

Study Abroad in the Age of Social Media

Irwin Compiegne

BA – Contemporary French Literature and Teaching French as a
Foreign Language, *Université d'Aix-Marseille*

MA – Didactics of French as a Foreign/Second Language and
Intercultural Education, *Avignon Université*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Technology Sydney

2020

Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Irwin Compiegne, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology, Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Signature:

Production Note:
Signature removed prior to publication.

Date: 06 February 2020

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been completed with the support of the UTS International Research Scholarship.

There are many people who made my thesis possible. First, I am extremely grateful to my supervisor A/Prof Julie Robert for her mentoring, dedication and intellectual guidance throughout my candidature. I would not have gone through this research project over the past three and a half years without her advice. Her constructive feedback challenged me every time, helped me to see the big picture and improve my articulations of findings.

I would like to acknowledge several other scholars from UTS, starting with my alternate supervisor, Prof Lesley Harbon, for her support and invaluable comments throughout my project. I am grateful to the panellists of my candidature assessments for their insightful and pertinent feedback, Dr Elena Sheldon, who assessed my research at every stage, A/Prof Elaine Lally, Dr James Meese and Dr Amelia Johns. In addition, I owe a huge thank you to Dr Angela Giovanangeli and Narelle Fletcher for their help and insights at the beginning of my project.

I am also thankful to Prof Jane Jackson who kindly took time to meet me when she came to Sydney as a visiting scholar. I have been extremely fortunate to receive the insights, recommendations and thoughts from such an expert of in the field of study abroad.

I extend a special thank you to Dr Brigitte Jandey who offered me my first opportunity in Australia to follow my passion for teaching French Language and Culture and pushed me to undertake this PhD.

There is one person without whom I would not have done even a fraction of everything I achieved in the past 16 years, my wife, Dr Burcu Cevik-Compiegne. From the non-degree Diploma of FLE to this thesis, I could move through each phase only because of you, your support and your love. I know how difficult it was to allow me the time and space to focus on my research, especially with the pregnancy. I am looking forward to new adventures with you, Samuel and Lucy.

Throughout my candidature, I was very fortunate to have the most supportive and friendly network among the fellow PhD students at UTS. I would like, first, to deeply thank my

friends from my Pomodoro writing group, Dr Chrisanthi Giotis, Bilquis Ghani and Cale Bain for their support in my writing especially at the final stage of my candidature. I would also like to acknowledge Bherokh Abbasnejad, Daniel Ouyang, Suman Laudari, Zablon Bosire Pingo, Pauline Murray-Parahi and Marie Palmer for their kindness and friendship.

I am also thankful to Dr Guenter Plum for copy editing and proofreading my thesis, making it more readable.

Finally, this project would not have happened without my generous participants who shared their thoughts and granted me access to very personal aspects of their lives. Thanks to them, I could vicariously be part of their adventures and escape the monotony of my study desk. From the very first meeting, they were all very enthusiastic to share their experiences. I am grateful beyond words, this thesis exists because of them.

To Burcu, Samuel and Lucy.

Table of Contents

Certificate of Original Authorship	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	x
Abstract	xi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Background	2
Research questions and conceptual frameworks	5
Research methodology	6
Research contributions	7
Overview of the thesis	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review	11
Study abroad, education and travel	13
Identity, study abroad and second language acquisition	20
Students’ social networks in study abroad	28
Social media and study abroad	35
Unanswered questions	43
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	47
Research questions	47
Theoretical frameworks.....	48
Rites of passage	48
Emerging adulthood.....	50
Research design	53
Principles of ethnography	53
Digital ethnography	54
Facebook.....	55
Instagram	56
Benefits of using social media data	57
Photo-elicitation: definition, origin and benefits	59
Phases of the study	62
Data collection	62
Participants	68
Data analysis	72
Conclusion.....	74
Chapter Four: Rethinking Students’ Social Networking in a Study Abroad	
Context	76
Social network representation via social media	77
Compatriot networks	80
“On site” co-national network	80
Online co-national network	86
Multi-national networks	89
Students who are either proficient or native speakers of the target language.....	92
Host national networks	95
Conclusion.....	115
Chapter Five: Travel during Study Abroad	120
A year of travel.....	121

Separation	126
Transition.....	130
Incorporation	150
Conclusion.....	153
Chapter Six: ‘You don’t fit here’: Relatives’ Visits during Study Abroad	157
First tensions.....	160
Changes in the power dynamics	168
Apprehension about return	176
Conclusion.....	178
Chapter Seven: Conclusion	180
References	188
Appendix: Pre-departure semi-structured interview — Questions	217

List of Figures

Figure 1: Example of a participant’s anonymised post.	64
Figure 2: Facebook researcher’s profile.	66
Figure 3: Pattern code “Social Networking” and sub-categories.	74
Figure 4: Erika’s Facebook post. Photograph of Erika, Alexandra, Trevor and another peer on their way to Switzerland.	81
Figure 5: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook. Photograph of Patricia and other Australian students in Aix-en-Provence.	82
Figure 6: Alexandra’s Facebook post. Photograph of Alexandra and Erika dining with other study abroad students.	90
Figure 7: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Patricia with other study abroad students in a bowling alley.	91
Figure 8: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Patricia holding a drawing.	96
Figure 9: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Patricia in a bar with local students.	97
Figure 10: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Patricia at a farewell party with local people.	97
Figure 11: Anne’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and her soccer team.	100
Figure 12: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and her soccer team.	100
Figure 13: Alexandra’s Instagram post. Photograph of Alexandra and her friend (domestic student).	102
Figure 14: Erika’s Facebook post. Photograph of Erika and her friends in their dormitory.	104
Figure 15: John’s Facebook post. Photograph of Diana and her French friend in Budapest.	114
Figure 16: Diana’s Facebook post. Photograph of John and Diana’s French friend in Budapest.	115
Figure 17: Alexandra’s Facebook post. Photograph of Trevor and Alexandra posing at the airport.	126
Figure 18: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and her family posing at the airport.	127
Figure 19: Erika’s Instagram farewell post.	128
Figure 20: John’s father’s Facebook farewell post.	129
Figure 21: Anne’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and Australian students in Montpellier.	131
Figure 22: Anne’s Instagram post. Photograph of Anne in Montpellier.	131
Figure 23: Alexandra’s Instagram post. Photograph of Alexandra in Lausanne.	132
Figure 24: John’s Facebook post. Photograph of Diana in Lyon.	133
Figure 25: John’s Facebook post. Photograph of Diana in Portugal.	137
Figure 26: Diana’s Facebook post. Update post announcing the addition of new photographs to her album.	140
Figure 27: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne in Brussels.	141
Figure 28: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne in London.	143
Figure 29: Erika’s Instagram post. Photograph of Erika in Zurich.	145
Figure 30: Diana’s Facebook post. Photograph of Diana in Copenhagen.	149
Figure 31: Erika’s Facebook post — GIF with her parents.	172

Figure 32: Erika’s Instagram post. Photograph of Erika and her parents. 173
Figure 33: Trevor’s Instagram post. Portrait photograph of his mother in Lausanne. . 174

List of Tables

Table 1: Data in numbers	68
Table 2: Participants' demographic information.....	71
Table 3: Categories of people identified on participants' posts on Facebook and Instagram	79
Table 4: Proportion of activities and settings represented in participants' posts.....	122
Table 5: Countries visited over the three-month summer break	125

Abstract

The advancement of information and communication technology has radically transformed the nature of study abroad and the way in which students apprehend this experience. As part of this larger shift, social media and digital communications have changed the way people interact, communicate and socialise and therefore also transformed the nature of study abroad as an immersive context for second language learning. This thesis aims to better understand the holistic and socially transformative dimensions of study abroad and explores the impact of what has become a quasi-constant digital connection to home on two traditional models of study abroad: the model of social network development (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977; Coleman, 2013, 2015; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011, Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Schartner, 2015) and the theory of study abroad being a rite of passage (Grabowski, Wearing, Lyons, Tarrant, & Landon, 2017; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Starr-Glass, 2016) to transition to emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2010, 2012) effected through a strict separation from home. The study is based on a digital ethnography of seven Australian university students learning French in France or Switzerland on a year-long study abroad program. Data were collected by following and cataloguing participants' posts on both Facebook and Instagram. These textual and photographic posts subsequently served as prompts for in-depth photo-elicitation interviews.

Findings indicate that using social media as a research tool in the study abroad context raises new questions and provides new insights. First, participants' narratives highlight the need to rethink students' social networking paradigms as the traditional circles of study abroad socialisation are challenged by the use of social media in study abroad contexts and the shifting student objectives and motivations inherent in the larger study abroad sector. Second, the digital ethnography revealed the central role played by travel experiences while studying abroad. Contrary to expectations, these travel experiences fostered participants' feelings of belonging in their host environment and their identity transition to emerging adulthood. These outcomes at once support and complicate the conceptualisation of study abroad as a rite of passage that impacts students' identity. Third, the online ethnography revealed an unstudied but important phenomenon: the visit from participants' relatives, specifically their parents. These visits disrupted the separation from home, disturbed participants' experience and negatively impacted their

identity transition to emerging adulthood. The thesis accordingly acknowledges the changing landscape of study abroad and the need for researchers to adapt to it. Consequently it advocates for the use of research tools aligned with rather than simply evaluative or critical of students' established digital practices.

Chapter One: Introduction

The thesis started with a failure. The initial intent was to explore second language students' identity development on social media in a study abroad context. After the participants' departure to France or Switzerland, the first weeks of digital observation yielded news feeds more akin to the digital diaries of backpacking young people than dedicated second language learners. To say that this did not yield satisfactory insights into their language learning and facets of identity linked to this learning was an understatement. I rapidly understood that social media-based digital ethnography was not going to be the new and best research methodology for study abroad scholars looking at second language learning. While digesting this initial failure without having even really started, I kept on collecting data from participants' Facebook and Instagram accounts. In doing so, I was witnessing their first moments in their new environment, their settling, their activities, their social networking, their travels and "playing tourist" moments. I rapidly understood the potential of social media in following, almost day-by-day, students while they are studying abroad.

Without a clear aim to guide my research, I began to read about what I was observing: the formation of social circles in the study abroad context, the impact of students' activities such as travelling or playing sports on their overall experience, and their use of social media in study abroad, including their communication with their contacts from home. I saw gaps between what I was reading and what I was observing and, importantly, how models admitted in the literature were challenged by participants' use of social media in this study abroad context.

The thesis therefore investigates how social media transforms the nature of study abroad and how the quasi-constant digital connection with home challenges two traditional models: the model of social network development in study abroad (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977; Coleman, 2013; 2015; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Schartner, 2015) and the theory of study abroad being a rite of passage (Grabowski, Wearing, Lyons, Tarrant, & Landon, 2017; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Starr-Glass, 2016) to transition to emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; 2010; 2012) effected through a strict separation from home. To do so, the study draws on the experience of study abroad and social media use of seven Australian university students of French on a year-long program in France or Switzerland.

Background

All the available statistics demonstrate the increasing popularity of international education. Indeed, the number of students pursuing studies in a foreign country continues to surge in higher education institutions around the world. In 2016, there were over 4.8 million international students¹, which represents an increase of about 140% since 2000 (UNESCO, 2018). The popularity of international education results in students' profiles, sociocultural backgrounds and motivations for studying abroad being increasingly diverse. Students now invest in international mobility for various reasons, such as employability, the acquisition of interpersonal skills and personal development (Mellors-Bourne, Jones, Lawton, & Woodfield, 2015). Universities have also perceived the strategic importance of international education for their development and reputation. Australia now competes internationally to attract students and education represents the third largest national export for the country, injecting \$32.4 billion into the economy in 2018 (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2019).

Study abroad, defined as “a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purpose” (Kinginger, 2009, p. 11), is part of this global and rapidly expanding phenomenon of international mobility. Numerous Australian students depart for overseas every year. According to the Australian Department of Education and Training (2019), 49,263 Australian students from 37 universities engaged in a study abroad experience in 2017, which represents an 11.8% increase over the previous year. Sojourns can vary in length, from a few days or few weeks, up to a whole year and, more rarely, for several years. In 2017, 77% of the study abroad programs in which Australian students were enrolled were of less than one semester. The sojourn is undertaken for educational purposes, which can include language and culture learning, but is not restricted to these objectives.

In Australia, the top fields of education for sojourners are science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) disciplines with 21%, health with 17%, management and commerce with 15% and society and culture with 14% of sojourners. Furthermore,

¹ In this thesis, the terms “study abroad student” will be used to refer to students, like my participants, enrolled in a given home university who are undertaking a sojourn abroad as part of their home university degree. The term “international student”, which is often used purely as a synonym for a full degree student from another country, will be used to broadly refer to the community of multi-national students, which can also include study abroad students, as opposed to domestic students.

studying abroad does not necessarily imply living in a new linguistic environment. Many programs and exchanges operate within the same major linguistic context: a British student studying in the United States or a French student studying in Quebec. Studying abroad is therefore not limited to second language acquisition in immersion environments. It is rather more broadly tied to identity and self-development, which have become major outcomes for sojourners, especially when the experience is undertaken in a transitional period of life — before finishing their studies and settling in a professional career. Accordingly, a growing body of the research in the field of study abroad conceives of identity development as a main outcome of study abroad instead of framing it as facilitator or hindrance of second language acquisition (Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown, 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Norton, 2013, 2014). This changing landscape of study abroad justifies further research, as the experiences, the stakes and students' motivations to prioritise international education are evolving. The increasing success of study abroad can be partly explained by the perceived employability and personal development benefits of international education, but these rationales alone are not sufficient to account for the increased mobility of students.

Advances in technology have also transformed the nature of study abroad in many ways, not least in terms of access and communication. Over the last decades, technological change has made the basic requirement of international travel faster, more convenient and less expensive. The improvement of travel conditions facilitates people's mobility, contributing to an ever-increasing interconnected world. This, in turn, is changing the landscape of study abroad. A larger number of students can now afford to study abroad and more destinations are accessible. This new affordability and access not only concerns students, but also their relatives and friends, who can more easily travel to visit them while they are studying abroad. These visits raise new issues for the experience of study abroad.

By the end the second decade of the 21st century, social media has become an integral part of modern life across the world. As of the first quarter of 2019, the first social media platform ranked by number of users, Facebook, had 2.32 billion monthly active users², while Instagram, sixth-ranked, has just reached 1 billion monthly active accounts (Statista, 2019). The rise of platforms such as Facebook and Instagram marked the shift

² Statista defines as active users those who have logged in to Facebook during the last 30 days.

towards the social orientation of online activities. Social media are defined as: “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Web 2.0 is the second stage of development of the Internet that is characterised by the transition from static web pages to dynamic sites in which user-generated content plays an essential role due to the growth of social media. This definition highlights users’ participative role as they create and share content that constitutes the base of further online social interactions. Social media enable identity expression, exploration, and experimentation (Code, 2012; Seargeant & Tagg, 2014) making the web a dynamic space shaped by users’ actions, contributions and interactions.

