Africa became a distance learning institution and remains so today (Welch et al 2004:321).

The first tertiary institution for Black South Africans was established in 1916 as the South African Native College in Fort Hare, which became nominally independent in 1949 and was renamed the University of Fort Hare (Welch et al 2004:320).

By the late 1980's many of the historically white universities opened up to all races and student statistics reveal that during this time there were 150,000 White students at these institutions in addition to 120,000 Coloured, Indian and Black students (SAUVCA s.a.:1). According to Dr. Nico Cloethe, the Director of the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) (Study SA:online), the proportion of African and Coloured students at South African universities grew from 46% to 66% during the years 1993-2002, while the proportion of White students dropped during the same time from 47% to 27% (for the specific and current racial distribution at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard Campus, the destination institution of this study, see section 4.4.1). Dr. Cloethe concludes that these demographic changes must be some of the most dramatic changes in the world for this timeframe and that South African higher education has experienced a revolution in terms of increased numbers of non-white students at South African post-secondary institutions (Study SA:online).

The National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa, which detailed the mergers of institutions within higher education, was completed in 2001 (Kraak 2004:271). The implementation of this plan will result in a "single, nationally coordinated system of

higher education” (Rouhani & Kishun 2004:239). In January of 2003, the South African postsecondary system began the merger programme in an attempt to streamline and avoid duplication in institutions that had occurred as a result of the creation of separate postsecondary institutions based on race. From an existing 21 universities, the merger, which is scheduled for completion at the end of 2005, will result in a total of 11 universities (Kotecha 2004:1). The information as depicted in Table 2.5 reflects the current state of the merger, the existing 18 universities and the renaming of particular institutions as of October 2004.

2.8.1.2 The Implementation of the Apartheid Policy in South Africa and the Response of International Community

In 1948 the National Party of South Africa became the ruling political party, bringing with it the racial separatist policy of apartheid that promoted separate but equal treatment of its country’s citizenship based on race (Lacour-Gayet 1977:294).

Two Parliamentary Acts had a significant impact on the educational system of South Africa. The first was the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Act 47), which established a Black Education Department and provided for a curriculum whose stated aim was to prevent Africans from receiving an education that would allow them to aspire to professions that they would not be allowed to take in a society dominated and controlled by Whites. This Act mandated that all non-White South Africans were to receive an education that would provide them with only the skills necessary to serve their own people in the homelands or to work in labouring jobs for whites. The second Act, the Extension of University Education Act (Act 45) of 1959, stopped non-White students from attending white universities and created additional and separate tertiary institutions based on race; two for Blacks, one for Coloureds (of mixed, non-White racial origin), and one for Indians (ANC 2001:online, Boddy-Evans 2004:3 & Lacour-Gayet 1977:305).

Subsequent to the passing of these Acts, ten so-called independent states, divided according to tribal background, were created within South Africa for its Black population. Each independent state, or homeland, had its own government, school system, and universities (Welch et al 2004:321).

Widespread condemnation of the apartheid system in South Africa began soon after its inception, although punitive actions, in the form of sanctions and boycotts, took several decades to occur. Both within South Africa, primarily by the African National Congress (ANC 1989:1-4) and within the international community through the United Nations, there were extensive appeals for isolationist policies as well as boycotts and sanctions.

In 1965, four years after South Africa broke away from the Commonwealth and became an independent republic, 496 university professors from 34 British universities signed a declaration, which stated:

“We, the professors and lecturers in British universities in consultation with the Anti-Apartheid Movement:

1. Protest against the bans imposed on Professors Simons and Roux.
2. Protest against the practiced of racial discrimination and its extension to higher education;
3. Pledge that we shall not apply for or accept academic post in South African universities which practice racial discrimination.” (ANC 1965:1-2)

This marked the beginning of the academic boycott against South Africa. According to Lancaster and Harricombe (1995:30) the following were the main tactics of the boycott:

1. Foreign academics and scholars rejecting opportunities to travel to South Africa as well as not inviting South Africans abroad;
2. Refusal to publish South African manuscripts by foreign publishing houses;
2. Foreign scholars abroad refusing to collaborate with South African scholars;
3. Foreign publishers refusing access to information, i.e.: books or computer software;
4. The banning of South Africans at international conferences;
5. Institutions abroad denying South African academics access;
6. Refusal by institutions abroad to recognize South African degrees;
7. Refusal by academics abroad to act as external examiners for theses presented at South African universities.

An exception to this academic boycott was made by the United States government in that it initiated Fulbright academic exchanges with South Africa in 1953 and although there was a decline in participation during the heyday of academic boycotts, the

programme continued to run unabated during the rule of the National Party to the current day (Fulbright s.a.:1-2) The United States did enforce a variety of other sanctions against South Africa, however, including sport, trade, economic and cultural sanctions. Most international sanctions were lifted after the Population Registration Act (Act 30, 1950), Group Areas Act (Act 41, 1950) and the Natives Land Act (Act 27, 1913) were repealed in the early 1990's (U.S. Library of Congress 1996:online).

In 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) took over leadership of the country from the Nationalist Party and a new political dispensation began, as did a new educational policy based upon the principals of equalisation of opportunity, desegregation, multiculturalism and democratisation (Welch, Yang & Wolhuter 2004:321).

2.8.1.3 South Africa as a Recipient Nation for International Students Prior to 1994

Against this background of South Africa's chequered racial history, what were the implications in relation to its involvement in international education, specifically that of study-abroad? The impact on South Africa's attractiveness as a destination for study-abroad programmes was substantial during this time according to the available statistics received from the South African Department of Education. Statistics on the intake of foreign nationals into South African universities are obtainable only from the year 1986 from the South African Department of Education (Matlejoane pers. comm.:2004) and are listed by continent of origin and racial background up until 1998. The available data does depict the fact that, at least for students from North America, South African institutions were not an appealing prospect as a study-abroad destination. Between the years of 1986 and 1998, the total number of students from North America (including the United States and Canada) who attended South African universities was slightly over 2,000 students with the average for these thirteen years being 56 students per year. Compared to the total number of American undergraduates who chose to study-abroad as depicted in Figure 1.1 (cf 1.1) and the total number of American undergraduates who have studied-abroad in South Africa since 1996, as depicted in Figure 1.3 (cf 1.4.1), the paucity of American students in South Africa during the years prior to the first democratic election in 1994 and for the first few years following the election becomes clear.

With specific reference to the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, the destination institution of this study, examination of the statistics supplied by the Department of Education during the years 1986 to 1998, indicates that a total of 36 students originating from North America attended this institution during this time, both at the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses. As the statistics also indicate racial background, it was possible to determine that only one student of coloured origin and two students of African ancestry attended these institutions, from the years 1994-1996 (Matlejoane pers. comm.:2004).

Despite the repercussions of the previous political policy that alienated South Africa from the rest of the world, the recent numbers of foreign nationals at South African universities since the first democratic elections in 1994 are on the upswing. So much so, that Caz Thomas, the Director of the International Office at the University of Cape Town (pers. comm. 2004), reported that in the humanities, their institution is at its full capacity with over 200 foreign students studying on the campus. She also stated that since the numbers of foreign student applicants are increasing each year, it is no longer necessary for the University of Cape Town to recruit at international conferences in the hope of attracting foreign students. The statistical report for 2003 from the University of Kwa Zulu Natal (formerly the University of Natal), the destination institution of this study, in regard to the intake of foreign nationals onto their campus, states that 124 American undergraduates were registered students on the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses (Kishun 2004:3).

These statistics agree with the report issued by the Institute of International Education (2003(a):online) on increased numbers of American undergraduates studying-abroad in South Africa and seem to indicate that Alt's surmise (2003:1) that students seem to be recognizing that there are inherent benefits to study-abroad in South Africa is correct (cf 2.8.1). Also Stryker's (cf 2.8.1) comments (s.a.:2) seemed to be confirmed in that there does seem to be a growing body of students who find that the idea of studying-abroad in a non-traditional location is an attractive one. Rubin (1995:3) states that in addition to the end of apartheid in South Africa, the notable increase of American students to South Africa for study-abroad programmes can be attributed to the fact that South Africa has a strong and growing economy in addition to the fact that it is a country in which English is the primary language.

2.8.2 The Socio-Political and Economic Context of South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination

South Africa, a country slightly less than twice the size of Texas, is home to an abundance of natural and man-made resources. Rich in gold, diamonds, uranium and a multitude of other innate reserves as well as a temperate climate and arable land (CIA World Fact Book 2003:Online), South Africa has the natural attributes for a solid economic foundation. A stable and popular government, shown by the continual decline of political violence and a 70% majority in the 2004 elections (South African Institute of Race Relations 2001:Online), a flourishing international trade network as well as solid and extensive communication and transportation infrastructures (CIA World Fact Book 2004:Online), make its population of over 43 million people some of the most fortunate on the sub-Saharan continent.

However, as with every nation, inherent problems do exist. This section will examine the major relevant exigent issues that pertain to South Africa as a study-abroad destination.

2.8.2.1 Issues of Health

When consulting the Centre for Disease Control's (CDC) website, the recommended prophylactic vaccines for Southern Africa (including Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, St. Helena, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies, typhoid and booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles. Interestingly enough, with the exception of rabies and typhoid, these are also the same recommended vaccines for all of Western Europe (CDC 2004:Online). It would appear that the health risks are comparable to some extent with those found in Western Europe.

However, one disease mentioned on both websites has its highest rates of incidence in Africa. HIV/AIDS is prevalent in all areas of Africa, has no preventative vaccine and it is highly communicable. Depending on which statistics are consulted, the percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa varies. According to the CIA World Fact Book (2004:Online), 21.5% of the population of South Africa is infected with HIV/AIDS, however many would consider this a low estimate.

In addition to the fear factor induced by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there is also a considerable economic impact, which will increase with each passing year. The growing and yet unmet demand on the health care industry, the loss of life and lessening of an effective labour force have had and will continue to have a detrimental effect on South Africa's economy (South African Aids Organisation 2004:1-3). According to the Human Development Index published by the United Nations, which combines wealth, education and health indicators, South Africa has declined over thirty places since 1995, primarily due to the escalating death rate as a result of the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Kane-Berman 2004:2).

However, it is the fear factor regarding HIV/AIDS that impacts most negatively when considering South Africa as a destination for study-abroad. The belief that Africa is a disease-ridden continent affects decision making regarding destinations both at the parental and student levels (cf 2.6.3). Since 1989, the International Educators Association (NAFSA) has been concerned with the increasing occurrence of HIV/AIDS in Africa (Stubbs sa:2). This led to a joint statement being published entitled: *AIDS and International Education Issues* by NAFSA and the American College Health Association (ACHA), with recommendations for the proper procedures for avoiding contracting the disease. Burn (s.a.:1) states that in the ten years since her initial comments on the concern of AIDS in Africa as an impediment to study-abroad, the situation has worsened and has escalated to form a serious deterrent to international exchanges in some regions. Tillman (s.a.:5) states that the ever-increasing pandemic of infectious diseases, specifically that of HIV/AIDS in Africa, is one of the many relevant factors that impact on the ever-changing world of international education.

While South Africa is more fortunate than most countries in Africa with its well established socio-economic infrastructure it is however, one of the worst affected areas in the world in regard the incidences of HIV/AIDS infection, with the highest prevalence in South Africa occurring in the Kwa Zulu Natal Province (Stanecki 2002:1-2).

However, Fantini (2002:12) argues that the necessary precautions against HIV/AIDS infection are well known and if followed, students do not encounter serious health risks. Issues regarding personal health are valid ones when considering study-abroad

destinations. Considering the increase of American study-abroad students to South Africa, however, it would seem that many students consider the threat of HIV/AIDS to be one for which they are prepared.

2.8.2.2 Issues of Safety

South Africa has been described as the '*Crime Capitol of the World*' as statistically, when comparing it with all international crime rates based on a per capita ratio, there are more violent crimes committed in South Africa than any other country in the world (Lebone 2004:1). In addition to this, it is believed that many violent crimes go unreported to the police and that in many cases, where the crime has been reported, the police fail to file the report, which implies that if all crimes were reported and filed the actual crime rate would be even higher than currently shown via statistical reports (Schonteich & Louw 2001:1). Schonteich and Louw (2001:1) also state that statistics show violent crimes to be on the increase, with the latest levels of reported crime being greater than for any other period in South Africa.

Such a reputation could only have a detrimental effect on those considering South Africa as a destination for a study-abroad programme. How can American colleges and universities balance the inherent risks involved in studying-abroad with the academic and cultural advantages offered by such a programme? Hoyer (2003:1), Fantini (2002:12) and others advocate that appropriate initial and on-going preparation, both on the part of the sending and the receiving institutions, is mandatory and does much to ensure that the student's time in a foreign country will be a safe and productive one. However, while following a preventative methodology regarding personal health can result in an illness free experience, practicing a 'forewarned is forearmed' strategy in regard to personal safety in many cases is not enough to circumvent becoming a victim of crime, and so, the issue of the increasing level of crime in South Africa can be considered a major barrier to study-abroad.

2.8.2.3 Issues of Cost

South Africa is in the fortunate position of having a robust and varied postsecondary infrastructure. As mentioned in section 2.8.2.1 and as shown in Table 2.5, South Africa is currently home to 18 universities.

The cost of attendance for one semester for a South African resident (University of Kwa Zulu Natal 2004(b):Online) in U.S. dollars is approximately \$1,630.00 per semester, or one-half of the total annual academic cost. (N.B.: All costs referred to in this section are in U.S. dollars based on the conversion rate at the time of writing of 1 US Dollars = R6.04 South African Rand. Costs for one semester in all instances refer to the cost of tuition and room and board and exclude travel, books and personal expenses. Costs for study-abroad expenses in this section are based on the direct enrol method (cf 1.3).

While this might seem extremely inexpensive to many, one factor to consider is the annual income per capita in South Africa. The GDP per capita, or gross domestic product, which is the purchasing power parity of each individual as listed in the Central Intelligence Agency's Fact Book for 2004 (CIA 2004:Online) is, in U.S. dollar terms, \$10,700.00 per person in South Africa while the GDP for the United States individual is over three times that amount (cf 2.6.1). However, the average cost of a semester's attendance at a state run institution in the United States is also higher, with an average cost of \$4,844.00 for a resident of that state (College Board 2003:3), resulting in the ratio of income versus expenditure costs for university being more or less on a par in both countries when based on a state run institution in both instances. The main difference in university costs between the two countries is that private universities in the United States, which form a substantial pool of the overall total of postsecondary institutions (cf 2.1.1.2), are far more expensive, with a total average semester cost being in the region of \$12,700.00 (College Board 2003:3). So, the average cost per semester for an American undergraduate is highly dependant on which college or university he or she decides to attend, which is not the case in South Africa, where costs are relatively the same at each institution.

How do costs impact on an American study-abroad student who chooses South Africa as a destination? The University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard Campus, the destination institution for this study, indicates that the total cost for a semester of study for a student outside of the African continent would be \$4,858.00 (University of Kwa Zulu Natal 2004(a):Online). An additional cost factor one must consider is the cost of transportation to South Africa. An economy ticket from New York to Durban at the time of writing is \$1,574.00 (South African Airways 2004:Online). Excluding the cost

of travel, the cost of a semester of study at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal would be identical to the cost for a resident of a state run institution in the United States, and considerably cheaper for a student at an American private university.

Considering that cost is believed to be one of the main barriers to study-abroad (cf 2.6.1 & Table 2.2), the fact that the expense involved in study-abroad in South Africa, travel cost excluded, is almost identical to spending a semester at a state institution in the United States, and far cheaper than a private institution, it would appear that cost as a main barrier to study-abroad is not as relevant when South Africa is the chosen destination.

How do the costs for a semester of study-abroad in South Africa compare with other destinations? Using China as an example, which has a similar number of universities and is ranked closely with South Africa on the Human Development Index published by the United Nations in terms of development (Kane-Berman 2004:2), as well as using a prominent institution in a developed nation in the United Kingdom, the most common destination for American study-abroad students (cf 2.3.1), a comparison is shown in Table 2.4 below (Costs are best estimates at time of writing and include: tuition, mandatory fees, if applicable, and on-campus accommodation and a food allowance for one semester only):

Table 2.4

Costs of a Study- Abroad Semester for American Undergraduates For the academic year 2004-05		
University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard Campus South Africa <small>(Source: University of Kwa Zulu 2004(a))</small>	Peking University, China <small>(Source: Peking University 2004)</small>	University of Oxford, England <small>(Source: University of Oxford 2004)</small>
\$4,858.00	\$2,808.00	\$12,968.00

In the end result, it would appear that South Africa is comparable in cost to that of state institutions in America, less expensive than Western Europe, but more expensive than some other areas in the developing world.

2.8.3 Perceived Barriers to Study-Abroad in Africa from an American Administrator Perspective

Although the number of participants in study-abroad programmes in South Africa seems to be increasing, there still are a variety of barriers to overcome from an American perspective, in order to do so. In addition to the challenges faced when considering study-abroad in general (cf 2.6), Lloyd (2000:6) contends that there are still more specific challenges that need to be addressed when dealing specifically with study-abroad in Africa. These include:

1. Changing gender relations both domestically and within the host country (cf 2.7.4.1);
2. Costs and benefits analysis both by home institutions and host governments and institutions supporting and accrediting these programmes (cf 2.6.1 & 2.8.3);
3. Involvement of African educators and administrative staff in the design, policy-making, and directing (cf Table 2.3 & 2.6.6.1);
4. Better assessment of the of the impact of students' career decisions, especially direct involvement in Africa, Africa-oriented, national or international work;
5. More creative endeavours to link up African, non-African and African diaspora students;
6. More creative training and exposure to Africa-specific knowledge that recognises the broader regional, national, transnational and global forces that are at work in the world.

In addition to these challenges, the administration of programmes within Africa seem to require, both on the part of the sending and receiving institutions, a disproportionate amount of time and energy and that minor challenges such as communications, transportation, health care, visas, housing, food and all of the normal components of study-abroad programme, present new and frustrating challenges when dealing with Africa (Fugate 1987:14). The availability of the necessary infrastructure to deal with study-abroad programmes on a day-to-day basis within the host nation can often be problematic, particularly in Africa. However, Zachrisson (s.a.:29) states that regarding the shifts into new study-abroad destinations, and the statistics that reflect this, Mexico and South Africa are good examples of countries that have the necessary educational

infrastructure to support such programmes.

Fortunately, Bowman's (cf 2.8.1) contention that study-abroad in Africa is problematic does not seem to still hold true, at least as far as South Africa is concerned. Whatever existing drawbacks do remain, South Africa as a destination for a study-abroad programme provides the American student with experiences he or she could not have in any other area. The areas of study, the university setting and different academic environment, the new cultures and exposure to different political and ethical concepts make for a unique and valuable experience (Fugate 1987:14).

2.8.4 Choice of Destination in South Africa Influenced by Field of Study

An American undergraduate student who wishes to study-abroad is often limited to foreign institutions that offer his particular field of study (cf 2.6.4). According to the statistical report of study-abroad demographics as shown in Open Doors (IIE 2002:61) the majority of American students, approximately 53%, who choose to study-abroad are from the liberal arts and business programmes. Other fields of study, such as: agriculture, art, language, sciences, education, engineering, health science, math and computer science, and the undecided students count for the remainder or 47% of students.

Table 2.5 defines the postsecondary institutions in South Africa and the various fields of study that are available. Currently, there are eighteen universities in South Africa due to the merger of institutions (cf 2.8.1.1). The institutions that have been merged are indicated in the following table in italics.

Table 2.5

<p style="text-align: center;">UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA Current As Of October 2004 (Source: African Studies Center:2004)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FIELD OF STUDY AVAILABILITY (Source: IEASA s.a.:Online)</p>
<p>1. Medical University of Southern Africa</p>	<p>Medical Faculties.</p>
<p>2. North-West University <i>(incorporating the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education)</i></p>	<p>Agriculture, Science and Technology; Education; Human and Social Sciences; Law; Commerce and Administration.</p>

3. Rand Afrikaans University	Arts; Law; Education and Nursing; Economic and Management Sciences; Engineering; Science.
4. Rhodes University	Commerce; Education; Humanities; Law; Pharmacy; Science
5. University of Cape Town	Humanities; Science; Engineering and the Built Environment; Law; Commerce; Health Sciences.
6. University of Fort Hare	African and Democracy Studies; Management, Development and Commerce; Agricultural and Environmental Studies; Science and Technology.
7. University of Free State	Humanities; Economic & Management Sciences; Law; Health Sciences; Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Theology.
8. University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, with campuses: Pietermaritzburg, Howard (Durban) and Westville <i>(incorporating the former University of Durban-Westville, University of Natal (Durban), University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg))</i>	Community & Development Disciplines (incl. Architecture & Town Planning); Economics and Management; Education; Engineering; Fine Art; Health Sciences; Human & Management Sciences; Humanities; Law; Science and Agriculture; Theology.
9. University of the North <i>(incorporating the former University of the North-West)</i>	Arts; Agriculture; Education; Health Sciences; Law; Management Sciences; Mathematics and Natural Sciences; Theology.
10. University of Port Elizabeth	Arts; Economic Sciences; Education; Health Sciences; Law; Science
11. University of Pretoria	Natural and Agricultural Sciences; Economic and Management Sciences; Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology; Education; Theology; Veterinary Science; Law; Health Sciences; Humanities
12. University of South Africa <i>(incorporating the former Vista University)</i>	Primarily correspondence study, a non-residential campus.
13. University of Stellenbosch	Arts and Social Sciences; Science; Education; Agricultural and Forestry Sciences; Law; Theology; Economic and Management Sciences.
14. University of Transkei	Arts; Law; Science; Health Sciences; Education; Economic Sciences.
15. University of Venda	Environmental Sciences; Agriculture; Rural Development and Forestry; Mathematics and Natural Sciences; Business, Economics and Administrative Sciences; Law; Education; Human Sciences; Health Sciences; Integrated Studies.
16. University of the Western Cape	Science; Arts; Economic and Management Science; Education; Dentistry; Law; Community and Health Science.
17. University of the Witwatersrand	Humanities, Social Science and Education; Commerce, Law and Management;

	Engineering and the Built Environment; Health Sciences; Science.
18. University of Zululand	Arts; Commerce and Administration; Education; Law; Science and Agriculture; Theology.

Of the eighteen institutions listed above, sixteen actively promote themselves as destinations for foreign students, the exceptions being the Medical University of South Africa and the University of South Africa (studySA:Online). Although both institutions do accept foreign students, they do so on an ad hoc basis and do not form part of the Study SA consortia.

As shown in Table 2.5, there is an abundance of academic disciplines available at South African universities, both in the humanities and within all major fields of study. It should therefore be possible for most American undergraduates to find an academic fit at most of these institutions.

2.8.5 Choice of Destination Influenced by Ethnic Heritage

According to Neff (2001:1), *heritage seeking* as the term implies, refers to study-abroad for the purpose of discovering more about one's ethnic background. In a study conducted by Carroll (1996:47) statistics showed that over half of the African-American students surveyed would prefer to study in a country that reflects their ethnic heritage. The rationale being that students of African heritage in the United States can experience, perhaps for the first time, what it means to be in the majority of the population and appreciates his or her own history and heritage (Fugate 1987:14). While in the twentieth century, Europe might have been the destination of choice for many of those of European descent, today, with an increasing number of students with African, Asian and Latin American backgrounds, and these areas are increasingly becoming the destination of choice, in a conscious decision to learn more about ethnic heritage. Many such students find that the experience of a prolonged stay in the region of their racial background to be profoundly rewarding (Fantini 2002:11).

Of the participants from the U.S. who choose to study-abroad in Africa, over 23% are African-Americans, although the same group make up only 3% of all study-abroad students from the United States (Neff 2001:1). This tends to lend credence to the

importance of ethnicity when choosing a study-abroad destination as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Does the experience of studying in the land of one's ethnic roots tend to be a rewarding and positive one? Bostic (s.a.:1) contends that he "hadn't just come home to my people in Sub-Saharan Africa; I had come home to my very own people in Guinea" during his two-year stay in Guinea in the mid-1980's. He goes on to say that he "discovered a home I never knew I had" and felt a strong bond of the familiar.

Occasionally, the experience is not always what students hope that it will be. Often it is more difficult to form the hoped for bond in what is perceived to be one's own country of heritage. Students often find the reality of the experience in Africa to be an alienating one. African-Americans frequently find that they have more in common with other Americans on campus than they do with Africans (Neff 2001:1).

When an African-American chooses to study-abroad in Africa it is automatically assumed that he/she is seeking to find an ancestral home, according to Shaw (s.a.:2). Her study-abroad programme at the then University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (currently the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus), did not have the specific purpose of seeking her heritage, as being an African-American her probable origins were in West Africa. She did find however, that it was a positive experience, and found that although she was welcomed home by the black South Africans on campus, she was primarily viewed as an American first, and an African second. Ganz (1991:32) adds that African-Americans should not be disappointed if they are viewed as Americans first and Africans second and that the stereotyped African-American image is prevalent even in Africa. Shaw (s.a.:2) goes on to say that she was disturbed when confronted with the results of America's influence in Africa as the perceptions of Americans are not positive ones, running the gamut from being seen as arrogant, self-centred and unsophisticated to a faulty perception created by popular media as a country of film stars and crooks.

2.8.6 Evaluation of South Africa as a Destination for Study-Abroad

As described in this section, there are a variety of specific concerns when considering South Africa as a destination for study-abroad. Since the first democratic elections in

1994, South Africa has seen a marked increase in the amount of foreign students, specifically from the United States, on its campuses. Despite its racial problems in the past, or perhaps because of them, South Africa is inspiring more and more interest on American campuses and as a result, becoming an increasingly attractive destination for American undergraduates.

The basic academic infrastructure and coursework available at South African universities seems comparable with the needs of foreign students. Costs are similar, if not less than institutions in the United States. Health related problems, although acute, seem manageable and the concerns of American study-abroad administrators seem be addressed in most of the major areas of concern.

The main concern when considering South Africa as a study-abroad destination appears to be the issue of personal safety due to the high incidences of crime.

2.9 BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONALISATION TO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

The benefits of internationalisation of a university campus, both on the institutional level and in regards to individual students as discussed in section 2.4, are not limited to a specific country, but are universal in nature. All of the inherent advantages that the United States realizes due to its increasing focus on promotion of internationalisation on and within its campuses are applicable to each and every nation.

With specific regard to South Africa, the imperative for increased participation of its universities in the international arena can be considered even greater due to its history of isolation prior to the first democratic elections in 1994. The legacy of apartheid is still evident in that the transition from an elite based system of education to one that serves the masses is far from complete (Ramphela 1999:1). South African institutions, in addition to the perceived benefits to international education (cf 1.4.1) states Thomas (2000:1-2), face increased challenges in attempting to accommodate the demand and need for preparing South African students and staff for the increasingly global society due to the struggling economy in comparison to more developed nations, and so the

relevance and importance of having foreign students on South African campuses becomes even greater as these foreign students provide for some international exposure.

Over the last ten years, according to Ramphela (1999:1) over 1.5 million foreign students have attended South African tertiary institutions. Of this number, 22% have come from Asia and the Pacific Rim area, 17% from the North American continent, 14% from Europe, and 50% from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which includes: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The influx of foreign students onto South African university campuses is cause for the greatest tangible benefit of international education, increased income generation. As shown in section 2.8.2.2, foreign students, depending on country of origin, pay a greater fee than South African students, with students from outside the African continent paying the greatest amount. Since the cost to American foreign students on South African campuses is almost three times that of the cost to the South African citizen, institutions in South Africa generate considerable income from the enrolment of these students.

2.10 SUMMARY

In Chapter Two background information on the system of higher education in the United States is given as well as the types of study-abroad programmes within the United States and their perceived importance and benefits. The challenges that face study-abroad participants, such as cost, lack of information, attitudes, academic and curricular constraints as well as personal barriers are explored in depth, both on a general basis and specifically in relation to Africa.

The various factors that influence the study-abroad experience are also examined with specific reference to those that relate to Africa as a continent and South Africa as a country. A brief background on the history of South African universities in relation to the policy of apartheid is addressed as well as the international community's reaction

and response. An examination of the socio-political and economic indicators in relation to South Africa as a study-abroad destination is made along with the benefits of internationalisation to South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?”

Steinar Kvale (1996:1)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One gave a background to the study. The problem statement and aims of the study were listed and a brief overview of the research methodology was stated.

Chapter Two, through an extensive literature review, examined the provision for and relevance of study-abroad programmes, as well as defining the process of study-abroad and the factors that influence it. The literature review also investigated Africa and specifically South Africa as the destination of choice of American study-abroad participants.

The aim of Chapter Three is to define the process by which the empirical research was undertaken, the rationale for such research, and the research design that was used for this study, that of qualitative research. The methods, by which the data was gathered, managed and analysed as well as the limitations and reliability of qualitative research are also discussed.

3.2 EXPLANATION OF AND JUSTIFICATION FOR QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

As stated in 1.5, very little research has been undertaken that examines the experiences of participants in study-abroad programmes, and none, that the researcher is aware of, which explore those experiences with South Africa as the host destination. In an attempt to partially fill this void, it was believed that a qualitative study, with the purpose of examining all the life experiences of the student participants was deemed most appropriate.

Qualitative research, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2), is a methodology by which things are studied in their natural environment. Interpretations are then drawn from the occurrences observed in an attempt to make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meanings the subjects of the study give to them. Since the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the phenomena of the participant's experiences (Marshall & Schumacher 1989:14), the data collected during the study is rich in description and presented as a verbal narrative of the experience (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:42).

Qualitative research, in addition to attempting to understand the occurrences of a particular experience, also demands on the part of the researcher an involvement in the life of those who are the objects of the study (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:42) in their natural surroundings and then applying an interpretive analysis to the findings of the study (Marshall & Rossman 1999:2).

As stated in 1.9.1, according to Seidman (1998:7), the choice of methodology is determined by what one is trying to learn. Since the purpose of this study is to learn more regarding the life experiences of American undergraduate students who chose to study-abroad for a semester in South Africa, and then to examine and evaluate the occurrence as a whole based on these experiences, the appropriateness of using descriptive, qualitative research involving analysis and interpretation seemed clear.

3.3 THE SAMPLING PROCEDURE

There are two divergent categories of informants that can be utilized for a qualitative study: those informants who are distinctively proficient and have expertise in a given

area; and those informants who, when studied as a group, collectively reveal the occurrences of a population affected by a state of circumstances or unique event (Weiss 1994:17).

It was decided for the purpose of this research to use both categories of informants.

3.3.1 The Focus Group: Purpose, Size and Selection

Within the field of study-abroad programmes, there exists a unique group of individuals whose primary task is to implement and administer study-abroad programmes within their institutions (cf 2.6.6.1). It was decided for the purpose of this research to utilize the expertise of a select group of these individuals and form a *'focus group'*. A focus group can be defined as a group of 7-10 people who are unfamiliar with each other and who have been selected because they share certain characteristics pertinent to the study (Marshall & Rossman 1999:114-115).

There are a variety of advantages in selecting a focus group for participatory input to a study. Utilising a focus group is a method by which a researcher can study participants within a socially oriented procedure that allows for a setting that is more natural than artificial investigational circumstances and more relaxed than the experience of a one-to-one interview. Also, when utilised with individual participant investigations, focus groups are especially useful for gaining access to specific population groups, determining site selection and sampling as well as for checking tentative conclusions. Focus group interviews also allow for greater flexibility on the part of the researcher, allowing for the exploration of unforeseen topics as they present themselves during the discussion.

In addition, the results obtained via a focus group interview have a high level of validity because the method is easily understood and the findings are believable. Focus groups are also advantageous as they are relatively low in cost, provide rapid results, and they can increase the sample size of qualitative research as more people may be interviewed at one time (Marshall & Rossman 1999:114-115).

There are also disadvantages to the focus group interview in that, according to Marshall

and Rossman (1999:114-115), the interviewer has less control over a group interview than an individual one, the data is difficult to analyse as it basically relates to understanding the participants comments, it requires a special room, equipment, and the group can vary a great deal and be difficult to organize. Despite these limited disadvantages, it was decided that the input from experts as a group within the field would be more beneficial to the study than input from individual informants within the field.

The focus group comprised a panel of experts in the area of study-abroad in the United States and thus formed what Weiss (1994:17) terms “people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are expert in an area” and so, form one of the two distinct groups of appropriate informants. The focus group participated in one group interview in May of 2003 at the NAFSA (Association of International Educators) conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. This panel was made up of seven professionals within the study-abroad arena, all of whose jobs entailed assisting students with study-abroad options.

Of the seven participants in the focus group, four were male and three were female. They represented an average of 7.9 years of experience in the following fields:

1. Directors, assistant directors or deans of study-abroad programming at small, private, liberal arts colleges;
2. Directors, assistant directors or deans of study-abroad programming at medium, private comprehensive universities;
3. Directors, assistant directors or deans of study-abroad programming at large, state universities;
4. Programme directors or programme coordinators at non-profit international exchange organisations.

The focus group was chosen via non-random, purposeful, convenience sampling, which ensured that “information-rich key informants” (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:182) were present in the group. All of the participants within the focus group were members of an international educational list-serve (an electronic discussion forum on study-abroad) and an email message was sent out to all members asking for volunteers to participate in the interview. From the group of volunteers who responded to the request, seven participants were selected that best represented the various professional units

within study-abroad programming (cf 1.3). The selection criterion was based on obtaining an overall distribution sampling from the various types of institutions in the United States, i.e.: small to medium sized private colleges and universities, large state universities (cf 2.1.1.2), as well as those involved in non-profit exchange organisations.

Each member of the focus group was given a consent form to sign (cf Appendix A-1).

3.3.2 Student Participants: Purpose, Size and Selection

The other group of informants chosen for this study were the second category of what Weiss refers to as potential respondents, those who were participants in an event (cf 3.3). This was a group of six American undergraduates who were about to embark on a semester long study-abroad programme in South Africa.

According to Weiss (1994:3) because qualitative interviews are expected to obtain vast amounts of information, the sample size is usually much smaller than those used in survey studies. Many qualitative case studies using interview research investigate one single case, as in Weiss' "An N of 1" (1994:32).

The size of the informant pool depends on the purpose of the study (Kvale 1996:103). The purpose of this study as stated in Chapter One (cf 1.7) was to learn more about the experiences of American undergraduates who chose to spend a semester abroad at a particular university in South Africa. For the purpose of this study, it was decided that a 'typical' sampling of students would be used and the size of the sampling would be dependant on how many subjects were needed to achieve the 'typical' sample. A typical sample, according to Merriam (2001:62) is one that is chosen as it reflects the person, circumstance or instance of the occurrence that is being examined. Wolcott (1994:115) defines the typical selection in his study of the typical elementary school principal as one person who encompasses '*Mr. Average*' amongst school principals and so forms the typical sample.

Although the '*Miss Study-Abroad*' as defined in Chapter Two (cf 2.3.1) typifies the most common person who chooses to study-abroad, in choosing the sampling for this study an attempt to replicate the statistical representation of all students who choose to study-abroad as shown in Table 2.1 in the areas of ethnic background, gender and level

of study. Therefore, the sample size needed to adequately represent the typical student was determined to be six students.

Looking at the side-by-side comparison in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of student statistics as listed in *Open Doors* (IIE 2002) and the statistics of the student subjects of this study; the lack of representation is evident only in the Hispanic groups within the racial and ethnic categories. In the academic levels categories, representation is lacking in the first and second year levels. It was believed that the areas that are not represented as per the *Open Doors* (IIE 2002) statistics contain percentages so small as to not constitute a major detraction from the goal of achieving the typical student sample.

Once the determination was made as to what constituted the average study-abroad student, a non-random, purposeful, convenience sampling with a snowball effect was used to recruit participants. An email was sent to a non-profit international exchange organisation known to have a programme in South Africa. A listing of all students who proposed arriving in January of 2004 in Durban, South Africa was sent to the researcher. An email was then sent to all prospective study-abroad students informing them of the research and asking for their participation. A consent form (cf Appendix A-2) and a biographical data form (cf Appendices B-1 & B-2) were mailed to all interested students.

Statistics of All American Study-Abroad Students

Source: Open Doors 2002

Table 3.1

Gender	Percentage
Female	64.9
Male	35.1
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
Caucasian	82.9
Hispanic-American	5.8
Asian-American	5.4
African-American	3.5
Multiracial	2.0
Native American	0.4
Academic Level	Percentage
Junior	40.7
Senior	20.4
Sophomore	13.6
Bachelor's Unspecified	11.0
Master's	4.7
Graduate, Unspecified	3.3
Freshman	3.2
Associate	1.5
Other	0.8
Doctoral	0.7

Statistics of Student Participants Used in this Study

Table 3.2

Gender	Percentage
Female	66.6
Male	33.3
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
Caucasian	83.33
Hispanic-American	0
Asian-American	0
African-American	8.33
Multiracial	8.33
Native American	0
Academic Level	Percentage
Junior	66.66
Senior	33.33
Sophomore	0
Bachelor's Unspecified	0
Master's	0
Graduate, Unspecified	0
Freshman	0
Associate	0
Other	0
Doctoral	0

A meeting was organized on the day of the students' arrival in Durban. Further biographical data forms (cf Appendix B-2) and consent forms (cf Appendix A-2) were distributed to the students at the meeting with the request that they be given to any other American students on the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal campus who expressed an interest in participating in the study (snowball sampling as per Weiss 1994:25).

From the completed biographical data forms, a compilation of the most typical subjects was chosen. From this group six final participants were chosen and contacted. All agreed to participate and interview schedules were organized.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION: METHOD AND SOURCES

The type of data required for this study involved descriptive accounts of life experiences. It was decided that the most appropriate method by which to obtain this information or data was through interviewing.

3.4.1 The Interview Method of Data Collection

Justification for utilising the interview method exists in the fact that the purpose of this study is to learn the 'stories' that people have to tell, an account of their experiences in a given situation. As Seidman (1998:1) states:

Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness. Every whole story, Aristotle tells us, has a beginning, middle, and an end. In order to give the details of their experience a beginning, a middle and end, people must reflect on their experience. It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience.

The purpose of interviewing for this study is not to test a theory, evaluate a situation or

to get answers to specific questions, but to gather information (data) which helps the researcher learn of the experiences of people and to find what meaning is given to the experience (Seidman 1998:3). It is as Marshall and Rossman state: “A conversation with a purpose” (1999:108). Merton et al (1990:13) believe that the interview method allows the interviewee an opportunity to express his feelings about a situation and not the ideas and presumptions that are important to the interviewer. The implementation of the interview method is far from mystifying; it is a conversation with structure and purpose and goes beyond common conversation. Nor is it an equal conversation as the researcher who not only defines the parameters and topics, but also carefully follows up on the participant’s answers to the questions.

Weiss (1994:9) believes that: “research aims should dictate research methods.” He goes on to say that the various aims that could make the interview method one of choice are:

1. *Developing detailed descriptions.* Learning as much as we can about an event or development.
2. *Integrating multiple perspectives.* Describing an organisation, development or event that no single person could have described in its totality.
3. *Describing process.* Learning about some human enterprise, how events occur, or what an event produces.
4. *Developing holistic description.* By putting together process reports from people whose behaviours interrelate we can learn about systems.
5. *Learning how events are interpreted.* Learning more about how an event is seen and understood by the participants.
6. *Bridging intersubjectivities.* Learning the information that makes it possible to view an event from the inside.
7. *Identifying variable and framing hypotheses for quantitative research.* Learning from the descriptive process, elements which may be used to measure and formulate hypotheses to test.

Since the aim of this research (cf 1.7) dictated the need for a qualitative study that developed data rich in detailed descriptions, which involved integrating multiple perspectives of a holistic nature while learning how this experience was interpreted by bridging intersubjectivities, the interview as a method of data collection was deemed to be the most appropriate.

The purpose of this study was to collect narrative information via interviews that will help describe and explain the experiences of American study-abroad students in South Africa. The method by which this data is sourced and collected is of prime importance to the study. Both a focus group interview (cf 3.3.1) and individual interviews (cf 3.3.2) were utilized in this study.

3.4.2 Tools for Data Collection

The choice of tools needed for data collection depends on the needs and beliefs of the researcher, as a variety of methods can equally be valid. For the purpose of this study, it was decided that the data would be collected through interviews that would be tape recorded with the consent of the subjects (cf Appendices A-1 & A-2).

Although Stake (1995:56) argues against tape recording interviews as “the cost in making transcripts and the annoyance for both respondent and researcher argue strongly against it” there is even more arguments in favour of the use of such recordings. Seidman (1998:97), Merriam (2001:87) and Weiss (1994:54) all agree that not only is the tape recording of interviews the most common form of capturing the content of an interview, it is also the most productive. The task at hand that of listening to the story, can more easily be attended to additional notes can be taken if required, and the exact wording and phasing of the respondent can be captured. According to Weiss (1994:54) without the tape recording of interviews, “the vividness of speech disappears.” Weiss (1994:55) also recommends tape recording if you wish to capture how the informants saw and reacted to events and Merriam (2001:87) states that tape recording interviews guarantees that everything said is preserved for later study. Seidman (1998:97) goes further and states: “To substitute the researcher’s paraphrasing or summaries of what the participants say for their actual words is to substitute the researcher’s consciousness for that of the participant.”

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and saved into Microsoft Office Basic Edition *Word*™ (version 2003). Merriam (2001:88) states that word for word transcription of recorded interviews provide the greatest pool of data for analysis.

3.4.2.1 Creation of an Interview Guide

An interview guide was created and used as a tool to assist in focussing the student interviews (cf Appendices C 1-3) at each stage (cf 3.4.2.1) as per Charles (1995:107) and Weiss (1994:48). Weiss defines the interview guide as a catalogue of topics that are to be addressed during the interview as well as in each area, appropriate questions that will guide the focus of the inquiry. The guide can be used as cue cards, assisting in the process of review by ascertaining that the interviewing process remains on track and appropriately addresses all areas under study. It is not always necessary to revert to the guide, however, if the interview takes an unexpected topic shift, the guide can be consulted. The interview guide may also be referred to at the conclusion of an interview to ensure that all appropriate topics have been addressed.

According to Merton et al (1990:43), the interview guide presupposes a prior analysis of the situation under study. In this study, the prior analysis was accomplished through a thorough literature review and the focus interview. The questions that comprised the three interview guides used for the six student subjects during the three distinct stages of inquiry (upon arrival, midway through the programme and at the conclusion of the programme) were then drawn from the areas of interest found via the literature review in Chapter Two and the areas of interest to the focus group participants.

Merton et al (1990:43) go on to say that there are various shortfalls in using an interview guide. The interviewer, while realizing that the guide is only a conduit by which one can channel appropriate areas of inquiry, it can often be used as a “fixed questionnaire comprising predesignated questions.” This can result in surrendering of the flexible adaptation of emerging new data, thus losing one of the chief merits of the interview process.

The areas of concern in this regard, as listed by Merton et al (1990:43-52) fall into four areas, defined as ‘Fallacies in Seeking Range’. One such drawback, or the fallacy of arresting the report, is a result of confining the areas under question strictly to those listed on the interview guide thereby arresting spontaneous comments, which might cause loss of pertinent data.

The researcher can also force certain topics, which results in the fallacy of forced topics, by adhering too closely to the questions listed within the guide. By doing so, this

results in forcing answers to questions that do not relate to the interviewees' actual experiences. Interviewees might sense that they are being coerced into responding in a certain manner or encouraged to suppress all or part of what they have to say, thereby causing the range of the interview to suffer (Merton et al 1990:45).

Conversely, a related limitation occurs when the interviewer adheres too closely to the exact phrasing of questions set up in the interview guide, rather than investigating the implications of the interviewee's statements. In this way, the interview guide may be a restricting factor rather than an assisting one as it interferes with the flexibility of the process, which is one of the assets of the interview (Merton et al 1990:48).

Finally, there is the concern that the interview guide may be responsible for the '*Fallacy of Rapid Shifts*'. In the interest of achieving a range of responses, the interviewer may settle for superficial discussions of a diversity of topics, and so in attempted to cover a broad range of subject matter, at the expense of depth. Although the length of the interview may not allow for coverage of many areas in a thorough manner, it is more important to cover fully a small area of inquiry than to make rapid shifts of inquiry merely to cover what is perceived to be the entirety of the topic under study (Merton et al 1990:50).

Merton et al (1990:53-64) suggest that although there are few hard and fast rules regarding the interview process, there are procedures that may extend the range of interviews without succumbing to the fallacies listed above. For example, the inclusion of unstructured questions, which "lead to specificity of comment, invite spontaneity, can be readily adapted to elicit depth reports and, is a means of obtaining a wide range of comment" (Merton et al 1990:54) are appropriate in the early stages of the interview process as they afford an initial range of items which can then be followed up at a later stage. They can be used in each stage of the interview process, however, to extend the range of comments beyond those anticipated in the interview guide. This type of question ceases to elicit new information as the interview develops, which is a signal that new questions can be introduced. Examples of such questions used in the interview process are: *What else in the orientation programme was interesting?* and *What part of the cultural situation here caught your attention?*

Another method in the interview process, which extends the range of the interview, is ensuring that transitional questions are used to shift the focus. While it is preferable that the interviewee makes the transition to a new area of discussion, it can be limiting within the interview setting, as the interviewee may veer into areas totally unrelated to the topic under study. It is then time for the interviewer to change the direction of the interview. A skilled interviewer can use “cues” in conversation, such as references in comments, to ease the interviewee into a new area of conversation. An example of this type of question used in this research is: *You mentioned earlier that the male and female roles seem somewhat different here; would you like to tell me more about that?*

The use of mutational questions at the end of the interview process is occasionally required to assist in covering areas that were previously unconsidered. A skilful interviewer should have little need for these types of questions and they should be used as a last resort in obtaining information as both transitional questions and unstructured questions, when used correctly, should allow for complete coverage of all items deemed necessary for exploration. Mutational questions were used in the interviews when it was found necessary.

The three interview guides (cf Appendices C1-3), as explained later in this chapter, contain topics that were deemed important to the study after a thorough literature review and results of the interview with the focus group. From the topics listed on the interview guides and depending on the flow of the interview, various types of open-ended questions, i.e.: unstructured, semi-structured, structured as well as transitional and mutational questions were used, sequenced in order. The interview guide was reviewed and adjusted after the pilot study and prior to each of the three interview stages. An interview guide was not used in the focus group interview.

3.4.3 The Focus Group Interview

For the interview involving the seven experts within the field of study-abroad who comprised the focus group, a meeting room was organized and a microphone and tape recorder were used to record the interview. The setting was a round-table format. Tea, coffee and light refreshments were provided as a means of saying ‘thank you’. The interview took approximately 90 minutes.

The interview occurred during the annual NAFSA (International Educators Association) conference in May 2002 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The stimulus question used to introduce the topic was:

‘What would be useful for you, as professionals’ involved or interested in study-abroad, to know about the experiences of American undergraduates involved in study-abroad in South Africa?’

3.4.4 Student Participant Interviews

A pilot study was conducted using one American undergraduate student, studying at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus (then the University of Natal, Durban) from January to June 2003. Three in-depth interviews were conducted as part of the pilot study; one upon arrival, one midway through the programme and one at the programme’s conclusion. Based on the pilot study, and as suggested by Weiss (1994:14), the aims were clarified and the study was outlined more succinctly prior to interviewing the primary informants.

The primary source of data for this study was from six American undergraduate student participants who studied abroad from January to June 2004 at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus. As with the pilot study, the three interviews took place at three distinct intervals; upon arrival, midway through the programme and at the conclusion of the study-abroad experience.

The choice of three, diachronic interviews as described by Seidman (1998:11) and Weiss (1994:42) seemed appropriate for this study. The diachronic report provides explanation, expresses phases of development and tells stories “in which things happen as times goes on” (Weiss 1994:42). Also, as Aristotle believes (cf 3.4.1), there is a beginning, middle and end to each whole story, and the goal of this study was to capture as much of that ‘whole story’ as possible (Seidman 1998:11).

Seidman states (1998:11) that the “most distinguishing of all its features, this model of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each participant.” Seidman divides the series into the following components:

1. *Focused Life History, Interview One.* This interview establishes the participants experience in context by asking him/her to describe as much as possible of past experiences in light of the topic.
2. *The Details of the Experience, Interview Two.* The purpose of the second interview is to concentrate on the details of the experience that is being studied. Reconstruction of detail is important during this phase.
3. *Reflections on the Meaning, Interview Three.* The purpose of the third interview is to learn more about the subjects' understanding of the experience. Although during all three interviews, the subjects are making meaning of their experience, in the final interview the experience is put into context of the previous two interviews.

Both Weiss (1994:56) and Seidman (1998:12) agree that the optimum length for each interview is in the region of ninety minutes. The logic behind this timing is that according to Weiss (1994:56) his observations conclude that while qualitative interviews can run to eight hours in length; the typical interview can be accomplished in ninety minutes. Seldom is an interview of value in which the length is less than thirty minutes. Seidman states that (1998:12) two hours seem too long for one interview and anything shorter than ninety minutes seems too short. He goes on to state that the ninety-minute time frame allows for a beginning, middle and an end, and that going beyond the scheduled time, whilst tempting, can result in diminishing returns.

3.5 DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

There are a variety of methodologies for data management and analysis. For the purpose of this study however, the following method was chosen as best suited to the goals of the research.

The first step in management of the data was to transcribe the recorded interviews into a word processing document (cf 3.4.2). After the transcription of the first interviews, the documents were reviewed for consistency and thematic patterns for both the focus group and the student informants. This process was repeated prior to each remaining

interview for the student participants and after each of the eighteen interviews.

The next step involved analysing the data. For the purpose of this research, the term ‘*analysing*’ will be defined as Wolcott (1994:26) describes: “analysis refers quite specifically and narrowly to systematic procedure followed in order to identify essential features and relationships consonant with the descriptors” and not to be confused with the term ‘interpretation’ or transforming data, or bringing meaning from the data, which will be covered in section 3.6.

The procedures involved in imposing a sense of order on the data were:

1. Reviewing and comparing each transcribed document to define themes, categories and sub-categories in order to find units of data or any significant or potentially significant segment of data (Merriam 2001:179).
2. Defining the categories (coding) that reflected areas that responded to the research aim and questions.
3. Continued evaluation of data units.
4. Reducing the data into the predefined categories.

3.5.1 Use of Computers in Data Management

Just as whether to tape record or not forms the basis of much debate, the use of computer analysis programmes in qualitative research is also much debated. While computer programmes can never take the place of careful and continual reading and reflection, they can make the monotonous process of organizing massive amounts of data an easier task for the researcher. Computer programmes do not “analyse data, they merely manage it” (Merriam 2001:167).

For this study, it was decided to use *ATLAS.ti*TM (version 4.1), a visual, qualitative data analysis management model building software commonly used in educational research.

According to Barry (1998:1) many qualitative researchers are now deciding whether or not to use computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Over the last decade many software programmes have been created, among the most common programmes for use in qualitative educational research are *Nud*ist*TM and *ATLAS.ti*TM.

The choice of *ATLAS.ti*TM for use in this study was based on Barry's (1998:8) recommendation that it was the most appropriate programme for a less complex study with one user in that it has as its main strategic modes "VISE: Visualization, Integration, Serendipity and Exploration. Having all aspects of the data and analysis on screen at once and being able to visually map out relationships between different parts of the data and theoretical ideas, and to form links between them and jump back and forth, all seem to encourage that creative process of sparking ideas and pattern recognition."

The main strengths according to Barry (1998:8) in the design of *ATLAS.ti*TM are:

1. It is visually attractive and creative;
2. All features on screen at once;
3. Well designed interface;
4. No limits on units of coding: can code any amount of text as one unit;
5. Hypertext inks between data/codes/documents (i.e. click on one jump to another);
6. Conceptual network displays which can be manipulated;
7. Can include text segments and memos in network displays;
8. Assists creative and visualised theoretical thinking;
9. Memos can be multiply linked;
10. Can process audio and visual;
11. Best used on screen.

Additional benefits in using CAQDAS is that, according to Barry (1998:13) computer based programmes allow for an additional type of processing, one that can assist in the ordered thinking tasks, such as data management and then use "visuospatial, hypertext software to allow us to think more creatively, conceptually and perhaps more holistically."

At the conclusion of the data analysis, it was found that although *ATLAS.ti*TM was indeed a powerful tool for providing assistance in data analysis as it did ameliorate the process of locating emerging and reoccurring themes and patterns in the data, it was under utilized by the researcher. The research for this study was not of a sufficient level

of complexity to adequately benefit from such a powerful computerized tool, and it was felt that the cost involved did not justify the assistance given. It was also felt that the level of knowledge needed to master all of the components of the programme could not be obtained by reading the manual and practicing with various demo versions. One-on-one instruction and/or tutorials would have assisted the researcher to a greater degree, however, these aides were not available at the time this research was undertaken.

3.6 DATA INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION

Once the basic analysis of the data was completed, the task at hand became that of interpreting the data, followed by the presentation of the findings.

The interpretation of the data, or bringing meaning to it in light of the research aims and questions, was intricately linked with the presentation of the research findings.

3.6.1 Interpretation and Presentation of Focus Group Data

The interpretation of the data for the focus group consisted of finding the answers from the seven participants of the group to one stimuli question: *‘What would be useful for you as professionals involved or interested in study-abroad to know about the experiences of American undergraduates involved in study-abroad in South Africa?’*

The interpretation of the data was undertaken as an “issue focused analysis” (Weiss 1994:153), a method by which the main concern was to discover what could be learned about the specific process and concerns of the professions in regard to study-abroad in South Africa. Rather than focussing on one specific issue or individual, the interest and interpretation centred on all relevant topics in this area.

The presentation of the findings was done in a narrative style.

3.6.2 Interpretation and Presentation of Student Participant Group Data

The interpretation of the data was done on two levels. Firstly, it was interpreted in a case-focused analysis followed by an issue-focused analysis. Weiss (1994:168) defines case-focused analysis as having the ability of making “the reader aware of the

respondents' experience within the context of their lives: this is what it is like to be this person in this situation." Secondly, the issue-focused analysis was then undertaken to present the findings that relate to the research aims and questions.

The presentation of data for this group was done in a biographical narrative style followed by a narrative description of the issues under study.

3.7 LIMITATIONS TO QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Marshall and Rossman (1999:110) state that interviewing does have its limitations. Since personal interaction is necessary, cooperation is paramount. Subjects may be unwilling or not comfortable with sharing information that is important to the study, or they are unaware of patterns that incur during the experience. The interviewer may lack the skills necessary to ask the types of questions which add to the depth of knowledge of the study.

Merriam (2001:42) states that the limitations of qualitative studies that involve cases are primarily due to the "sensitivity and integrity of the investigator." She goes on to say that since the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, unless her or his skills in not only interviewing but also collation of the final report and analysis of data are strong, there could be inherent weaknesses in the findings.

Lincoln and Guba (1981) are quoted in Merriam's book (2001:42) as saying that: "there is an unusual problem of ethics" in that an unethical researcher could infer from the data virtually "anything he wished could be illustrated." Merriam also states that both the reader and researcher need to be aware of latent bias in descriptive data.

Weiss (1994:12) states that those involved with quantitative research sometimes are critical of reports produced as a result of narrative, descriptive data. Criticisms revolve around two areas:

1. *That the information produced is anecdotal.* They rely on accounts provided by a relatively small sample of respondents;

2. *That they are impressionistic.* This implies that not only are the findings imprecise but also that they are more a product of art than of any objective scientific methodology.

Weiss (1994:12) goes on to say that these two forms of criticisms are unwarranted. Many of the studies in the humanities or social sciences, which contribute to our understanding of society and ourselves, and which could have been obtained in no other way, are a result of qualitative interview studies.

3.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Can you use quantitative vocabulary in a qualitative study? This is a long-standing debate amongst researchers. Glatthorn suggests that the terms ‘validity and reliability’ belong to studies conducted using quantitative research methods (1998:34). In Creswell’s *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing Amongst Five Traditions* (1998:200) argument is made that the issues of validity and reliability need different nomenclature when used in qualitative research, such as credibility and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985:289) suggest that the term ‘trustworthiness’ be used instead of validity.

Semantics aside, the need for a qualitative study to meet high standards, which validate the interpretation of the research, is paramount. As Stake (1995:109) mentions, the researcher has ethical responsibilities to ensure that misrepresentation and misunderstanding are minimized as far as possible and that certain protocols or measures are set in place by the researchers, that go beyond simple repetition of data gathering, which are a deliberate attempt to ensure the validity of data observed.

How does one establish validity or trustworthiness in a totally subjective interview? If the interview was held on a different day, with a different person, or if the respondent was in a different mood, would the responses be the same? Seidman (1998:17-21) believes that a series of three interviews with multiple informants allows for validity, as it:

1. Places the participants’ comments in context;

2. Allows for accounting of idiosyncratic days;
3. Allows for internal consistency of what they say;
4. Allows for comparison of one participant's comments against others.

Weiss (1994:150) states that “we must rely on the quality of our interviewing for the validity of our material” and that occasionally validity can be ensured by the process of interviewing additional informants. However, the quality of the interview is paramount as there is no replacement for meticulous interviewing and the partnership formed by it, despite any problems encountered during the interviewing process. Obtaining data that is rich in details and descriptions of remembered events is the researcher's best guarantee of validity. Also, apparent inconsistency is not always indicative of invalidity as people can and often do act in inconsistent ways or maintain inconsistent feelings.

Although the rhetoric might differ, the goal of qualitative research is identical to that of quantitative research, according to Merriam (2001:199). That is, producing a study that is valid and reliable in an ethical manner. The manner in which this is accomplished might differ, but the desired outcome is the same. According to Firestone (1987:19) “The qualitative study must convince the reader that procedures have been followed faithfully because very little concrete description of what anyone does is provided. The qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion ‘makes sense’.”