One of the immediate consequences of the rise of social media applications is that they have radically transformed the social world and the way in which individuals interact. These platforms not only offer an additional way to communicate, but have deeply changed both linguistic and communicative practices, as well as social relations patterns (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). The development of digital communication, including social media, is also contributing to the transformation of the nature of the study abroad experience, to the point that today’s experiences — when students often own a smartphone, have easier access to the Internet and are almost constantly digitally connected with their home social networks through social media — are radically different from those of earlier eras. Many students virtually carry their home in their pocket as they study abroad. Technology in general and social media in particular then play an important role in their lives and have changed the way they apprehend their experience of study abroad from the beginning until the end. Indeed, social media have great implications for how students adjust to their new environment (Lin, Peng, Kim, Kim, & LaRose, 2012; Mikal & Grace, 2012) and how they develop their social networks (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016; Godwin-Jones, 2016). Furthermore, social media allow students to promote specific aspects of their experience to their audience who, in turn, can comment, react and interact with them based on their posts, therefore having a direct influence on their experience. However, students can also self-censor or over-share their experience which may impact how they are perceived by their audience and potentially affect findings of any research based only on social media as source of data to explore study abroad experience. Concerns about over-sharing versus privacy and one’s digital footprint have seen changes to how people use social media and how the platforms themselves have

responded with a range of new private and even encrypted means to remain connected but less public. Social media is a rapidly changing set of platforms that individuals use in different ways. Researchers need to be mindful when using social media as a research tool since students, knowing that they are being observed, could alter their posts, change their posting habits, hide some aspects of their experience and their identity or, conversely, over-share and emphasise specific facets. Complementary sources of data therefore must be found such as interviews or questionnaires. The implications of this new digital affordability still need to be explored, as it challenges the dominant representations of study abroad, where students are separated and disconnected from home to be immersed in a new linguistic and cultural environment.

Research questions and conceptual frameworks

The thesis explores in greater detail the aspects of the experience that seven Australian students of French displayed and promoted on social media while studying abroad in France or Switzerland. Two similar and related research questions drove the study: what aspects of their experience — and of their identity — do students display and promote on Facebook and Instagram?

The objectives of my experiential inquiry are to determine what students do, with whom they interact and how these activities and these people influence their overall experience. The aim is to better understand how students develop their social networks, the implications of social media in this process and how the use of social media in the study abroad context challenges the representations of students' social network development.

The identity-based part of the query seeks to determine the aspects of their identity that students promote on social media in relation to their experience and what these aspects reveal of students' perceived value of study abroad. The aim is to interrogate the validity of study abroad as a rite of passage for students, to ask whether study abroad triggers and catalyses their identity transition to adulthood and to understand how the experience can impact students' identity and their relationships with their immediate social circles.

In order to investigate these questions and their research objectives, the thesis draws on the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage (Grabowski et al., 2017; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Starr-Glass, 2016) which is based on van Gennep's (1960) anthropological theory

and Arnett's (2000, 2010, 2012) notion of emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a stage of life between adolescence and full-fledged adulthood. Arnett situates this period between the ages of 18 and 29 and identifies five characteristics: "identity exploration", "self-focus", "instability", "possibilities/optimism" and "feeling in between". The theory of study abroad as a rite of passage explores students' transition to emerging adulthood. Rites of passage, such as graduation or marriage, are rites, more or less socially elaborated, through which individuals change state, social status and position, and are based on three phases. First, there is a separation from the community when individuals withdraw from their former self and social position. Second, a transition occurs; this is the period between states, after the separation but before the acquisition of the next state. The last phase is incorporation, when individuals reintegrate into their community with the new status and new identity acquired and assumed through the rite. Within this conceptualisation, the use of social media in the study abroad context is particularly intriguing, as it challenges the strict separation from the supporting networks at home.

Research methodology

In this research, participants' social media posts were used as prompts for in-depth discussion and inquiry. The methodology employed was based on a digital ethnography through Facebook and Instagram, from which field notes were taken and through which interviews conducted. Participants are seven Australian students from a Sydney-based university. As part of their degree in International Studies, participants were required to spend their fourth of five years of study abroad, either in France or in Switzerland. This year abroad is preceded by four semesters of French language and culture study. Participants were aged between twenty and twenty-one at the time of their departure. Ethics approval was sought in September 2016 and the first pre-departure interviews were conducted in December 2016 when access to participants' social media platforms was obtained. Participants departed in January 2017 and came back to Australia the following year, in January 2018. The data collection ended in March 2018 with the post-sojourn interviews.

The data were collected in three complementary ways: digital ethnography throughout participants' sojourns, three sets of interviews and field notes. First, throughout their experience of study abroad, participants were observed through social media. Their posts on Facebook and Instagram were screenshotted and collected in order to examine their

modes of self-presentation and the aspects of their experience that they promoted on those platforms. Second, field notes were taken throughout the digital observation period which informed the interviews. Third, three sets of interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken before participants' departure abroad. Then, based on some of the participants' posts, two sets of photo-elicitation interviews were undertaken to collect their narratives and reflections, one halfway through their experience and one after their return to Australia. The data collected were then analysed using a two-cycle coding method (Saldaña, 2009) in order to identify the major emerging themes and patterns.

Research contributions

In the field of study abroad, this study makes contributions to the model of students' social networks development traditionally described in the literature as composed of three circles: compatriot, multi-national and local students. Data highlight that this quasi-permanent connection with home through social media challenges this conceptualisation, as it has direct impacts on the way study abroad students socialise. The thesis therefore argues for the emergence of an additional social circle: the online compatriot network mainly comprising family and friends from home. Furthermore, the investigation of the composition of students' social networks, the type of relationships they maintained and the activities they were engaged in brings to the fore a social network comprising multi-national students who are proficient or native speakers of the target language. This group, a product of changing patterns in international education and study abroad more generally, was found to bring specific benefits, academic and linguistic, and has a distinctive and underestimated influence on participants' experience.

The thesis also contributes to the body of research that conceives of identity development as a main outcome of study abroad (Benson et al., 2013; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Norton, 2013, 2014). Whereas most inquiries into study abroad focus on second language acquisition and treat identity as a variable that either facilitates or hinders students' learning, the current research positions identity at the core of study abroad and considers it as a dynamic element rather than as a static variable. Study abroad is therefore viewed as a transformative experience for young people to transition to emerging adulthood. Importantly, the research highlights the significance of travel during study abroad in triggering students' identity transition and feeling of homeliness in their host environment.

The study also contributes significantly to the body of knowledge on students' use of social media while studying abroad. As yet, the use of social media has been reductively framed as a variable that positively or negatively impacts students' second language learning and immersion in the host environment. In the field of study abroad, social media are mostly considered objects *of* study rather than as tools *to* investigate study abroad. Instead, in this thesis, social media are viewed as both research and conceptual tools to examine students' self-presentation and social networking.

On a theoretical level, the findings of the research extend and complicate the model of rites of passage (Grabowski et al., 2017; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Starr-Glass, 2016). Data largely validate the relevance of the three phases and, consequently, support the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage for youth. Nonetheless, important departures from the model were noted. First, the quasi-permanent digital connection with home blurs and smooths the separation phase; this was found to be beneficial for students' adjustment to their new environment. Additionally, throughout the sojourn, social media enable students to gather endorsement from their home community on their activities. Second, travels undertaken within study abroad take the shape of an embedded rite of passage effected through the separation from the new routine and the comfort zone of the host environment. These travels trigger students' self-development and sense of belonging to their host locations. This period in the sojourn when students had developed such a strong sense of belonging to their host environment that they considered it to be a second home, owing to their new social networks, acquired independence and self-reliance, constitutes an intermediate phase in the model of rites of passage. Students had already transitioned to adulthood and begun to anticipate their return back home. This phenomenon is also highlighted in the research through a little-studied facet of the study abroad experience that had a significant impact on participants' experience: the visit from relatives and friends. The outcomes of these visits show that they were disruptive but this disruption is in itself an indicator that students had already begun or already progressed considerably in their transition to adulthood.

On a methodological level, the thesis uses two complementary methods of data collection as an innovative approach to overcoming the methodological limitations commonly identified in the field of study abroad. First, where researchers seek research tools to effectively keep track of their participants while they are abroad (Back, 2013; Kosinski,

Matz, Gosling, Popov, & Stillwell, 2015; Stewart, 2010), my study shows that social media help to overcome this issue. They allow close day-to-day observations of the research participants and allow researchers to obtain accurate insights into the research participants' activities and their social circles. Second, social media mitigate the issue of participant fatigue resulting from the use of blogs or e-journals, which are often used to collect their narratives (Back, 2013) but that are not common practices for students outside of their roles as research participants. In the current research, by contrast, the digital ethnography was conducted almost nonintrusively, sparing participants the burden of completing extensive questionnaires or producing diary entries. Third, the photo-elicitation method reveals itself to be particularly effective for overcoming participants' issues with recall (Martinsen, 2010). Since participant-generated photographs were used to trigger their memory, they are like *aide-mémoires* (Downey & Gray, 2012; Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012) and enable participants to recall the moment when the photographs were taken and why they were posted on social media.

Overview of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature relevant to understanding study abroad as a contemporary phenomenon involving travel and education in a modern context of digital connectivity. The first section examines the correlation between study abroad, education and travel, and explores the outcomes of travel during study abroad and its impact on students' identity. It moves on to the notion of identity in the context of study abroad and surveys the contributions from the fields of applied linguistics and second language acquisition. This is followed by students' social networking and use of social media in the context of study abroad.

Chapter Three describes the methodology and explains the conceptual framework used in the study. Through the description of the research strategy including the online ethnographic approach and the photo-elicitation method, the innovative approach of the research design and the relevance of using social media as a research tool to investigate study abroad students' identity expression are highlighted. The chapter concludes with an overview of the different phases of the research and a detailed presentation of the seven participants.

Findings and analysis are presented in the subsequent three chapters. Chapter Four centres on students' social networking in the study abroad context. Based on the digital ethnography, the chapter categorises the people who were represented in participants' posts on social media. Their social networks and their relationships are then analysed based on participants' narratives. The findings point to the emergence of two social networks that slip from the grasp of the traditional model of study abroad students' development of social networks, both bringing students distinctive benefits: the online compatriot network and the multi-national students who are proficient or native in the target language.

Travel is the focus of Chapter Five. Participants' activities, as represented online, are analysed and the prime activity of travel is considered in light of both goals and outcomes. This is put in conversation with the concept of rites of passage and demonstrates that, while the three phases of the model are found relevant for the analysis of students' experience of study abroad, the analysis argues for the existence of an embedded rite of passage effected through travel within study abroad.

Chapter Six looks at a little-studied phenomenon revealed by the digital ethnography: the visits from relatives and friends in participants' host environment. Findings indicate that these visits warrant both scholarly and practical attention as participants' experience point to their disruptive influence on the study abroad experience, especially the transition to emerging adulthood as a key outcome for the rite of passage.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusions to be drawn from the research for study abroad scholarship and practice. Limitations and caveats of the study are considered and suggestions are made for future investigations, especially in regard to the increasing digital connectivity that challenges established conceptual models, and the need for researchers to recognise and work with the digital and social media realities of study abroad. Recommendations for study abroad instructors, students and their families conclude the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

As study abroad becomes more popular, students' backgrounds, as well as their motivations and goals for undertaking a sojourn abroad, are increasingly diverse. Data from international institutes such as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019) or the Institute of International Education (2018) show that self-development and employability are among the primary motives of students for studying abroad. In their survey of more than 1500 British undergraduates, Mellors-Bourne et al. (2015) confirm this trend. They ranked students' principal motivations to study abroad thus: a desire for interesting and enjoyable experiences, to broaden horizons, to develop intercultural awareness and interpersonal skills such as independence and self-confidence, to enhance employability and career prospects and, finally, to improve language skills. The latest statistics from Institute of International Education (2018) also confirm that learning a second language is now only a minor reason for study abroad: only 7.3% of all American students studying abroad were enrolled in Foreign Languages or International Studies degrees. Similarly, the Australian Department of Education and Training (2019) reports that second language learners represented only 14% of all Australian students studying abroad. In the United States (US), as well as in Australia, the leading fields were science, technology, engineering and maths, business and social sciences. Moreover, studying abroad does not necessarily mean to sojourn in a new linguistic environment. Indeed, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019) reveals that Anglophone students' favourite destinations are other Anglophone countries. For instance, the top destination countries for Australian students are the US, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), and Canada. Among the first non-Anglophone countries listed are Japan and France, respectively representing 2.9% and 2.8% of all Australian students studying abroad.

In this context, alongside obvious academic motivations, students' interests are more and more focused on employability, personal development and acquisition of interpersonal skills such as independence, but also, travel and leisure. The stakes for study abroad have therefore changed. As part of their academic paths leading to professional careers, students now invest in studying abroad to acquire advantageous skills, valued in their home society, that will increase their employability (Adey, 2017; Prazeres, 2018). Study abroad is, thus, commonly undertaken at a transitional period between the end of studies and the beginning of a professional career, but also between the end of adolescence and

the beginning of adulthood. In a sense, the motives that students seek, such as independence and self-confidence, as well as travel, are particularly related to emerging adulthood (Grabowski et al., 2017). Study abroad is therefore increasingly tied to identity at a period of transition between two states of life. Indeed, study abroad enables students to transition to adulthood by, on the one hand, addressing their necessity to accumulate what Bourdieu (1986) labelled as cultural capital, which refers to knowledge and education serving as social distinction for future employability, and on the other, fostering their self-development through international travel experience and living conditions away from home. This latter aspect will be the object of close focus in the thesis, starting with this literature review, which is divided into four sections.

The first section explores the tight links between study abroad, education and travel, with a particular focus on the importance of travelling in Australian culture and the outcomes of travel during study abroad. This section highlights the fact that study abroad is part of an increasing strategic demand for international mobility in today's globalised world. The popularity of study abroad lies in its combination of two essential features that satisfy that demand: travel and education. Besides fulfilling the needs for education related to the aim of employability, study abroad offers opportunities for travel, which is tightly linked to identity development, particularly in contemporary Australian society, which views travel as a rite of passage to adulthood. Although there is growing scholarly attention to identity development in the study abroad context, on the one hand, and through travel, on the other hand, a gap exists in the literature on the benefits of travel *while* studying abroad.

The second section focuses on the notion of identity in the context of study abroad and focuses on the fields of study abroad, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics. A detailed review of the literature focusing on second language acquisition in the context of study abroad sheds light on a tension between identity as akin to demographic factors and identity in a more holistic sense. On the one hand, identity is treated as a variable that either fosters or hinders second language learning. (Identity is here described in terms of demographic categories such as nationality, gender or age, and the main focus is on second language acquisition.) On the other hand, identity is viewed as the main outcome of the experience of study abroad.

The third section considers students' social network development in study abroad contexts and reveals a general scholarly consensus on the fact that study abroad students'

social networks are comprised of three social circles: the co-national or compatriot network, the multi-national network and the host national network. However, a detailed examination of the literature shows contradictory findings on the order of importance of each network. Importantly, the increasing importance of social media in study abroad students' social lives and the impacts of these digital platforms on students' socialisation process has not been sufficiently studied.

Finally, the fourth section examines the use of social media, including in study abroad, and focuses on two fundamental features of social media in relation to identity: self-presentation and the need to belong to social networks. The review of the literature on study abroad reveals that, just like the notion of identity, social media has mostly been considered as a variable influencing second language learning, which often comes at the expense of understanding social media as venues for study abroad students' identity expression.