Research design can play an important role in the trustworthiness of the data obtained in the study. Regardless of the type of research, the issues of validity and reliability are ones that can be addressed through careful planning of the study design, through the method of data collection, analysis and interpretation, and lastly, by the way the findings are presented (Merriam 2001:199). Seidman (1998:33) states that “Without thoughtful structure for their work, they increase the chance of distorting what they learn from their participants and of imposing their own sense of the world on their participants rather than eliciting theirs.” Charles (1995:103) mentions that the key to validity within qualitative research is “consistency.” Every effort was made to ensure consistency of interviewing, subject selection and research design so as to ensure the maximum level of trustworthiness of data.

Instances in the design which were followed in this study to bring ‘thoughtful structure’ and to ensure reliability and trustworthiness were:

- 1 *Substantive literature review.* The development of a comprehensive set of documents regarding study-abroad allowed for an analysis of themes and issues relevant to the problem and assisted with consistency, relevancy and trustworthiness (Creswell 1998:63).
- 2 *Formation of a pilot study.* This allowed for testing the research framework that assists in the establishment of reliability.
- 3 *Formation of a focus group.* Interviewing experts in the field to determine areas of interest within the study added a level of trustworthiness.
- 4 *Formation of an interview guides* (cf Appendices C-1 to C-3). The fact that an interview guide was used in each of the three interviews, posing the same topics for discussion with each subject allowed for the consistency and reliability within the interviews (Charles 1995:103, 175).
- 5 *Choice of participants.* The choice of participants in the focus group was made so that professional people within the framework of the topic under study were represented. The choice to use student participants which closely resembled the typical study-abroad student as shown in the “*Open Doors*” (cf Tables 3.1 & 3.2) statistics enhances the possibility of the results being generalized and assisted in proving external validity (Merriam 2001:211).
- 6 *Use of the three-interview design.* According to Seidman (1998:17) the use of the three-interview design enhances validity in that it places the interviewee’s comments in context. By interviewing a number of participants, connection was made and crosschecking was accomplished between the participants. Also, if the interview structure works to allow the participants to make sense of the process as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity.
- 7 *Tape recording of the interviews and verbatim transcription.* This method of data collection allowed for constant rechecking of the participants actual wording, allowing for additional trustworthiness of the data in that it could later be reviewed to demonstrate it’s accountability (Seidman 1998:97).
- 8 *Strict methodology for data analysis and interpretation.* The design for the analysis of the data was rigorous, based on a variety of well-known qualitative researchers’ methods and recommendations.

- 9 *Use of computer analysis software.* Although not a substitute for careful reading and evaluation of data, the use of computer software for analysis is useful in reaching a more in depth or secondary analysis in some cases which helps increase the reliability and trustworthiness of data (Merriam 2001:166-177).

3.9 SUMMARY

Chapter Three begins with an explanation of and justification for the use of case study qualitative research. The appropriateness of the interview method for learning about the experiences of six American undergraduates who chose to spend a semester at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus is also clarified. The limitations of such research are covered in detail.

The tools by which the qualitative data was collected are reviewed and a justification is put forward for the use of a tape recorder and interview guides.

The selection of the participants for the study, both for the focus group and the student participants, is defined and clarification is given of the sampling technique used.

A discussion of the reliability and validity of qualitative research is discussed in general and then with specific reference to this study, indicating the methods by which the study was designed to ensure maximum trustworthiness and reliability.

The management of the data is described as well as the method by which it is analysed, interpreted and presented for both of the groups under study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH RESULTS

“Study-abroad isn’t about academics, I don’t know anyone who thinks it is”
Ben (2004)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Up to this point in the study, the focus has been on presenting background information via the literature review, detailing the areas of interest and the subject matter to be examined as well as providing a methodology by which the research was undertaken.

This chapter deals with the findings of the research. The first section will cover the results of the focus group interview (cf 3.4.3) and the second section will cover the findings of the student participant interviews (cf 3.4.4). An integration of the two interview groups and a synthesis of the findings will also be addressed.

4.2 THE FINDINGS OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

As detailed in Chapter Three (cf 3.4.3), a focus group interview was held in Salt Lake City, Utah in May of 2003 with seven professionals within the field of study-abroad, which lasted approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. A single, stimulus question was asked of the group:

What would be useful for you as professionals involved or interested in study-abroad to know about the experiences of American undergraduates participating in a study-abroad programme in South Africa?

All quotations from the focus group participants are stated verbatim, with no attempt to correct or improve language usage.

Various comments during the interview indicated that learning more about the diverse topics involved in a semester in South Africa would assist them as well as their staff in not only counselling students on the appropriateness of South Africa as a destination

but also to better prepare those who do chose to study-abroad in South Africa.

Increasing the diversity of study-abroad destinations (cf 2.8.1) was of prime importance to all of the participants, yet it was universally stated that without more knowledge of the experiences of current students in non-traditional locations, it was difficult to promote such destinations.

The topic question of the interview generated a variety of responses; of which the emerging patterns and themes are outlined in the following paragraphs.

4.2.1 Expectations, Achievement of Goals and Evaluation

As stated in Chapter One (cf 1.1), very little research has been done in the area of evaluation of study-abroad programmes. Evaluation is necessary, according to Abrams and Heller (1978:3) to establish a methodology by which the effectiveness of such programmes can be determined. Three areas involving evaluation, which the participants of the focus group believed more information could be useful, are covered in the following paragraphs: expectations vs. reality, achievement of goals and the student's evaluation of the programme.

4.2.1.1 Expectations vs. Reality

One response to the stimulus question dealt with the area of programme evaluation (cf 1.5); one member of the group felt that what was lacking in the knowledge base concerning study-abroad was a description of the experience in the student's own words dealing with the difference between the expectations of the experience and the actual reality of it (cf 2.7.1). It was suggested that much of Africa is perceived by Americans to be '*The Land of the Lion King*', and so, an interest was expressed in knowing to what extent the actual experience of life in a developing nation, in a large metropolitan city, differed from the pre-arrival expectations.

Information on the experiences and perceptions of current students in South Africa would allow me to not only better prepare future students who are contemplating the same destination, but also to advise with more knowledge, more understanding, those who are uncertain of such a destination.

Following on from this, another participant expressed a desire to ascertain whether any of the student's pre-arrival preparation (cf 2.5.5) involved reading or learning about South Africa in the classroom (cf 2.8.4) and whether or not this shaped his or her perception prior to arrival, and if it so, whether this information was viewed as useful and accurate.

4.2.1.2 Achievement of Goals and Evaluation of Programme Outcomes

Another participant expressed a concern as to what degree the programme allowed for achievement of the student's personal goals and whether or not a student who desired to connect with a particular group of South Africans, for instance, rural people, had the ability to do so.

It was also stated that it would be useful to know more regarding specific accessibility to goals, i.e.: if a student desired to become integrated within the host campus culture as well into the local culture, was this a realistic and obtainable goal during the programme (cf 2.7.3).

Lastly, in the this area, an participant stated that knowing more about student perceptions concerning the validity and usefulness of the programme was needed as well as what evaluation criteria the student applied to the programme (cf 2.7.6).

4.2.2 Issues of Ethnicity and Race

The focus group expressed an interest in heritage seeking and the experiences defined by race (cf 2.8.5). This section deals with the participants' comments on the need for more information in these areas.

4.2.2.1 Experiences of Heritage Seekers

The need for more information regarding the experiences of students of colour specifically those of African-Americans within Africa, (cf 2.7.4.2) was stated. Following on from this, there was curiosity expressed in knowing more about the perception of African-Americans concerning Africa and their level of acceptance within the host culture and whether or not they perceived themselves to be accepted as Africans or primarily as Americans, who happen to of African descent (cf 2.8.5).

Also considered to be of importance was learning more about the reactions of the African-American students to their reception on campus and in the local community and whether this affected the African-American student's experience in a negative or positive way.

4.2.2.2 Experiences Based on Race

There was a general interest in learning more about what the students in general felt about race relations in South Africa (cf 2.8.1.2):

The issue of identity in general is one that U.S. students who study in South Africa tend to grapple with because they're exposed to a different conception and a whole different history of race relations and even the terminology, such a coloured, or Malay or a Cape coloured. What are the tensions between the Indians and the Zulu's in Kwa-Zulu Natal? How do the students react to racial relations that are so very different? Does this have an impact on their experiences?

Other topics discussed in the area of race centred on learning more in regard to non-African-American undergraduates and how they dealt with the fact that for many of them this was the first time they found themselves part of a minority (cf 2.7.4.2). Did this affect their experience? Participants stated that knowing more about students' reactions, feelings and experiences based on race including whether or not race played a part in defining friendships and interpersonal relationships would be useful as well as learning more regarding pre-arrival perceptions that differed from the actual reality in relation to race (cf 2.7.4.2).

4.2.3 Sexual Orientation

Issues of sexual orientation were also raised by the focus group interview. They centred on the acceptability of being gay and the host government's attitude towards people of different sexual orientations (cf 2.7.4.3).

We want to encourage a diverse area of destinations, not the usual like England and Germany, but we need to know if gay people will be comfortable in South Africa or will they be persecuted? There is a fear that some kids have that the social patters are so different, many students are liberal and would they fit in?

What would be the experience of the gay person? Is the (South African) government very anti-gay?

4.2.4 Academic Experiences

Several of the participants also showed curiosity regarding the academic experiences of the students who choose to study-abroad in South Africa (cf 2.7.5).

The focus group expressed a desire to learn more about the availability of various programmes of study, and the student's perceptions of the instruction received, as well as the students' attitude in dealing with different academic points of view. If the perspective of professors on the host campus differed from that that of the professors on the home campus, is this perceived to be a matter of difference or a matter of quality, for instance, does the student believe that there is a right and wrong aspect of understanding or presenting the academic agenda?

Another participant wondered about the adaptability of course choices and whether or not it was similar to the United Kingdom where students are not able to take courses in as many of different departments as they are allowed to in the United States, because this affects many students whose major is within the liberal arts fields (cf 2.8.4 and Table 2.5).

The learning style and preparation for academic experiences were also areas of concern. Differences in the academic structures as well as in the presentation of subject matter would be useful to know as this would impact on the home institution's ability to prepare the students academically prior to their arrival. Whether or not certain books ought to be prescribed before departure, and if so, which ones, was information that the participants felt would be useful to know in addition to the impact of prior study in the areas of South African history, culture and literature and whether or not students who studied abroad in South Africa felt that this preparation was of importance.

Interest was shown in learning more about the type and style of instruction. Questions were asked which dealt with the process, and whether or not it was a more analytical process than in the United States, or was it a case of being spoon-fed? Feedback on whether the students were happy with the academic experience and if they felt that they

had benefited from it was deemed to be of importance.

One participant questioned to what extent the students felt able to cope with the academic demands. Did they know what was expected of them as students? Did the professors make the demands of the classroom known to them? If they needed help, was it available?

What can I do to ensure that our students are prepared academically? Many students come back from South Africa and say that the academic level is too easy, that the courses they need aren't available, is this true?

Finally, in the area of academic experiences, one participant wanted to know the availability of academic coursework with South African-based subject matter and if the courses, specifically those in literature, history, and economics were taught with a South African perspective or a British perspective.

4.2.5 Cultural Immersion

As stated in Chapter Two (cf 2.7.3), cultural immersion is considered to be an essential component of the study-abroad process. This section covers the areas within cultural immersion, namely: immersion with the local population and language; cultural immersion experiences via community service endeavours; the American lifestyle as a barrier to immersion; and student relationships with South Africans and other Americans; and interpersonal relationships and religious experiences.

4.2.5.1 Local Population and Language Involvement

Several participants wanted to know to what extent students involved with the local people on local projects were using the local language as well as whether or not language learning was necessary prior to arrival. If so, which language should American students learn: Afrikaans or one of the other official ethnic languages (cf 2.7.3)?

Also, interest was shown in whether or not students actively chose to learn a local language if it was not part of the host or home academic institution's demands.

4.2.5.2 The American Lifestyle as a Barrier to Immersion

The question was posed as to whether once students arrive in South Africa and bring their U.S. values and dollars with them, do they live as Americans in South Africa by attempting to recreate their American lifestyle or do they try to adopt the South African lifestyle (cf 2.7.2)?

How as an adviser can I tap into that? How can I make them see that if you want to get the most of the experience you need to get fully involved?

How a student deals with the enormous disparity between the privileged and less privileged was another item of concern.

Both ends of the spectrum are norms in South Africa. Which do they choose to identify with, the rich or the poor? Do they try to find a middle road, or are they confused by it or are they oblivious? How do they deal with their own privilege?

4.2.5.3 Student Relationships with South Africans and Other Americans

Five of the seven participants were curious to learn what were the perceptions of Americans on campus (cf Figure 2.1) and whether or not they were accepted and welcomed as Americans (cf 2.7.3.).

Other topics, which generated much interest, were:

How much do Americans hang out with other Americans? Do they make the effort to know their South African counterparts or are they content to remain in an 'American Ghetto'? (cf 2.7.3).

4.2.5.4 Interpersonal Relationships, Religious Experiences and Community Service

Three of the participants expressed interest in knowing to what extent the American students integrated into the culture of the host university and the local culture and whether or not these experiences increased the students' opportunities to form relationships with South Africans. Knowing more about the options for integration and the results thereof was perceived as an important aspect of the American students'

experience.

One participant asked if an American student became involved with a South African student of a different racial background, would this relationship be perceived in a negative way by the host culture?

Two participants expressed interest in learning more of the significance of religious experiences. They felt this was of importance to many of their students.

South Africa is a multi-religious society. Do the Jewish students, Catholic students, Muslim students and members of other religions have significantly different experiences?

An area of interest revolved around whether there were opportunities for students to be involved with local groups in the rural areas and whether there were opportunities for becoming involved with community service projects (cf 2.7.3).

I don't want to do missionary service type thing. I don't want them to be in charge of the agenda, in charge of anything. I want them to show up and be a pair of hands. Many of our students want to be involved in community service, is that an option?

4.2.6 Choice of Destination and Family Reactions

Why students choose a particular area for study-abroad destinations was an area of great concern (cf 2.8). Curiosity was expressed on the issue of choice of destination as well as what type of resistance, if any, students encountered in making the decision to study in South Africa, either from families, peer groups or their home institutions (cf 2.6). If students did experience obstacles in this area, what were the main barriers and how did they overcome them?

Participants were also interested in knowing what the factors were that led to South Africa being the destination of choice, as it was felt that if the determining factors could be established, more could be done to encourage diverse destinations. Mention was made that it could be because South Africa was an English-speaking destination with a

difference and that being so, no prior language learning was needed. One participant stated that it was an adventurous destination and that only those who perceived themselves to be risk takers would choose South Africa as a destination. Another expressed interest in knowing whether or not prior academic or other learning experiences influenced students' decisions regarding destinations (cf 2.7.3).

4.2.7 Preparation and Orientation

Four of the seven participants were interested in learning more on the topic of pre-departure information (cf 2.5.5) and how the home institution should prepare a student to go to South Africa. One participant asked what would be the best method to ensure that students are adequately prepared and if the students believed that the pre-departure orientations were sufficient. The question was raised whether once the student was in South Africa did he or she in retrospect receive a good preparation before arrival, was it adequate, inadequate and why? It was felt that recommendations on such programs would be useful to future students.

It would be useful for me to know what the arrival orientation is like in country. What kinds of services are available to students, i.e.: academic advising, psychological advising, cultural advising, medical, how do the students access that? Is payment required? Is there an international office? Does it work? Are the resources available?

In addition to host campus preparation, the focus group respondents were all interested in learning more about student opinions on the quality of the arrival orientation that the students received from the host institution

4.2.8 Living Conditions On Campus

Five participants in the focus group were interested in knowing more about the comfort level of the students once they arrive on campus in South Africa as well as the similarities to campus residences in the United States.

Many of our students worry about the dorm life and the food. What is it like for them living on campus? Are they happy? Are meal plans provided? Are there cooking facilities? This is a big issue for our students, they need to know what

to expect.

Other areas of interest regarding living conditions centred on the options for student living, such as the availability of homestays and apartment living (cf 2.2.1) as well as the preferences students have for various types of living conditions.

4.2.9 Health and Safety Issues

One of the biggest drawbacks I have in promoting South Africa as a study-abroad destination is dealing with its reputation as a country that has unacceptable levels of street crime, AIDS and rape. I wonder if it is as bad as the media makes it out to be? Is it really safe enough for our students?

All members of the groups expressed concern over issues of health and safety (cf 2.8.2.2). These comments dealt with the need for more accurate information on crime and health issues in South Africa. It was stated that it was important for those who send students to South Africa to know how to prepare them to deal with these issues.

Knowing what immunizations were necessary, whether or not there were unsafe areas that students needed to stay away from, as well as the preparation and assistance that the South African institution offered in these areas were topics of concern to all of the focus group respondents.

I think it would be valuable to know how they have been prepared to deal with health issues such as hepatitis and HIV both by the sending and the receiving institutions. Students need guidelines for their personal behaviour, sexual behaviour as well as how to deal with accidents. Were they prepared? If not, what can we do to make them prepared?

In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21. In South Africa the legal drinking age is 18. Three of the seven participants wondered if this was an issue in student safety and behaviour and if the use of drugs was a common occurrence on campus. Issues of safety and security of campus residences in South Africa was also discussed.

Another issue in the area of health and safety that two of the participants were interested in dealt with sexual harassment and rape (cf 2.8.2.2). Comments were made that the experiences of women might be different from that of men in that the constant fear of rape would inhibit normal behaviour patterns (cf 2.7.4.1).

4.3 THE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

This thesis concerns itself with the experiences of American undergraduates who chose to study-abroad at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Durban, Howard Campus (formerly the University of Natal, Durban). The American undergraduate student participants were involved in a semester-long study-abroad programme (cf 2.2.1) that consisted of either a university consortium or programme provider placement. The semester of study consisted of the immersion type of programme with students living in on-campus dormitories and where the language of instruction was English. This institution will be fully described in this chapter along with geographical location information.

This section also provides a brief biographical snapshot of each student participant, which is delineated in Tables 4.1 through 4.6. This information (cf 3.4.4) allows the researcher to place the participants' behaviour, decisions, experiences and reactions into the context of their lives (Seidman 1998:11).

The information was obtained from the biographical data form that each participant completed upon agreeing to participate in the project (cf Appendix B-2) in addition to information supplied in the first interview, the primary function of which was to establish a 'focused life history' (Seidman 1998:11) (cf 3.4.4). Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. As in the responses made by the focus group, all quotations from the student participants are stated verbatim, with no attempt to correct or improve language usage.

A statistical summary of the student participants' characteristics follows in Table 4.7 (also see Table 2.1).

This section also describes the interview procedure in relation to its location and atmosphere.

4.3.1 Age and Educational Information

At the time of the interviews (January through June 2004) Ben, the youngest of the participants, was twenty years of age, Carrie, Emily and Faye were twenty-one and Adam and Darla were twenty-two. Darla and Emily were seniors (4th and final year) in college, while the remaining participants were in their junior year (3rd year). All participants attended college full-time. These statistics correlate with the typical American study-abroad student participant (cf 2.3).

All of the participants had similar GPA's (cf 2.5.2.1) with the average being 3.33 or a symbol "B", which implies that each participant was above average in their prior academic performance.

Adam, Ben and Carrie attended small, private colleges, while Darla, Emily and Faye attended large, public institutions. Two students (Adam and Ben) attended college on the East coast; two students attended in the Mid-west (Carrie and Emily) and two students attended college on the West coast (Darla and Faye). Ben and Carrie resided in on-campus accommodation at their home institution, while the remainder of the students resided in off-campus apartments or houses, but not with family members.

All of the students had majors within either the social sciences or humanities, with the exception of Adam who was an Architecture major (cf 2.6.4). Three of the students (Adam, Ben and Carrie) were placed at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus via a non-profit study-abroad organisation while the other three students (Darla, Emily and Faye) were placed on the same campus via direct university consortia agreements (cf 2.2.1).

All of the participants chose to 'go away' to college, that is, they all attended a college or university in the United States that is too far to allow them to commute to home.

4.3.2 Background Information Dealing with Gender, Family and Ethnicity

Two of the participants were male, while four were female. Again, this correlates with the average statistic of American undergraduate study-abroad participants (cf 2.3 and Table 2.1). All students described themselves as being financially dependant on their parents. Adam, Ben and Darla described their parents as being in the upper-middle class financially, while Carrie, Emily and Faye described their parent's income as below the national average (cf 2.3.1 & 2.6.1). Carrie, Emily and Faye were dependant on financial aid, including loans, to attend college and to study-abroad, while Adam, Ben and Darla were not.

All participants described themselves as coming from very close-knit families, none of which had experienced divorce or separation. Ben's mother had died while he was young, but his father had not remarried. Each participant had at least one sibling.

Ethnically, Adam, Ben, Carla and Emily described themselves as being Caucasian, while Darla described herself as being multi-ethnic (Caucasian and Native-American), and Faye described herself as an African-American.

Emily and Carrie each had an elder sister who had travelled abroad, while Adam, Ben, Darla and Faye were the first in their families to participate in a study-abroad programme. Faye was the only participant who had no previous travel experience, while the other students had travelled to Europe, Puerto Rico and Costa Rica, either on family vacations or as part of a high school enrichment programme.

4.3.3 Prior Language Acquisition

None of the students described themselves as being proficient in a language other than English with the exception of Carrie, who considered herself 'almost fluent' in German. With the exception of Carrie, none of the students had taken a second language in college, although all had taken French, Latin, Spanish or German in high school. Each student indicated that they felt that they had poor language acquisition skills.

4.3.4 The Interview Procedure

All interviews (cf 3.4.1), with one exception, took place at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard campus. The university provided interview rooms, either in the library or in an academic block for the researcher’s use, free of charge. The exception occurred when Darla changed her second interview date, due to ill health. It was then impossible to reschedule an interview room at the university to coincide with Darla’s availability. The dorm in which Darla stayed was unsuitable to conduct an interview due to lack of privacy and unacceptable noise levels. Therefore, Darla’s second interview took place in a secluded section of a nearby restaurant.

The decision to hold the interviews on campus was made in a conscious effort to introduce as little bias as possible into the interviewing process. The venues were considered neutral, quiet, and comfortable; ideal for audio recording and were easily accessed by the students, who had no mode of transport other than taxis during their stay in South Africa.

The interviews were “conversations with a purpose” (Marshall & Rossman 1999:108). The relationships that developed with the participants during the diachronic, three-stage interview process were cordial and increasingly familial. The participants were eager to speak of their experiences and explore areas hitherto unexamined, which the interviews allowed them to do. One student participant commented:

I’m so glad that I decided to do this. I mean it’s really made me think about so many things that happened during my time here, things that I probably wouldn’t have considered on my own.

Table 4.1	Name: Adam		Age: 22	
	Level of Study: Junior		Ethnicity: Caucasian	
	Major: Architecture		GPA: 3.2	
	Home Residence: Small town on the East coast			
	Home Institution: Small, public, liberal arts college on the East coast			
	Placement: Non-profit study-abroad organisation		USA University Residence: Off campus	
	Snapshot of ‘Adam’			
	Previous Travel: Costa Rica			
	First in family to Attend College: No		First in Family to Study-Abroad: Yes	
	Reason for Choosing South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination: I wanted to surf and study architecture			
Goal: Anything and everything				

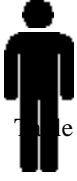


Table 4.2

Snapshot of 'Ben'

	Name: Ben	Age: 20	
	Level of Study: Junior	Ethnicity: Caucasian	
	Major: Politics/History	GPA: 3.5	
	Home Residence: Large city on the West Coast		
	Home Institution: Small, private, liberal arts university on the East coast		
	Placement: Non-profit study-abroad organisation	USA University Residence: On campus	
	Previous Travel: Various countries in Europe		
	First in family to Attend College: No	First in Family to Study-Abroad: Yes	
	Reason for Choosing South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination: Developing nation, great surfing, and totally different from the USA		
	Goal: Immerse myself in the culture, meet lots of great people, take interesting classes, and challenge my perspectives.		
Family Support for South Africa as Destination of Choice: Supportive but concerned about safety			

Table 4.3

Snapshot of 'Carrie'

	Name: Carrie	Age: 21	
	Level of Study: Junior	Ethnicity: Caucasian	
	Major: Theatre Arts	GPA: 3.4	
	Home Residence: Small, Midwest town		
	Home Institution: Small, private, liberal arts college in the Midwest		
	Placement: Non-profit study-abroad organisation	USA University Residence: On-campus	
	Previous Travel: Family trips to Europe		
	First in family to Attend College: No	First in Family to Study-Abroad: No	
	Reason for Choosing South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination: Looking for a unique experience.		
	Goal: To experience the theatre, culture, music, the life of the people, game reserves.		
Family Support for South Africa as Destination of Choice: Mom – worried. Dad/sis - supportive			

Table 4.4

Snapshot of 'Darla'


	Name: Darla	Age: 22	
	Level of Study: Senior	Ethnicity: Multi-ethnic	
	Major: English/Modern Literature	GPA: 3.4	
	Home Residence: Suburb of large city on the West coast		
	Home Institution: Large, state university on the West coast		
	Placement: Direct university consortia	USA University Residence: Off campus	
	Previous Travel: High school trips to Europe		
	First in family to Attend College: No	First in Family to Study-Abroad: Yes	
	Reason for Choosing South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination: the experience of something totally new and different excites me; I love to travel; it is paradise here; and the beaches and land and animals and political upheaval enthralled me. Also, I have never been the minority, racially or in any sense it seems, and I knew this would be a totally eye-opening, unequivocal experience.		
	Goal: I want to live like people here do, without the commodities that some Americans tend to take for granted. No stereo, no TV and VCR and DVD player, no phone, no computer. I just want to know what its like to live outside of America, in a land where justice and health are not secure. Difference, experience, and newness; all enthral me.		
Family Support for South Africa as Destination of Choice: They couldn't have been more supportive, in every sense. They miss me and they worry about my safety, as all parents do, but never have held me back or not let me choose my own way.			

Table 4.5

Snapshot of 'Emily'


	Name: Emily	Age: 21	
	Level of Study: Junior	Ethnicity: Caucasian	
	Major: Women's Studies	GPA: 3.3	
	Home Residence: Large city in the mid-west.	USA University Residence: Off campus.	
	Home Institution: Large, state university in the mid-west.		
	Placement: Direct university consortia	Previous Travel: Puerto Rico	
	First in family to Attend College: No	First in Family to Study-Abroad: No	
	Reason for Choosing South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination: South African history and politics fascinate me and I was also looking for a challenging experience. Since I began college I have wanted to travel abroad and have always found Africa interesting and have developed a particular interest in South Africa.		
	Goal: I hope, in a word, to grow. I want to learn more about myself while experiencing a life-changing period of my life.		
	Family Support for South Africa as Destination of Choice: They were supportive but worried. I think their major concern was my safety no matter where I decided to go.		

Table 4.6

Snapshot of 'Faye'


	Name: Faye	Age: 21	
	Level of Study: Senior	Ethnicity: African-American	
	Major: Ethnic Studies	GPA: 3.2	
	Home Residence: Large city on the West coast		
	Home Institution: Large, state university on the West coast.		
	Placement: Direct university consortia	USA University Residence: Off campus	
	Previous Travel: None		
	First in family to Attend College: No	First in Family to Study-Abroad: Yes	
	Reason for Choosing South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination: Interests in the historical and current political climate, traditional and contemporary African music, and to positively impact the HIV/AIDS crisis in some small way.		
	Goal: I hope to live in a township for a few days and learn of Africans' experiences living there. I hope to conduct some meaningful research analyzing sustainable livelihood development, and I hope to learn how to sing traditional African music. Also, I would like to visit the Drakensburg Mountains, Johannesburg, Soweto, Lesotho, Mozambique, and other places if I have the opportunity.		
Family Support for South Africa as Destination of Choice: Very, very supportive and excited.			

Table 4.7

Summation of the Six Participants

Gender	Number of Students/Percentage	Age	Number of Students/Percentage
Female	4 (66.66%)	20	2 (33.33%)
Male	2 (33.33%)	21	3 (50%)
		22	1 (16.66%)
Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students/Percentage	Duration of Programme	Number of Students/Percentage
Caucasian	4 (66.66%)	One Semester	6 (100%)
African-American	1 (16.66%)	Field of Study	Number of Students/Percentage
Multiracial	1 (16.66%)	Social Sciences	2 (33.33%)
Native American	1 (16.66%)	Humanities	3 (50%)
Academic Level	Number of Students/Percentage	Architecture	1 (16.66%)
Junior	4 (66.66%)	Previous Travel	Number of Students/Percentage
Senior	2 (33.33%)	Some	5 (83.33%)
Origin	Number of Students/Percentage	None	1 (16.66%)
West Coast	3 (50%)	1 st to Study- Abroad	Number of Students/Percentage
Midwest	2 (33.33%)	Yes	2 (33.33%)
East Coast	1 (16.66%)	No	4 (66.66%)
Size of City	Number of Students/Percentage	Type of Home Institution	Number of Students/Percentage
Small town	2 (33.33%)	Public	4 (66.66%)
Large city	4 (66.66%)	Private	2 (33.33%)
Academic Aggregate	Number of Students/Percentage	Location of Home Institution	Number of Students/Percentage
B symbol or better	6 (100%)	West Coast	2 (33.33%)
Residence at Home	Number of Students/Percentage	Midwest	2 (33.33%)
On Campus	2 (33.33%)	East Coast	2 (33.33%)
Off Campus	4 (66.66%)		

4.4 THE STUDY-ABROAD DESTINATION

All of the participants spent one semester at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus in Durban, South Africa (cf 2.8). Formerly, the University of Natal had two campuses, one in Durban and one in Pietermaritzburg. In January 2004 the University of Natal was merged with the University of Durban-Westville, a historically disadvantaged institution. The University of Natal thus formed three distinct campuses with revised names (cf Table 2.2):

1. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus;
2. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Westville Campus;
3. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

4.4.2 A Brief Overview of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus

In order to place the participants into the correct context, a brief background of the university they attended, the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is presented in this section. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is located in Durban, South Africa.

Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg was founded in 1910. In 1949, the University of Natal was granted independent university status, owing to its rapid growth not only in number of students but to facilitate rapidly expanding course offerings and research opportunities. By 1949 Natal University was already a multi-campus institutions, having extended its campus to Durban following World War I (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal:Online).

In his paper on the merger of the universities, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Professor Malegapuru Makgoba (2003:Online) states:

Over the course of the past 12 years, the University of Natal has grown from a relatively small institution comprising roughly 14,000 predominantly white students, to an institution comprising nearly 2,000 students, 48 percent of who are black Africans and 29 percent of who are Indian students.

Over the same period, the institution has managed to grow its proportion of

female students to a point where they now outnumber their male counterparts and to increase its percentage of postgraduate students from 26% of the total student population to 32% (cf 2.8.1.1).

Currently, some 1,500 international students from 70 countries attend the University of Natal on the various campuses (StudySA.co.za:Online).

All of the student participants resided on-campus while in South Africa. According to University of Kwa-Zulu Natal website (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal:Online), the Howard campus and the Medical School, which forms part of the institution in Durban, can accommodate 2,000 students. However, competition for these places is high and not all students are accepted into the available dormitories. There are two sets of residences available: Charles Smith Hall and Albert Luthuli Hall. Charles Smith Hall is comprised of 11 individual residences and is close to most of the main academic buildings, as well as banks, shops and the Medical School. Albert Luthuli Hall is comprised of a Cluster Residence and the six-storey Tower Residence, which is situated on the western side of the Howard College Campus. This complex is furthest from the academic buildings, but close to most sports fields and the sports centre.

All residences have access control, lounges and television rooms, intercom systems, call boxes and parking space. All students are accommodated in single rooms. Most residences are self-catering while a dining facility is still available for students.

4.4.2 Background Information on Durban, South Africa

Durban is a major port city in Africa, with a metropolitan population of approximately 2.5 million. It is situated in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal, the largest province in the country, both in size and population (Durban Metropolitan Area Information:Online).

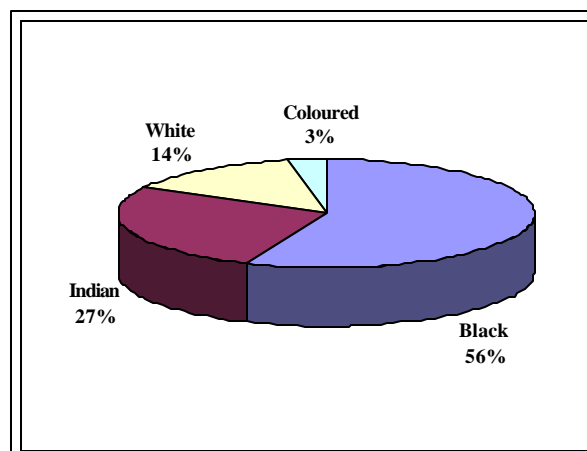
In terms of language, the metropolitan population is largely Zulu and English speaking. Important minority languages are Xhosa and Afrikaans. Other minority languages including German, Portuguese, Sotho and traditional Indian languages such as Tamil, Hindi, Telegu and Urdu are spoken. Durban is also diverse in terms of religion. It is predominantly Christian but there are important Hindu, Islamic and African traditionalist minorities.

The population is comprised of a variety of ethnicities including Zulus, Indians, Coloureds and Whites.

Figure 4.1

Durban's Ethnic Composition

Source: Durban Metropolitan Area Information:Online



4.5 THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDENT INTERVIEWS

This section examines the emerging patterns and themes that were evidenced through the series of three, diachronic, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each of the six participants (cf 3.4). The findings are presented in an approximation of chronology, in order to assist in clarity; beginning with the factors that influenced the participants' decisions to study-abroad in South Africa and concluding with the participants' recommendations for future students who might consider South Africa as a study-abroad destination.

4.5.1 Factors Influencing the Choice of Destination

In order to understand the students' motivation in choosing a particular destination for a study-abroad experience, it is important to ascertain the influences over choice of destination (cf 2.8). The findings of the interviews indicated that there were eight areas that students considered when making the choice of destination. This section examines those areas in detail.

4.5.1.1 Academic Coursework

The influence of prior academic coursework at the home institution (cf 2.8.4) specifically that of African history and politics played a major role in the decision to make Africa the destination of choice for three of the six participants.

The availability of such coursework can be limited, however, as Ben states:

If you would have asked me two years ago about South Africa I would have said OK it's in Africa, presumably in the Southern part of Africa, I mean that's logical. I've heard of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu but that would have been the extent of it. I wouldn't have had a clue about it; I mean I've been into current events and stuff, so I knew what apartheid was, but never the chronology of it or the fact that it ended 10 years ago legally. And so, sophomore year I took a course on African politics, not knowing a thing about Africa. It's kind of unfortunate, at least in my experience in college on both the east and west coasts, that there's nothing about Africa, except maybe about three days about the triangular slave trade, that's the extent they give Africa. So I took this class about African politics and really developed an interest in Africa.

Although Emily had evinced an interest in Africa prior to the beginnings of coursework in the field, the choice of South Africa as the destination for her study-abroad programme was determined by her coursework:

So I said to my mom I was going to travel around Africa, and I wanted to go on a study-abroad programme, and she said you can do whatever you want. I finally changed my major to Women's Studies and I convinced my parents that I could have a career in it and stuff like that and I decided that I wanted to do an African studies specialization. And the more and more I learned about Africa the more I became interested in South Africa, because I'm really interested in the politics of South Africa.

For Faye, the sole African-American participant, the study of African history was a revelation:

When I first was introduced to African history I was like wow, you know, I never knew any of this and it made me feel proud like I had something more than the United States, something more than slavery and segregation.

Faye felt that she needed to learn more, not only about Africa as the continent of her heritage (cf 2.7.4.2) but also about the current issues which faced it. For Faye, South Africa became a very personal issue.

Later on in my freshman year, 'Time Magazine' produced a report on the AIDS crises in South Africa and I was so disturbed and conflicted and uncomfortable about the entire situation that I also in my freshman year took an intro to Black Studies class so I became more aware about Black issues and Black politics and African history and everything. So all this at the same time occurred and when I read the article in 'Time Magazine' I said, oh my God, I have to do something. I want to do something. But the connection had been made between the EAP (Education Abroad Programme) and the programmes in South Africa. I started a fund-raising drive on my campus to raise funds for medical supplies and stuff like that. I guess when I became more and more politicized I became more and more interested in Africa and then I guess South Africa specifically.

4.5.1.2 Political Interest

South Africa was seen as a unique and exciting country in terms of its political development for two participants, both of whom had majors that were aligned to political studies (cf 2.8.1).

Emily stated that another factor in considering South Africa as a destination was due to the fact she was interested in the political situation and the history of oppression as being a Women's studies major, the politics of oppression (cf 2.8.1.2) were of interest to her.

Ben also stated that he, as a double major in Politics and History, found South Africa to be an intriguing country due to its unique political history (cf 2.8.1.2) and specifically because it was due to have national elections while he was in the country:

Being in a country during its years of transition and development, being in a country ten years after apartheid ended, eight years after the constitution was ratified is just one of these experiences you just can't find anywhere else. Obviously the opportunities will arise with current events as they evolve over time, but right now this is like the only country of its kind politically.

4.5.1.3 Language Learning

Of the six participants, only Emily stated an interest in learning a language as part of the study-abroad curriculum (cf 2.7.3):

I wanted to go to a place where I could learn another language and be immersed in the language but also to have the opportunity to speak English.

Emily was the only student who had a language class as a requirement. This was a stipulation of her placement consortia.

Although language acquisition is one of the goals of study-abroad programmes (El-Khawas 1994:93), for the majority of these participants, at least, it was not a matter of high priority.

4.5.1.4 Influences of Family and Friends

The influences on choice of destination by friends and family were rare amongst the participants (cf 2.6.3).

Darla was the only participant that indicated that a family member, her father, had an influence on her choice of destination:

But then I don't know, I got interested in random places. I know that sounds weird, but I really didn't know anything about Africa. It was just this other continent that I never knew anyone who went to or had any knowledge of at all. After my parents went to Egypt they were much more involved and interested in Africa. My dad is the biggest scholar I know, he reads everything, he knows everything, we started talking about Nelson Mandela at the dinner table and the whole

apartheid issue. So I started understanding the apartheid issue going on here and began to become more interested in coming here.

Also, persuasion by word of mouth by students who had previously studied-abroad in South Africa was non-existent. Of all the participants, only Emily stated that she had heard comments that influenced her decision making favourably:

I've heard beautiful, wonderful things about the people that live here so I was really interested in seeing South Africa on my own.

4.5.1.5 Influences of Ethnic Heritage

As mentioned in Chapter Two (cf 2.7.4.2), statistics show that over half of the African-American students surveyed would prefer to study in a country that reflects their ethnic heritage, the rationale being that students of African heritage in the United States can experience, perhaps for the first time, what it means to be in the majority of the population and appreciate his or her own history and heritage (Carroll 1996:47).

For Faye, the only African-American in the group of participants, her ethnic heritage played a role in her choice of destination, not as a heritage seeker per se, but as a chance to be in the ethnic majority of the population for once in her life. Faye also describes reactions to her choice of destination and the mistaken belief that it was made primarily to find the source of her heritage:

I have a friend who went to Ghana and we went through the same EAP (Education Abroad Programme) office and in the interview the gentleman who interviewed me asked me if the reason I was going to South Africa was to reclaim what black people lost. I thought it was funny because I wasn't going to Ghana and a lot of people go to Ghana because that's West Africa and that's where a lot of black people originated from. But no, I'm definitely interested in learning more about indigenous African culture but that wasn't the goal. Like to try and find a village here and say hey, cousins, I'm back!

You know. It wasn't like that. It is a privilege. It is realizing a life long goal of coming home so to speak, even though this particular region may not have been

home.

There is hardly any possibility that there will ever be a Black president in the U.S., but here there is a black president. It's very encouraging to see Black doctors, Black scientists and it's all within reach and it's fantastic.

4.5.1.6 Academic Influences and Field of Study Availability

Setting academic goals should be of primary importance (cf 2.5.1) when choosing a study-abroad programme, according to the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE 2004:online).

Academic majors can often influence the choice of available institutions for a study-abroad experience (cf 2.8.4).

To what extent the participants of this study viewed academic influences and field of study availability a priority or a limitation is the subject of this section.

a. Academic Influences

Of the participants, only Ben believed that interest in the academic influences within the South African educational system were an inducement to his choice of destination. His interest lay in the area of the British influence in presentation and perception of South African subject matter as well as learning more of the history and politics of South Africa from an African viewpoint (cf 2.7.5).

b. Field of Study Availability

As shown in Table 2.1, the majority of students who participate in study-abroad programmes have academic majors within the fields of social science and the humanities. American undergraduate students who wish to study-abroad are often limited to foreign institutions that offer his or her particular field of study. This information correlates with the information supplied by the student participants in this research (cf Table 4.7).

Since five of the six participants were within either the social sciences or humanities fields, both of which are available at most institutions within South Africa (cf Table

2.5), availability of field of study was not a determining factor in their selection of either destination or institution.

Adam, however, was an architecture major and to him, his choice of institution based on the availability of his subject matter was one of the considerations:

This was the only school that had good waves and a good architecture program.

4.5.1.7 South Africa as an English Speaking Destination

The fact that South Africa is primarily an English speaking country and that the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus' language of instruction is English was of primary importance to all of the participants (cf 2.7.3).

As mentioned in 4.3.3, all of the participants indicated that they believed that they had poor language acquisition skills and that studying-abroad in an English speaking country was a necessity.

As Ben stated when asked if being in an English speaking country and academic environment was important to him:

It was a necessity. I took Latin for six years and short of talking to the Pope it's not much use.

Carrie, the only participant who indicated an almost fluent ability in another language stated:

I looked at programs in Germany, because I'm almost fluent in German, but I didn't want to have that struggle. Study-abroad was hard enough without the language barrier.

The sentiments expressed by the participants regarding the choice of South Africa as a destination for study-abroad due to the fact that English was the major means of communication agrees with Hurd (2002:1), when he states: "Therefore, I can imagine

that for some, the thought of living abroad in a foreign country where we don't even speak the native language is one that makes us even more uncomfortable" (cf 2.6.3) Although Hurd was referring to African-American's and their attitude barriers, it would seem that this fear is common amongst many race groups.

4.5.1.8 Interest in South African Culture

Of all the themes within the area of factors influencing choice of destination, the interest in the South African culture had the largest positive response, which tends to agree with Green's (2003:12) opinion that "student's motivation to become involved in internationalization is reliant on one's attitude towards 'international/intercultural learning' and that the value that a student places on such learning is dependent on personal experiences in their interactions with people from other cultures" (cf 2.6.3).

Carrie, for example, states that her interest in learning more about the South African culture was an overriding one:

Definitely the cultural experience is most important to me, as I'm not getting any academic credit for being here. My college or my theatre department won't give me any credit for my acting class or any of my other classes.

While all of the participants indicated that interest in learning more about the culture of South Africa was a prime motivating factor in the choice of destinations; Ben qualifies this with:

Because I didn't even look other than vaguely at my field of study, but I cared so much more about where I was going to be, and about the social life, not just the party atmosphere, but just cultural type social life, more so than the academics. Which is weird because at home, I'm not really like that. I really care about the academics first at college.

4.5.1.9 Perceptions of Enjoyment

Following cultural learning as a determining factor in the choice of destination, the perception of enjoyment was ranked as the second most important factor according to the participants. Although no literature could be found on this topic, it nonetheless was

of primary importance to the participants when choosing their study-abroad location, as Darla states:

I saw all these pictures of the beaches and everything. Definitely the environment got me to come here; it looked like paradise, definitely paradise. I want to travel, have fun, hang out, enjoy myself, go to the beach, meeting people, finding out what life is really like here.

Adam's sporting interests and his perception that he would be able to enjoy them in South Africa was a prime motivating factor for him in his choice of destination:

I chose it because mainly because I wanted to get out of the country and surfing had a lot to do with it. The primary reason was that Durban has good waves.

All of the participants indicated that their choice of destination was to a large extent, based on the fact that they perceived the South African lifestyle to be conducive to enjoyment in that it had a temperate climate, was located on the beach and travel to other parts of South Africa and the southern African region would be in easy reach.

4.5.2 Issues Regarding Cost

Although Booth (1991:40), Sommer (s.a.:2) and Carroll (1996:46-47) all state that cost is one of the main barrier's to studying-abroad (cf 2.6.1), that was not the case with the participants in this study. As mentioned previously (cf 4.3.6), three of the participants described their families as below the national average in income generation, yet they also stated that due to financial aid and loans, the barrier to study-abroad imposed by cost was non-existent. This finding also lends credence to Sommer's statement (s.a.:3) that in various countries the cost for a semester of study-abroad could be cheaper than staying at home for many American students (cf 2.6.1 and Table 2.4).

There was however, a large disparity in costs between the students who participated in the non-profit organisation's programme and those who participated in the various university consortium programmes. This section will deal with the findings in those two areas.

4.5.2.1 Experiences Dealing with Costs in the Non-profit Organisation Group

The differences in cost between the two types of sending organisations involved in this study, namely university consortiums and a non-profit organisation (cf 1.3) were significant, with the non-profit organisation being in the region of 50% higher. The apparent justification for the added expense was that the non-profit organisation has an infrastructure on the ground, provides added amenities such as cell phones and opening of bank accounts, and various other services such as outings and field trips.

As Ben states:

I think the value for money is a bit iffy. The non-profit organisation charges you instead of you paying directly to the school here. They charge you for the whole package, other than airfare and they provide some services which you pay for, probably 10 times more than what it would cost otherwise. It's basically 9-10,000 bucks (U.S. dollars) for the semester, without airfare, and studying directly would be about \$2-3,000 and then non-profit organisation puts some money in for food costs, about \$2,000. They deposit money that we have paid them into these accounts for us. My home institution is so ridiculously expensive; I'm actually saving money by being here in the long run.

Ben does bring up the point that despite the additional costs imposed by being involved in the non-profit organisation's programme, he is still finding it cheaper to attend a semester of university studies in South Africa than a semester at his home institution, which agrees with the comment made by Green (2003:14) in 2.6.1.

However, Ben also stated that he would have preferred to set up his own study-abroad programme directly with the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, thereby saving even more money, but his home institution would not approve this as they had no direct knowledge of his destination institution and therefore would only permit his enrolment through a non-profit organisation.

Adam, on the other hand, found that by coming to South Africa via the non-profit organisation he was actually paying more than he would at his home institution:

That means that I'm paying more. A little more than home, but not much more.

4.5.2.2 Experiences Dealing with Costs in the University Consortium Group

All of the participants who part of the various university consortium programmes found that it was cheaper to spend a semester in South Africa than at their home institutions (Green 2003:14). Even so, for three of the participants, this experience meant that they had to take out additional student loans to cover ancillary costs such as airfare, living costs, and additional travel while in South Africa. Some of the expenditures would not have been necessary had they stayed on their home campus.

Faye commented on the total cost of her programme as well as on the fact that many students are unaware of the fact that financial aid is transportable for study-abroad purposes:

I think a lot of students at my home institution are hesitant to apply to study-abroad because of the costs. Many don't know that financial aid transfers over. And also for some programmes through our university consortium, it's cheaper to study-abroad than to stay at home. All together, my complete financial aid package for South Africa is about \$8,000 and that includes pocket money, airfare and everything.

Emily also made the comment that she found it much cheaper to study in South Africa:

It's much less expensive here. I'm on student loans back home, that's how I pay for school, and so it's really nice because coming here, I'm only paying \$2,500 and at home we pay about \$16,000 per year.

4.5.3 Reactions to Choice of Destination

As stated in 4.2.1.1, much of Africa is perceived to be home of 'The Lion King', as well as an unsafe and unhealthy continent. As a direct result of negative perceptions and reactions by family, friends, teachers and administrators many students actively choose not to study-abroad on the African continent (cf 2.6.3).

Lack of support generally from family, friends and advisers, as illustrated in Table 2.2,

is a contributing factor in the decision not to study-abroad for many students. This negativity can be compounded when the negative perceptions of Africa specifically are added into the decision making process.

In addition, parental and student fears that a period of study-abroad could delay graduation and hence increase education costs as well as the burden of the cost of the program itself, are valid concerns.

So, the reactions that the participants dealt with from the influential people in their lives when deciding on South Africa as a destination for their study-abroad programme are well worth noting.

4.5.3.1 Reactions from Family

The familial reaction for all of the participants was one of support, although at times, qualified support. Fear of personal safety was an area of concern, although the overriding issue stemmed from the family missing the participant and being unhappy that the participant would be away from the family for such an extended period as Adam stated:

They were supportive. They thought it was cool. My mom was a bit worried. My sister didn't like it at all. They weren't concerned about the place I was going to; they were concerned I'd be away. They don't realize that South Africa can be more dangerous than where I live in the States.

Ben's family were more concerned with the issue of colour and crime:

My grandmother still wonders about the 'colour difference' but that's her generation. My dad correlates colour with crime and there is a correlation, so he is worried that this was not the place to come, especially Johannesburg.

Emily faced her parent's possible negative reactions in a very proactive way:

I went to see an Adviser about places to go and I picked South Africa and I said you know, I don't think my parents are going to be very happy about this and he

gave me a video on safety at the university here in South Africa and I took it home and showed my parents and they said “ you know, you said to us the day you decided that you wanted to go to college that you wanted to go to Africa so that’s fine, go”. They were worried; they had a lot of reservations, but knew that I wanted to go.

Carrie also handled negativism in a very positive way:

My mom freaked out as she was really worried about the crime and stuff, but my Dad was really supportive and I think he’s jealous. My mom was supportive later on but the funny thing is when she read stuff on South Africa she pointed out all the negative stuff, so I pointed out all the positive stuff.

Faye, the only student with no previous travel experience, was expecting to have major resistance from her family, but was surprised by their reactions:

Everyone was pretty supportive. My mom said ‘go for it’. My grandpa prayed for me. He said the God in Africa was the same one we had here. My grandma warned me not to get kidnapped by a king. I think there were some wrong perceptions about South Africa at home, like catching diseases and things. Everyone was like go, have a good time.

There was a little bit of shock. It’s not common in our family for a member to go to the other end of the world. But they were very supportive. My younger sister was supportive, but she does miss me.

4.5.3.2 Reactions from Friends

Ben, Darla, and Emily each left behind a person with whom they were involved romantically. Despite this, all three stated that the reactions from their boyfriends or girlfriends were positive and supportive.

Darla mentioned that she and her boyfriend had travel plans for Europe after graduation and they decided that it was good that Darla was going to a place where they most likely would not go together in the future, which agrees with Alt’s statement (2003:1)

that “Students are beginning to realise that unless they have a future with the Peace Corps, opportunities to spend extended time in non-western destinations will be rare once the college experience ends” (cf 2.8.1).

Conversely, misconceptions regarding Africa were not uncommon amongst the participant’s peer group, as Adam stated (cf 2.6.3):

They were surprised. Some of my less intelligent friends think that people run around here naked, that we’re still in the Stone Age here.

Carrie mentioned that her long time friend and roommate was unhappy that they would no longer be able to share a room, but that other friends were supportive:

Tessa was sad that we weren’t going to be roommates this year. My friend Kyle said he admired me because he said it was something he couldn’t do because he depends on people too much.

4.5.3.3 Reactions from Home Institution

In the area of support from advisers and teachers, only one participant mentioned that she received negative comments (cf 2.6.6.2). These related to a teacher’s comment that Carrie would not be able to complete her degree on time if she took the opportunity to study-abroad as well as another teacher’s comment that the quality of education in South Africa would be sub-standard:

I thought about it my freshman year in college I remember talking to one of my professors in college. I got into music and I remember I had a really great, fabulous voice teacher and I talked to her and she said ‘I don’t think we’ll be able to teach you everything if you go abroad for a semester’.

My home institution thinks that they’re the only one’s who have anything to teach me and my drama teacher was really negative about me coming here and thought it would be a waste of my time.

4.5.4 Pre-arrival Organisation and Preparation

As stated in 2.6.2, internationalisation on many campuses is poorly integrated and as a result, forms a disjointed mixture of information, programmes and activities, which are poorly integrated into the institution (Green 2003:15). While 73% of four-year colleges report having some type of administration staff to support study-abroad programmes, (American Council on Education 2000:16) the usefulness, as perceived by the students who utilize their services and as reported by the participants of this research, is varied.

This section will deal with the various types of assistance participants received from their home institution study-abroad offices, their pre-departure preparation from their home institution, consortia organisation or non-profit organisation as well as self-preparation and the benefits, or lack of such, derived from each of them.

4.5.4.1 Assistance from the Home Institution Study-Abroad Office

Darla expressed frustration with her home institution's study-abroad office and their level of organisation and knowledge as well as with her inability to contact the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal prior to her departure:

I was very frustrated right before coming. The EAP (Education Abroad Programme) office said I could talk to the people here at the school in South Africa, but I couldn't. They wouldn't give me any emails, any numbers, they had it all, but wouldn't give it to me. I got a brochure from U. Natal and I got an email from the guy in the International Student's office here and I emailed him and he didn't reply. I couldn't get through to him. I wanted to talk to people in the academic department and I couldn't. I spoke to someone from the main office in the States and she gave me the wrong dates, the dates from last year, but I didn't know it. And I plan ahead and so my dad and I got on to the Internet and found the cheap flights and planned it right then and set it all up and so weeks later when I found out the dates were all wrong it would have cost \$700 to change the ticket. I had my home institution telling me that I couldn't arrive late, and I had my Dad telling me that I couldn't change my ticket, I was in tears. I arrived two days late, and missed the university orientation here.

Ben also expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with his home institution's study-abroad office:

It's interesting to the extent that my home institution is supportive in the sense that they'll let you do it, so I guess I call that supportive. They have a study-abroad office with basically one guy, he's a really nice guy, but to the extent that he's helpful is minimal, probably through no fault of his own. I knew that if I wanted to go to Africa, I'd just have to do it on my own. I really wanted to study-abroad directly as you save absurd amounts of money, but for academic transcript purposes my home institution was pretty set, they wanted us to go through an American intermediary like the one I signed up with as they don't have any links or consortium agreements with other institutions.

Adam also expressed frustration with his home institution study-abroad office:

I went through my school at first. They made it very difficult. They don't have a good connection with the non-profit organisation I ended signing up with. So eventually I contacted them myself and found out about the program. I looked at the programs and found the ones on South Africa and I got on the 'net and made contact with them and they were very helpful. There was no help from my institution in any way. It wasn't even there. It was very bad.

On the other hand, Carrie was extremely happy with the information and advice that she received from her study-abroad office:

I have found my home institution to be really supportive. There's a great international office at my home institution and they do their own programmes. They have a house on campus as well. My study-abroad adviser, Juliet, was really supportive as well. I didn't know where I wanted to go, I was thinking of Germany because I had studied German. I looked at Austria, looked at England. Then I saw a programme on South Africa and then I thought maybe I'll go to South Africa.

As was Faye:

They were very helpful. My study-abroad adviser, Sharon, is very committed to

study-abroad. She has been so many places it's incredible. She's even been to South Africa but only for a short period. So, she really motivated me to continue the process and she would check up on me. When I got to my sophomore year, 'when are you doing the application', when I got to my junior year, 'when are you sending in your application'? And when I told her I was going, she said she was really proud of me and happy for me. I'm really grateful towards her as she planted the seed essentially.

4.5.4.2 Pre-arrival Preparation

Three of the participants: Adam, Ben and Carrie came to South Africa via a non-profit study-abroad organisation. The other three participants: Darla, Emily and Faye came through various U.S. university consortium agreements. As a result, there was a varied level of perceived assistance in pre-departure programming (cf 2.5.5).

Adam was the only participant who indicated that he was not interested in pre-departure information. The non-profit organisation that he went through to come to South Africa issued all students, including Carrie and Ben, a booklet on South Africa as their form of pre-departure:

I don't know how much you can ever be prepared for things that you're not used to. I couldn't tell you one thing that was in my predeparture booklet. I just skimmed it, didn't really read it. I'm not into books and pre-departures. I don't read the stuff they give me. I didn't attend the orientation on campus. I wanted to figure it out for myself and all those books and programmes are boring.

Carrie expressed dissatisfaction with the material she did receive and wished that it had been in greater detail:

Neither the school nor the non-profit organisation prepared me. It would have been useful if they had. I have never had a class where the final exam counted for 70% of the grade. I've never had that before, so it's a bit scary. Actually, all I received was just a booklet, but it was specific to South African banking and things. It had pictures of the dorms and the people who were cooking their meals on campus, so I thought it was an either/or thing with the cooking, but

it's really not. You have to do your own cooking. I wish I would have known more about the British based system here, that its lecture based not multiple choice, but long essays, that the final exam was in a large room under tight security. It was a bit daunting. I didn't have any preparation for that. It could be in one of the organisations booklets or on a DVD or the web.

While Emily seemed mostly satisfied with her pre-departure information:

A lot of it we figured out on our own. They gave us an idea of where to get the cheapest ticket, and then they gave us the forms for our visa and passport. We had one general orientation which was a general study-abroad orientation and then we had another orientation that was semi-specific, but there were a lot of surprises when I got here, but I think for the big things we were prepared for. They prepared us for safety, like we're not as safe as we are back in the States, in terms of getting mugged and having things stolen and being able to walk around freely. So I think the big things we were prepared for. They prepared us for the racial difference in that we would get a lot of attention when we first got here and it would trickle off as we were here more and people got the idea that we weren't going to date them and take them home with us to get married and things like that.

There were other things that were big surprises, like how slowly things work at the university was a big surprise, and they weren't expecting us when we got here because we got here too early and that was a big surprise. But overall, I think we were prepared pretty well.

Darla felt that her pre-departure information contained quite a bit of misinformation:

I was told by the office at my school that we would have a meal card like I've always had on campus, and there aren't. I was told that there were cafeterias on campus, well there aren't. There are cafes, but you don't have a meal plan. That is what I thought; I had a planned meal that is what I thought I had paid for.

My last quarter in there were a lot of health things I had to do, I had like 6 shots

in one day: malaria, typhoid, hepatitis and all this stuff. I had to get a chest X-ray for I don't know what and it was like \$200, none of this was necessary, I think they just wanted our money. I don't know any other students here who had to go through all this health stuff.

Besides the health stuff, the visa and the study application, that was a big thing. It took me awhile to get all that done, but there was no real predeparture programme.

Overall, Faye was pleased with the information she received:

I was a little upset because my friend, the one who went to Ghana, had a day and a half retreat. And I was expecting that but we just got this half-day programme. But it was very informative. We had a three to four hour meeting and we went over travel trips, immunizations, safety information. Practical living tips, they covered a lot.

4.5.4.3 Self Preparation

In the area of self-preparation, only Ben and Darla indicated that they had done any meaningful research or readings. Darla investigated South Africa on the Internet and read articles and books that her father gave her. Ben, on the other hand, developed a list of informative reading materials, including Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and other books with political and historical references.

Both participants commented that this was a useful exercise and found the information they gathered and read useful in preparing them for their experiences in South Africa.

4.5.5 Post-arrival Orientation

Upon arrival in South Africa, which in all cases took place a minimum of ten days prior to the start of classes, the participants who were part of the programme organized by the non-profit organisation took part in an orientation conducted by the representatives of that organisation (cf 2.5.5). In addition, all of the participants then had an orientation conducted by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus. This section deals with the experiences the participants had as a result of these orientations.

4.5.5.1 Arrival Orientation Conducted by the Non-profit Organisation

The three participants who were involved in the orientation had some level of criticism regarding the orientation. Adam's experience with the orientation was the most negative:

It was really vague and basic. I mean stuff like don't do drugs, don't violate South African laws and if you do, get a lawyer, that kind of stuff. Here's the university, here's the ethnic and religious make up of the university. I'm the kind of person who likes to know things before I do them, so I did my own research and read up on stuff so I kind of knew the things that they were telling us. We met for about an hour to sign some forms, they gave us cell phones that was about the extent of it.

Carrie was more positive, but brought up the point that her free time prior to the start of classes could have been used in a more productive way:

It wasn't very long but it was good. I just think that the fact that we were here for two weeks and nothing was planned for us, that got a little long. Something should have been planned.

4.5.5.2 Arrival Orientation Conducted by the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard Campus

Not one of the participants was complementary in regard to the arrival orientation conducted by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus. The main areas of criticism dealt with lack of organisation, inappropriate behaviour of staff, non-relevance and length of the programme.

All of the international students who were beginning the academic year at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus in February 2004 (i.e. research, graduate, undergraduate, degree-seeking, and non-degree students) were included in this 2-day programme.

On the issue of organisation, Emily believed that more could be done to accomplish this, but also realized that she was applying her American viewpoint to the programme:

I think I would have made it a bit more organized and move a bit more quickly as a lot of time we were waiting for people to show up and so when things were supposed to take two hours, they took four hours. But I think that I'm slowly learning that this is a characteristic of South Africa, that things just take a bit longer here and it's a bit refreshing as things tend to move a bit too fast in the States. But I think the main thing I would work on would be organisation and I would try and get things a little more organized. If I were to tell international students about registration and talk about all these booklets and forms I would have them there to look at.

In the area of inappropriate behaviour of staff, Carrie mentioned that she found the following disturbing:

The guy who was in charge of the orientation programme kind of started picking on people. A lot of people are here to study political science and he started questioning them very aggressively. And then a number of people in the group at orientation are taking women's studies and they were talking about the need for liberation amongst women in Africa and he went on and on about how in this culture women are subservient to men. I just thought that was so inappropriate.

Emily, along with all of the other participants, believed that there was little relevance in the programme for their particular needs as semester study-abroad students, and that the majority of the information was geared towards degree-seeking students:

They talked about credits, but there were people who were international students, but they were degree students and I'm a non-degree student, so it was different for us, so it wasn't very helpful.

Four of the six participants were so frustrated after the first day of orientation that they did not return for the final day.

Faye believed that the programme was too long and not useful, with the exception of

the experiential component:

It was way too long, and we didn't learn anything that was important to us. Just a total waste of time really. With the exception of going out to explore town, I found it to be really poorly done.

4.5.6 Experiences Dealing with Adaptation

The experiences relating to adaptation, which are the topic of this section, have been broken down into two distinct areas; the initial settling-in stage and the general adaptation to the lifestyle and culture in South Africa. The reasoning for this is that it was believed that by doing so, it would portray a more realistic scenario of the experiences of the participants. As stated by Anderson (1994:293), adjustment is a continuum (cf 2.7.2.1) “of overcoming obstacles and solving problems in present-environment transactions”. These obstacles were more prevalent in the initial stages of arrival due to the very nature of any settling-in experience and therefore, it was felt that they needed to be dealt with as a separate topic.

The following comments in the areas of initial-settling experiences and general adaptation issues are not the only areas in which adaptation was experienced. The more specific adaptation issues are dealt with in detail in sections 4.5.6 through 4.5.7.

4.5.6.1 Experiences in Initial Settling-in Adjustments

The main theme in initial adjustment revolved around the area of frustration of expectations which agrees with the Martin et al (1995:87) and Weissman and Furnham (1987:323) studies in that individuals hold expectations (cf 2.7.1) about specific events, relationships and behaviours when they study-abroad. Based on these expectations, and whether or not they have been fulfilled, they then form the basis of an evaluation methodology to define if the event has been a success.

All of the participants indicated initial frustration with the settling-in process. Darla was the most emphatic regarding her expectations, and the fact that she felt that most, if not all of here expectations in regards to arrival and settling-in were not met. She describes her first few days and her high level of frustration:

Adjusting was tough. The person who was supposed to meet me at the airport

never did. That was my liaison and she never showed. I kind of figured she never would as she didn't get back to me before I left. I met her late and she made it sound like it was my fault and she had no idea what was going on. She said she would take me to my dorm and I would meet my buddy. So like I sat in the taxi and waited and there was no one at the dorm and it was locked. I never met my buddy. I sat there on the curb, hot and exhausted after 20 hours on the plane and felt so frustrated.

It took me ages to find out how to get into my room. It made me angry at first. There was no linen and no pillows and no towels and no one told me that I wouldn't have it. The RA (Resident Assistant) said she'd bring it day after day and then I just tried to find the place to get it and I just couldn't find the right person and I felt so overwhelmed.

Ben expressed his frustration with the differences in the administration and how it worked:

I've seen a lot of red tape here, almost to the point of absurdity. Six lines for everything, filling in the same paper three times, it kind of makes me think of what Communist China must be like. It takes 7 meetings with 10 people to get new light bulb for your dorm. It's bureaucracy after bureaucracy. So, it's kind of like a country that is trying to develop and to a large extent it is developing, but it's kind a little bit ahead of its game.

Darla also felt frustrated with the level of bureaucracy and her perceived level of its efficiency:

Here you have to go to one office to get your housing card, then you have to go to the cashiers office and then to the department and then the housing office and then back to the cashiers office. I'm used to registering online and here you have to go to each department and then each faculty and I'm taking two faculties, and you need signatures from so many places, I had to go to four different departments to get things done. It's not like you can pay for things all at one place and the lines are huge and take hours and people are so confused.

And when you ask questions people don't know the answers. I don't know how people get through all the confusion. By the second day I was here I was not so happy.

Darla goes on to say that the level of assistance from the international office was less than she had anticipated:

I didn't have any support from the university international office here and that was tough. I was told that I would have help from the international office but they are really inefficient and I've just learned to not get stressed over it. But I do think that the office here could do a much better job, they're just not very competent. My parents are still really upset about that part. But I can go there and get my mail and send my mail, but other than that, they're useless.

I think if you come here expecting the American style of having things handed to you on a silver platter, you not going to get that. You just have to deal with things differently than you would back home.

Another area of adjustment was within the physical environment arena. Carrie took some time to adjust to the differences between Kwa-Zulu Natal and her home environment:

If there's one thing I can't get used to it's the vegetation. It's so green here, and the lizards in our rooms and the mosquitoes. I'm so used to the winter; I can live in zero degree weather so here is a shock. One thing I didn't expect was that the city reminds me of New York because the buildings are so tall and you don't know where to look because there's so many people and stuff around. I look at the fruit vendors and the backpack vendors and the belt vendors and they are all there, one after another. I think that is cool, really cool. Then I turned right and there was a meat truck and I had never seen one with dead animals hanging down.

Ben also commented on the differences:

The foliage and the nature everywhere is so incredible. Walking on campus and seeing monkeys and it's like I'll stop in mid-conversation with someone and they say 'don't you have these at home'? And I'll say 'yeah, in zoos'!

4.5.6.2 Experiences in General Adaptation to the Culture and Lifestyle of South Africa

This section explores the reactions of the participants to their experiences regarding culture shock (cf 2.7.2.1) as well as perceived differences in the culture and lifestyle of South Africans including use of alcohol and drugs (cf 4.2.9).

a. Experiences Dealing with Culture Shock

Contrary to Darla's experiences, in that she encountered a high level of frustration upon arrival in South Africa, followed by immediate adaptation, Carrie was the only one who exhibited all of the various stages of culture shock as described by Oberg (1960:178-79) (cf 2.7.2.1). Her initial response to arriving in South Africa was one of wonder and exhilaration, followed by strong feelings of alienation and a desire to go home. By the third interview, she had accepted the differences in culture and lifestyle as "just another way of living" and realized it was she who had made the changes. This empowered her somewhat, believing that she had accomplished one of the things she had determined to be her goals prior to arrival (cf 4.2.1), a desire for more self-confidence and independence, in that she now perceived her stay to be a successful one.

Emily also, to some extent, exhibited the classic symptoms of culture shock. However, in her case it was related to her sexual orientation and that she felt that it was harder for her to adjust because of it (cf 2.7.4.3):

It's really hard for me to adjust because there's a really big part of me that I don't feel comfortable sharing with people. And so that has been something that has been difficult to negotiate. There have been a few people that I have been comfortable telling, but they have been American and so it's been hard. I would like to share all of myself with people but holding that back makes me feel like I can't get as close to people as I'd like to.

Emily's initial feeling of alienation due to her sexual orientation increased her perceived inability to adjust. However, as in Carrie's case although not to the same extent, she did adjust, realizing that it was she who had changed to some degree and she became more comfortable, although never entirely so, in sharing her identity with others.

Faye also experienced initial feelings of culture shock in dealing with familiar things that became unfamiliar in the new environment:

When I first went to orientation I was wondering what was I doing here, because I didn't know anyone here I felt really alone and lonely. And then I went to buy some food and the ketchup was all watery and it wasn't really ketchup. So, I was you know, upset. Then I went into town and heard people speaking Zulu and I felt not a part of it, and I'm not, and that was difficult at first. But that passed. I made friends.

Emily also found that the initial adjustment stage was a difficult one for her, and exhibited classic symptoms of culture shock:

My major adjustments when I got here were going through the chaos of dealing with what was going on, how to ask the right questions and how to do things. In terms of getting here, I didn't know even how to catch a cab; I didn't know there would be cabs right outside the airport. I didn't know how to use the telephones when I got here.

The majority of the participants commented on the fact that the pace of life was much slower in South Africa than in the United States. Although initially this required some adaptation, it was generally believed to be a very positive aspect of their experiences.

Despite an initial negativism to her adjusting experiences, Darla found that she adapted well to her perception of the South African lifestyle:

I didn't expect that it would be this mellow and calm. But I have adapted to a

large extent to the South African lifestyle, doing nothing, hanging out. I got into the lifestyle here, I think. My Dad says I've gone native. Now that I'm outside of it and looking at it, people around here are just content here to sit around and talk. At home they have their TV's, their DVD's, their VCR's, their cell phones and their Internet and they're still bored all the time. Definitely, I have noticed out here that people seem happier with life, much more mellow

Adam agreed with Darla's comment in that he believed that the students and other young people he met in South Africa were happier than their counterparts in America:

Kids are happier here, less bored. They're happier with who they are. It's not like that in the U.S., no one is happy with who they are there.

Emily comments that perhaps the perception of slowness could be due to the fact that she is away from her comfort and support zones:

Things work much, much slower here. I say that, but then again, maybe they don't. Maybe I say that because I have a better support person at home, when things aren't working out I know where to go, because I know where to turn, and so things go more quickly.

Ben believed that the college lifestyle was very similar to the one he had left behind, and so, required very little in terms of adjustment:

But the conversation in the college dorm here is the same as the one at home; you're still talking about women, half of whose names I can't pronounce her;, you're talking about cricket and rugby, instead of baseball and football, but it's the same mentality, like let's drink and talk and stuff. It's a combination of Africa and the first world. You could be anywhere. The restaurant could be one in the States or anywhere in world, then six blocks away you could be in India or other parts of Africa.

Ben also commented on the prevalence of the British and European influences:

What did surprise me, which shouldn't, because I should have known better, was the prevalence of the British and European influences. The colonization really stands out. The type of mayonnaise, the concept of 'having or doing tea'. The reason my graduate class hasn't met yet is that we're meeting for tea next week so we can decide when we're going to meet. Which doesn't make any sense to me as an American.

b. Issues Dealing with Alcohol and Drug Usage

Ben found that some cultural differences changed his behaviour patterns. As Ben was the only participant who was twenty-years of age upon arrival, he was under the legal drinking age in the United States; however, he was well within the legal drinking age in South Africa, which is 18. When questioned as to whether or not he appreciated the fact he could legally drink in South Africa, he responded:

I always had a fake ID in the States, so I used my fake ID to get into clubs, not because I wanted to drink, just because that is where the social scene was and that's where I wanted to be. I don't think that people drink here more, but they drive drunk a lot more.

Faye also expressed her concern dealing with alcohol consumption:

It worries me about the role of alcohol in impoverished communities. I read this book called "Kaffir Boy" and the main character's father was a hopeless drunk. I hope that alcohol is not being used as a tool not to deal with problems that you have. And then oh, my gosh, Tuesday night the rowing club had a party and they had a beer drinking contest and I know they have them back home especially in frat houses in the States, and it was advertised on campus and the beer drinking competition was advertised too and never in a million years on my home campus would it be OK for a student organisation to advertise drinking on campus.

All of the participants had comments relating to drug and alcohol usage in South Africa. While the feelings were mixed on whether or not alcohol consumption was greater in America or South Africa, all agreed that drug usage, specifically that of

marijuana smoking, was far more prevalent here and far more open, as Darla states:

Everyone was smoking; you could smell it all around. And that's something that doesn't happen at home, people hide it, you just don't smoke grass in public.

4.5.7 Experiences in Cultural Immersion

As Church (1982:551) states, the number, variety, and depth of social encounters within the host culture may be the most important variable in the success of the sojourn experience (cf 2.7.3). The type of programme that all of the participants were involved in is described as an *Immersion Programme* (cf 2.2.1), that is, a programme involving direct enrolment into a host country's indigenous system of higher education.

Furthermore, all of the students were housed in on-campus accommodation, which further enhanced the potential for immersion. To what extent the programme allowed for immersion into the host culture and to what extent the participants made use of the possibilities for immersion form the topic of this section.

4.5.7.1 Immersion within the Campus Environment

This sub-section explores the patterns that the participants perceived to be important factors when discussing their immersion into the campus culture of the host institution.

a. Friendships with non-Americans

The forming of friendships with various students on the host campus was of primary importance to all of the participants. When examining whom they made friends with, the issue of race was often brought up. The issue of race as an adjustment and cultural immersion factor is dealt with extensively in section 4.5.9, but there was overlapping in the two areas.

Initially, Emily found that interaction with her peers to be quite different from what she was used to:

I've found that there's no middle ground, people are either really, really, really friendly or they don't want to have to do anything to do with me. I'm used to starting random conversations with people, like when you're standing in line or

something, and when I do that here often people will just look at me as if I'm from Mars.

A very pronounced common theme amongst the friendship base that the majority of participants formed was the fact that they formed their friendships with African students, but not South African students. Their friendships were primarily with other international students from countries such as Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Ben, however, stated that his strongest friendship base was within the male, Zulu student population group and that in his opinion, groups tended to form along racial boundaries. He also discovered that making friends was easier than he anticipated:

I thought it would be more of a challenge making friends and meeting people. Maybe I'm just naïve, but it's been easier than I thought to craft friendships. The majority of people that I'm hanging out with are predominately Black African Zulus. Unfortunately, there is a divide in my experience with who you go out with. Not that it's always mutually exclusive, but it tends to be that you either go out with Americans, white South Africans or Black South Africans. The Americans tend to hang out with the other Americans. So you go certain places with each group and it's really cool with the Africans, you shoot pool, hear neat music.

There is a visible barrier, not to say that they treat me differently, but I am different and I guess it matters. But I don't feel uncomfortable. I have a good group of friends, some from the debate team, and some from the dorm. They're really welcoming.

Adam stated that although he hadn't learned much regarding the Indian culture in Durban, he believed that the Africans still had very strong ties to their culture:

I haven't learned much about the Indian culture. It appears to me that their upbringing is very strict. I think that's why you see them making out all over campus because they can't do it at home. The black culture is very different; they're very in tune with it. In America, most people just take on the American culture, the melting pot, no matter where you're from. Everyone just sort of like

adopts to some degree the same culture. Some friends I have here, if the guys want to get married they still have to buy the girl's family cows.

b. Involvement in Extra-curricular Activities

All of the participants, with the exception of Adam, became involved in extra-curricular activities on campus. This involved joining clubs and teams in various pursuits such as fencing, soccer, debate, drama, dance, rock climbing, aerobics and swimming. For many of the participants this was the first time they had taken part in a particular activity and without exception, they found that it was a major source of not only enjoyment and stress relief, but also a friendship enhancing experience.

The participants found that the host institution made it easy for them to become aware of such activities and organisations on campus as they had an 'activity fair' during the first week of classes where the students could visit various booths and meet with the representatives of clubs and organisations.

Emily in particular found that, despite a language barrier and the fact she had no prior experience in the sport she was welcomed onto the soccer team:

And then when I went to soccer practice I was really worried about how I would be treated there especially since I'm really awful and I've never played before. But it was like the total opposite. The coach came up to me and said come on, and the girls are really nice to me and really, really welcoming even though I'm so awful. The only problem I have is that they all speak Zulu to each other, but if I ask they all stop and speak English to me so I know what's going on. I definitely felt though that these activities helped me branch out and meet new people that I probably wouldn't have met otherwise.

Ben found that his involvement with the debating team, something he was involved in on his home campus, was not only an enjoyable experience, but a valuable learning experience as well:

One thing that was so amazing that I never expected was the debating competition. What was so incredible about it was that it meant so much to

everyone there who was competing. It was amazing to see them so appreciative of something that so many American debaters in the States would mock and complain about and whine that they had to pay R25 to compete; it was so incredible to see how appreciative they were and how simple and amazing things were. They didn't care who won. They were there for the love of debate.

c. Involvement in Community Service

Another area that the participants found useful in broadening their cultural immersion was participation in various forms of community service (cf 4.2.5.4). Although all of the participants indicated an interest and a desire to become involved in some type of community service, only Ben, Faye and Darla actually did so. They found that obtaining access to these types of programmes was a very effortless process as the appropriate office on the host campus was extremely useful in offering assistance and advice.

Faye became an HIV peer counsellor, Ben became involved in a programme that involved mentorship in a nearby settlement area and Darla joined a programme that assisted young scholars with academic counselling.

Ben commented many times during the interviews that his experiences in community service allowed him to have encounters with other types South African lifestyles:

I've had some really cool experiences. I'm doing community service in one of the townships, helping kids put on an HIV workshop and being a resource to them in a variety of ways, liking helping with the math homework and stuff. One of the kid's mothers died last week and we were asked to go to the funeral and it was pretty fascinating. Very different from what I've experienced in the States. I met up with a guy from Roots and Shoots and I've become involved with him and his programs. He's a graduate student here. The office is on campus here, and so the university made it easy to get involved with community service. I've made friends with the local kids this way and it's really been incredible.

d. Relationships with Other American Students

Apart from what type of programme in which the student participates, the degree to which the student chooses to intermingle with the host culture is also important to the degree of cultural immersion experienced by the student (cf 4.2.5.2 – 4.2.5.4). Shannon (1995:8) states that in her experience (cf 2.7.3), teens visiting or studying abroad in an organized programme often don't reach out beyond the peer group with whom they arrived.

Church (1982:551) states: "because of the anxieties associated with immersing oneself in the social environment of the host culture, many sojourners form enclaves of fellow nationals that largely determine the living arrangements, friendship patterns, and organisational affiliations of the sojourners involved" (cf 2.7.3) Although Bochner et al (1976:275) state that the person most likely to be an overseas student's best friend will be an individual from the same sex and culture (cf 2.7.3), this was not the case with most of the participants in this study, nor was it found that these participants predominately formed enclaves of fellow Americans as their primary friendship base.

Of the participants, Carrie was the only one who exhibited the traits described by Church (1982:551), Shannon (1995:8) and Bochner et al (1976:275). Carrie stated that she attempted to form friendships outside her comfort base, but her level of shyness, unhappiness, frustration and alienation forced her back to her comfort zone of American companions. She also found that the level of integration in South Africa not to be what she expected, which influenced her ability to intermingle:

Wow. My expectations have been so baffled since I've been here. One thing I need to work on is how to approach people because I'm so shy. One preconception that I had because of all the diversity here I thought there would be more of a sense of community here and there isn't. You don't see people mingling. People tend to stay in their own sectors. They still are really separate and that isn't what I expected.

Darla found that it was primarily the male American programme participants that did not seek immersion within the host culture:

I tell my U.S. guy friends that I get so much help and they're so like 'it's because you have boobs'. I don't think it's a gender thing, I think it's because the U.S. guys here stick to American men.

The other participants were aware that limiting their social contacts to other Americans would result in a restricted experience, as Ben states:

I find it hard to believe that an American can come to such a different place, such a bold place, and not want to communicate with different groups of people.

Many of the participants did believe, however, that the majority of American students on the host campus formed cliques and tended to seek out each other's company rather than mingle with host nationals or other international students.

e. Differences Perceived Due to Nationality

A barrier to immersion within the host culture may be the perception the host culture has on America and Americans, according to Shannon (1995:5). Shannon states (cf 2.7.3) that "instant recognition of 'American' may foster an extremely negative reaction, and the task of gaining acceptance is harder. That is one of the most challenging and creative efforts for someone living in a culture that may be, for historic, or political reasons, hostile to America." Students, she goes on to say, must guard against becoming too defensive, but may feel duty bound to be the 'good American' and defend his or her home country. As shown in Table 2.1, the most common factor that has an influence on an American study-abroad student is his or her nationality. This topic is especially pertinent at a time when anti-American sentiment is perceived to be at an all time high in South Africa (cf 2.7.3).

To some extent, the participants felt that they were perceived first as Americans, and then as students. Surprisingly, the findings of this study indicated that there were no comments dealing with specific anti-American sentiment. However, all participants voiced the opinion that they were seen as 'rich privileged Americans' and that many of the South African students voiced strong opposition to current American politics.

Ben found that although he was an extremely patriotic American, at times he had to

leave behind his nationality in order to form bonds with the host culture:

I am ridiculously patriotic at home. I drive my family mad; I have a huge flag in my room. So, I'm an unfair sample, I think. I see criticism of America as more of an opportunity here to educate people and I don't really get defensive. One by one, I'll change the world! It does open up and give a chance to learn where other people are coming from. If someone says to me that they hate what Bush is doing in Iraq, I'll be more interested in the why instead of the fact that they hate it. It's mostly emotional stuff, but I hope to hear new insight when I hear criticisms, but that rarely happens. Sometimes it's easier if you disown everything that the US stands for. It's sad, but it's true. I do that. Sometimes you realize you have to agree with people even if you don't. Like if they hear you say, OK, I hate Bush, they say, OK, now we can talk, now we can be friends.

Ben also found that the professors treated him a bit differently to the other students, due to the fact that he was not a South African student, but a foreign student on a study-abroad programme:

The professors are a little more lenient, in things like missing class and travelling, kind of like you'd hope them to be, because they recognize we're not getting degrees here, we respect them and take their classes seriously, but we also are here for some other reasons.

Faye found that although South African students were critical of her government, they were not interested in her opinion as much as being able to state their own opinions:

Politically here, people tell me their opinion, and seldom ask mine.

Adam was fairly oblivious to any reactions to him based on his nationality, yet he was also somewhat defensive and matter of fact about having expectations that Americans are not generally liked:

Americans are hated around the world. It's funny because people love Americans and they hate Americans. It's easy to point a finger at policies that

are public. Our government is doing similar things that other governments are doing; we're just doing it in a much more public way.

Darla perceived that when Americans were treated badly, it could be attributed to their behaviour:

I've heard that other Americans have been treated badly, but I haven't. I think that the people who have bad experiences tend to travel in big clumps of Americans and they're loud and noisy and ask stupid questions about life in general. I tend not to push and pry. I think people's reactions to you are dependant on how you are to them.

Emily stated that she found South Africans very assumptive regarding her perception of South Africa and at times, were dismissive of her ability to have correct assumptions about South Africa:

Also, they expect me to be really ignorant. Not to know much about Africa or where countries are or that I would believe that lions roam all over the place and that people are running around in the bush, instead of living in cities. So I think ignorance is a perception people have here of Americans besides the fact that everyone, and I mean everyone, thinks that each and every American is really, really rich.

4.5.7.2 Cultural Immersion in the Off-Campus Environment

This sub-section deals with the aspects of cultural immersion that took place off the campus, within the city and province as well as within neighbouring countries.

a. Travel within Kwa-Zulu Natal

Emily and Adam were the only two participants who restricted their travel to areas within Kwa-Zulu Natal. For Emily, this was a case of financial constraints and for Adam it was due to the fact that he preferred to spend all of his free time surfing.

However, all students did get off campus regularly, exploring the city and suburbs of Durban.

All of the students expressed surprise at the number of Indian residents in Durban and found this additional and unexpected culture intriguing. Darla visited an Indian family in their home for a meal and found the multi-generational existence to be a new experience for her. She also went for weekend trips to her Zulu friend's house in Pietermaritzburg.

Faye was disappointed by the perceived Americanization of the African culture as she found in Durban:

I knew that South Africa was metropolitan but when I went into town some things were so urbanized and I would say; oh, they have this here too? I was also surprised to see women dressed as they are back home, I didn't expect them to be naked but I expected more ethnic dress, but that's not common. I do not want to see Americanisms all over the place. It disgusts me. At a restaurant I went to, there were these two guys dressed like so many black men do at home. It brought tears to my eyes. And it was like, South Africa, no. Africa, no. This is not the way.

The non-profit organisation participants went on an organized visit to the Drakensburg, a mountainous region northwest of the city. All of the participants had the ability to take part in organized outings that the host institution made available, however, all declined to do so, preferring to organize their own trips for a variety of reasons. Kirsten explains that the visits to the townships that the host university organized were not appealing to her, as she believed it would not be a valid cultural experience:

Organized trips might enhance the experience, but you have to be careful. I mean you can't just do a day in the life of a township dweller, and exoticfy the experience and put them on show. That wouldn't be right.

Darla decided not to go on organized outings for a similar reason, as she also believed that trips were inappropriate for her, in that she preferred to have this experience with friends:

The international student's office planned stuff and tours and stuff, but it's during the week and during school hours and it's only for international students but do I want to go out and be with a bunch of tourists? No. I'd rather do it with my South African friends.

b. Additional Travel Outside of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Ben travelled to a remote town in the Northeast section of South Africa during his free time prior to the commencement of classes. He found this trip to be an education on many levels, and also found that his behaviour was quite different that it was in his home country:

On so many different levels it provided a fascinating perspective to start South Africa with. I did so many crazy things that I would never have done in the States; sitting on top of the land rover, holding on to the luggage rack. It's one of these places that is a really small town, kind of redneck. It was fascinating, they couldn't have been nicer to us, but some of their racist comments truly nauseated me, so you had to balance that with they're letting us stay at their house, they're treating us to whatever we want, they recognize that we're random college students that don't have much money. It haunted me that I couldn't imagine how they would have treated us if we were black students.

For Faye, her trip to Capetown, prior to the commencement of classes, reinforced her belief that her decision to come to Durban, rather than Capetown, as a study-abroad destination was the right one:

It's a nice place to visit; it's very nice to visit. But I wouldn't want to live there. I don't know why people say it's the best place to live in South Africa. It's a very different culture, more like Europe. And it would lead a person to believe that there aren't any African people in Africa. I really don't like that.

For Carrie, her trip to Tanzania was another experience in isolation:

I just went to Tanzania for Spring break and that was really hard. I had major culture shock for eight days because I saw maybe 15 white people the entire

time I was there and it was way more difficult than I thought it would be.

Faye believed that her additional trips to Swaziland and Mozambique provided her with new insights into new and very different African cultures. Ben believed that it was necessary to travel as much as he could, and so went on a trip to Kenya during mid-semester break. Not knowing if he would ever return to Africa, he believed it would be short-sighted of him not to experience all that he could, including travel.

4.5.7.3 Immersion Due to Religious and Language Experiences

This sub-section deals with the religious and language experiences the participants felt added to their cultural immersion.

a. Religious Experiences

Ben, who describes himself as a non-practicing Jew was the only non-Christian amongst the group of participants. He, as well as Adam, Emily, and Faye indicated that involvement in religion had no part of in their experiences in South Africa. Carrie was the only participant who described herself as practising her religion and other than going to church once during her study-abroad experience, had no experiences involving religion.