Study abroad, education and travel

In a comprehensive review of the literature on study abroad and language learning, Kinginger (2009, p. 11) defines study abroad as “a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes”. Her definition highlights the educational aim of study abroad, which therefore differs from migration, either temporary or permanent, which is not intrinsically educational, as well as from tourism, which is undertaken purely for leisure purposes. However, there is no strict separation between study abroad and these other two forms of international mobility. In some cases, study abroad can overlap with migration if, for instance, a student travels abroad for educational purposes and eventually settles in the host country. Study abroad also overlaps with tourism, as travelling and sightseeing are among the main activities of students while studying abroad (Carr & Axelsen, 2005; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Walsh & Walsh, 2018). Stone and Petrick (2013) even define study abroad as a form of educational tourism and note that:

the most obvious parallel between study abroad and tourism is that travel is a central component of each, and neither study abroad nor tourism can exist without travel. Because study abroad is an impossibility without travel, many of the benefits of study

abroad may be influenced by (or even be a direct result of) travel and touristic activities. (p.6).

Indeed, study abroad sits on a continuum between migration and tourism. The educative outcomes and benefits of travel are, therefore, often indiscernible from those of study abroad, especially when travel is one of the main goals and purposes for studying in another country.

The scholarly attention to tourism, study abroad and migration suggests the increasing importance of international mobility in today's globalised world to employability and cultural capital (Adey, 2017; Prazeres, 2018), which, in a Bourdieusian theory of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), is a non-material resource that accumulates throughout the course of life, like knowledge and education. Like other forms of capital (such as monetary assets), cultural capital can serve as a social distinction. Larzén-Östermak (2011, p. 455) notes that "the capability to live and work in different linguistic and cultural environments is highly valued in today's society". In her study of two Finnish students of English language who spent a semester in the United Kingdom, she reports that being "someone who has lived abroad" (2011, p. 468) was valuable cultural capital that her participants could use for employability upon their return to Finland. The link between student motivations and the acquisition of cultural capital is well established in the literature on students' international mobility (Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012; King, Findlay, Ahrens, & Dunne, 2011; Waters, 2012). Findlay et al. (2012) found that British students base their choice to study abroad in "world class" host universities on the greater opportunity to accumulate cultural capital. Upon their return, this capital serves as a social distinction (Prazeres, 2019) from "non-traveller" students when they enter the workforce. Thus, the cultural capital acquired through the experience of study abroad is directly converted into both economic capital, through gaining access to a more competitive position in the labour market, and symbolic capital through climbing the social ladder. Additionally, Prazeres (2018, p. 919) notes that "young people anticipate the needs and requirements of potential future employers and therefore engage in the pursuit of distinction through an international education". Thus, research on young people's goals of travel as well as the outcomes demonstrates how investing in international mobility is perceived as affording students valuable cultural capital and social distinction.

Notwithstanding, many students do not necessarily invest in studying abroad purely for professional purposes. The strategic accumulation of cultural capital is not necessarily students' chief priority and main purpose for studying abroad. Instead, travel is, for many, a major motive; viewed as an opportunity for self-exploration, adventure and experimentation. For instance, Waters, Brooks, and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) found that British students in their research chose to study in the United States at university-level for fun in the pursuit of happiness. Several students also wished to escape the perceived rigidity of British higher education to study in North America, which they viewed as more flexible, while others perceived the experience abroad as an opportunity for personal reinvention. The notion of "escape" therefore strongly stands out in their study, as many of their participants saw study abroad as a chance to escape the social pressures and the expectations of their education. Study abroad therefore constituted for these students a way to extend the freedom and insouciance of their youth, as opposed to preparing for employment and the responsibilities associated with adulthood. However, the hypothesis of escapism is challenged by the fact that students abroad are already equipped with various valuable forms of capital prior to their departure and automatically gain "mobility capital" from the experience of studying abroad (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). The mere fact of studying and living abroad maintains, strengthens and enriches their capital resulting in a social reproduction of advantage (King et al., 2011; Waters & Brooks, 2010). Prazeres (2018, p. 920) points out that "international student mobility can therefore entrench young people's membership within an exclusive and distinctive club".

Travel and education have been closely intertwined for centuries and have always been prestigious, hence they function as a form of social distinction. Travel for educational purposes can be traced back to the Grand Tour (O'Reilly, 2006; Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003), which was a cultural tour of Europe undertaken between the 17th and the 18th centuries by young, upper-class English men as part of their education. Although the phenomenon has been largely attributed to the English (Löfgren, 2002), many Grand Tourists also came from Germany and France and later on the United States and even Australia, particularly because of its connections with England. The Grand Tour was considered a rite of passage for English nobility since these young men usually travelled for extensive periods of time — up to two years — to various European destinations at a relatively young age. This was a "once in a lifetime" experience to become adult (Cohen, 2001) and travel was intended "to confer the traveller with full membership into the

aristocratic power structure” (Weaver & Lawton, 2010, p. 52). Stone and Petrick (2013, p. 5) argue that “today, educational tourism maintains some similar elements of the Grand Tour by creating a formalized travel product in which education is supposed to occur”. Today’s study abroad students are in some ways the descendants of these Grand Tourists and have integrated the educative and transitional dimensions of travel: “Even those who are not aware of the history of the Grand Tour commonly make reference to the educational nature of travel” (O’Reilly, 2006, p. 1004). In Australia, the Grand Tour has progressively given rise to various forms of travel undertaken by young people.

Contemporary Australian society is marked by two travel-based events for youth that occur between the end of high school and university and are considered rites of passage to transition to early adulthood: the gap year and “schoolies week” (Curtis, 2014; Deery & Jago, 2010; King, 2011; O’Reilly, 2006; Winchester, McGuirk, & Everett, 1999).

An individual who takes a gap year commences university one to two years after the completion of high school (Curtis, Mlotkowski, & Lumsden, 2012). Taking a gap year is becoming increasingly popular with Australian students. In their report for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research based on longitudinal surveys of Australian youth, Lumsden and Stanwick (2012) estimate that, in Australia, in 1999-2000, 10% of school leavers took a gap year and this increased to 24% in 2009-2010. Although it is difficult to precisely determine when the gap year became popular and set as a social norm, both King (2011) and Jones (2004) situate the beginning this phenomenon in the 1960s in United Kingdom before getting increasingly popular in the United States and in Australia. Among the main activities undertaken by gap year takers are work, volunteering and travel (King, 2011; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neil, 2012; Millington, 2005), which are often combined. In Australia, the gap year is deeply entrenched in the collective imaginary as a transformative experience in the transitional period between adolescence and early adulthood (Lyons et al. 2012). Just like the Grand Tour, the gap year has been linked to a form of social class positioning (Simpson, 2005; Heath, 2007) and a transitional period to early adulthood (Beames, 2004; Bagnoli, 2009b).

Similarly, every November, thousands of Australian school leavers celebrate their completion of high school during “schoolies”. This week-long celebration is held in various destinations around Australia — the Gold Coast in Queensland probably being the most famous — but also increasingly internationally, in locations such as Bali.

Schoolies first began in the 1970s. It rapidly became one of the major youth events on the Australian social calendar, and is widely perceived as a rite of passage as it is an in-between phase at a transitional time into adulthood (Curtis, 2014; Deery & Jago, 2010; Pettigrew, Biagioni, & Jongenelis, 2016; Salom, Watts, Kinner, & Young, 2005). Both schoolies and the gap year highlight the entrenchment of travel as a rite of passage in Australian culture.

The influence of travel on youth identity and development of a sense of self has been extensively investigated in the literature (Bagnoli, 2009b; Frändberg, 2014; O'Reilly, 2006; Wearing, 2002). For example, travelling is found to increase young people's knowledge, strengthen their sense of identity and social status (Elsrud, 2001) and help them to construct new identities (Desforges, 2000). Furthermore, travelling during this period of life assists young people to transition to adulthood. On this point, in their study of students returning from youth expeditions, Allison, Davis-Berman and Berman (2012) note that such expeditions "could assist people to move through this transition more quickly, comfortably, smoothly and easily. Perhaps most importantly of all, such experiences may assist young adults to become more responsible members of society" (p. 498). Similar findings are identified in King's (2011) study of twenty three British gap year takers. Based on his participants' narratives, King views the gap year as a point of transition of their lives from which they start developing confidence, maturity and independence; markers of adulthood.

However, unlike the gap year and schoolies week, study abroad is not widely considered as a rite of passage for young people, despite the fact that it also requires youth to leave their family and travel for a more or less extensive period before reintegrating to their home environment. Benson et al. (2013), whose research focuses on the Australian context, further note that "study abroad is increasingly becoming a first experience of global mobility for young people" (p. 36). Study abroad is part of universities' strategic plans and key performance indicators. Indeed, universities are more and more committed to providing their students with engaging and internationally-oriented learning experience through the integration of international perspectives and content into curriculum, the promotion of the second language acquisition and opportunities for overseas learning experiences, partnerships and study abroad programs. In this sense, study abroad may be seen as a rite of passage for young Australian students to assist in their transition to

adulthood. While there is abundant literature on this matter (Grabowski et al., 2017; Starr-Glass, 2016), the conceptualisation of study abroad as a rite of passage remains largely unexplored, essentially because study abroad differs from the gap year and schoolies in the crucial feature that qualifies them as rites of passage: the phase in which they are undertaken, in between the end of high school and tertiary education (King, 2011). Conversely, study abroad is an integral part of the educational path: fully integrated within tertiary study. It is therefore not viewed as a transition between two phases and is less laden with the symbolism of rites of passage. Notwithstanding, much like the gap year and schoolies week, study abroad fulfils essential conceptual characteristics of rites of passage: first, it corresponds with a period of transition for young people, conceptualised by Arnett (2000, 2004, 2010, 2012) as emerging adulthood, and, second, it involves a form of travel.

Many of the benefits of study abroad identified previously may be influenced by travel and tourist activities. As mentioned previously, the outcomes of both study abroad and travel for young people have been widely studied. Conversely, the existing literature on the benefits of travel *while* studying abroad is quite limited although tourism and sightseeing were found to be among the main activities of study abroad students (Carlson, Burn, & Yachimowicz, 1990; Carr & Axelsen, 2005; Stone & Petrick, 2013). Since many students seize the opportunity of studying abroad to travel extensively, it can be challenging to determine whether the outcomes attributed to study abroad arise from the travel or the study portions of their experiences.

A few studies have investigated the educative outcomes of the travel portion of study abroad. Gmelch (1997) analysed travel journals of fifty one American college students studying abroad in Europe. He found that their travels contributed to their personal development in terms of confidence, self-reliance and adaptability. Overall, students reported that they learned more through their travels than during their academic experiences. Similarly, in his study of thirty returning American university students from one semester abroad, Laubscher (1994) found that travel organised as out-of-class learning activities enhanced students' personal development, helping them to reconceptualise the world around them and better appreciate cultural differences. More recently, in their qualitative study of thirty five American students involved in a year-long study abroad program in Ireland, Langley and Breese (2005) suggest that most

students' intercultural learning happened during their independent travel experiences. Coryell (2011) reports similar findings based on the study abroad experience of twenty four American students in Italy. In her study, she highlights the importance for students to be given free time to explore their environment and especially their host city; she views it as an open-air classroom in which students can immerse themselves and "learn with the sights, sounds, smells, physical sensations, cultural practices, and foreign peoples and languages" (p. 19). According to Coryell, this immersion is more likely to happen through independent experiences that push students to explore and interact without being chaperoned by educators or contained in a bubble with their compatriots. There is a strong emphasis in the literature on American students' experiences; the studies mentioned above examine the outcomes of travel in isolation from the study abroad experience. Alternatively, as independent travel is an integral part of study abroad, outcomes should be examined directly in relation to the experience abroad.

Most students travel while studying abroad and, for some, it is among their main goals. However, as Stone and Petrick (2013) point out, it could be challenging to distinguish the outcomes due to travel from those due to academic learning, as they both encourage independence, self-reliance and personal development at large. Equally both experiences echo, complement and strengthen each other's benefits, especially when considering identity transition as the main outcome of study abroad. Indeed, the main grievance of educators about travel is that it could take students away from fully immersing themselves into the host culture, form contacts with locals and, in the case of second language learning, impede their linguistic gains (Kinging, 2008). Finally, it is worth noting that year-long or long-term sojourns are particularly relevant to investigating the issue of travel while studying abroad since students are given greater opportunities to experience different forms of travel: independent or pre-organised; alone or in groups; for a weekend or for several weeks; in the host city and the surrounding area; in the host country or other foreign countries offering researchers various contexts of study. Thus, investigating study abroad students' travelling behaviour has the potential to reveal the holistic nature of the experience of study abroad with multiple profiles of students with different interests and goals.

Identity, study abroad and second language acquisition

Many researchers emphasise the importance of the learning context in second language acquisition (Collentine, 2009; Collentine & Freed, 2004; Llanes, 2011). According to Collentine (2009), the research on second language acquisition focuses on three different contexts. First is the foreign-language classroom in domestic settings, in which students tend to use the second language mostly for academic purposes. Second is the intensive domestic immersion setting which differs from the former in that students spend most of their academic time studying the second language. Last is the study abroad context, which may also include formal and informal learning. Most research has focused on acquisition of a second language in both foreign-language and intensive domestic immersion contexts. For the last two decades, numerous researchers have agreed that research still needs to be undertaken in the field of study abroad (Allen & Dupuy, 2012; Back, 2013; Benson et al., 2013; Collentine, 2009; Kinginger, 2011, 2013; Llanes, 2011; Tracy-Ventura, Dewaele, Köylü, & McManus, 2016), despite the significant rise in prominence and popularity of research into study abroad.

The literature on second language acquisition in study abroad contexts is divided into two main categories. The first category is the earliest and by far the most abundant, and includes mostly quantitative studies focusing on linguistic outcomes and on behaviour variables that correlate with linguistic gains. Numerous studies attempt to assess the improvement of overall proficiency (Di Silvio, Diao, & Donovan, 2016; Rivers, 1998; Huensch, Tracy-Ventura, Bridges, & Medina, 2019; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003), vocabulary development (Borràs & Llanes, 2020; Briggs, 2015; Dewey, 2008; Ife, Vives Boix, & Meara, 2000), grammar (Collentine, 2004; DeKeyser, 1991; Howard & Schwieter, 2018; Sagarra & LaBrozzi, 2018), pronunciation (Díaz-Campos, 2004; Mora, 2008; Müller & Schmenk, 2017) and writing (Kim & Belcher, 2018; Llanes, Tragant, & Serrano, 2018). According to Llanes (2012), oral fluency has been the skill most frequently examined (Du, 2013; Freed, 1995; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Huensch et al., 2019; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Martinsen, 2010; Mora & Valls-Ferrer, 2012). Testing the assumption that immersion contexts such as study abroad enhance second language acquisition, these studies mostly rely on quantitative methods in a comparative perspective between students in a study abroad setting versus an “at home” setting.

Although most of the research in this category tends to indicate benefits of study abroad in second language gains, Kinginger (2009, p. 68) pinpointed “striking individual differences” that led researchers to explore individual experiences. Researchers then attempted to identify behavioural variables that correlated with second language gains. Most of this research is based on quantitative methods and is evaluative, but does shed light for the first time on the importance of the quality of the immersion. For instance, studies have investigated housing type (Dwyer, 2004; Kinginger & Wu, 2018; Magnan & Back, 2007), extralinguistic factors, such as the amount of time students spent using the target language (Freed et al., 2004), and attitudes towards the target language and host culture and motivation (Allen, 2010; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006) as having a significant impact on second language acquisition.