Darla suffered the loss of her grandfather while on the programme, and found that although she was not involved in any organized religion, that the comfort she received from her fellow dorm mates, who prayed for her and with her was important to her at this time. She describes her fellow students in the dormitory as very religious, getting up early to pray and sing hymns. Although she felt outside of this experience, she did value the cultural perspective, and believed that it had made an impact on her:

It was so beautiful the way they prayed and sung. It made me begin to think a bit more deeply about my religious convictions, or lack of them. They showed such a strong belief that it was hard not to think about it. When my grandpa died, this guy came and sat on the bench next to me and we talked about heaven and being in a better place and stuff and I found that the experience was really a comfort to me.

b. Cultural Immersion Due to Language Acquisition

Carrie and Emily were the only participants to take a Zulu language course while in South Africa. Carrie dropped the course as she felt that the level of difficulty was too great. All of the participants did indicate however, that they found that discussing the Zulu language with their South African acquaintances and asking for assistance in basic communication skills was helpful in immersing themselves into the campus culture, as Carrie mentioned:

But the cool part of my Zulu class is that it helps me make friends because I can say to people that I'm taking Zulu and ask for their help, so learning languages helps to make friends.

Ben's attitude agrees with Green (2003:12) when she states that some students may believe that English is the common language around the world and if that is so, that there is no longer any need to learn a foreign language (2.6.3). However, Ben did find some use for language acquisition:

I've never been a language person; I'm one of these typical Americans that believes that English is the language of the world. In as far as everyone here does speak English; it kind of doesn't disprove my logic. I'm trying to learn some very basic, conversational Zulu. Cabs gives you better rates when you can go out there and say "Sawubona".

Emily stated that the lack of Zulu ability could be detrimental even to other Africans:

I've seen Blacks here criticize other Blacks from other places who can't speak Zulu. They feel the same alienation that I do, I think. My friend from Zimbabwe feels different, as she can't speak Zulu.

4.5.8 Sexual Orientation and Gender Issues

As stated in 2.7.4, Stewart and Talburt (1999:164) believe that understanding the impacts race and gender have on the learning processes in study-abroad programmes will enable a rethinking of the curricula "such that learners' differences and their resulting cultural experiences enter the formal curriculum." They have found, with few exceptions, that current research has tended to generalize student's experiences abroad,

giving scant attention to the specifics that can shape their interactions and cultural learning. The omission of this focus in current research not only “limits understanding of the processes and outcomes of study-abroad but also neglects the needs of students whose race and gender may negatively affect their potential to meet their goals for study-abroad.”

This section deals with various encounters and experiences that were either gender-related or as a result of specific sexual orientation.

4.5.8.1 Experiences Based on Sexual Orientation

Emily was the only participant who was not heterosexual. Her initial ability to adjust was influenced heavily by this fact as were many of her other experiences.

She described that initially she went out at night to the various nightclubs, gradually finding that for her, at least, it was better not to mingle with the local culture, as she never achieved any level of comfort doing so. Her sexual orientation caused her to withdraw more and more, finally restricting her immersion entirely to the campus culture, where she felt marginally safer.

Emily endured the piropos (cf 2.7.4.1) that the other female participants described, but to her, the aggressive male behaviour was more than disquieting:

It's also difficult as I can't spit out that I have a boyfriend back home and that's hard for me too. When I first started going out it was really hard because men are really forward and they're right there and they constantly want to dance with you and they're saying things that you're not really comfortable with and that was really hard for me to adjust to because I'm never in those kind of situations back home.

Dealing with men being interested in me is never a compliment here because of the origin of that interest, of me being different, of me being an American, of me being white, of me being available. There's just a whole range of things that I think get assumed about me and particularly that I would have any interest in them to begin with. Where back home there are social cues that would give an

idea that I don't like men and also as a woman I feel like I can put myself in spaces where I don't have to deal with the constant onslaught of male attention and here I don't know where those spaces are.

Emily goes on to explain that her friendships on campus began to improve with time, but her forays into Durban nightlife had halted:

The two people I feel closest here to have just started dating and they are two women. And so, that's a really comfortable place for me to be and more and more I start coming out to my friends from Africa who probably have more of a conservative idea and its been accepted really, really well. I just don't go out anymore. I'm more satisfied staying at home. I go out once in awhile but to different places and with a selectively different group of people. There's still the problem of men. Maybe I'm seeing the really worst of men here because the only men I've seen are the ones that have been really forward and inappropriate with me, so I think I've formed a different opinion of South African men than of American men.

When asked if she felt persecuted in any way because of her sexual orientation, Emily stated that she believed that the lack of community was upsetting to her and it became a contributing factor to her remaining within an American clique of friends, as she found the concept of sharing her sexual preferences with South Africans a difficult area to negotiate, but also provided a valuable learning experience for her. The impression was made that it was an easier transition for a gay man:

I know someone here who is a gay guy and he's having a great time, everybody accepts it, it's fine. This has not been my experience. My experience has been really different and difficult. The Durban Lesbian Centre here is a small one, but four out of the five women that work there are straight so even at the Centre there isn't much of a community or a place where you feel safe.

I think that's why I've made more American friends; it's because I feel more accepted within that group. I do feel a fear of telling people here. Then when my girlfriend arrived and they saw us together they were like, 'oh, you're gay' and

that was my coming out experience.

I don't think Durban is a bad place for queers to come to. In some ways it has really enhanced my experience, as I've had to deal with things that I perhaps wouldn't have ever had to deal with. I don't think I would ever give the advice don't come because you are queer. It's tough, but it's not impossible by any means.

4.5.8.2 Experiences Based on Gender

All of the participants stated to greater and lesser degrees that their experiences were shaped by different perceptions of gender in South Africa. All of the female participants were affected by the piropos (cf 2.7.4.1) they experienced off-campus, usually negatively, although Faye felt it was an interesting cultural difference more than a derogatory statement. Aggressive sexual behaviour was a criticism raised against South African men of all racial backgrounds, and all of the females felt that this behaviour was far different from what they experienced in their home culture.

Carrie believed that the dominant attitude of South African men was so strong that it would influence her participation in an extracurricular project, the production of a gender-based play, *Vagina Monologues*:

Women are supposed to be subservient here. A few friends and I want to do the Vagina Monologues, but that's one thing we're worried about, you know that this is an empowering women's piece and it worries us that we're going to have men shouting at us from audience. I mean if you have a person at the university administration saying stuff like women should be subservient (cf 4.5.5.2) and on the first day of orientation, you wonder.

Carrie also found that the constant piropos she found herself subjected to by South African men affected her racial attitudes and her ideas on gender relations:

I was walking downtown yesterday by myself and all the people that whistled and winked at me were coloured people and that doesn't help eradicate the stereotype at all. And so, now I kind of have that thought in my head that people

who are going to rob me or get something from me are people of colour. And I know that's not true. This is a very interesting question. Because the three American women I hang out with are extremely gender conscious. And I've never been gender conscious before. But I definitely think that gender shapes your experiences here, because I notice all the winks and whistles from all these creepy guys here. I just want to punch them. I really hate it.

Faye noticed differences in the treatment of women in South Africa, but was not disturbed by it, but at times flattered:

The attention has enhanced my experience in a positive way. One thing I have noticed here is that the men are very forward. They have no apprehension to say 'give me your phone number; let's get married', me and my friends, we have gotten a few marriage proposals, instantly they're in love with you. They are mostly Zulu. They are interested in a (sexual) relationship first. And we're like let's be friends first, and they're like how can we get to know you if we're not together?

Ben noticed that the usual social patterns based on gender that he was familiar with in America did not exist here:

One night we had a party and the guys in my dorm parked one of their cars outside our dorm and blasted music and just drank. And it was fascinating to me because it's all guys, all of them drinking and dancing and having a good time and in the States for whatever reason, maybe being just too self conscious, or whatever, we would never do that, we would not dance without women.

For whatever reason here it's just divided and it's disappointing to the girls as I guess they want to be a part of the Zulu Frat house. I'm not sure that the separation of gender has to do with a negative attitude, but it is different.

It's interesting; the male type bonding is different than in the States. Like when we go to a dance club the guys here all want to go together, and be totally happy about that. In the States, we wouldn't do that. We'd need girls to join us

to have the security to go.

Ben also commented on his perceived differences for females in the South African culture:

I think that the culture here, unfortunately, is a lot more amenable to hassles for women and seems more male dominated.

Darla mentions that the South African men that she has met are more aggressive than in her home culture:

I have noticed that the guys have a different idea of this, after about two minutes they ask me where my room is. I'm just realizing that guys here interpret things differently. I'm like no; you're not coming to my room. When I go out, the guys are really upfront with them hitting on us all the time. Even though I push them off and I tell them to go away, they just don't. Guys at home aren't so aggressive. When you say back off back home, they do.

4.5.9 Experiences Based on Race

The various experiences based on race are the topic for this section. All of the participants found that the various facets of race in South Africa made for a variety of cultural, social and learning experiences.

Hembroff and Rusz (1993:1) believe that perhaps learning more from the experience of underrepresented minorities would do more to increase their participation in these programmes and Green (2001:1) and Hayes (s.a.2) state (cf 2.7.4.2) that some studies suggest that black Americans experience unfavourable treatment overseas.

For others, this may be the first time that students experience what it is like being part of a minority, and Jamison (2001:6) recommends that students who study in Africa should not bring any American “racial etiquette” with them (cf 2.7.4.2). “In America we try to eliminate racial differences, in Africa racial roles are sharply defined and extremely difficult if not impossible to break down”.

As there were many areas dealing with race in the participant's experiences, this section

has been broken down into three main topics: experiences from an African-American's point of view, experiences from a minority point a view and general experiences based on race.

4.5.9.1 Experiences as an African-American

For Faye, the most positive aspect of her study-abroad experience was being in the majority (cf 2.7.4.2). She felt acceptance on a very primary level due to her skin colour. Feelings of exclusion and being different no longer existed in the area of race.

I'm pleased and excited when people mistake me for a Zulu because I don't have my own language or culture. I mean I have my black culture, which is different from American culture so I wouldn't say that I don't have any culture but not like an indigenous African culture or language or a particular home.

I think that's part of the reason I love it here. People from South Africa seem to accept me easier. I have had the opportunity to experience more. When I go to town I don't draw as much attention. I can fade into the background. My American friend is an Indian. She gets accepted here easily too into the African group. I have no discomfort about being the only black person in a class of 500. It's great.

Faye also stated that by coming to South Africa and being part of a majority for the first time in her life, she learned a new appreciation for the role of Black people in history and more understanding of herself as a person:

One of the reasons Blacks tend to have a feeling of inferior status is that oftentimes Black history is measured from the time that African people arrived in the United States. With no explanation or no recounting of what we had in Africa and I think to a large degree that's why Black people internalize inferiority because all we have here is the history of stereotypes; of being criminals and being impoverished and not known for our mental capabilities. We don't have a sense of our own history, from where we came, as the Europeans do. Coming here has given me a sense of that, it's something that I know I'll explore more when I get back and it's been the best thing about being

here.

4.5.9.2 Experiences as a Minority

The other five participants now found themselves, all for the first time, as part of the minority (cf 2.7.4.2). Their reactions to this experience form the topic of this section.

Ben found that his experiences with race and being a minority had a minimal impact:

Maybe it's because I'm naïve, or a have made a conscious effort not to accept any different treatment. I think race can affect experience, but I don't think it necessarily always does. If you're hanging out in a crowd or in a place where it does affect that much of the experience, then I think it's time to get out of there because there's probably not to much to learn from those people anyway. To a large extent, I don't even notice it. No. I've never considered, and I differ from a lot of people on this, but I've never considered race to be something quite frankly, that matters. Not to say that I don't notice it when I'm in a Durban nightclub and I'm the only white person there, and one of the only white people in my dorm. I know I stand out. But so would I if I were the only nice dressed person in a casual environment.

Darla also found that the issue of race and her minority status had little impact on her personally, but did notice that other white American students were conscious of it.

When she attended an exercise class this became an experience to remember:

I've had a couple of people come and they're like, why are there no white people? And I'm like, I don't know but it's fun and its fine with me.

Carrie and Emily had more issues with the fact that they were now part of the minority. As Carrie discovered, it's not easy being part of a minority and it changed her awareness of herself:

Intellectually, I knew I was coming as a minority. It just didn't occur to me that it would hit me like this. It's hard. I don't know how to elaborate. I don't want to be racist. I am conscious of my feelings and I'm not always comfortable with

my conclusions, as they do sound racist. Sometimes I don't think about race, but I mostly do. I mean it's hard not to. I mean I know there are minorities, but I never really realized it before. I've never experienced not fitting in automatically; I guess that's what it is.

I realized that since I've been here I do tend to gravitate towards people of my own race group. It seems easier, more within my comfort zone. There isn't an automatic connection with people of different colours.

This is just such a hard question. A big part of it is not having a comfort zone. It's not something I want to feel, but it does help me understand minorities at home. I can see that it can be so hard to be a minority now.

Emily found that her ability to immerse within the culture and broaden her friendship base was affected by not only by race, but also by ethnicity:

It makes it difficult to connect with Black South Africans because there is a preconceived notion of who I am in terms of being a White American, what can I possibly understand about you being a Black South African? Which is true. I mean what can I understand? But I think no matter what, being white means that certain people will not be friends with me.

I expected to be treated differently because I knew of the apartheid history. Race relations here are different because the history is different. Race relations here are based on ethnicity, like I'm Zulu and you're not, even though we may both be Black, we're different. I've seen Blacks here criticize other Blacks from other places who can't speak Zulu. They feel the same alienation that I do, I think. My friend from Zimbabwe feels different, as she can't speak Zulu.

4.5.9.3 Experiences Based on Race Relations

This section deals with general perceptions of race relations and experiences based on race in South Africa (cf 2.8.1.2).

Darla experienced what she perceived to be unfair treatment based on race in the

classroom:

In my class today, a black girl kept coming in and out, we were watching a movie. People come in and out all the time. My white professor went over and screamed at her and embarrassed her telling her she couldn't go in and out all the time. Five minutes later a white guy did the same thing and he was totally ignored. Other white kids got up all the time. I think she got harassed by the white professor and I think if I had done the same thing I wouldn't have gotten harassed, so yeah, I think race affects my stay here but I kind of like to take things with a grain of salt and enjoy my time here. I can't see me changing the things here. But it's so sad, you know.

In the social environment, Darla also experienced what she described as unfair treatment based on race at a nightclub she went to:

And then the cops came on motorcycles, I was calmly walking away and these white cops went right to the black guys I was with. I should have walked away but I went to the cops and said why are you harassing them? I mean they were doing nothing. But as soon as I said that they backed away and just watched. But they were really harassing them. I was walking away and another group, a girl from my English class was there with a couple of white guys and they said why are you hanging out with them, they're dangerous guys, and I said I know this guy he lives near me in the dorm, I mean maybe I'm naïve, but I have never felt in danger from people just because they're a different colour.

Emily describes a situation on campus where she was on the receiving end of upsetting remarks based on her skin colour as well as an upsetting experience at a nightclub, an experience that had never occurred to her in the United States:

I was at a party at the student union and a guy came and sat down next to me and without being too graphic about it, he basically asked me why I wasn't inside and if I thought I was too good for everybody else inside because of the colour of my skin. Which was really hurtful as I had just come with some friends that I had made and I was just sitting there relaxing and thinking about how

much I was enjoying myself here and that was one of the first comments that I had that was really, really awful. And then another guy was really forward with me at a club and I walked away and he asked me if it was because I was a different colour than he was. And so these are things that have been difficult for me to adjust to.

Darla also commented that race is a predominant focal point in conversations in South Africa, which is so different from the racial customs that she is familiar with at home. This observation agrees with Jamison (2001:6) when he states: “Students who study in Africa should not bring any American “racial etiquette” with them. “In America we try to eliminate racial differences, in Africa racial roles are sharply defined and extremely difficult if not impossible to break down” (cf 2.7.4.2).

It’s interesting though that I’ve noticed that every person I’ve talked to mentions race; black, white whoever, talks about race within five minutes of conversation. I realize that it’s huge here, but I’m not really used to that. The black people talk about the horrible colonizers, the white people talk about the black people that beat them up and steal their stuff. And I’m just thinking I haven’t seen any of this at all. I mean I’m sure it all comes from something that I haven’t experienced and don’t know. I generally just sit and listen and take it all in.

Adam also found that the history of racial segregation was not forgotten and that his treatment as a White, in his eyes, was more favourable than that of other race groups within South Africa:

Being here makes me understand segregation within the context of South Africa, which is much more segregated in a very real way than the States. We went to a bar the other night, me and a South African friend I met, a black Zulu kid. It was primarily a white bar, and he was commenting that 10 years ago he couldn’t have even been in a bar like that. It’s still somewhat uncomfortable for him to be in a place like that. It’s not that anyone there was making comments or would make comments but you can still see the divide in the culture. In the States you see subtleties, like where people live and stuff like that, but you don’t

see in terms in of interaction in everyday life.

I know I get treated better here than Blacks or Indians. It's no secret that the white race is the more prominent in terms of social standing and monetary worth. You get better service being white. You go to better places being white. It upsets me when I'm with other people who are not white and it affects them.

Adam also commented on overt racism he experienced, which was vastly different to him in terms of his experiences based on race in the United States:

It was a shock to see the white on black racism here. We don't have that at home. I know they had apartheid not too long ago and there are remnants of that here, so that's pretty clear. I expected more black on white racism when it's mostly white on black. We went out to 'Cool Runnings' a night club and one white guy came up and was really rude to the black guys I was with.

4.5.10 Health Issues

As stated in 4.2.9, all of the participants of the focus group were concerned with health issues in South Africa and how they would impact on the student's experiences. The findings in this area are the topic of this section.

All of the participants believed that they were given a copious amount of information on preventative health measures prior to leaving the United States; perhaps, in some instances, a perceived overload (cf 4.5.4.2).

The participants all indicated that they were aware of health risks, primarily HIV/AIDS. None of them was involved in a relationship in South Africa, for a variety of reasons, and so contraction of HIV/AIDS from a consensual sexual act, was not an issue. However, there still remained some concern that exposure to this disease could be contracted by other means, as Emily states, along with her concerns that her friends are not being as careful as they should:

I'm not going to date anyone here. I do worry about rape. Also, my problem is that I would probably help in an accident situation. Don't tell my parents! I just

would help and worry about it later. It's so heart wrenching to think about. It's unbelievable; it's a very different dynamic to think about. The two advisers back home just told us not even to risk it. My friend Amy is starting to see a guy here and I keep telling her you just don't know. Like last year five girls had relationships here and three didn't use any protection. And they're not even getting checked up to see if they're OK.

Ben made similar remarks concerning his unwillingness to become involved due to the threat of HIV/AIDS as well as his concern of being willing to offer assistance in an accident:

If I didn't have a girlfriend I think I would have a whole other range of preconceptions of HIV and stuff, not the just be careful stuff, which you should always have, but almost irrationally I don't think I would date at all. I would just hold hands the whole time I'm here.

One of the things that haunt me here though on a personal and moral level, is that if I saw an accident would I would stop and help? But at the same time it haunts me that I don't know if I would even stop to help other than by calling an ambulance. Some of these are setups; people tell me that they stage accidents so that they can hijack your car.

Both Emily and Ben were concerned about general health care and the fact that they were not given a list of hospitals or doctors to contact, either by their sending organisation or by the host institution, in case of ill health or an accident. Ben also expressed concern over the level of health care.

4.5.11 Issues Dealing with Personal Crisis

An area that was not covered in any of the literature review or by the focus group, yet became an issue for two of the participants, Darla and Carrie, was coping with personal crises, which had an impact on their mental and emotional health.

After twenty-five years of marriage, Carrie's parents separated while she was on the programme. Due to her feelings of isolation, Carrie believed that she had no one to turn

to at this time. This increased her level of unhappiness, her desire to return home and had a negative impact on her experience altogether.

Darla experienced the loss of her grandfather during her time in South Africa. Unable to fly home, she felt that she was missing an important time with her family. Unable to comfort her grieving mother, unable to share her grief with her family, she questioned the ‘rightness’ of her decision to ever leave home in the first place. Darla came to the conclusion that this was an aspect of ‘growing up’ and that many people, including those in South Africa, have to deal with worse situations, and managed to put the loss of her grandfather into a perspective that she was comfortable with and thus achieved a learning experience:

Since my grandfather died last week, I’ve heard stories of people who have lost whole families here. There seems to be a more mature attitude here. People have had to deal with so much more death and tragic things in life, so much more than we have had to in the States. I’m sad about my grandpa, but he was old and he doesn’t have to suffer any more, but here people lose brothers and sisters from murder and AIDS. They have to deal with much harsher things here and don’t have as much pleasure in their lives to balance it all out. And I think that’s wonderful. I think every American should come here and have an experience of things like this just so they can appreciate the things they have, you know? It takes courage to live here and people learn just how to go on.

4.5.12 Safety Issues

A perception of South Africa as a location where personal safety is at risk is considered a barrier to study-abroad (cf 2.5.2.3). A student’s experience can be negatively affected by becoming a victim of crime or having friends and/or acquaintances who are (cf 2.8.2.2). A participant in the focus group (4.2.9) listed issues of safety as a primary barrier to the promotion of South Africa as a destination for study-abroad. How valid are these concerns?

The student participants’ comments in this area form the topic of this section. This section is broken down into two sections: the perceptions the participants had regarding safety and specific incidents where the participants or those they knew were involved in

incidents of crime.

4.5.12.1 Experiences Regarding Perceptions of Safety

Issues of personal safety regarding transport in South Africa were an area that concerned Ben:

I feel OK about being in a combi (a van used as a taxi for public transport) other than you don't know who the hell is driving, and do not see the cars they are cutting off or don't they care, stuff like that. It's not like the busses are much safer either. I've been on the more cautious side, taking taxis at night instead. To me it's worth the American dollars and I think my family would agree. I haven't been hindered, but you need to approach it with a non-American mindset. Public transport is dangerous. But if you're constantly freaking out about the danger like most Americans, you can't have a good time. So we'd rather pay the extra and hire a taxi to make sure we're safe when we go out at night rather than just stay at home.

Initially, Darla felt that the attitude that most people had regarding crime in South Africa was too negative:

I mean maybe I'm naïve, but I have never felt in danger here. I'm always in groups, I've never been scared, and if I was I'd let out a big scream. I'm a big girl; I can take care of myself.

However, future incidents did cause her to change her perspective.

Faye, like many of the other participants, believed that her pre-departure orientation was far too negative in its presentation of safety issues in South Africa, which caused her, upon arrival to be paranoid regarding the issue. She found that over time, although she remained vigilant, she became far more relaxed:

Safety is fine. I'm vigilant. But not any more than if I was back home. I'm more relaxed about safety now. We heard so much about danger at home.

Emily stated that some of her friends felt safer in terms of drug use in South Africa in the sense that they knew what they were taking and knew areas where it would be safe to participate in drug usage. She also commented on the fact that her behaviour was influenced in that she did not drink alcohol in South Africa:

I don't drink because I don't feel comfortable drinking here. I like to know the place, how to get around in case something happens and I don't have that sense here, so I don't drink.

Carrie's concerns focussed around the issue of rape and contraction of HIV/AIDS and that this fear heightened her safety awareness. Although she felt more or less safe on campus, she stated that fear was always a part of her experience.

On the other hand, Ben specifically chose Durban, as he perceived it to be safer than other African locations:

I really wanted to go to Africa and experience Africa. So it was between Ghana and South Africa and I kind of concluded with family assistance that South Africa was a safer version of doing Africa.

However, whatever the prior or perceptions of crime in South Africa, all of the participants were either victims of crime or knew someone who was during their sojourn in South Africa.

The three participants who were participants in the non-profit organisation's programme, Carrie, Adam and Ben, experienced this on their first day in South Africa, when the leader of their group had his cell phone stolen out of his shirt pocket at a stop light in Durban's city centre. Unfortunately, later in the programme the same man was a further victim of crime when his brother-in-law was murdered and his wife attacked and severely beaten. These were two distinct incidents, but happened within a week of each other.

Carrie's reaction was fairly matter-of-fact:

Although it's scary about what happened to John and his family, but at the same time, people get murdered in America.

Darla had three separate incidents where she was the victim of crime. She was involved in an attempted mugging at a shopping centre, was a victim of the 'date rape drug' at a nightclub, and was robbed of R800 (approximately \$188) at an automated bank teller. Amazingly, throughout most of this she remained very resilient:

I don't see crime as a reason for not coming here. Having my money stolen and almost being mugged was a horrible fluke, and kind of my fault as I guess I should have been more careful. Stuff like that doesn't happen to me in the States, but it still didn't upset me too much.

Although after the drugging incident, I went to the med centre on campus the next day and the nurse told me that often people will pay the bartenders to spike a drink. It was very scary because the nurse made it sound like it happens all the time. I told the bartender the next time I went and she said "you know honey, that happens". I mean I totally freaked. That never happens at home. I mean I've never met anyone that it's happened to before.

Faye had an incident where she was involved in an attempted mugging, and although it initially frightened her, she accepted this occurrence as a fact of life in South Africa.

Adam recounts his experiences with crime and his comparison to crime in the States:

And there's the theft. My food keeps getting stolen out the refrigerator. It's really irritating. We tried to lock it up but we share the fridge and it just doesn't work, so stuff keeps getting stolen. I left my watch lying outside and 20 minutes later I went back and it was gone. In the States it would be in lost and found. Not here. It's just gone. I am so used to being able to go out and leave my door open and nothing would happen. I'm so used to no crime and here it's so different. It doesn't make me worry. It makes me mad. I sympathize with people who can't afford stuff, and if they would ask me, I'd give it to them, but I have a problem when people take things. I get cranky.

Emily mentioned that she was also a victim of an attempted mugging at a local shopping centre and that three of her female friends were also victims of the 'date rape drug' at nightclubs in Durban. On reflection, she, like Darla, placed a part of the blame for the attempted mugging on herself:

It was my fault. I know better than to keep my stuff where I can't see it. Strangely enough I wasn't upset by it. I don't come from a big city, and stuff like that doesn't happen to me in the States, so I've never been in physical danger, but it still didn't upset me too much.

Ben stated his frustration with the media coverage on crime and how it differs from what he is used to in the States:

A kid on campus was murdered down at the market. One went missing and we don't know what happened. It saddened me that this wasn't big news on the TV or radio; it's just so commonplace here. There was a kid on my home campus who died and it was all around campus and in the newspapers, but here it just happens so often, the society is numb to it, which is really sad.

A lot of international students like to bullshit each other about the safety, saying stuff like 'it's fine here'. But when push comes to shove, it is dangerous. People do get attacked and mugged and murdered.

Adam stated that he had a sense that sooner or later he would become a victim of crime:

I feel like it's just a matter of time till something happens, you know. Because I had this experience with some guy being highjacked at gunpoint right behind us, and a student from France got knifed in the chest last semester. One of my friends was shot at on the Bluff.

All of the participants stated that they had food stolen from the communal kitchens in their dormitories on a regular basis and that the security guards at each of the

dormitories were not as vigilant as they would have liked.

4.5.13 Fulfilment of Expectations

As stated in Chapter Two (cf 2.7.1) one of the aims of this research was to determine what the expectations of the student participants were and whether or not they were fulfilled.

Weissman and Furnham (1987:323) suggested (cf 2.7.1) in their preliminary study of expectations and short-term travellers that “expectations lead to adjustment particularly if too ambitious expectations, in the sense that adaptation will be easy and beneficial, are not fulfilled. On the other hand, if expectations are unrealistically low, it may be that the person does not seek out the opportunities to fully realize the potential of the environment and may, by a self-fulfilment strategy, become depressed. In other words, the greater the disparity between prior expectations and fulfilled expectation is directly related to mental health.”

Martin and Rohrlich (1991:39) define expectations, in the role of study-abroad, as *predeparture concerns about salient aspects of the sojourn* (cf 2.7.1). This section will cover the prior expectations of each of the participants and a self-evaluation of whether or not they were fulfilled.

4.5.13.1 Adam’s Expectations

In a sense, Adam was an anomaly in the group of participants in many ways. He evinced none of the typical expectations regarding his study-abroad experience, nor none of the typical goals. His primary expectation was that Durban would be a great location for surfing, which he found that it was. He expected to have more time to devote to his sport, but found that the academic demands of the Architecture school were greater than anticipated and so limited his access to the beach. In that sense, his expectations were unfulfilled, but instead of producing a negative perception of his experience as Martin and Rohrlich (1991:39) state is the usual outcome of unfulfilled hopes (cf 2.7.1), it spurred him on to extend his study-abroad programme for another semester and perhaps for the entire degree programme.

The other expectations that Adam had regarding his experience lay in the realm of

academics and race relations.

Academically, Adam expected that architecture would demand less of him than it actually did and that the type of instruction would have more interaction with the professors.