Exclusively quantitative approaches have proven insufficient to comprehensively capture students’ second language learning in the contexts of study abroad and individual differences in linguistic outcomes. Researchers have therefore turned to ethnography, case study and mixed methods, mostly qualitative in nature, which constitute the second category of research: exploring second language acquisition in relation to students’ identity.

In the past decade, the number of studies exploring the impact of study abroad on participants’ identity have increased (Barkhuizen, 2017; Benson et al., 2013; Coleman, 2007; Duff, 2013; Jackson, 2008, 2011; Kinginger, 2004, 2017; Mitchell, Tracy-Ventura, & McManus, 2017; Patron, 2007; Pellegrino, 2005; Plews, 2015; Stewart, 2010). Several comprehensive reviews of the study abroad literature describe identity in terms of demographic categories such as ethnicity or age (Block, 2007b; Kinginger, 2009, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2017). These studies attempt to understand the study abroad experience from the students’ perspective. Some are based on mixed-methods studies combining qualitative approaches with quantitative assessments of second language gains. For instance, in her study based on mixed methods including oral proficiency interviews of four American students studying in Spain for one semester, Isabelli-García (2006) found a positive correlation between local network engagement and oral proficiency. In Kinginger’s (2008) mixed-methods study based on six American students’ narratives collected through interviews and journals, she found that the sources of individual variation of outcomes of the language assessments were tightly linked to the individual

experience and goals of her participants. Indeed, the most successful students were those engaged in activities with local communities, such as local soup kitchens, or campus-based associations. Conversely, students lacking engagement with local people achieved only moderately. Both Isabelli-García's and Kinginger's studies demonstrate how the study abroad experience is highly variable and how, even when enrolled in the same program and living in the similar conditions, students can have radically different experiences.

More ethnographic research reveals that "language learning in study abroad is a complex, dialogic, situated affair in which the subjectivities of students and hosts are deeply implicated" (Kinging, 2011, p. 64). This observation highlights not only the importance of the quality of students' engagement with the target language and host communities but also the crucial role played by variables such as age or ethnicity, with a heavy focus on the literature on nationality and gender.

A number of studies have investigated the role of students' national identity in study abroad and the implications on language learning with a large focus on host family setting (Goldoni, 2013; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2008; Patron, 2007; Pellegrino, 2005; Perrefort, 2008; Shively, 2011). Although my study does not fully engage with the matter of host families in a study abroad setting, it is identified as a relevant factor in other study abroad research projects investigating students' identity development. In their respective literature reviews, Block (2007b) and Kinginger (2009, 2013) highlight several reactions of American students exposed to unfamiliar social practices, such as retreat into ethnocentrism or a sense of superiority, and also confrontation of criticism from the hosts of aspects of American lifestyle or foreign policy. Kinginger's (2008) ethnography of twenty four American students in France exemplifies how geopolitical events, such as the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, can interfere with students' experience and shape their perceptions of their own national identity. For some, contradictory views on the conflict negatively affected their engagement with their host family, consequently impacting their linguistic gains. Conversely, both Isabelli-García (2006) and Kinginger (2004) offer counterexamples of American students who developed foreign-language mediated identities through ethnorelativism. Indeed, Kinginger's (2004) case study shows how an American student developed a large and diverse communicative repertoire by avoiding compatriot students and persisting in developing a local social network.

Many studies have similarly scrutinised the role of gender as a hindering or facilitating variable for language acquisition in the context of study abroad. Many researchers have suggested that some female American students perceived host societies as sexist and, as a result, felt distressed and alienated from their host environment and struggled to form local social networks (Anderson, 2003; Bown, Dewey, Belnap, & Shelley, 2012; Kinginger & Farrell Whitworth, 2005; Pellegrino, 2005; Polanyi, 1995; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Trentman, 2015). Consequently, female study abroad students frequently find refuge in compatriot and other international student networks, aggravating their marginalisation from local social networks (Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2009; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Twombly, 1995). However, other studies have demonstrated a more positive correlation between gender and second language learning (Churchill, 2009; Kinginger, 2016; Patron, 2007; Trentman, 2015).

In most of the research on identity in study abroad, identity is framed quite reductively as a variable that potentially influences language proficiency gains. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001, p. 157) point out that: “focusing on variables is, if nothing else, misguided, since it is not the variables that should be our concern, but the concrete individuals who come to the learning site with specific histories, personalities and agencies”. Indeed, although research on study abroad differs in methodologies and approaches, it views language proficiency as the main outcome of the experience abroad. Moreover, study abroad is also often considered as a mere contextual variable with limited influence on identity. An approach that considers only how identity influences the study abroad experience, shifts the focus from the impact of study abroad on identity. On this point, Benson et al. (2013) argue that:

This focus on language learning outcomes often comes at the expense of opportunities to understand study abroad as a holistic experience with multiple language and identity-related outcomes. Study abroad is viewed as a context for language learning only in the most abstract sense. It is not seen as a context of individual experience that is, in turn, embedded in the context of individual students’ lives. (Benson et al., 2013, p. 38)

There is thus a clear need for more research on the way identity is durably transformed and developed in the context of study abroad conceived as a conducive ground for identity transition.

The literature on the issue of identity and second language learning in study abroad highlights a general consensus among researchers on a conception of identity as complex, malleable and changing across time and space (Block, 2007b; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2013; Norton, 2000, 2014; Pavlenko, 2002; Tracy-Ventura et al., 2016). From this perspective, Norton (2013, p. 45) defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. Identity is not fixed for life but is constantly changing, notably due to new sociocultural environments in which individuals immerse themselves, such as during study abroad. Such a learning context has the potential to challenge students’ habitus (Bourdieu, 1990), which provides them with a sense of their “rightful place” in society and a predisposition to act and think in accordance with dominant ideologies, and what they consider to be the expectations of society. Identity is therefore negotiated and re-negotiated throughout students’ life in general and during a study abroad experience in particular. On this constant negotiation between identity and the social context, Block (2007b) further explains that:

Identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of past, present, and future. Individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their sociohistories as life goes on. The entire process is conflictive as opposed to harmonious, and individuals often feel ambivalent. There are unequal power relations to deal with, around different capitals — economic, cultural and social — that both facilitate and constrain interactions with others in the different communities of practice with which individuals engage in their lifetimes. (Block, 2007b, p. 27)

Block’s definition highlights the importance of “negotiation of difference” that occurs in immersion contexts characterised by unequal power relations (Kinger, 2013). A student’s identity is a constantly negotiated dialectic with the learning context. Thus, identity is not a fixed entity but rather a site of struggle destabilised by immersive environments. One of the principal stakes for learners is to achieve a new emotional and moral balance, attainable notably through the creation of new social networks or the

establishment of a new daily routine (Kellett & Moore, 2003; Nowicka, 2007; Prazeres, 2018; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Kinginger (2013, p. 341) also notes that “exposure to unfamiliar practices can upset taken-for-granted-views, but the outcome is more than just adding new perspectives to the old”. Instead, students would be in an “in-between” situation, a “third space” (Bhabha, 2012; Kramsch, 2009), best described by Block’s (2007a, p. 864) notion of ambivalence that characterised the negotiation of difference which is “the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart”. Identities mediated through language learning depend on students’ capability to open up a third space in the struggle they experience in confronting their habitus and their previous identities to unfamiliar environments and practices. Negotiation of difference therefore requires a strong investment in learning (Peirce, 1995) and can lead to ambivalence, anxiety and irritation, but also to intercultural awareness, self-confidence, independence and multilingualism.

The research to date on identity and second language acquisition highlights limitations identified by several influential scholars of the field. First, as Kinginger has pointed out on several occasions (2009, 2013, 2017), there is an overrepresentation of the experience of American students. Many scholars are filling this gap, offering studies on learners from various contexts such as Australia (de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; de Saint-Léger & Mullan, 2018; Robert, 2013), Finland (Larzén-Östermak, 2011), Austria (Baldt & Sirsch, 2019), Hong Kong (Jackson, 2008, 2010), France (Papatsiba, 2006; Patron, 2007), Indonesia (Umino & Benson, 2016), Spain (Martin-Rubió & Cots, 2018), Japan (Hanada, 2019; Sasaki, 2011), and Brazil (Foster, 2014). More research involving students from various origins studying abroad in different countries is still needed, and Kinginger (2017, p. 5) argues that “although there may be features that all educational sojourns share, until there is a broader representation of sending and receiving countries, generalizations based on this research will be risky”.

Second, the literature on study abroad is largely based on short-term programs, which is representative of and consistent with the available statistics on study abroad. For instance, the Institute of International Education (2018) reports that in 2016–2017 short-term programs of eight weeks or less represented 64.6% of all programs, while one-semester sojourns represented 33.1% and long-term stays, of over an academic year or calendar year, only 2.3%. However, especially when researching identity development and its influence on various outcomes, long-term stays are more likely to give students

opportunities to negotiate difference (Dwyer, 2004; Hamad & Lee, 2013; Kinginger, 2013).

Third, study abroad literature tends to consider the voices of only two sets of stakeholders in study abroad experiences: students and educators. In order to diversify the traditional points of view primarily centred on students and educators, scholarship must give voices to other stakeholders also concerned by the experience study abroad, such as students' relatives and friends. Their voices are needed to comprehensively understand the changes undergone by students as these changes also necessarily impact students' immediate social circles.

In the field of applied linguistics, only a few studies have supported the view of identity development as the principal outcome of study abroad for students. In her digital ethnography using e-journals of eight American students studying in Mexico for a semester, Stewart (2010) found that, through interactions and friendships with locals, students were able to develop host community mediated social identities. Furthermore, Larzén-Östermak (2011) explored the narratives of two Finnish students of English studying abroad in Scotland and in London. The first intent of their sojourn was educational, as both were envisaging a career in teaching English as a second language. Nonetheless, for both, the main outcome was self-exploration. Larzén-Östermark concludes her study by noting that "the intercultural sojourn begins as a trip abroad, to discover a second culture and learn the language, but ends in learning most about one's self" (2010, p. 470). This study shows that even when students invested primarily in studying abroad for professional development and learning a second language, identity development became the main outcome. In fact, the primary gain was that of cultural capital through the mere fact of study abroad and the experience of living in another cultural and linguistic environment, although the potential gains in social and economic capital were significant.

While the benefits of study abroad are commonly related to education and employability, many students are motivated by non-academic desires for international travel. In their study exploring travel patterns and motivations of overseas students staying for short periods in Australia, Jarvis and Peel (2008) argue that study abroad programs enable students to fulfil their desires for travel and that many combine the structure of the study abroad programs with short periods of independent travel. For many students, study

abroad may even be seen as an opportunity to travel and discover countries or regions where they would not otherwise go. This is especially the case within educator-led short-term programs which provide a more or less structured travel experience aiming to explore historic, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the host country along with linguistic purposes. On this particular mode of study abroad, in their study of a short-term program in New Caledonia involving 13 undergraduate students from two universities in Melbourne, de Saint-Léger and Mullan (2018) suggest that study abroad provides students with the confidence to travel outside the common tourist areas and, consequently, offers a unique cultural experience: “five students mentioned that had they been on their own they would have stayed in tourist areas and the cultural aspect of the tour would have been lost” (p. 302).

Several other benefits of study abroad for students that are strongly established in the literature can be correlated to travel. A sojourn abroad has the potential to increase students’ intercultural competence (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Hanada, 2019; Starr-Glass, 2016; Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008; Schartner, 2016; Twombly, Salisbury, Tamanut, & Klute, 2012), independence and self-confidence (Bachner & Zeustchel, 2009) and global and open mindedness (Gammonley, Rotabi, & Rotabi, 2007; Hadis, 2005; Harper, 2018; Mule, Audley, & Aloisio, 2018) which is linked to change of worldview (Dwyer, 2004). Another additional essential outcome of study abroad linked to travel is the exploration of the self and the way study abroad can foster personal self-discovery. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) further notes that:

One of the main benefits derived from an experience which perturbs them [the students abroad] is that the learning gained contributes to their overall capacity to adapt to other difficult passages in life. Individuals who have gone through this emerge stronger, asserting their individuality. During this new socialization which students manage on their own, they become emancipated. Most students mention this kind of elation, of enlargement of their world and of personal opening, as “growing up”. Then the stay is truly vested with the value of a rite of passage and a “life lesson”. (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, p. 226)

Merely studying abroad triggers and catalyses students’ identity transition strongly, due to the travel experiences embedded in study abroad. More research is therefore needed to

explore the outcomes of travel during study abroad (Carr & Axelsen, 2005; Stone & Petrick, 2013).

Students' social networks in study abroad

The formation of social ties is a major factor in students' experience in study abroad as it impacts their well-being and their adjustment to their new academic and sociocultural environment (McManus, 2019; Maundeni, 2001; Rientes & Nolan, 2014; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005). Research to date has found that students' social networks comprised three circles: co-national or compatriot students, other international students, and local people including domestic students (Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, 1985; Bochner, McManus, 2019; McLeod, & Lin, 1977; Coleman, 2013, 2015; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017; Schartner, 2015). There is wide consensus on the finding that there are three different networks, but contradictions arise in the literature about the order of importance of these networks for students.

One of the earliest studies of students' network formation is Bochner et al.'s (1977) study of 30 study abroad students from various countries studying in Hawaii. Their study is based on a quantitative questionnaire. Participants were given a checklist of 15 activities and asked to identify preferred "friends" with whom they would do those. Based on their data, the authors suggested the Functional Model of Friendship Networks (FMFN), which classifies students' social ties into three categories, in descending order of salience:

- a) a conational network whose function is to affirm and express the culture of origin;*
- b) a network with host nationals, whose function is the instrumental facilitation of academic and professional aspirations; and*
- c) a multi-national network whose main function is recreational. (Bochner et al., 1977, p. 277)*

Since then, numerous studies have replicated the FMFN to explore students' experiences from various backgrounds, in various contexts and scales but mostly quantitatively, and have made contradictory findings. Coleman (2013, 2015) found that, although the primary network is the co-national network, the second one is the multi-national network. Conversely, Hendrickson et al. (2011) have found that host nationals are the primary network, while Merrick (2004) and Brown (2009) reported a lack of meaningful interactions with locals. Furthermore, other scholars highlighted the importance of the

multi-national network in their participants' experience (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Sovic, 2009; Young, Sercombe, Sachdev, Naeb, & Schartner, 2013; Schartner, 2015).

Most studies have found that the co-national network, which consists of compatriot student friends, is the primary social tie for students. Bochner et al. (1977) found that the main function of this network is the expression of affirmation of the home culture. Maundeni (2001) confirms this initial finding and adds that compatriot friends provide continuity in students' feeling of cultural identity which, in turn, contributes to reduction of acculturative stress when adjusting to the new environment. In fact, falling back on social relations with compatriot students would be a natural behaviour when facing cultural differences and linguistic difficulties. On this point, in her study of four American students studying abroad in France, Wilkinson (1998, p. 32) notes that "the spontaneous formation of home culture 'islands' may actually have been the most efficient way for the students to keep from drowning in the French 'ocean' while they began to process the barrage of cultural differences and linguistic challenges faced on a daily basis". The compatriot network may work as a buffer with the host community as it may attenuate the stress that students often face when crossing cultures (Kim, 2001). This network may be of importance at the beginning of the sojourn as students can find emotional support from people who are undertaking the same experience and are likely to be feeling the same emotions. Compatriot students provide a source of comfort and, through discussion and social interactions, a better understanding of the host culture which social media friends cannot provide (Woolf, 2007). It is worth noting, however, that these studies concern second language learners in study abroad rather than the growing body of students studying in countries where their first language is spoken.

Conversely, Ward and Searle (1991) found that this reinforcement of students' cultural and national identity had a negative impact on the acculturation process and rendered students less willing to adjust to different cultural norms and form friendships with local people. As a result, in the context of second language acquisition, students who prioritised friendships with co-national students would lack opportunities of meaningful interaction in the target language (DeKeyser, 2007; Dewey, 2008) which, ultimately, may negatively affect language learning (Maundeni, 2001), cultural adjustment and overall satisfaction abroad (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Furthermore, Neri and Ville (2008) found that co-

national friendships were, at the same time, associated with lower academic success and greater well-being abroad.

Findings in the literature on the function of the co-national network are thus somewhat contradictory. Geeraert, Demoulin and Demes (2014) argue that the positive and the negative influence of compatriot friends may, in fact, vary over time and depend on the particular phase of the stay:

On arrival to the host country when stress is argued to be at its highest, close contact with co-nationals may be very welcome and have the effect of reducing stress and providing a sense of adjustment. Over time however, as the sojourner becomes more settled and comfortable in the new society, extensive contact with co-nationals may be at the detriment of cultural learning and adjustment. (Geeraert et al., 2014, p. 88)

However, individual differences more clearly explain the variations observed. Expected patterns as described by Geeraert et al. (2014) can be inaccurate. Indeed, while some relationships could foster mutual assistance and push students to step out their comfort zone and engage with the host community, others could inhibit intercultural learning and cause students to retreat into ethnocentrism. These contradictory findings reveal the need for longitudinal ethnography, as observations of individual experiences have the potential to complement previous findings. There is a need for in-depth analysis of the creation of these friendships as well as their dynamics.

The host national network is composed of host nationals, including domestic students. There is a common assumption among study abroad students and educators that study abroad automatically leads to developing of relationships with host nationals (Pellegrino, 1998; Dewey, Belnap, & Hillstrom, 2013). However, despite the fact that study abroad students usually seek out and expect to develop connections with locals (Sakurai, McCall-Wolf, & Kashima, 2010), lack of meaningful interactions with host-nationals has been repeatedly reported (Merrick, 2004; Brown, 2009; Sam, 2001; Schartner, 2015).

Three main reasons are commonly given to explain this difficulty to connect with host nationals. First, the language barrier makes it hard for students to develop relationships with host nationals (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Rienties & Nolan, 2014). Similar findings were reported even in the case of study abroad for second language learning. For

example, in their study of 41 American students of French studying abroad in France, Freed et al. (2004) found that study abroad participants used more English than French in everyday life and that, although they had many opportunities to speak French with locals, they preferred interactions in English with their compatriots. Second, study abroad students may perceive discrimination (Lee & Rice, 2007; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010). Kinginger (2008) reported on this negative outcome and demonstrated how students can feel discriminated against due to their national identity and home country's foreign policy, with, ultimately, effects on their linguistic gains. Third, most host nationals already have well-established social networks and often do not seek or need friendship as much as study abroad students (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Rienties, Beusaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012; Woolf, 2007). For instance, Kudo & Simkin (2003) found that Japanese students studying in Australia experienced difficulties in forming friendships with Australians due to the latter's existing commitments to family and friends.

The literature on students' social network development consistently shows that connection with host nationals is essential in the adjustment process. Although, at the start of a sojourn, contact with host nationals is not essential for students' adjustment, Geeraert et al. (2014) found that students who did not develop connections with host nationals over time were more likely to experience higher levels of stress. The acculturation process is therefore complex and evolves continuously throughout the sojourn. Long-term stays are more likely to give students opportunities to develop friendships with locals since meaningful interaction occurs over time (Volet & Jones, 2012). Longitudinal research is thus needed to identify these changes and explore the structure and composition of students' friendships with locals. Moreover, as shown, the literature highlights several obstacles to connections with locals, which can lead to a near-absence of contact. Deardorff (2009, p. 212) warns against a risk of "ghettoization" of study abroad students and the role of institutions in limiting this risk. Due to the difficulties identified in the literature, studying abroad may not automatically ensure quality interactions with host nationals, highlighting the importance of institutions' role in fostering contacts with local people and domestic students in particular.

The multi-national network comprises other international and study abroad students from around the world. Upon arrival in the host environment, students usually start forming

friendships with other study abroad students (Kim, 2001). They share a common bond of being outsiders, which facilitates the creation of friendships. As opposed to other social ties, the role of friendships developed within the multi-national network is largely unexplored (Young et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the benefits of this network are manifold. First, it increases students' intercultural awareness, as they are exposed to various cultures (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Second, the multi-national network fosters a sense of commonality; while Sovic (2009, p. 747) refers to "cosmopolitan friendships", Montgomery and McDowell (2009) talk about a community of practice which contributes to a sense of belonging and well-being (Schartner, 2015). Moreover, students find support in this community, which strengthens their social identity. For instance, Kashima and Loh (2006) found that international ties were related to better psychological adjustment and identification with the host university. Third, the multi-national network enables students to learn and practise the host society's language through interaction with other study abroad students who are also learning the language. Hendrickson et al. (2011) note that because students often feel embarrassed, notably due to their accent, they feel more confident speaking with other multi-nationals. On this point, surprisingly, studies of international students with native or high levels of proficiency in the host language are absent from the literature concerning the multi-national network. However, these students, for instance Québécois students studying in France or Switzerland or American students studying in Australia, are a valuable source of the target language exposure specifically helpful to second language learners.

The three social ties commonly identified in the literature serve different functions. Nonetheless, they all contribute to students' well-being and adjustment to their new academic and sociocultural environment. The existing literature provides insights into the complex and dynamic process of social networking in various contexts. However, most of the studies already cited are based on quantitative methodologies and sometimes have contradictory findings. As recently pointed out by several scholars (Geeraert et al., 2014; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Schartner, 2015), more qualitative and longitudinal research is needed in order to capture the evolving nature of social networking. Furthermore, very few studies have explored students' social networking for more than one semester. Most studies are based on short-term study abroad programs, yet, as previously mentioned, social networks evolve over time, and purely quantitative studies are unable to explore in depth the dynamic and the nature of relationships formed by students. As yet, most studies

are typically limited to counting the number of individuals in each network category, neglecting the qualitative aspect of the relationships.

Furthermore, the traditional divisions of study abroad students' social networks into three broad circles show several limitations. First, they suggest that individuals who constitute each of them belong to unitary and monolithic groups. However, the constantly increasing number of students studying abroad necessarily results in diversification of students' linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds. The model on which most of the studies listed above are based, was relevant forty years ago, but if we posit that the identities of the students that are sent abroad are multiple, malleable and changing across time and space, this is also true for each individual they encounter, whether compatriot, host national or from a third country. Thus, a reconceptualisation of students' social network development is needed more than ever and sub-divisions should be considered, as each circle is highly diverse. The compatriot network includes students from the home country. However, many of the university students who are studying abroad, especially those learning second languages, have been studying together for several years, and therefore already know each other before they depart. Their first circle is then often composed of students from their home university rather than students from other universities or other 'home' cities. The bonds created with students from their home country are therefore variable.

Second, and similarly, the broad category of multi-nationals does not better reflect the diversity of the students it comprises. For example, international and study abroad students who are native or proficient in the target language occupy a significant position. They offer specific academic and linguistic benefits, notably to other students learning the target language. The latter also acquire a sense of global citizenship as they realise that the language they are learning is part of a larger space than just the host country. This is exemplified in France and Switzerland as both countries host significant numbers of francophone international students, for instance from Africa. Those international students belong to a group that is almost in-between the host nationals and the multi-nationals. Similarly, host nationals are a very diverse group. Domestic students who are themselves recent migrants could be also set apart within this network, as they may more easily see themselves in the study abroad students' place. This heterogeneity is not reflected in the representations of students' social ties in the study abroad context that are commonly used in the literature.

Third, the traditional models of students' social network development do not show the interconnections between the different circles. Study abroad students often share the same networks of multi-national students, which form a community of practice independently from the host community. Moreover, these representations give no indication about the quality and the importance of the relationships for the students. A given network can be the most populated but may fail to provide students with quality and meaningful interactions, which are especially crucial in second language learning (DeKeyser, 2007; Dewey, 2008; Maundeni, 2001).

Fourth, there is an assumption in these models that all networks are based on face-to-face interactions, but the implications of students' use of social media should also be taken into consideration (McManus, 2019). Indeed, the constant connection with their social networks from home has radically transformed the study abroad experience. As Kinginger (2013, p. 345) points out: "ready access to travel and to technology-enhanced social networking (e.g. Facebook or Skype) has changed the nature of study abroad to the point where today's experiences are fundamentally different from those of earlier eras". One of the most immediate consequences is that students have an additional tool for socialisation. They can use social media to connect with people; this has already been widely explored and established in the literature (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016; Godwin-Jones, 2016; Mikal & Grace, 2012). Furthermore, social media were found to play an important role in students' adjustment as they may help to reduce homesickness and ease acculturative stress (Mitchell, 2012; Sandel, 2014). Students can now communicate with their networks from home almost constantly and immediately throughout their sojourn. They can find support and receive feedback and comments on the aspects of their experience they choose to promote. Their social networks from home, therefore, can directly influence every aspect of their experience, including their social network development. This has transformed the way students apprehend their study abroad experience.

Since students arguably no longer have the same relationship to study abroad, and social media is a major reason for this new state of affairs, the issues and outcomes have also changed considerably, demonstrating a clear need for further investigation. The implications of this quasi-permanent digital connectivity with home on the way students apprehend their experiences of study abroad and develop their social networks are yet to

be explored since, to date, social media has been mostly reductively framed as a variable that fosters or hinders second language acquisition.

Social media and study abroad

Two fundamental social dynamics are at the core of social media: the presentation of self, tightly linked to the notion of identity, and the building and maintenance of social networks, which is tied to the concepts of social interaction, community and belongingness. This is especially salient in platforms like Facebook and Instagram which allow users to publicly manage their self-presentation and build, maintain and extend their social networks.

Social media enable users to create a profile and allow them to “type oneself into being” (Sundén, 2003, p. 3). The profile page enables users to present themselves in various ways. They can display a profile picture, describe their personal interests and hobbies, identify their family members, provide information about their work and education or translate their personality into text. These sites enable users to manage and make visible their social networks. For instance, on Facebook, by default, users can consult each other’s profiles, unless a user has restricted the access. After joining Facebook, users are asked to identify “friends” in the application, which requires bi-directional confirmation. Instagram uses the term “follower” to refer to a user who follows one’s account and is able to see, like and comment on posted content. Public consultations of the friends or followers list is an essential component of these platforms. The lists contain links to every other contacts’ profile, which enables users to traverse the network and consult others’ profiles and possibly send a “friend request”. As a result, connections between individuals who would be unlikely to meet one another offline are made possible. However, boyd³ and Ellison (2007, p. 211) also note that on many of these sites “participants are not necessarily ‘networking’ or looking to meet new people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network”.

Platforms like Facebook and Instagram therefore facilitate the building and maintaining of social networks and Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008, p. 1820) point out that “the display of users’ names and their institutional affiliations make the Facebook

³ Note that danah m. boyd spells her name using lowercase letters.

environment almost fully nonymous. The nonymity of Facebook is an ideal condition for examining identity construction in online environment where the relationships are anchored in offline communities”. This anchorage in the offline world is fundamental to the study abroad contexts as social media can therefore reveal students’ activities, the creation and maintenance of their relationships and their identity construction.

There is a general consensus among study abroad researchers that identity is malleable, changing over time and space, is a site of struggle and is socially constructed (Block, 2007b; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2013; Norton, 2000, 2014; Norton Pierce, 1995; Tracy-Ventura et al., 2016). Identity is a set of resources upon which individuals draw to present and express themselves through interactions with others. It is therefore constantly negotiated and co-constructed in social interactions depending on the social context individuals navigate. Rather than being singular and stable, identity is multiple and changing. Social media as a vector of social interactions is relevant within this construct as they allow users to manage, curate and emphasise specific facets of their identities. In this sense, social media strengthen individuals’ agency (Code, 2012) including their choice of language of communication. As in offline settings, language use on social media is central to how individuals convey their identity, make connections while effectively excluding others. Indeed, first language can be used for documenting the experience of study abroad and communicating it with the audience from home. However, target language may also be deliberately used towards contacts from home to convey specific aspects of students’ identity, for instance, as competent learners of the target language (Back, 2013). Despite these new implications of social media in the concept of identity, research into identity on social media remains underexplored (Androustopoulos, 2010; Darwin, 2016; Georgalou, 2017) and confined to users’ profiles (Vásquez, 2014), in turn neglecting the other venues where identities are performed (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014).

Classic theory of self-presentation (Goffman, 1978) posits that interactions between people are attempts to control or guide the impressions they make on others. Individuals are then seen as actors who are on stage in front of others “performing” the positive aspects of their selves in order to generate desired impressions. At the same time, people align themselves and perform in accordance with what they think is valued in particular groups. On Facebook, users can strategically manage their self-presentation within two spaces, their wall and their news feed (Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014; Seidman, 2013). On their

wall, users present themselves by displaying, editing and managing information via their profiles and their posts. As claimed by boyd (2007), “the profile can be seen as a form of digital body where individuals must write themselves into being” (boyd, 2007, p. 129). Since, through their profile, users can express salient aspects of their identities for other members to see and interpret, the profile constitutes a unique venue where identity performance can be observed. boyd’s statement above highlights the fact that, unlike in offline interactions, users’ identities are not performed through the spoken word but mostly through written and visual resources such as photographs, memes and videos.

On platforms like Facebook and Instagram, users can upload photographs, videos and, more recently, live videos. These new resources are becoming an increasingly important aspect of self-presentation and online self-identity construction (Androutsopoulos, 2010; McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Van Dijck, 2008; Young & Quan-Haase, 2013). Photograph sharing on social media is a powerful tool of identity construction and communication (Van Dijck, 2008) and is used for the affirmation of personhood and personal bonds. Selfies, self-portrait type images, are undoubtedly one of the most salient expressions of this new feature (Chua & Chang, 2016; Lyu, 2016; Qiu, Lu, Yang, Qu, & Zu, 2015). The research in this area has focused predominantly on profile photographs (Flynn, 2016; Hum et al., 2011; Strano, 2008) through the lens of gender (Kapidzic & Herring, 2014; Oberst, Renau, Chamarro, & Carbonell, 2016; Rose et al., 2012; Zheng, Yuan, Chang, & Wu, 2016), age (Dhir, Kaur, Lonka, & Nieminen, 2015; Ozimek & Bierhoff, 2016) and personality traits (Carpenter, 2012; Kapidzic, 2013). Through their photographs, social media users were found to seek social acceptance with their self-presentations (Farquhar, 2012) and use strategies that influence the liking and consideration they receive from their contacts (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013). Bareket-Bojmel, Moran, and Shahar (2016, p. 789) also argue that “individuals who engage in self-presentation online will be motivated to reveal their inner ‘true-self’ or an image that is not necessarily ‘perfect’ in order to receive candid feedback from their network audience”. Self-presentation on social media is therefore about self-enhancement or self-promotion in order to generate social acceptance.