As to race, Adam stated that due to the racial history of South Africa and the legacy of apartheid, his expectations in this area were different from the reality:

I expected more black on white racism when it's mostly white on black. It was a shock to see the white on black racism here. We don't have that at home. I know they had apartheid not too long ago and there are remnants of that here, that's pretty clear.

He goes on to define his level of expectations:

I didn't have any definite expectations, I just knew it would be really different and that's what it's been. Completely different from home in every way. Disappointed? No, not at all, but I wish the campus were right on the beach, like I thought it was going to be. Without a car, it's hard to get around.

4.5.13.2 Ben's Expectations

Ben stated that he purposely did not form many expectations as he believed that to do so, would negatively affect his experience, should they not be met. He came with what he described as “*superficial expectations*”. The expectations he did have, concerned his prior perception of Durban, as a less urbanized and cosmopolitan city:

The city is more built up than I expected. I knew that Africa wasn't huts and lions. I think to the extent that Durban is a far more developed and modern city, I think I misgauged what to expect. I think I expected a more Ensenada, Mexico type city. I mean that didn't matter, but it didn't match the picture in my head.

Meeting someone on his campus who had come to Durban on a study-abroad programme influenced Ben's expectations on what the people were like. He believed

that this assisted him in forming correct expectations and eased his adjustment into the South African culture.

Ben also believed that his expectations regarding making friends and meeting people were far exceeded:

I thought it would be more of a challenge making friends and meeting people. But it's much easier than I thought.

It's amazing how accepting the college culture is. You move into your residence and everyone helps, without you asking. When you wonder around the college, people stop and ask if you're lost. I was expecting something analogous to how we in the States would respond and how we would receive people in the States. The big barrier would be once we found out they were only here for six months, we'd be a bit leery about making friendships as they wouldn't be here that long.

Ben stated that he had formed no prior expectation regarding the academics at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus.

4.5.13.3 Carrie's Expectations

Carrie also stated that her expectations of South Africa in terms of urbanization were different than the reality she was faced with when she arrived, although this was not a disappointment to her. She also stated that she expected to be more concerned for her personal safety than she actually was.

Carrie's goals shaped, to a large extent, her expectations. Her goals of personal change while on the sojourn of study-abroad were not achieved and to some extent, defined her experience as less than successful. This agrees with Shannon (1995:6), in that students who hope that the study-abroad experience will change inherent personal problems will no doubt be disappointed (cf 2.7.6).

Expecting that this experience would change her in the sense of making her more outgoing and confident, Carrie expressed disappointment that this had not happened and therefore, her ability to make friends was less than expected.

Carrie also stated that she expected that the 'Rainbow Nation' would be different in terms of race relations. Due to the fact that apartheid had officially ended 10 years ago, and having read so much in the media that it was a 'New South Africa' she was disappointed to find that this expectation wasn't met:

One preconception that I had was that I thought there would be more of a sense of community here and there isn't. You don't see people mingling. People tend to stay in their own sectors. They still are really separate and that isn't what I expected.

Carrie also believed that although she had prepared intellectually for being a minority in South Africa and anticipated that she would not find it insurmountably difficult; the actual experience was far more complex than she had anticipated and her levels of alienation and the resulting loneliness due to her inability to adapt were not what she was hoping for or expecting:

I knew I was coming as a minority. But I didn't really know, if you know what I mean. It just didn't occur to me that it would hit me like this. It's hard. I don't know how to elaborate.

4.5.13.4 Darla's Expectations

Darla stated that she purposely did not form high expectations, as she was wary of being disappointed:

Generally I don't like to go into things having high expectations because then nothing can be as good as you wanted it to be, nothing can be gained from that. So I didn't expect specific things. I just wanted to go and see what it would be like. But it's so much more than I thought it would be.

However, she did have specific expectations. She expected the level of difficulty in the academic arena to be greater, although at the same time, she did not expect to be academically enriched, which she found that she was, far exceeding all her prior expectations.

She had also formed expectations on the treatment of Americans in South Africa and found that despite her expectation that the current American government, in her opinion, was not treating South Africa especially well, she found that South Africans were far less anti-American than she anticipated (cf 2.7.3).

To some extent, Darla came to South Africa with expectations that the organisation and levels of student assistance on campus would be comparable to what she had at her home institution. She admits to being surprised and disappointed in this area.

She also expected that men in South Africa would be similar to the men in the United States, but found them far more aggressive and predatory. Darla also agreed with Ben and Carrie in that she expected the lifestyle to be less similar to that of Europe and the United States:

I didn't expect much, but I did think it would be totally different. I didn't expect that it would be this mellow and calm and people are incredibly sweet and classes are slower. The nightlife is like London, it's amazing. Everyone is dancing, having a great time, not everyone is getting drunk and sitting and watching TV. It's much better than home in a lot of ways.

4.5.13.5 Emily's Expectations

Emily was the only participant who expected Durban to be more urbanized, rather than less. She believed that Durban would be similar to a major U.S. city in atmosphere, however, with none of the beauty that she found in Durban.

Emily arrived with expectations of fitting into the White culture and being able to form friendships with this racial grouping, as she believed that they would have more commonalities:

What I've found is that I don't have much luck with white South Africans being very nice. I've met three other South Africans who happen to be white and they haven't been nasty, but really unfriendly. It was really strange. It was like I

didn't expect to be treated better because I'm white among them but I expected to feel comfortable but it was like this is awful!

Emily also expected South Africa to have to have a more political and racist attitude, with her treatment, as a White, being less than cordial. However, except within the White ethnic group, she found herself to be accepted far more than she had anticipated.

Emily also expected differences between South Africa and the United States, but not as many as she found. To Emily, expecting slight differences from her home culture, the culture she began to immerse herself in was delightfully rich, yet complex and at times, difficult to comprehend. Initially, she was baffled by the perceptions South Africans had of her as being rich and politically naïve as well as ignorant of life in South Africa:

Also, they expect me to be really ignorant. Not to know much about Africa or where countries are or that I would believe that lions roam all over the place and that people are running around in the bush, instead of living in cities.

Emily expected a higher level of awareness and knowledge concerning America and Americans amongst South Africans, and although this was not the case, she viewed this rather than a disappointment, as an opportunity to teach others about herself and her country of origin.

She also had expected, from talking to people who had previously studied abroad at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Westville Campus, that the level of academics would be much easier, instead of which she found it to be extremely tasking and very engaging.

Emily did not expect any changes in herself or in her perception of the United States, yet found that these were the major outcomes of her stay in South Africa.

4.5.13.6 Faye's Expectations

Faye was one participant who was disappointed by the level of urbanization in South Africa, and viewed this as a negative aspect, in that she felt South Africa was emulating America rather than developing its own culture.

Faye also expected higher levels of racism, particularly amongst Blacks and Whites, but this was not what she found:

I anticipated more overt displays of racism. But I haven't seen much of that. I think there's more racism in the States than here. I think I was expecting more racial tension than I've seen. I expected more Black resentment of Whites, but what I've found is that there is more resentment against the Indian community by the Black people. I think it's because of opportunities and the role that Indians play in the communities. They are the shop owners. They are exploitative. I've heard that on a number of occasions. People tell me you can't trust Indians. So this isn't what I expected.

Faye anticipated not only learning more about the African culture but also a high level of acceptance amongst the South African Black population, and was very pleased when her expectations proved well founded:

This is what I hoped for. What I wanted it to be. It's great. It's fantastic. I think that's why I wanted to stay for a year.

Faye admitted that although she tried not to form preconceptions regarding personal safety and the level of crime in South Africa, it was hard not to, as to her, this was the main topic of American media in reference to South Africa as well as the main topic of her home institution's pre-departure programme. However, this expectation proved incorrect, as she believed that it was no different than in the United States, and she commented that she felt far more at home than she expected to.

4.5.14 Living Conditions

Five of the focus group participants indicated that more information regarding living conditions of American study-abroad participants in South Africa is necessary (cf 4.2.8). Having such knowledge would enable study-abroad programme administrators in the United States to more accurately inform potential study-abroad students who may be considering South Africa as a destination as well as allay whatever reservations or fears such students might have regarding living conditions.

This section covers the information the student participants shared regarding their living conditions and dormitory experiences at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus as well as their preferences of habitat. All of the participants resided in various on-campus dormitories during the entire programme.

4.5.14.1 Choice of Habitat

All of the participants indicated that they far preferred the option of dormitory life to that of a homestay with a host family. One participant stated that if the only option was that of a homestay, she would have viewed that as a major deterrent to her choice of campuses and most likely would not have come.

Although Baty and Dold (1977:63) state that, according to their research, homestays allow students to have the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the host culture by providing opportunities to cross economic and social as well as cultural boundaries and give them an experience that is far from the normal university setting (cf 2.7.3), the findings based on this study show that the participants of this study believed that they had achieved a higher level of cross economic, social and cultural immersion via the dormitory stay and also this experience considerably increased their experiential learning. Also, many of the participants stated that one of their goals was to experience the '*college life*' in South Africa and that by participating in a homestay; this would not have been possible.

The six participants indicated that the following presented barriers to their participation in a homestay programme:

Barriers to host family habitat:

1. loss of personal freedom; i.e. acquiring 'another set of parents';
2. unintentional breaking of social mores or taboos;
3. loss of personal space;
4. fear of the unknown;

The reasons that the participants preferred the dormitory lifestyle were given as follows:

Reasons for preferring dormitory habitat:

1. ability to experience authentic South African college life;
2. ability to make friends more easily;
3. ability to experience more forms of cultural, economic and social diversity due to other international students from various countries being residents as well as people from various walks of life;
4. more flexibility in lifestyle.

Ben and Emily indicated that they believed that the ideal situation would be one in which they lived in the dormitory, but had the option of homestays on the weekends.

The fear of doing something that would culturally offend her homestay hosts as well as homestay being a major deterrent to her participation in study-abroad was expressed by Emily:

I think it would have been an interesting experience and now that I'm here I think I might have enjoyed it but I think it would have been enough to deter me from coming if I had to live with a host family. My biggest worry coming here has been doing something that would offend people culturally; doing something here that was culturally unacceptable but something that at home would be fine like coming home at 3 am. If I was living with a host family I would be worried that I would be doing those things.

Carrie indicated that although she was glad that she had the dormitory experience, should she come back to South Africa to further her studies at a later stage, she would choose to live in an apartment:

If I were to come back, though, now that I've already been here, I think I might want to be in an apartment. But as a first time student here, I'm glad I had the dorm experience, it really helped me meet people, get to know the campus. I think it was important to be on campus for the first semester.

Adam had this comment with regard to homestays and the cultural and social enrichment he found in dormitory life:

That's hard. It's the luck of the draw. It's kind of like having a roommate. You either get one you really like or one you hate. It's the same with host families. I would have lived with a host family, but there was that fear of getting the family from hell. I'd like a family, if I knew that we'd get along. It's just hard to know that in advance. I wouldn't like to be with people who tried to be my parents, who tried to restrict my freedom. You're close to school in the dorms, the activities on campus, but you do need transportation. But for the semester abroad student, it works really well. You meet people, learn a lot more.

4.5.14.2 Experiences of Dormitory Life

As mentioned, the entire participant pool preferred dormitory life. As with any living situation there are positive and negative aspects. This section deals with the experiences the participants had as a result of dormitory life.

All of the participants indicated that food stealing was prevalent in the dormitories. Darla expresses her concern over this as well as the fact that the dormitory security guards were not as vigilant as she would have liked (cf 4.5.12):

At first in the dorm we didn't have keys or locks for the refrigerator. The first time I went shopping I spent over R200 on food. It always happens at night. All my milk, like half a gallon of milk, all my sandwiches were taken. This was like four days in a row this would happen. Four of us shared a lock and it was still happening. Then I realized that some people weren't locking it. I guess some people aren't too concerned with it. People take things and then the scary thing is that they just drink out of my milk container, it's just a very violating feeling. We have cards but the security guards don't even check the cards at night.

Negative comments regarding living on campus stated that some of the residences were located very far from the academic buildings and that there was a sense of being trapped on campus as Adam states:

I found myself trapped in residence. I think I would have really liked a car. I think that's absolutely necessary as much as food and shelter. You have to get

out and having a car makes it so much easier. Public transportation is horrible. Cabs are expensive. Combi's are dangerous.

Several participants indicated that they were very happy with the fact that their residences had single rooms, something they were not used to in the United States, as well as having a communal kitchen.

Emily's experience regarding her habitat in South Africa was not exclusively negative, yet she would have preferred apartment living, had that been an option:

I didn't want homestay and I still wouldn't have wanted that, but if there had been a possibility of apartment living I would have preferred that. I had forgotten how much I hate dorm life, but I was reminded and maybe that was good. But I didn't like the dorms when I lived in them in the States and I still don't. The one thing that is nice is that you have your own room here, but they're dirty, people are loud, you don't have much privacy. Food still gets stolen. You get used to it, but you don't like it.

But the good part has been that I met most of my friends through living in the dorms, so I can't say it's been all bad. But I would have preferred an apartment.

4.5.15 Academics

The various facets of what role academics played in the participant's experiences are the topics of this section. This section is divided into two subsections: the quality of the academic experience and the difficulty of the academic experience.

4.5.15.1 Perceptions of Quality

The issue of academic quality, from the participant's point of view, dealt with accessibility to professors and the assistance they are willing to give as well as the ability to question academic viewpoints.

Darla believed that the professors were accessible and makes the point that she was very proactive in making sure that they knew who she was:

I feel comfortable asking questions. In the first few days I went to each of my professors and introduced myself and told them that I was new and new to the system and that I might struggle a bit with the accent. I was worried about that. I didn't know if I could understand everything. But I've had such a wonderful experience in class with all my professors and now they call on me and look to me to say things, and they like it that I do. But I'm taking English subjects and English lends itself to discussions and it's personal, so maybe others don't have the same experience, but my teachers care about being here where at home you don't always get that sense.

Adam's experience in the architecture department was not as positive in that he believed the professors to be inaccessible, highly critical and unfair, and with a different perspective than in the United States, where he found that professors had more of a customer service attitude:

I think that's pretty frustrating. I had to wait ages to see one teacher today and all day while I was trying to talk to him, people came up and asked questions and then he would answer and I felt that I never really got his attention.

I think the professors could be critical without being so demoralizing. In general people seem to care a lot more in the States. The customer is always right. You have to give them what you want or they won't come back. Here, the attitude is different, more arrogant.

Carrie and Emily commented that in their experiences, the ability to contribute to a discussion in class and the availability to have interaction with a professor after class was dependant to a large extent, on the professor. Both participants indicated that they had classes in which their comments and questions were welcome, and others in which they were not. Professors' personalities played a large part in perception of quality, as it did in their home institution. They also came to the conclusion that the British influence on South African education was responsible for much of the differences they perceived in the style of education.

Faye believed that in many instances, the quality of education was better in South Africa. Again, she allied this to personalities in that:

The professor is helpful. Very helpful and as good as or better than back home. She knows her stuff. She's open to questions. I really like her, the paradigm she's working from. She's really committed to the idea of not just learning the information but playing an active role in your learning.

Ben strongly believed that the quality of education he received at this home institution was far superior. He attributes this fact, primarily, to the philosophy of education in the United States as well as to the fact that it is a far more analytical process in America:

The philosophy is very different here. My home institution prides itself on working together with the student, striving for knowledge, truth. The philosophy here is much more like we're privileged to be hearing this wise professor's lecture, what this professor believes concerning the issue. I've come to believe that these professors think they're God. They say they encourage debate, but to a large extent they don't. Very little is discussion based, most is just lectures. I'm not saying there's always a right and a wrong, but some type of discourse would be interesting.

Although on the other hand, it's really about philosophy and I don't want to give the impressions that academics here are really inferior. They're not, but they are different. But does it matter? It might be true to some extent, but that's not what study-abroad is all about. Study-abroad is not about academics, I don't know anyone who thinks it is.

Emily, on the other hand, disagreed with Ben's comments to some extent in that her experience with one of her professor's was richly rewarding:

I've had really good teachers in the States and so have been really lucky that I've been really motivated. But this teacher is really excited and motivated by what he is teaching and that is rare. In the states you have this academia

problem where the teachers think they're better than everyone else and the teachers talk to their students like they're six and they're like 'your opinion doesn't matter cause it's wrong because you're a student'. And he is just really excited about what he is teaching but really excited about what we have to say and he stops to listen. He welcomes questions. He's also a young guy, he's written a book so he can't be too young, but he looks about 28. He's very charismatic, he's having us read Hobbs at the moment and I'm finding it very difficult and somehow he's gotten me very excited about reading it.

4.5.15.2 Perceptions of Academic Difficulty

The issue of academic difficulty deals with the comparison to the level of difficulty of academic coursework at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus versus the level of difficulty at the participant's home campus.

Ben also related the perception of academic difficulty, or lack of it, to the philosophy of education in South Africa compared to that in the United States:

I think it's a different kind of philosophy of education than here, so it's probably not right to say that it's easier or harder. It's just different, it's much more formal. My home institution is one of these places where you step into a classroom, it's you and the professor, even if they're giving a lecture, it's much more dynamic: 'let's interact, let's have a discussion; hey, the Supreme court said this about the Brown review board on education, what does everyone think about it?'

The deeper philosophical difference here, which is the one I'm having a little bit of difficulty trying to grapple with, is: "we know the right answer and we are imparting it to you" whereas in the States is "we have our opinions, and we're going to be really clear about this", but the goal is to explore and find the truth, as clichéd as that may sound, rather than just tell you what it is.

Adam described the workload as far greater, however he did not equate this with a higher level of academic difficulty, but with a higher level of requirements and the time

necessary to complete them, which he believed was greater than at his home institution:

I've worked hard. It's a good habit to be acquainted with hard work. I've learned some new things that will help me out. In architecture, you learn that for every new thing you learn there are 20 more things you should know. It's not that it's harder here, it's just there seems to be so much more busy work, that it takes so much longer to get it all done than at home. But maybe that's a good thing; as once you're an architect, people's lives depend on how well you learned your craft.

Emily commented that her expectations in the areas of academic difficulty were challenged in that American students who had been to the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Westville Campus previously had commented to her that the academic level was much easier, when in fact, she found it very academically challenging at the Howard Campus.

All of the participants, with the exception of Ben, indicated that they found the fact that the academics at the host institution to be very exam driven, far different from their home institutions and this added to their conviction that this made for a more difficult academic environment. However, most of the participants had an opportunity to take their classes for a Pass/Fail mark, rather than a symbol grade, and their alleviated some of the anxiety, as Emily stated:

I am glad I took it pass/fail as I found it really challenging. Part of it is the way the syllabus is set up with the final making up 60% of the final grade. That I'm not used to and it was a bit scary because I don't test well. The test taking atmosphere was really, really tense. Rows and rows of desks with loudspeakers and everything is quiet and you're being watched and you can't have bags and it's so different. You can't go to the bathroom without signing in and out, they want your cell phone and it's really not a comfortable atmosphere. So, I'm glad I took the classes' pass/fail, as the system is really hard for me to function in. Also, the classes I took were really challenging. The Zulu class was really tough and the political theory class was hard, but it was interesting.

Several participants commented that the accents of the professors, especially those not from South Africa were difficult to understand, and although that added to their perception of difficulty, they realized that so many notes were given during most of the lectures that understanding the professors made very little difference to their ability to learn the information required of them.

Two of the student participants found language usage and idioms to be an issue in cultural adjustment, which also affected their ability to comprehend academic expectations. However, Ben was the only participant who expressed his sense of enjoyment at the interesting learning experience generated by the differences in idiom usage in South Africa within the academic environment, compared to his home institution:

It's one of these fascinating differences; you have to learn the slang to understand what he (the professor) means. Like he was passing out handouts, he was making the point of not taking one for those who aren't here he said, 'It's not crumpets on a tea tray' and I'm like, what's going on? Then he said 'you can toyi-toyi anywhere' in response to complaints. One of the South Africans in the class leaned over and explained to me that it was a type of protest. The terminology – like 'we'll have a one off on Tuesday', I mean like what the hell does that mean? It was kind of fun being the only student who didn't have any idea at all what was happening. I had a final exam in constitutional law today and the question stated: 'Mr. X had 6 distinctions on his matric', and now am I suppose to guess that this meant he was a good student?

Emily also found that the adjustment to differing expressions and academic references to be a major one:

Everything works so differently and I was so confused for the first three weeks here. I didn't know what a tutorial was, what a DP was; I still don't know what that is.

4.5.16 Experiential Learning

This section deals with the topic of learning experiences that the participants stated were important to their level of knowledge and were responsible for various changes in their perceptions of life, but did not occur exclusively as a result of the academic environment.

All of the participants stated that their level of '*experiential learning*' (cf 1.9) far exceeded what they learned in the classroom, which agrees with Hopkins (1999:36) when he states that: 'Immersing oneself in another culture provides new opportunities for learning-by-doing, virtually twenty-four hours a day' (cf 2.7.5).

Abrams and Heller (1978:7) mention that many derogate the value of the non-academic learning process that students who participate in study-abroad programmes undergo, but state that this form of learning can involve a high level of intellectual attainment in understanding and coping with the foreign culture (cf 2.7.5).

The participants described their experiences regarding experiential learning as occurrences that resulted in change in thinking patterns, perceptions, beliefs and values.

In addition to learning about differences in culture, Ben found similarities as well:

Although many things are different, much is the same. I'm still bullshitting with guys about women, the only difference being is that here; I can't pronounce their names.

Changes in behavioural patterns were also as a result of learning and appreciating cultural differences and adopting some of the differences, which were perceived to be better than those found in their home culture.

Darla stated that the enjoyment of simple forms of entertainment, learning that greater interpersonal interaction brought its own rewards and appreciation of a home-culture lifestyle in which health and safety were not in such immediate danger, were the most important learning experiences she had during the programme.

Carrie stated that her increasing understanding of what it was like to be a minority

would affect her life and her behaviour patterns in the future. She also stated that she had learned many things about herself during her time in South Africa, namely:

I found out that although I want to be independent, it's OK to rely on people. I also know now that I can survive and thrive in situations that I used to find fearful. I've learned that I can be homesick and survive. I've gained so much self-confidence; I never expected that the changes would be so many or so profound.

Ben believed that he had learned different perspectives that challenged his former beliefs regarding affirmative action:

It's interesting, because I've always been one of those people with my own politics, as right or wrong as that may be. I oppose affirmative action. I tend to think a lot of the racist whining, especially if its coming from a white person who has some privilege, but nevertheless, I find it very superficial, and very like get over it, stop playing the victim, type thing. I think racism should be opposed, but lets move on. I have a very different attitude here, because you don't have the same arguments of meritocracy on your side. You don't have the civil rights amendment passed 50 years ago. When are you finally going to move on? You can't say with a straight face here – 'When are you going to get over it? Things ended 8 years ago'.

All of the participants indicated that changes of perceptions regarding their own culture had taken place. Political standpoints, quality of life, racial perceptions as well as viewpoints on American lifestyle, as a society of over-consumers were the primary areas in which the participants viewed change of attitude as a result of their time in South Africa.

Faye stated that her opinions on American's attitudes towards education and opportunities in life had changed:

That's the really great thing about South Africa. They're really more appreciative of the basic stuff here. The dream is go to university here. Not go

to a particular university like it is in the States.

Emily realized that her staunch viewpoints might also need adjustment. Her perceptions of activism within the lesbian community were also challenged:

I've also been struggling to put it into words all the things that I've learned here and how this has resulted in personal changes. I think I've met people here that challenge me in areas in my life that I have never been challenged in before. Particularly racially in terms of looking at ways that I think, or the way white people look at a community of colour. Looking at everything from inter-racial relationships, to healthcare, to employment. Looking at my activism in ways that I've never looked at it before. Looking at the queer community as only a white space and not a space for Black women or Latino women or things like that. I see things that I would have never seen in people before and I've learned to identify the reasons that I dislike certain people's behaviours and things like that.

4.5.17 Achievement of Goals

As stated in Chapters One (cf 1.7), one aim of the research was to determine the end of programme outcomes. The American Council on Education (2000:iv) indicates there is very little in the way of prior research that documents the outcomes of study-abroad programmes (cf 1.1). The methods chosen for establishing the end of programme outcomes in this study were to determine to what extent the participants' expectations have been met (4.5.13) as well as to what extent the participant had accomplished their predetermined goals.

The findings of this section deal with the students' perceptions of the outcome of their study-abroad experience based on whether or not their predefined goals had been met.

The participants' goals are listed in Tables 4.1 through 4.6. These goal statements were taken from the information the participants supplied on their biographical data form, which they completed when agreeing to take part in the programme. Although the participants elaborated further on their objectives during the interview process, Faye, Darla and Carrie stated that essentially their goals remained the same, while Ben, Adam

and Emily's goals developed during their sojourn in South Africa.

Adam's goals evolved to include academic learning via the Architecture department and changed to the extent that he enrolled in another semester of study-abroad at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus. He will decide at the end of that semester whether or not he will remain to complete the entire degree programme.

Ben stated that being a normal college student, he chose not to be an analyst, but rather concentrate on enjoying the experience of achieving his goals:

It was a lot more than I hoped it would be. I came here with an open mind. If I were to generalize, I would say that I have undoubtedly done the best that I could have done. From an academic basis to being here on election day, going down to the polls, discussing the elections with them. In terms of making friends, discovering a new culture, undoubtedly I have had an unbelievable experience. In terms of immersing myself in the college culture, I've definitely succeeded in most of goals.

I think that my goals have evolved as I've been here and I think I've accomplished most of what I wanted to. But I've also tried to live a normal college life and part of being a normal college student is not always being the analyst and one who reflects on his experiences, but rather let's go grab a beer and talk about women whose names I can't pronounce.

As Emily states, her goals changed due to her experiences:

I think I have achieved my goals, but I think they've changed from what they were when I first came. When I first got here I was really gung-ho about learning more about Africa and myself. And what it ended up being was learning lots about myself and some things about South Africa. When I go home I'll be able to tell people key things about being here and being in South Africa. But more than that has been internal change and internal growth. So my goals evolved over time. I did learn more about politics, local economy and how it relates to the global economy but the goals shifted towards coming home with

personal growth.

My perception on gender studies has changed and my perception on race has really changed. More in the area of race in the States in a positive way. For a long time I thought being race blind was a good idea, but I've learned more and more that by doing that you leave out a lot of things that are really important. Especially in regards to feminism. I come from a white perspective and that negates the fact that there are other perspectives from women of colour and that I think is something I'll be more aware of when I go home to the States.

Emily's experience in the development and achieving of her goals, agreed with what Twombly stated (1995:2) would be a desirable outcome of study-abroad in that while it is neither desirable nor possible to change the host country, it is important to assist women in understanding how gender roles differ in other countries so that they may be better prepared to deal with the issues as they arise (cf 2.7.4.1).

Although Hensley and Sell (1979:406) state that "most empirical studies have found relatively little evidence of significant attitude change" (cf 2.7.6) these findings reveal that not only did change in levels of self-esteem occur but also significant changes in attitude as evidenced by the participants' comments during the interview process. Whether the study-abroad experience produces lasting change can only be determined by studies that focus on re-entry and long term change issues.

All of the participants stated that their predetermined goals had been achieved. According to Emily the fulfilment of her goals added to the perceived value of her sojourn:

I expected to be way ready to come home long before this point. I am ready to go home now. I miss my family, but I've never felt that I needed to go home. I think that's because everything I wanted to accomplish, everything I felt I needed to accomplish, I did accomplish. I've been really happy, I really like Durban and the experience I've had.

Carrie stated that her personal goals of acquiring more independence, more self-

reliance had definitely been achieved, far more than she had anticipated.

Darla's goal of leaning to live the '*South African lifestyle*' was met and resulted in many levels of experiential learning:

Any young person getting away from their comfort zone, what they are used to and finding joy in where they are, is a joy in itself. Now I know I could live anywhere and find happiness. Knowing that I could be thrust into this completely new environment and this totally new life with different people and different social situations and everything and still be OK, it's a very good feeling.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter provided descriptive and background information on the two distinct groups of participants; the focus group and the student participant group. In addition, this chapter presented the findings of the in-depth interview with the focus group as well as the patterns and themes identified during the diachronic series of three in-depth interviews with each of the six student participants who were studying-abroad in South Africa at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard campus from January to June, 2004.

There are many conclusions and recommendations for further study that can be drawn from the findings of this chapter, most of which will be dealt with extensively in Chapter Five.

However, the main findings include the fact that there is a need for a wide variety of extensive information regarding non-traditional study abroad destinations by study-abroad administrators, information which is ideally produced by the participants of such programmes. Such information would allow study-abroad administrators the knowledge by which they might more efficiently and accurately promote less traditional study-abroad destinations to appropriate study-abroad candidates.

In answering the main problem statement posed in Chapter One of this thesis, "What

are the life experiences of the American undergraduate who participates in a study-abroad programme in South Africa?” the answer would be that, through a thorough literature review and as a result of the three diachronic interviews with the student participants, the life experiences of the American undergraduate student in South Africa are many and varied, with the least important, from the student point of view, being those that dealt with academics.

Cultural involvement, which was the main source of experiential learning, was viewed by all of the participants to be the most important aspect of the sojourn. All of the student participants’ goals and expectations revolved around the cultural, rather than the academic experience.