The news feed is the page where users spend most of their time (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2011). It gathers Facebook friends’ activities such as status updates, photographs, videos, shared links and “likes”. A user’s news feed is generally visible to

his/her friends, who can also access the user's friends and their activities. Moreover the news feed offers users the opportunity to like, share and comment on every post. These three options are used for interacting and sharing posted content and they can be considered a self-presentational tool that users can employ to manage the ways they are perceived by their friends (Lee et al., 2014).

In sum, if we posit that identities are discursively constructed and dialogically performed through social interactions then social media platforms are an ideal environment for their performance. Importantly, this section brings to the fore antagonist forces at play on social media. Indeed, while users enjoy greater agency to choose the facets of their identities they wish to present, they also need to align themselves to particular groups' ideologies, including their home social networks. Thus, social media provide an ideal environment to research and observe identity performance and what students and their home communities value in the experience of study abroad.

Identities are performed partly by aligning oneself with different groups, ideologies and cultural practices. On this point, Seargeant and Tagg (2014, p. 9) suggest that "identity performance cannot be discussed in isolation from the communities with which individuals align themselves and the ways in which those communities establish and maintain the relationships that comprise them". Social media are based on connectedness and social networking, which highlights a fundamental motive for individuals to use these platforms: the need to belong (Gangadharbatla, 2008; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Baumaister & Leary (1995, p. 497) point out that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships". They argue that lacking fulfilment of this need would negatively impact well-being. Nonetheless, they also concede individual differences and posit that individuals with high needs to belong would strive harder to obtain numerous satisfying relationships than individuals low in this need. Social media play an important role in people's belongingness as they enable users to fulfil their belonging needs through interactions with and learning about other users. Indeed, social media are correlated with the reduction of social disconnection (Sheldon, Abad, & Hinsch, 2011), facilitation of relationship development (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2018; Yu, Tian, Vogal, & Kwok, 2010) and increased self-esteem (Steinfeld, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008).

The need to belong is essential in the context of study abroad and is translated into both the need to remain in contact with home communities and the need to create and maintain new relationships with social networks in the host environment. Social media can therefore play a central role in students' strategies of socialisation. The immersion context of study abroad destabilises students' identities and they must then strive to achieve a new emotional and psychological balance. Social media can potentially smooth this destabilisation by allowing students to remain in contact with their supporting networks from home (Mitchell, 2012). Additionally, social media can, arguably, assist students in initiating contacts with communities in the host context (Chen & Yang, 2015; Li & Chen 2014; Mikal & Grace, 2012), including in ways that are less dependent upon linguistic proficiency. A detailed observation of study abroad students' posts can also provide insight into the structure of their social networks (Olding, 2013) and the types of activities in which they are engaged. Furthermore, the highly visual nature of social media adds a dimension to social networking that many study abroad researchers do not adequately consider.

In the literature of study abroad, social media has so far mostly been treated as another variable that affects the quality of the experience, the exposure to the target language and culture, and ultimately the linguistic gains students can make. On the one hand, some researchers argue that social media has a positive impact on the quality of immersion in that it can reinforce connections and strengthen communication with the host community (Chen & Yang, 2015; Durbidge, 2019; Li & Chen 2014), ease anxiety and the fear of missing out (Hetz, Dawson, & Cullen, 2015), reduce homesickness (Mitchell, 2012) and facilitate access to information (Mikal, Yang, & Lewis, 2014; Sin & Kim, 2013). On the other hand, some have found a negative impact of its use, in isolating learners from the host culture (Huesca, 2013; Magnan & Lafford, 2012; Roberts, 2010; Wooley, 2013). Thus, the main objective for the studies cited here has been to describe students' use of social media in order to investigate its impact on the quality of the immersion, and ultimately assess the implications for linguistic gains.

On the positive side, the research on social media use in study abroad contexts upholds a common assumption that digital connectivity allows study abroad students to maintain their social bonds with their supporting networks back home, which in turn contributes to their well-being and offers new possibilities to engage with the host culture (Godwin-

Jones, 2016). In an article drawing on a case study with nine participants from an intensive English language program in the United States, Mitchell (2012) found that many of her participants joined Facebook during their experience abroad in order to bridge the distance with friends and family and consequently reduce their feelings of homesickness. Back in 2012, students already perceived the bridging potential of Facebook.

Similarly, Sandel (2014) found that online communication with home helped to reduce students' acculturative stress. Furthermore, online connections with home correlated with a better social adjustment and stronger feelings of belonging to the host society (Lin, Peng, Kim, & LaRose, 2012). For their part, using a survey administered to students from five of the largest study abroad programs in the United States, Mikal and Grace (2012) found a double advantage of digital technology in easing students' anxiety and helping integration. First, they suggest that digital connection with home eases acculturation due to the "continuity provided by a sense of connectedness and the consistency of online communities" (Mikal and Grace, 2012, p. 300). Second, they report that students used the Internet to create virtual opportunities to connect with the host communities and seek practical information about the host culture, such as finding a cultural event, without necessarily following through with their plans and establishing relationships in the offline world. Forbush & Foucault-Welles (2016) confirm the finding that social network sites such as Facebook help students to connect and expand their network in the host community upon their arrival. Several other studies support the same positive outcome of social media use (Li & Chen, 2014; Lin et al., 2012; Park, Song, & Lee, 2014; Rui & Wang, 2015).

Social media was also found to create bridging spaces with the home communities. In a study based on a cyber-ethnography of three American learners of Portuguese in study abroad in Brazil, Back (2013) uses Facebook data to analyse her participants' interactions. She reports that one of her participants used Portuguese in status updates. Contacts from home would then react to these updates with amused confusion and often request more information. The participant would then use these interactions as an opportunity to teach them Portuguese. This type of updates posted in the target language are not necessarily aimed at the host community. In the case of Back's participant, members from the home community frequently responded to those posts, which showed how the participant used

self-presentation strategies to receive positive feedback and acceptance from the home community and to position themselves as a competent learner.

Conversely, many studies claim that with increased digital connectivity to home, students may not be fully engaged in the host culture and may therefore miss out on interactions with target language speakers. Kinginger (2008) reports on this negative impact in her case study of an American student in France. Digital communications with home through emails and instant messages with friends and relatives prevented the student from feeling “really immersed” (Kinging, 2008, p. 96). In a more recent study, Lee and Ranta (2014) correlate students’ use of Facebook with their difficulty to connect with local people. Similarly, in his study of international students studying in Australia, Olding (2013) reports that Facebook was primarily used to maintain relationships with compatriot students rather than creating contacts with locals.

Furthermore, the use of social media may trigger students’ fear of missing out. In their quantitative study using an online survey administered to over 400 students studying at a Danish in-country study program, Hofer, Thebodo, Meredith, Kaslow, and Saunders (2016) found that constant connection with home through Facebook fosters a fear of missing out on events from home. Although 80% of the cohort reported having fewer opportunities for being online than they would normally have at home, participants could still spend, on average, 1.6 hours per day on Facebook and two thirds felt that they were missing out when seeing their friends’ activities back home. Similarly, in his study of American students studying abroad in Ireland, Kelly (2010) found that students remained constantly connected, mostly through Skype and Facebook, to their friends and relatives during their time abroad. This created the condition of what the author calls “ambilocation, which he concludes “has the very potential to render full-immersion study abroad obsolete” (Kelly, 2010, p. 104).

The Internet is populated with warnings for students intending to study abroad about the use of digital technology and social media. Many take the form of blog articles written by study abroad educators or advisors who, often based on their own study abroad experience that usually occurred before the advent of digital technology, lament the presumed negative impacts of the Internet on study abroad. Although articles like “How the Internet screwed up study abroad” (Roberts, 2010) or “How Facebook can ruin study abroad” (Huesca, 2013) acknowledge that digital technology has radically changed the

experience of study abroad, they accuse social media of preventing students from having a “fully” immersive experience in the host environment and “truly” experiencing the cultural shock. Huesca even recommends a media pledge to incite students not to use social media or their digital platforms for music and films. In the same vein, Doerr (2013) reports that study abroad guidebooks often recommend that students minimise their use of the Internet, mobile devices and social media. These warnings are based on a nostalgic discourse of “it was better before” and the assumption that both full immersion, if it had ever existed (Kim, 2001; Maundeni, 2001; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Sovic 2009; Wilkinson, 1998; Woolf, 2007), and the initial cultural shock are necessary and beneficial for all students.

Scholarship on the use of social media in study abroad contexts has several limitations. The first major limitation of studies assessing positive or negative impacts of social media is that social media use in the study abroad context is considered as a variable that either facilitates or hinders language learning and/or the quality of immersion. However, this focus on both language learning outcomes and immersion quality often comes at the expense of opportunities to understand social media as a powerful and insightful venue for study abroad students’ self-presentation and identity negotiation.

Second, more longitudinal studies are needed to better understand why contradictory findings have been found. On the one hand, social media facilitate contacts with local people, while on the other, they take away students from the host culture. These findings demonstrate above all else that the use of social media is highly individualised and can serve radically different aims. Although studies based on quantitative methods, such as online surveys administrated to large cohorts, have provided interesting insights into students’ use of social media while studying abroad, more qualitative method-based studies are needed to complement and extend our understanding of an experience that has been completely transformed by the integration of social media into students’ everyday lives.

Finally, the almost mythical conception of “full immersion” reveals a nostalgic discourse sometimes at play in research on study abroad. Blaming students for their presumed over-use of technology and social media conceals the fact that local people use these platforms just as much, if not more, than the students in question. According to Doerr (2013):

suggesting that visiting students stay away from electronics but failing to acknowledge that their “native friends” may be spending a lot of time on the Internet and watching TV creates an impression that these things are not an integral part of the host society and that the host society is less globally connected via the Internet. (Doerr, 2013, p. 237):

Some literature on social media use in study abroad relies on largely erroneous assumptions that the host community is digitally disconnected and both culturally and linguistically homogenous, as opposed to the visiting student who is often portrayed as connected, mobile, culturally and linguistically diverse. This supposition denies the multicultural and multilingual reality of the online and offline spaces that students traverse (Kramsch, 2013). Students who study in one of the growing number of English-language-of-instruction programs in non-Anglophone contexts are but one facet of this changing reality along with study abroad programs offering exchanges within the same linguistic space. Thus, with the rise of technology and social media, the reconceptualisation of the experience abroad, as well as the use of social media within a new model integrating this new landscape characterised by the advances in technology, is needed more than ever (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2016).

Unanswered questions

This chapter has reviewed the different ways that study abroad has been approached in research, with particular focus on the notion of identity. It began with an extensive review of the literature on second language acquisition and identity in study abroad contexts. It highlighted the general consensus among researchers that identity is multiple, malleable, changing across time and space and a site of struggle. The main issue identified is that identity is treated as a variable that may facilitate or hinder second language learning. However, this reductive focus on linguistic outcomes prevents educators and researchers from comprehending study abroad as a life changing experience that deeply, durably and irremediably impacts students’ identity. The early assumption was that study abroad student identity was essentially that of second language learner. Research then focused on the intersectional identities that influence second language acquisition.

However, study abroad students’ identity is more complex and multiple. They can simultaneously be second language learners, travellers, emerging professionals and

young adults living away from home for the first time who have both online and offline connections to different social networks. Consequently, study abroad needs to be considered holistically as part of students' lives instead of only a language learning journey. Theorising study abroad as a rite of passage is a way to situate this international experience as part of students' life path within a major transitional period and conceive of their identity construction as part of this transition. Therefore, identity is positioned at the core of this transformative experience, which emphasises its dialogical nature. On the one hand, identity has the potential to shape the study abroad experience, and on the other hand, it durably changes and develops under the influence of this immersion environment. Thus, several questions arise.

First, by taking part in study abroad, do students actually perceive that they are accomplishing a rite of passage? This question not only raises the issue of the value that students attribute to this experience but also of their home society's views on study abroad. Those questions are particularly relevant in the Australian context since the transition to emerging adulthood is socially constructed around rites of passage based on travel experiences. Exploring the differences between the gap year and schoolies week helped to understand why, as opposed to these events, study abroad is not widely considered as a rite of passage. One essential difference was identified: while the gap year and schoolies week mark a juncture in institutional study, a transition between high school and tertiary education or work, study abroad is integrated into students' educational path and arguably, to the "Plan" that Arnett (2004) describes as the route that emerging adults will take between adolescence and adulthood. Because the purpose of study abroad is educational, the transformative aspect of the experience does not come to the fore as it does for the gap year and schoolies week, which are undertaken to assist young people to transition to adulthood. Therefore, there is social recognition for their value as rites of passage that is not extended to study abroad. However, just like the gap year and schoolies week, study abroad requires students to depart their home community to undertake travel and, especially in long-term sojourns, it has been demonstrated that travel and sightseeing were among students' main activities while studying abroad (Carlson et al., 1990; Carr & Axelsen, 2005; Stone & Petrick, 2013). So, what are the outcomes of these travels and the implications in the experience of study abroad? Does travelling while studying abroad specifically equip students with skills and knowledge that they would not otherwise develop? Do those travels help study abroad students to transition to emerging adulthood?

Second, the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage entails that the experience aligns with the fundamental characteristics of rites of passage and the three phases conceptualised by van Gennep (1960): separation, transition and incorporation. Three main consequences arise. Firstly, rites of passage imply an identity transition through which students will acquire a new social status within their community. In the case of most university students, the transition is made towards adulthood. Through the rite of passage of study abroad, are aspects of students' identity durably and irremediably transformed? Further investigations are needed to understand identity transition, and longitudinal observations throughout long-term sojourns are a useful way to complement the findings of studies based on short-term stay as well as those using purely quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires administered to large cohorts of students. More research is also needed to explore the durability of the identity changes after the sojourn. Voices must be therefore given to both students and their relatives to measure the extent of the changes on the family dynamic for instance. Secondly, if we posit that identity is social in nature and constructed through social interactions, the changes in students' identity necessarily have consequences for their social environment. The experience abroad impacts not only students but also their social networks, including their family and friends. Investigating the structure of their social networks while they are studying abroad and how the dynamics of their relationships evolve with the different groups students are in contact with offline and online has the potential to reveal different aspects of their identity transition. Finally, rites of passage require a separation from the home community that is accomplished through travels in many rites. Typically, a member from a given community undertakes a journey through which they will acquire a new social status upon their return. For study abroad students, study abroad comprises this travel dimension and, therefore, can be seen as a socially structured and educational travel experience.

Third, as demonstrated, the role of social network development is particularly crucial in a study abroad context. As Murphy-Lejeune (2002) points out, through their new socialisation during study abroad, students become more emancipated. Moreover, social network development is typical of the transition phase of rites of passage (Grabowski et al., 2017) and, research has shown that it is crucial for study abroad students, as social ties strengthen their well-being and ease their adjustment to their new environment. Nonetheless, few studies have explored this phase of social networking in order to reveal

how students add, construct and find value in study abroad and how they can become more emancipated and independent through the creation of social ties.

Fourth, the advancement of digital communication and social media have radically transformed the social landscape and the way we communicate. However, the use of social media in study abroad has been reductively considered as a variable that can positively or negatively impact second language acquisition. Several issues then emerge. What aspects of their identity and their experience do students choose to promote on social media? As shown in the literature, social media fulfil users' needs for self-presentation. Antagonist forces are at play on those platforms. On the one hand, users enjoy greater agency for self-presentation and can freely curate the facets of their identity that they wish to display; on the other, they need to align themselves with their audience's dominant ideologies. In other words, users display on social media what they think will meet their audience's interests and expectations (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2014; Seargeant and Tagg, 2014). Therefore, what students and their home society value in study abroad can be showcased on social media. Indeed, social media are venues where students' activities and social ties can be exhibited and examined, and the facets of their identity, their experience, their activities and their social ties they choose to promote have the potential to answer the questions and inform the issues that my study is concerned with.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

One of the starting points of the thesis was to find an effective way to closely follow study abroad students throughout their sojourn with the initial objective of examining the development of their second language identity. While this objective was unsuccessful, the methodology was effective in gaining insight into students' experience. The focus of the research and its objectives therefore shifted toward the implications of the study abroad students' use of social media during their sojourn in their socialisation process and their modes of online self-presentation. The focus of the research and its objectives therefore shifted toward the implications of the study abroad students' use of social media during their sojourn in their socialisation process and their modes of online self-presentation. The unprecedented transformations in communication, social interaction and socialisation resulting from the increasing use of social media and digital communication have impacted the social world in general, and the nature of study abroad and the way today's students experience it in particular. From this context, new stakes have emerged, such as the implications of social media use on study abroad students' social networking and the consequences of the quasi-permanent digital connection with home on students' experiences. New research techniques therefore needed to be developed in order to adequately address these issues. Based on students' practices, my research draws on social media to collect data, gain insights into students' experiences and explore their identity transition to emerging adulthood in order to answer the research questions.

Research questions

The research examines the identity transition to emerging adulthood of seven Australian students of French during their experience of study abroad in France or Switzerland. Social media were identified as an ideal space to explore their transition as they allow a close day-to-day observation of participants' activities, social networking and identity expression. Two interrelated questions drove the study: what aspects of their experience abroad — and of their evolving identity — do students display and promote on Facebook and Instagram?

To answer the research questions, the study utilised a digital ethnography and photo-elicitation interviews. The objectives are, first, to observe and analyse the formation of online and offline social networks and the implications: students' use of social media in facilitating and representing their socialisation process. Second, explore the representations of students' social network development in contemporary experience of study abroad characterised by the increasing use of social media and the changing landscape of study abroad. Third, examine the aspects of students' identity that they choose to promote and display on social media and determine their perceived value of the experience of study abroad. Fourth, explore students' transition to emerging adulthood through the rite of passage of study abroad.

Theoretical frameworks

In order to investigate the research questions, the study draws on two theoretical frameworks: the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage (Grabowski et al., 2017) based on the concept of rites of passage developed by van Gennep (1960) and Arnett's notion of emerging adulthood (2000, 2010, 2012). As the study abroad students' social networking models are practical in nature, they are discussed in the literature review in Chapter Two.

Rites of passage

The first mention of "rites of passage" in anthropological literature is commonly attributed to Arnold van Gennep (1960). According to van Gennep, individuals take on several different social statuses — childhood, adulthood, parenthood, elder — during their lives. The transition between these statuses is signalled by rites of passage more or less elaborated that accompany every change of state, status, social position, or life cycle for individuals.

Van Gennep's conceptualisation of rites of passage is based on three successive phases: separation, transition or liminality and incorporation. The first phase, separation, sees the individual withdrawing from their former self and former social position. It comprises a symbolic ritual signifying the detachment of the individual from a social position. The individual then enters the second phase, transition, during which they become a "passenger" (Turner, 1976, p. 234). They are passing through a symbolic domain detached from the attributes of their previous or future state. During this phase, the

individual is temporarily and situationally separated from their community. The whole process can be initiated by the individual, imposed on them, or a combination of both. The last phase, incorporation, sees the neophyte reintegrating into their community with a new status that provides them with new rights and duties aligned with those of other individuals of the same social position.

Many researchers consider that, in contemporary societies, travel is a modern rite of passage especially when undertaken at a transitional period of life (Adler, 1985; Giddens, 1991; Matthews, 2008; O'Reilly, 2006; White & White, 2004). Since travel is an intrinsic part of study abroad, van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage is theoretically relevant for analysing and repositioning study abroad as a rite of passage for students. Based on van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation of the rites of passage, Grabowski et al. (2017) offer a framework for analysing students' experiences in study abroad. They applied the three phases described previously to conceptualise study abroad. The first phase, separation, "sees the GET⁴ students preparing to exit the home country by limiting their interaction with their social groups. They are detached from their former self via some kind of ritual, for example, a leaving party" (Grabowski et al., 2017. p. 144). The second phase, transition, is "where the student is between two states of being. Here interaction in the new society includes forming relationships with local and study abroad students as well as local people. Adoption of new behaviours and expansion of knowledge occurs in order to 'fit in'" (Grabowski et al., 2017, p. 144). The last phase, incorporation, is "where the student becomes competent in the new society and has adopted a new status as a study abroad student. He/she is a member of a new group and upon return home, takes this status with him/her" (Grabowski et al., 2017. p. 144).

Each phase of Grabowski et al.'s (2017) framework is the straightforward transposition of van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation. The framework is part of a larger study that, based on a comprehensive review of the literature on transformational travel, makes the case that study abroad should be recognised as a rite of passage for youth in promoting identity transformation and global citizenry. Although Grabowski et al.'s (2017)

⁴ Grabowski et al. (2017) use the term "global educational travel" (GET) as a broad definition of study abroad. They defined GET as "all overseas travel undertaken by enrolled undergraduate students for the purpose of study" (Grabowski et al., 2017. p. 139). Their definition includes study abroad students and full degree international students.

framework is strongly underpinned theoretically, it is neither explained in concrete terms nor tested empirically through the experience of study abroad students.

Emerging adulthood

Implicit in van Gennep's use of the rite of passage framework is the new status students will acquire upon their return from study abroad; that of adults. Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (2000, 2010, 2012), nuances this by identifying a status, emerging adulthood, that is characteristic of individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 who are taking time before settling down into a career or starting a family. Within this period of development, they explore identity, relationships, and career and education prospects. Arnett (2000, 2004) identifies five characteristics of emerging adulthood: "identity exploration", "self-focus", "instability", "possibilities/optimism" and "feeling in between". His concept is particularly relevant to the context of study abroad as it corresponds to the period of life when university students commonly leave not only their homes, but their society. Parallels can be drawn with the three phases of rites of passage; the separation phase, for instance, is characterised by instability and identity exploration. Similarly, feeling in between defines the transition phase, where students are between two states of life. Nonetheless, study abroad is, surprisingly, neglected in his analysis. Each of Arnett's characteristics of emerging adulthood is discussed here in the light of study abroad.

The first characteristic, identity exploration, is the stage in which individuals explore, in various ways, their possibilities for their lives, such as work, studies, travel and love. According to Arnett (2004), a greater independence from parents is observable during this period of life although emerging adults have not yet reached the stability that characterises full adulthood, notably achieved through long-term work and stable relationships, which provide the security needed to take on additional responsibilities, such as a career or a parental role. During the transitional period, there is a lower reliance on parents or parental figures and a lack of the obligations inherent in adulthood. This absence of constraints makes possible a degree of experimentation and exploration. According to Arnett (2000), emerging adulthood is a time particularly suitable for travel:

...emerging adults may also travel to a different part of the country or the world on their own for a limited period, often in the context of a limited-term work or educational experience. This too can be part of their identity explorations, part of

expanding their range of personal experiences prior to making the more enduring choices of adulthood. (Arnett 2000, p. 474)

The second characteristic, self-focus, is when individuals make decision for themselves on what they want to do and be before the constraints of adulthood. Emerging adulthood is the time of life when individuals focus the most on themselves (Arnett, 2004). Children and adolescents are also self-focused; however they always have parents, teachers, relatives, siblings and other adults to respond to. Family and school provide a frame of rules and standards that requires answers from them on a regular basis and that monitors their behaviour. Similarly, adulthood is characterised by commitments and obligations; for instance, towards partners, children and employers. Emerging adulthood is an interval period when ties to commitments and obligations towards others are looser. It is through self-focus that emerging adults “develop skills for daily living, gain a better understanding of who they are and what they want from life, and begin to build a foundation for their adult lives” (Arnett, 2004, p. 14). The stakes are independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. Although many students still rely financially on their parents during their study abroad experience, the separation from their family puts them in an in-between situation in which they also enjoy extensive independence and, often for the first time, manage their own affairs.

The third characteristic, instability, is a time of exploration and changing decisions in different areas such as work, studies or love. Arnett (2004) notes that:

...emerging adults know that they are supposed to have a Plan with a capital P, that is, some kind of idea about the route they will be taking from adolescence to adulthood [...] However, for almost all of them, their Plan is subject to numerous revisions during the emerging adult years. (Arnett, 2004, p. 10)

Revisions of the Plan could mean, for instance, exploring a particular major at university before dropping it and changing to another one or doing an internship to explore a particular professional field. Each time a revision is made, individuals learn something about themselves and what they want for the future. This point illustrates the difference between study abroad and, notably, the gap year, which is experimental in nature. Study abroad is usually a part of the Plan as it is integrated into a university degree and

undertaken for educative purposes and represents a significant investment for a student's professional or academic future.

The fourth characteristic, feeling in-between, is located between the restrictions of adolescence and the obligations of adulthood. In Arnett's conception, this period is characterised by a semi-autonomy in which individuals are responsible for themselves while still depending to a certain extent on their family. The reason for this in-between feeling lies in the characteristics of adulthood commonly cited by emerging adults: "1. Accept responsibility for yourself. 2. Make independent decisions. 3. Become financially independent" (Arnett, 2004, pp. 14–15).

Finally, the fifth feature, possibilities/optimism, is when individuals' possibilities for their futures are still open and nothing is definitive. Emerging adults consider these possibilities with optimism, they "look to the future and envision a well-paying, satisfying job, a loving, lifelong marriage, and happy children who are above average" (Arnett, 2004, p. 16). During emerging adulthood, the directions to take are still numerous and open to change.

The concept of emerging adulthood is relevant when analysing the impacts of study abroad on undergraduate students' identity. Numerous studies have used it and concluded that the experience of study abroad triggers and facilitates students' transition to emerging adulthood (Baldt & Sirsch, 2019; Harper, 2018; Hofer et al., 2016; Hutterman, Nestler, Wagner, Egloff, & Back, 2015; Grabowski et al., 2017; Wintre, Kandasamy, Chavoshi, & Wright, 2015). However, limitations have been identified and care must be taken. First, Arnett's model contains major assumptions about class privilege and is hetero normative. The stability of adulthood that Arnett claims to be achievable through lifelong marriage, parenthood and well-paying job is indicative of the limits of his conception. My study acknowledges these limitations and employs this framework broadly, in that it describes an intermediate stage of life between the end of adolescence and adulthood characterised by independence and self-sufficiency. Second, study abroad is surprisingly absent from Arnett's analysis, although he refers to travel as a part of emerging adults' identity exploration. Yet, as mentioned above, his concept is used in several studies to explore study abroad undergraduate students' transition to adulthood. One of the reasons of this absence in Arnett's analysis may be linked to his focus on the American context. Indeed, when undertaking their study abroad experience, many American students already live on

their university campus away from their families, which is less common in Australia. Students from the major Australian cities, where most of the population resides, tend to enrol in a university in their home city. For Australian students, study abroad often implies leaving their family home for the first time. Furthermore, in her research on educational mobility in Europe, Murphy-Lejeune (2002, p. 75) suggests the existence of a “sociological threshold of youth” beyond which travel becomes difficult and is impeded by markers of adulthood such as long-term employment or parenthood. Prior to this point, travel can accelerate the transition to emerging adulthood. Study abroad, by taking away students from their relatives and allowing them to travel, is a ground conducive to this transition.

Research design

Given that rites of passage is an anthropological concept and that ethnography is a key research strategy in anthropology, my study is also ethnographic in nature. It is nonetheless adapted to the digital age and seeks to maintain the separation of study abroad by keeping the researcher at a distance from participants. It uses digital ethnography and photo-elicitation interviews to explore study abroad students’ experiences and identity development throughout their year-long sojourn in France or Switzerland.

Principles of ethnography

Ethnography, in general, aims to closely examine social groups and social activities in their real-life contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Traditionally, the ethnographer takes part in the everyday life of the subjects of their study for a given period of time, closely observes behaviours and activities, listens to what is said and asks questions. As summarised by Bryman (2012), the key roles of the researchers in ethnography are to immerse themselves in social contexts for an extended period of time, regularly observe subjects’ behaviours and activities in their social settings and interview them to complement observations, listen to and potentially take part in conversations, and collect documents and take field notes about the subjects and their community.

Wolcott (2008, p. 22) points out that culture, which “refers to the various ways different groups go about their lives and to the belief systems associated with that behavior,” is the central characteristic of ethnography. Indeed, the aim for the researcher is to “develop an understanding of the culture of the group and people’s behaviour within the context of

that culture” (Bryman, 2012, p. 432). The main methods of ethnographic data collection are participant observation, interviews (formal or informal), analysis of documents and records, field notes and visual analysis of photography, films and videos (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Study abroad research focusing on identity favours ethnography and predominantly uses interviews and field observations to collect data while students are studying abroad.

Today’s study abroad students exist in two interconnected worlds simultaneously, the online and the offline. The offline setting is the physical study abroad context. The online setting comprises social media; Facebook and Instagram in particular. The latter space, conceptualised as encompassing language use, culture, social interaction and identity expression, is a means to explore students’ study abroad experience. While the traditional ethnographic techniques are sufficient to explore the offline space, they are not adequate to examine the digital space. New ethnographic techniques therefore had to be designed in accordance with students’ practices. Social media presented as the most suitable way to gain insight into study abroad students’ experience as they document it and display facets of their identity to their audience.

Digital ethnography

The contexts involved in this study, the offline study abroad context and the social media setting, are not explored in isolation but rather in relation to one another. As Darwin and Norton (2015) found, the separation between online and offline spaces had become tenuous, allowing individuals to navigate fluidly across them and “because of the dynamic nature of these spaces, and the increasing diversity of those who occupy them, the asymmetric distribution of power no longer rests on the simple dichotomy of native speaker and language learner” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 41). The theoretical and empirical need to explore the interrelations of the diverse social contexts in which students are engaged while studying abroad is behind the choice of the research methods employed in my study.