There seems to be no main inhibiting factor which causes South Africa to be one of the statistically lowest recipient nations of American study-abroad undergraduate students, but rather a combination of factors. Misperceptions of Africa both on the part of the home institution and the student body, lack of information and assistance from home institutions as well as an academic syllabus at the home institution that lacks focus on areas within Africa, which in turn, cannot inspire interest in specific African nations, seem to be the main factors found during this research which inhibit American undergraduate students from participating in study-abroad programmes within Africa and specifically South Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

How much a dunce that has been sent to roam

Excels a dunce who has been kept at home.

William Cowper (1731-1800).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research, as stated in Chapter One (cf 1.5), was to determine the experiences of six American undergraduates while participating in a semester long study-abroad programme at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Howard Campus in South Africa.

The topics of this chapter deal with a summation of the findings of the research, aimed at increasing the participation of American undergraduates in study-abroad programmes in South Africa by determining the areas which attract as well as hinder involvement in such programmes as well as locating specific areas for further research.

5.2 A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS RELATING TO TRADITIONAL BARRIERS IN STUDY-ABROAD

As stated in Chapter Two (cf 2.6), according to Green (2003:10-12), NAFSA (2003:1-29), Booth (1991:40) Sommer (s.a.:2) and Carroll (1996:46-47) the main barriers surrounding non-participation that affect students in their study-abroad decision process are:

- Cost;
- Lack of information;
- Attitude;
- Curricular and academic barriers;
- Personal constraints;
- Institutions and faculty.

This section will examine each of these six areas in relation to the experiences of the six student participants and it will also examine the opinions of the student participants both on both the barriers as well as the attractiveness of South Africa as a study-abroad destination.

5.2.1 Barriers Relating to Issues of Cost

Although the arguments put forward by Norfles and others (cf 2.4.1) in Chapter Two regarding cost as a barrier to study-abroad are compelling and valid, in most study-abroad situations, the student participants in this study, despite several participants describing themselves as below the average income level (cf 4.3), did not find cost to be a barrier to their participation or consideration of participation in a study-abroad programme. In fact, the majority of students, both from the non-profit organization and the university consortium groups found that spending one semester in South Africa was indeed cheaper than remaining at their home institution.

5.2.2 Barriers Relating to Issues of Lack of Information

This section discusses the various issues that deal with information regarding the study-abroad experience.

5.2.2.1 Information from Home Institution

Although several participants found their home institution somewhat lacking in ability to provide information on study-abroad in South Africa as well as assistance during the process of application (cf 4.5.4.1), lack of information was not perceived to be an insurmountable barrier by any of the respondents. Those who could not find appropriate assistance via their home institutions' study-abroad departments, found it via the Internet. As stated in Chapter Two (cf 2.5.1), there is no scarcity of information on the Internet regarding study-abroad programmes in South Africa.

5.2.2.2 Information Regarding Pre-departure

The topic of predeparture information was an area of concern for the focus group (cf 4.2.7). It was felt that it would be desirable to learn more about the methodology and presentation of such programmes to ensure that the participants of study-abroad programmes were adequately prepared. Evaluation of such programmes was also

mentioned.

The experiences of the six student participants (cf 4.5) were as varied as the participants themselves. Lack of information was not viewed as a major barrier by the student participants, although the majority of them believed that what information that was supplied in this area to be inadequate, there is very little consensus on how to assist an institution in improving or remedying pre-departure programmes, as was requested by the focus group.

Based on the findings of this research, required information on preparation for study-abroad is a very subjective process, and as such, a uniform methodology or system of delivery will ultimately fail to meet the needs of each individual. At best, it would appear that a varied approach involving the students with meetings with home institution personnel, past students, as well as materials on the Internet, booklets and recommended readings is the best that an institution can hope to do to meet the wide-ranging learning styles and information requirements of pending sojourners.

5.2.2.3 Host Institution and Arrival Information

Although lack of information from the host institution cannot be viewed as a hindrance to the initiation of a study-abroad programme, as the student is either already in residence or about to be, it can negatively impact upon the experience and thereby lead the study-abroad student to actively discourage others from participating in a similar undertaking.

The participants in the focus group were interested in learning more regarding this aspect of information. Negative comments were made by the student participants regarding lack of information supplied by the host institution prior to arrival (cf 4.5.4) as well as upon arrival (cf 4.5.5). It would appear that this was one of the major criticisms of the programme by the student participants and was viewed as a major shortcoming of the host institution in their overall evaluation of the programme.

5.2.3 Attitude as a Barrier

As stated in Chapter Two (cf 2.6.3), attitude towards the possibility of study-abroad

poses one of the largest barriers to participation in such a programme. The term ‘*attitude*’ can encompass a variety of nuances, but for the purpose of this research, ‘*attitude*’ will refer to: family, friend and home institution influences, language influences and academic relevance.

5.2.3.1 Attitudes of Family, Friends and Home Institution

Despite a few of the participants indicating that their family and friends expressed concerns over personal safety while on a study-abroad programme in South Africa, as well as negative attitudes towards the country in general, the overall reaction for all of the participants was one of support, not only from family and friends, but also from their home institution (cf 4.5.3) and thus, did not constitute a barrier to study-abroad for these participants.

5.2.3.2 Attitudes Towards Language

Language acquisition was not an item of importance for any of the student participants, nor was it viewed as a barrier to the programme as it was a requirement for only one of the student participants (cf 4.5.1.3). In fact, one of the primary reasons for choosing South Africa as a destination for study-abroad as stated by all of the participants was that it was an English speaking country (cf 4.5.1.3).

5.2.3.3 Attitudes Towards Academic Relevance as a Barrier

As mentioned in Chapter Two (cf 2.6.3), attitudes towards participating in a study-abroad programme are influenced by attitudes towards academic relevance. As shown in Tables 4.1 through 4.6 none of the participants indicated that there was a primary interest in academics when stating their goals for the study-abroad experience, thus negating attitudes towards academic relevance as a barrier towards study-abroad.

5.2.4 Issues Dealing with Curricular and Academic Barriers

Although research has shown (cf 2.6.4) that particular fields of study, such as engineering and medicine, not only offer barriers in and of themselves to participation in a study-abroad programme, differences in international curriculum and academic systems additionally challenge students in terms of compliance with home institution requirements.

All of the student participants indicated that South African institutions in general and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus specifically offered a wide array of academic programmes which fit into their field of study requirements. In addition, all of the participants with the exception of Carrie (cf 4.4.1.8) stated that they had no difficulty in registering for classes which fit in with their programme of study at their home institution, thus revealing that issues regarding curricular and academic barriers were non-existent in this study.

5.2.5 Personal Constraints as Barriers

As mentioned in Chapter Four (cf 4.4.11), all of the student participants had to deal with issues of personal constraints prior to and during the study-abroad programme. Those most frequently mentioned were missing family, friends and romantic attachments, their home institutions and the involvement on campus.

However, all of the respondents indicated that although these were real and serious issues for them, there were not insurmountable barriers as the study-abroad programme was short-term and the personal sacrifices that came with leaving one's comfort zone were minimal compared to the experience of being in South Africa.

5.2.6 Institutional and Faculty Barriers

As stated in Chapter Two (cf 2.6.6), barriers relating to institutions and faculty can be traced to a variety of causes. In terms of the student participants' findings, it was believed that the home and primarily the host institution could have had more staff, more information and more organization to ease the difficulty in finding information on South Africa, going through the process of applying for a study-abroad programme and in ease of settling in at the host institution.

5.2.7 Student Participants' Opinions on the Barriers to Study-Abroad in South Africa

Of all the traditional barriers listed in the literature review (cf 2.6), none presented insurmountable obstacles to the six student participants as evidenced by the fact that they did spend one semester in a study-abroad programme in South Africa.

At the conclusion of the third interview, each participant was asked what he or she believed was the reason that so few students chose to study-abroad and in particular why even fewer students chose South Africa. Their consensus of opinion centred on four main issues:

- American college students are too comfortable in their own '*bubble*' of college life and actively choose not to leave it;
- Anticipating the personal constraints, or personal sacrifices, that confronts a student when contemplating a prolonged absence from their home country is a very real barrier to many students' participation in study-abroad programmes (cf 2.6.5). Although all of the participants indicated that such sacrifices exist (cf 4.5.11), they rationalized that the programme was short-term and the benefits involved in study-abroad far outweighed the personal sacrifices that they might encounter and as such, found that personal constraints do not present enough negative factors to truly be considered a barrier. However, the participants all indicated that for most of their friends and acquaintances, the personal sacrifices involved in a semester of study-abroad were viewed as insurmountable.
- The personality required to chose a less traditional destination is one that involves independence, self-reliance and more than the average amount of courage, which were felt not to be a common characteristics amongst American college students as voiced by the participants (2.7.3);
- South Africa is misrepresented in that all of the advertising brochures and websites focus on the rural aspects of the country and do not give a true picture of the country's advanced nature, thus limiting the attractiveness of the destination to only those students who seek a rural experience and discouraging those who seek a more first world experience, or a combination of the two.

5.2.8 Student Participant's Opinions on the Attractiveness of South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination

Much of this research has centred on the difficulties imposed and obstacles to be overcome when considering a study-abroad programme. Learning more about the barriers to study-abroad so that future plans can include methodologies by which to

overcome them is important. It is also relevant to know the positive aspects of a particular programme in order to be better positioned to promote it.

According to the student participants, there were four main areas that made South Africa the destination of choice:

- *Language.* As stated in 4.2.6 by a focus group participant, and confirmed by the majority of student participants (cf 4.5.1.7), South Africa was an appealing destination in that it is an English speaking country requiring no additional language ability or language learning.
- *Cost.* All of the students on the institutional consortium programme, and the majority of the non-profit organization's students stated that spending a semester in South Africa was cheaper than attending their home institution for the same duration of time, making South Africa an attractive cost saving destination.
- *Location.* As many of the students stated (cf Figure 4.1-4.6), their goals in spending a semester abroad were not academically linked. As such, attending an institution located near the beach, in a sub-tropical climate and perceived to be a place where they could have fun as well as attend classes was extremely attractive to them.
- *Infrastructure.* The fact that South Africa is a developed nation in an underdeveloped setting, with a strong African flavour was of immense appeal to each of the student participants (cf 4.5.1.8). Having the ability to offer all of the first world amenities in addition to providing a taste of the exotic and the additional benefits of a wide variety of flora and fauna, in a relatively inexpensive environment were major factors in their selection of South Africa as their study-abroad destination.

5.3 A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS RAISED BY THE FOCUS GROUP

This section summarizes the responses of the student participants in relation to the topics raised by the focus group (cf 4.2).

5.3.1 Expectations, Achievement of Goals and Evaluation

As stated in Chapter Four (cf 4.2.1.1), the participants of the focus group were concerned that the perception formed by many people of the African continent is extremely inaccurate and this would negatively affect the students' expectations. Other items of interest concerned student self-preparation and whether or not this shaped student expectations in any way.

The focus group also expressed interest in learning more regarding the students' ability to achieve goals as well as the end of programme evaluation (cf 4.2.1.2).

5.3.1.1 Student Expectations vs. Reality

Based on the student participants' responses, it would appear that all of the students had fairly accurate pre-arrival expectations about South Africa, due to a large extent, to their own attempts at learning as much as they could about their destination prior to arrival (cf 4.5.4.3). Primarily using the Internet, the students gleaned information regarding South Africa; they also read books and used information provided by their home institutions to form their expectations.

The student participant's descriptions of their expectations of the programme (cf 4.5.1.3) were centred on five major areas, all of which, other than that of race relations, matched the reality of their experiences:

- *Cultural*. A belief that the study-abroad programme would teach them about the country and people of South Africa (cf 4.5.7);
- *Enjoyment*. A general belief that the study-abroad programme would offer them a variety of new experiences that would be entertaining (4.5.1.9);
- *Race Relations*. All of the participants had expectations of how race relations were perceived in South Africa, which were challenged during their stay (4.5.9);
- *Differences*. All student participants expected to be confronted by major differences in lifestyle, academic atmosphere and interpersonal relationships (cf 4.5.7);
- *Safety*. The student participants were all expecting to deal with issues of personal safety during their stay (cf 4.5.12).

5.3.1.2 Student Achievement of Goals

The focus group (cf 4.2.1.2) expressed interest in learning whether or not the study-abroad programme allowed for achievement of the student participants' goals. While several of the student participants' goals evolved during the sojourn, all of the student participants (cf 4.5.17) indicated that their goals had been achieved during the programme.

A statement of each student participant's goals is listed in Figures 4.1 through 4.6. As stated previously, (cf 4.5.17) these goals were not academically related, and although fairly nebulous in nature, most centred on cultural involvement.

5.3.1.3 Student Evaluation of Programme

The focus group was interested in learning more about how the student participants evaluated their time in South Africa and whether it was considered to be a beneficial programme.

As stated in Chapters One (cf 1.7) one goal of this research was to determine the end of programme outcomes based on determining to what extent the student participants' goals and expectations had been met (cf 4.5.13). This information was also obtained via the student participants' perceptions of self-fulfilment of their sojourn (cf 4.5.17).

While all of the student participants indicated that they believed that the study-abroad programme was beneficial and worthwhile in that the majority of their goals and expectations had been met or exceeded, there were two main areas which they believed could be improved upon:

- *Home institution information.* The majority of the participants indicated that there was room for improvement in their home institution's ability to promote South Africa as a destination for study-abroad as well as within their organizational capabilities in offering assistance once the decision had been made by a student to participate in such a programme (cf 4.5.4) by offering more information in areas such as academic preparedness, campus life, contact information of previous study-abroad students in Durban as well as more information about the city of Durban;

- *Host institution assistance.* The majority of the student participants believed that the host institution, specifically that of the international student office, was lacking in its ability to provide assistance and information in a timely manner (cf 4.54.5).

The value placed on the experience of study abroad is, from a student's point of view, largely dependant of the ease of adjustment; academically, socially and from his or her personal comfort level point of view. If there is no support on the ground or within the institution, then the student's experience, both during the program and in his or her relating of the experience to peers and family after the program, will suffer. Hence, the value of an infrastructure such as the non-profit organization offers. It is possible that the non-profit organization students' contacts on their home campus will receive a far more favourable feedback than those students from the university consortiums due to the fact that many consortium students experienced high levels of frustration when dealing with local administrators.

Despite some criticisms of the home and host institutions, all of the respondents stated that they would again choose Durban, South Africa as their study-abroad destination.

5.3.2 Issues of Ethnicity and Race

As stated in Chapter Four (cf 4.2.2) the focus group participants expressed an interest in learning more about the experiences of study-abroad students that were shaped by race.

5.3.2.1 Heritage Seekers

The experience of students of colour who participate in study-abroad programmes within Africa was an area of interest for the focus group (cf 4.2.2.1).

Faye, the only African-American student participant chose Africa as a study-abroad destination primarily because she was of African descent (cf 4.3.2) although she realized that it was not her country of racial origin, she believed that learning more about the African experience (4.5.9) was a pertinent and useful experience for her and expressed her belief that the study-abroad programme exceeded all of her expectations (cf 4.5.13.6).

5.3.2.2 Experiences Based on Race

Learning more about what student participants experienced in terms of race was a topic mentioned in the focus group interview (cf 4.2.2.2).

All of the student participants indicated that to some extent their experiences were affected by race, either by being within a majority or a minority for the first time (4.5.9). Despite initial adaptations to readjusting to differences in racial perceptions, none of the student participants indicated that race presented overriding difficulties in their experience in South Africa, although all of the participants found that race relations in South Africa differed greatly from those in the United States.

5.3.3 Sexual Orientation

The focus group also was interested in learning more regarding issues of acceptability and adaptation of non-heterosexual participants in a study-abroad programme in South Africa (cf 4.2.3).

Of all the student participants, only Emily described herself as being within the non-heterosexual category (cf 4.5.8). Although Emily did find her adaptation to life in South Africa negatively affected due to her sexual orientation, she did not feel persecuted to any extent and found that once the connection had been made which identified her as gay, there was a general acceptance of this facet of her life.

Based on Emily's comments during the interviews, it would seem that female non-heterosexual students do have greater general adaptation concerns, but not to the extent that it negates the experience in any major manner.

5.3.4 Academic Experiences

Another topic in which the focus group expressed interest was within the area of academic experiences, primarily within the following areas:

- *Availability of programmes.* All of the participants indicated that the availability of subject choices was sufficient in that they could find appropriate courses within their field of study or field of interest (4.5.1.6).
- *Perceptions of instruction.* Although all of the participants indicated that they found that the type of instruction differed from their home institution,

and believed that this difference lay in the fact that the South African educational system was British based, none of the participants evinced major problems with the level or type of instruction (cf 4.5.15).

- *Attitudes towards different academic points of view.* As in any academic environment, there are many opinions regarding the correctness of varying points of view. In this study, some of the participants found that the academic point of view as presented by the various professors was one which they were familiar with and with which they agreed, while other participants did not. None of the participants stated that the South African professor's academic point of view was insupportable (cf 4.5.15).
- *Learning style and preparation.* To some extent, the participants found that the learning style was somewhat different than what they were used to on their home campus, primarily within the testing structure and method of delivery, which most participants reported as finding a bit daunting (cf 4.5.15).
- *Level of difficulty.* Some participants reported that they found this to be a challenging academic experience, while others did not (cf 4.5.15.2). There was no consensus of opinion regarding the differences in level of difficulty regarding academic coursework at the South African institution versus the participants' home institution, which tends to infer that as in the United States, some students find academic life challenging to a lesser or greater extent, and thus it could be concluded that for all intents and purposes, the level of academic difficulty is similar to that of the United States.

5.3.5 Cultural Immersion

The focus group expressed an interest in learning more regarding the participants' ability to immerse themselves into the local culture as well as learning more about the relationships formed during the study-abroad experience (cf 4.2.52). This section covers the most salient points dealing with cultural immersion and forming of relationships.

5.3.5.1 Local Population

The participants all expressed satisfaction with the level of involvement within the local community, in as much as they desired to become involved (cf 4.5.7). Travel outside

the campus environment, including visits to local destinations and those further a field added to their sense of immersion with the local population as well as overall satisfaction with the study-abroad experience.

5.3.5.2 Community Service

Interest was shown by the focus group as to whether or not students who chose to become active in community service were given the opportunity to do so (cf 4.2.5.4). The results of this study show that where a student had an interest in pursuing community service involvement, there were options and opportunities available on and off the host campus environment to do so (cf 4.5.7.1.c).

5.3.5.3 American Lifestyle as a Barrier to Immersion

None of the participants found that their perceived or real American lifestyle was a barrier to immersion (cf 4.5.7.1). Other than trying to dispel the myth that all Americans were rich, most of the participants believed that they were not at all different than their host country nationals in that many were poorer, but some were wealthier, as was the fact at their home institution, and this did not present any insurmountable barriers to immersion.

5.3.5.4 Relationships with Other Students

All of the student participants found it relatively easy to befriend their host country counterparts (cf 4.5.7.1). In fact, for most of the participants, this aspect of their study-abroad programme was unexpectedly, the most fulfilling.

5.3.5.5 Interpersonal Relationships

The main barrier to the formation of interpersonal relationships of a sexual nature, as stated by the participants, was the fear of contracting AIDS (cf 4.5.10). Another barrier was the fact that several of the participants had left relationships back home, which they would resume upon return, and hence had no desire to form romantic liaisons.

5.3.5.6 Religious Experiences

None of the participants stated that religion played a major role in their experiences in South Africa (cf 4.5.7.3).

5.3.6 Living Conditions on Campus

As stated in Chapter Four (cf 4.2.8), the focus group was interested in learning more regarding the living conditions of the student participants. All of the student participants lived in on-campus dormitories. The results of this study show that living in dormitories was the preference of all of the participants to such a strong degree that living with a host family might have negatively influenced the participants' decisions to participate in this programme.

The comfort level of the campus dormitories, as described by the participants, was acceptable and did not negatively impact on their stay in any way. In fact, for a majority of the participants, the on-campus living environment allowed them to make friends more easily with other South African and international college students and was a major factor in positively influencing their stay in South Africa.

5.3.7 Health and Safety Issues

Health and safety issues were a major concern to the focus group as South Africa has been the centre of attention in international media in many instances in this regard, and has developed the reputation of a country that experiences a higher rate of violent and petty crimes than most countries (cf 4.2.9) as well as being a centre of HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, the concern for safety was a valid one. Each of the six participants experienced some form of crime, either first hand or to someone they knew (cf 4.5.12). While these experiences did have an impact on the participants, in that they were initially distressed, surprisingly enough, this initial impact did not form the basis of an overall negative reaction to the experience of spending a semester in South Africa, and was viewed as just another part of the experience as a whole.

In the area of health, other than comments that the host and home institution could have supplied names of local hospitals and doctors in case of an emergency, no issues dealing with health were a concern to the participants. The host institution did have a clinic on campus, which one of the student participants made use of, but for the most part health was not a topic of concern.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following recommendations are made which would hopefully address the issues of under representation of American undergraduates who participate in study-abroad programmes in South Africa.

5.4.1 Developing and Expanding International and Area Studies

Word of mouth is an important factor when considering the promotion of such programs, but this research shows that not one participant came to South Africa because of it. What did fire an interest in South Africa was primarily coursework at their home institutions and a personality which led to a desire to explore the unfamiliar.

Adapting the current curriculum of the over 3,200 post-secondary institutions in the United States to include a higher degree of area studies and a stronger emphasis in internationalization is, although not an impossible task, certainly a long-term one. However, this study does show that curriculum influences were the prime motivating factor in not only the decision to study-abroad, but also in the choice of destination.

The premise, as stated by Schroth and McCormack (2000:533) that it takes a special type of student to partake in a semester or a year overseas, and an even more extraordinary student to choose a non-traditional location seem to be true (cf 2.7.3). However, it is suggested that offering a greater degree of international and area studies within the grade school and high school levels would begin to sow the seeds of curiosity regarding the international experience at an earlier stage. It could be that once students arrive on the college campus, either their academic course load does not allow for international subject matter or that it is too late to sow the seeds of curiosity regarding a new culture. Also, according to several of the student participants, American college students are so comfortable in their university existence that they see no need to expand it.

Therefore, it is recommended that a long-term comparative study be undertaken which would compare the outcomes of high school students who had exposure to an internationalized curriculum and their rate of participation within study-abroad programmes versus high school students who did not.

5.4.2 Accurate Promotion of South Africa as a Study-Abroad Destination

The participants were confused by the apparent dichotomy of the rural portrait presented in advertising and promotional brochures concerning South Africa with the actual first world infrastructure that is the reality of the experience. When asked '*What do you feel would attract more students to study abroad in South Africa?*' the overall belief of the student participants was that although the flora and fauna was a major interest factor, the marketing should concentrate on the fact that cities such as Durban and Cape Town are large, complete with all the amenities that American cities have and are major seaside resorts, comparable to anything found in the U.S. or Australia. The majority of participants (5 out of 6) indicated that their main goal in coming to South Africa was to have a phenomenal travel experience rather than a meaningful academic experience. The marketing should reflect that desire and supply a picture of a country that has the bush, but does not, to a large extent, live in it.

As a result of these findings, it is recommended that further study be undertaken to determine the influences of advertising on study-abroad destinations as if the promotion of South Africa as primarily a first world destination within the African diaspora would increase the number of American undergraduates who choose to study-abroad in South Africa.

Another means by which South Africa could be accurately promoted as a study-abroad destination is by utilizing former study-abroad students as the important resources they are to support and encourage American undergraduate students in making South Africa their destination of choice.

Although returning students can offer information that no administrator can, as they have lived the experience, according to the findings of this study, not one student participant had contact with a returnee student prior to the decision making process on a study-abroad destination.

It is the recommendation of this study that more organised efforts be made to harness the assets that former study-abroad students have to offer and use these valuable human resources as an important tool in the promotion of not only South Africa as a

destination for study-abroad but for all less traditional study abroad destinations.

5.4.3 Establishment of an Independent International Accrediting Study-Abroad Organisation

According to the findings of this study, the cost of direct enrolment (cf 2.2.1) is by far the least expensive method by which a student can participate in a study-abroad programme at the University of Kwa Zulu, Natal, Howard Campus. Yet, as it was found in Ben's case (cf 4.5.2.1), his institution would not allow this form of enrolment as they had no direct knowledge of, or contacts within the host institution.

Therefore, it is one of the recommendations of this study that a feasibility study be conducted to determine whether or not it would be viable to establish a global accreditation system for study-abroad programmes throughout the world.

If all institutions which offered study-abroad programmes for foreign nationals submitted to a voluntary peer-review evaluation system, which would establish a form of quality assurance in that host institutions met or exceed minimum standards in areas such as academics and living conditions and then made these findings accessible to interested students around the world, the problems associated with direct enrolment would lessen and would ensure acceptable levels of academic quality, transferability of academic credits, and a standard level of living conditions.

The principle of this system of accreditation is already implemented in the United States where all post secondary institutions of learning, if they wish to be accredited, follow a system of peer review. The process of accreditation, as followed in the United States, involves the following procedures:

1. the establishment of standards;
2. an institutional self-study in which its performance is measured against established standards;
3. on-site evaluation by a team of outside educators selected by the accrediting agency;
4. publication of the fact that the institution met the standards;
5. periodic re-evaluation of the institution's programs (Sjogren 1986:24).

These procedures could also be applied to programmes of study-abroad throughout the world, ensuring that direct enrolment was a more acceptable process and thus lessening the cost of study-abroad and hopefully resulting in a larger student participatory group in these types of programmes.

This organisation could also be utilised in establishing and increasing existing direct academic exchanges. This is a one method of obtaining an international educational experience in which students can, for a semester or more, exchange places with other students from around the world, each paying only their home country educational costs. This would allow students who are prohibited from participating in educational opportunities outside their home countries due to costs, to engage in active involvement in international education at the same price it would cost to remain at their home institutions.

By establishing international standards between institutions, the process of international student mobility could be greatly enhanced.

5.4.4 Faculty Travel as an Inducement to Study-Abroad

The findings of this study also showed that for Faye (cf 4.5.4.1) it was the encouragement and inspiration supplied by a study-abroad coordinator that was one of the prime motivating factors in her decision to study abroad in a less traditional location. This particular study-abroad coordinator had a vast amount of travel experience and was able to share her enthusiasm for and benefits of international travel with Faye, which spurred Faye on to pursuing the sometimes difficult process involved in study-abroad.

Since inspiration received via a respected mentor can often influence the actions of the student, an additional recommendation made on the basis of the findings of this study is that it become a matter of policy that study-abroad administrators and support staff travel with greater frequency and to less traditional locations.

If American post secondary institutions wish to promote less traditional locations in study-abroad programming, which seems to be the findings of the literature review and

the focus group interview (cf 2.8.1 & 4.2), then it would appear that having a faculty and an administration with first hand knowledge of those destinations would result in a growing pool of students who choose the less traditional destinations.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation to this study is that, due to its very nature, it is bounded by time and place, making exact replication unlikely. South Africa, as an emerging democracy is changing and will continue to do so. Therefore, future American study-abroad participants' experiences in South Africa will also change. A similar study conducted in another African country would, most likely, have very different results.

However, it is believed that the findings of this study are relevant in achieving its aim, which is to recommend areas that could be improved upon in the near future so as to attract a larger proportion of American undergraduates into study-abroad programmes in South Africa.

Another limitation is that this study only examines the experiences of '*traditional study-abroad students*', as defined in Chapter Two (cf 2.3.1) and not the experiences of the larger base of non-traditional students, which could result in a completely different set of findings. Also, students in the fields of engineering, medicine, and allied health sciences, such as nursing, which are traditionally difficult majors for study-abroad, did not form part of the participant pool, thus limiting information to those students who are majors within the humanities, with the exception of Adam, who was an Architecture student.

This study only examined the experiences of a gay female student and not that of a male gay student, and thus limited the findings in that area.

Also, the relatively small student participant pool of six students, although well within the recommendations of Weiss (1994:3) and other researchers, could have impacted negatively on the results, in that a larger pool of participants could have led to additional and/or different findings.

5.6 SUMMARY

Through richly descriptive interviews, this study primarily examined the out-of-class experiences of six American undergraduates who spent a semester at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard Campus from January to June 2004. The data presented in this study suggests that it was perceived to be a positive experiential learning occurrence, offering numerous opportunities to become immersed in the host culture, as well as a beneficial academic experience. The findings of this study also suggest that the traditionally assumed barriers to study-abroad played but a minor role if any, in the participation of the participants of this study.

Many investigations in study-abroad experiences have focused on the more traditional study-abroad destinations. However, traditional study-abroad destinations tend to be in locations such as Europe where the culture has many similarities to that of America. If the main purpose of study-abroad is to broaden cultural understanding, then a study-abroad destination that offers more differences than similarities seems a logical choice. A culture dissimilar to one's own offers more opportunities for learning, challenging former perceptions and allowing for a true inter-cultural base of understanding.

Discovering the barriers to study-abroad in less traditional locations is the first step in resolving them, thus paving the way to a broader student participation base and thus better achieving the goal of true inter-cultural learning.