Digital ethnography (Pink, 2016; Varis, 2016), also labelled as virtual ethnography (Hine, 2008), online ethnography (Georgalou, 2017), cyber ethnography (Keeley-Browne, 2011; Ward, 1999) and webnography (Puri, 2007), “transfers the ethnographic tradition of the researcher as an embodied research instrument to the social spaces of the Internet” (Hine,

2008, p. 257). The first applications of digital ethnography were limited to proving the online interactions' richness and their entrenchment in the offline social life. A decade ago, Hine (2008, p. 258) predicted that "a key challenge for the future is to develop forms of ethnography that take seriously the social reality of online settings, whilst also exploring their embedding within everyday life". My study contributes to this dual orientation and uses social media as a means to explore both students' identity expression on Facebook and Instagram, and their identity transition during their experience in the study abroad context. Digital ethnography conducted through social media facilitates the observation of students almost on a daily basis and the examination of the implications of their online activities, including their quasi-permanent connection with home, on their experience of study abroad and how their offline activities are reflected on what they display on social media.

My research offers a longitudinal approach to explore, over the course of participants' sojourns, the structure, composition and evolution of a specific group of students' social networks in study abroad. The aim of this approach is to complement and extend the existing literature that has identified individual differences and variations over time in students' experiences, notably in terms of social networking. Furthermore, participants' social media content, which was overwhelmingly photographs, was discussed with them during photo-elicitation interviews with the aim of investigating their negotiation of identity in both online and offline spaces.

Facebook

Facebook is a social media platform co-founded in 2004, by Harvard University students, Mark Zuckerberg and fellow students and roommates Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. It originally started as TheFacebook.com with the aim to facilitate communication within the community of students in Harvard and was extended to Stanford, Columbia and Yale later. From this niched debut, Facebook opened registration to the general public. In a letter published in 2017 on Facebook's website, Mark Zuckerberg defines its mission as "to bring the world closer together" (Zuckerberg, 2017). Facebook is now the largest social media platform in the world with 2.32 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2019). It offers several venues and features for the users to share and express their thoughts, feelings and what matters to them. They can write short messages called status updates to let their contacts

know what they are doing, thinking or feeling. Status updates may also include links and photographs. One of the main purposes of Facebook is to allow users to find and add other users on their friends list. A friend is anyone with whom a user is connected on the platform regardless of their offline relationship. Indeed, a Facebook friend could be a family member, an actual friend, a colleague, a casual acquaintance or someone that the user has never met offline before. When users identify mutually as friends, they can see each other's profile and Wall. They can then comment, like and share each other's status updates, links and photographs unless privacy settings are set up to prevent them to do so. Users are identified through their profile consisting of their name and a profile picture along with additional optional personal information such as date of birth, educational background or career path. The platform also encourages interaction between users notably through the tagging feature that enables users to tag friends in photographs which will notify them. Additionally, in 2011, Facebook Messenger was launched allowing private communication between users.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform specialised in photograph and video sharing. It was created in 2010, in the United States, by Kevin Syston and Mike Krieger before being acquired by Facebook Company in 2012. Instagram is the sixth largest social media platform in the world with just over a billion users (Statista, 2019). It shares several comparable features with Facebook although the terminology may be slightly different. For instance, friends are called followers on Instagram. Just like in Facebook, users are encouraged to create their profile by adding a profile picture and providing personal information. Users can follow, like and comment other users' feeds and tag people in photographs or videos. They can also connect their Instagram and other social media accounts, particularly Facebook, enabling them to automatically duplicate the content on those social media platforms. The increasing popularity of Instagram lies in the widespread use of the smartphones which allow users to take photographs and videos, share them online, almost instantly, through the application. Indeed, the range of effects and filters added on the original photos and videos contribute largely to the success of the Instagram application.

Benefits of using social media data

In my research, social media are considered as both research tools to gather data from participants and conceptual tools of self-presentation and belongingness, especially relevant to identity expression in a study abroad context. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide several unique benefits to online ethnographic and longitudinal research. First, they are two of the most popular social media platforms among tertiary students (Kosinski et al., 2015). Second, the majority of the research on study abroad relies on participants' self-reported experiences. Pre- and post-interviews and surveys are among the most commonly used methodologies. Although the data collected using these methods have afforded researchers some insight into the experience of study abroad, self-reported data are often not sufficient to comment in depth and in detail about the changes that occur during that period (Back, 2013; Martinsen, 2010; Stewart, 2010). Stewart (2010) argues that the study abroad period can be seen as a "black hole" period when researchers lose contact with their participants "just when their language and personal identity as an L2 [second language] speaker are undergoing the greatest change" (Stewart, 2010, p. 141).

In some recent research the use of e-journals (Stewart, 2010) or blogs (Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Miceli, Murray, & Kennedy, 2010; Lee, 2011) as social media tools to engage students in narrating their experiences abroad has partially addressed that issue. However, these platforms still depend on participants' self-reported experiences and are therefore prone to numerous issues and may not be sufficient and reliable tools for research on identity development. The most frequent issue is that of participant recall (Back, 2013; Martinsen, 2010): the period of time between an experience and the report from the participants upon their return can lead to a lack of accuracy or precision in the collected data. In research examining changes in American students' spoken Spanish after a short-term study abroad in Argentina, Martinsen (2010) conceded this issue in his study: "because much of the data included in this study relied on students' reports of their experiences or perceptions, it is difficult to ascertain how much the scores reflected the reality of the areas measured" (Martinsen, 2010, p. 515). Therefore it is crucial to capture the changes as close as possible to the moment they occur. With this in mind, data from social media can offer an original insight into research on study abroad given that it is

directly collected by researchers and not interpreted by the participants (Kosinski et al., 2015). Social media thus constitute crucial windows into the transition phase.

Motivated by the necessity to mitigate the issues closely linked to the participants' self-reported experiences and the need to observe learning processes within ordinary and natural contexts, researchers are increasingly using ethnographic techniques such as case studies (Kinging, 2008; Lee 2012; Mitchell, 2012) or individual studies (Jackson, 2011). However those techniques can also present issues such as participant fatigue. As Back (2013) points out, "attempts to gain a more comprehensive look at study abroad through participant-observation and interviews may also lead to study fatigue on the part of student participants" (Back, 2013, p. 379). This is particularly true with the use of diaries, blogs and e-journals, which can be very demanding in terms of time and effort for the participants, from whom the contributions are often obtained through assessments and evaluations or encouraged via honoraria. Using social media site like Facebook and Instagram help to ease somewhat the issue of study fatigue this method does not require the participants to perform any specific tasks other than those they would undertake independently of the study. Moreover, digital ethnography through social media can mitigate these concerns as the researchers can nonintrusively observe participants' posts by blending into the audience or fading into the background. In this research, participants had between 300 and 1200 friends on Facebook and between 100 to 500 followers on Instagram. After being added on the participants' social media platforms, no interaction took place between the researcher and the participants on those platforms. No posts were published from the research accounts so nothing would remind the participants of the researcher in their news feed. This strategy was chosen in order to make the monitoring as minimally intrusive and disruptive as possible and encourage them to forget that they were being observed.

Social media offer the possibility to post photographs and sort them into albums, which not only fulfils the traditional function of remembering (Van Dijck, 2008), but also provides insight into the way students document and share their experience with their contacts. The content they post and the facets of their identities they choose to emphasise have the potential to reveal the values of the study abroad experience both for them and their home community, who constitute their primary audience. A close look at the ways that students manage their self-presentation through the news feed on social media while

abroad can bring an original insight into their immersion experience in a new sociocultural environment, their social networks and their activities. Social media offer significant opportunities to longitudinally observe participants' identity changes, including any potential changes, as well as the activities they engage in and the people they form relationships with. Thus, investigating study abroad students' self-presentation strategies on social media on both their Wall and their news feed may reveal how they create new social networks, integrate into a specific communities and/or seek support from their home community.

Photo-elicitation: definition, origin and benefits

Photo-elicitation, first used in anthropological research in the 1950s (Collier, 1957), is “based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). In his article, Collier identified several benefits of using photographs during an interview: they help to focus and structure the discussion by obtaining dense and straight answers, and reduce the fatigue and repetition of verbal interviews. Collier also found that photographs smooth the first contact with the research participants, who are then more apt to answer spontaneously and give more concrete and emotionally charged information.

Collier's study is one of the rare examples of research based on data generated by the researcher. In most research using photo-elicitation interviews, participants are asked during a preliminary interview to take photographs that are then discussed (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008; Wright & Larsen, 2012). My study paves the way for a third kind of photo-elicitation research in that it uses photographs that participants take on their own initiative and that are gathered through their social media accounts.

As opposed to strictly verbal interviews, researchers who use the photo-elicitation method commonly identify two major benefits: the elicitation of more tangible and diversified information and the empowerment of the participants (Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012).

First, photo-elicitation interviews help researchers to understand the meaning of the photographs taken by the participants. Although photographs contain a great deal of information, their significance and meaning for the participants can only be revealed by

the participants themselves, as “by themselves the photos are meaningless” (Rose, 2012, p. 311). Discussing a photograph can trigger meaning that otherwise might have remained latent, so it may also bring out different kinds of information that is more intense, emotional and ineffable (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002; Croghan et al., 2008; Bagnoli, 2009a; Rose, 2012). Furthermore, the process of photo-interviewing participants elicits more information than a verbal interview would (Harper, 2002). Thus, having participants speak to and about their own photographs can reveal their feelings, emotions and memories and, additionally, encourage introspection and reflection.

Second, photo-elicitation facilitates communication between the researcher and the research participants. Photographs are powerful stimuli for the interview and can facilitate dialogical exchange. On the one hand, researchers can rely on them to elaborate their questions and rekindle discussion; on the other, participants can use the photographs to illustrate their answers and communicate original dimensions of their lives (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Furthermore, interviewing participants using their own photographs empowers them and gives them the central role of the “expert” (Rose, 2012). In her study on the inequality among students from private and public school in South Central Los Angeles, Clark-Ibáñez (2004) concluded that the method empowered participants to teach the researcher about their social lives in ways that would otherwise have remained hidden or been taken for granted, in part due to researcher bias. Since the participants explain the photographs to the researchers, they provide them with information and eventually elicit their meanings. Harper therefore suggests that “photo-elicitation can be regarded as a postmodern dialogue based on the authority of the subject rather than the researcher” (Harper, 2002, p. 15). Thus, photographs provide a solid structure for the interview, helping researchers to expand on questions and enhancing the participants’ role. Photographs act as a medium of communication that likely leads both parties to a common understanding.

Photo-elicitation interviews are widely used across a range of social science disciplines. However, despite the benefits identified, little research on study abroad has used the photo-elicitation method due to the difficulty in accessing students’ photographs that they took during their sojourn. Exceptions include Downey and Gray (2012), Umino and Benson (2016) and Wang, Leen, and Hannes (2017). Social media help to overcome the issue of accessibility and can be extremely beneficial in investigating students’

experience abroad due to two major features of photographs: they sharpen memory and they open windows into participants' lives.

Photographs trigger memory and act as mementos in the interview, especially when using participant-generated material (Harper, 2002; Croghan et al., 2008; Rose, 2012). In their study exploring intercultural skills development while abroad, Downey and Gray (2012) argue that each photograph acts as an *aide-mémoire* that anchors memory and enables participants to recall the moment of the photograph. The researchers used in-country blogging during photo-elicitation interviews with returning Australian students in order to "help students to recall their own changes in perceptions and adapting to a new culture while abroad" (Downey & Gray, 2012, p. 3). Using photographs to trigger students' memory sharpened their ability to express narratives of their experiences abroad and encouraged their reflection. Photographs are so central in their participants' daily lives that the authors conclude that using a methodology based on visual stimuli to trigger memory is more effective and elicits more information.

Photographs also provide a way for researchers to gain insight into the interviewees' perspective by asking for their interpretation of the material reality (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Croghan et al., 2008; Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013). Photo-elicitation interviews are "particularly helpful in exploring everyday, taken-for-granted things in research participants' lives" (Rose, 2012, p. 306). This is especially relevant in the context of study abroad, where students document and share their experiences via photographs throughout their sojourn. In a case study using a photo-elicitation approach to look at an Indonesian student's experiences of communities of practice while studying abroad in Japan, Umino and Benson (2016) described the different phases of immersion represented in the participant's photographs that he took over his four-year experience. The categorisation of the photographs offers an insight into the participant's everyday life in Japan and depicts the evolution of his activities and his social networks. Thus, photographs are extremely valuable in gaining longitudinal insight into participants' lives. The process of routinely documenting and sharing their experiences on social media and then talking about the photographs allows participants to reflect in depth on their everyday activities with the necessary distance that helps them to express thoughts and feelings that would remain hidden otherwise.

Today's study abroad students were born in the digital age and social media is fully integrated into their daily lives. They typically use photographs in many of their posts as tools of self-presentation and online identity construction (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Van Dijk, 2008). Network technologies, such as smartphones and widespread Wi-Fi, simplify the production and sharing of photographs. Pictures can be captured, posted and viewed almost anywhere and any time via social media platforms, which explicitly incite users to share images allowing diverse representations of the self (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Van House (2011) argues that "making, showing, viewing and talking about images are not just how we represent ourselves, but contribute to the ways that we *enact* ourselves, individually and collectively, and reproduce social formations and norms." (Van house, 2011, p. 131). The advancement of technologies has not only transformed students' mobility through easy access to travel and digital technologies but also the social world and the way they communicate and socialise. Social media therefore have the potential to reveal students' negotiation of identity, their strategies for creating and maintaining social networks as well as their activities while studying abroad. Participants were not asked to take photographs specifically for the purpose of my research. While during regular photo-elicitation interviews participants are guided to take photographs and then discuss them, the images collected on their social media accounts can elicit more concrete information about their everyday lives abroad, their identity transition and their social networking (Umino & Benson, 2016). Drawing on their own photographs taken while abroad and posted on social media is a relevant way to understand their experience from their perspective and gain an insight into their modes of self-presentation.

Phases of the study

Data collection

This study received ethics approval from the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee in September 2016 (Approval Number ETH16-0437). Since this study involved online observations of participants' social media platforms, ethical restrictions were placed on the project to protect participants' and their contacts' privacy. During the recruitment process, and especially just before data collection started, participants were given an information sheet and signed a consent form. Both documents included the researcher's name and contact details, the purpose of the study, what participation required of them

and any risks and inconvenience. A statement was also included reassuring participants that their participation was completely voluntary, that they could withdraw from participation at any time, and that their participation would not affect their academic progress. After I was added as a friend on participants' Facebook accounts and as a follower on their Instagram accounts, data were completely anonymised upon collection before being securely stored. Participants chose their pseudonym, which is used throughout the study. Through several reminders in the initial documents, participants were encouraged to develop a clear understanding of their rights and of the potential risks of participating in the research.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants and their contacts, identifying elements of their posts, such as the names on the profiles, the posts' authors and commenters, any names or identifying elements in status updates, captions and comments as well as all the faces on the photographs collected were obscured (see Figure 1). However, participants' pseudonyms appear on the posts for clarity.



Figure 1: Example of a participant's anonymised post.

The study was advertised to potential participants during one of their preparation sessions for study abroad in October 2016. Announcements targeted two cohorts: one departing to France and the other departing to French-speaking cantons in Switzerland. I presented my research, its aims and what was involved for participants, and distributed the information sheets. Students could sign up by providing their contact details either on the spot or via

follow-up contact that they initiated. In total, seven students responded and proceeded to the first interview and added me to their contacts list on both Facebook and Instagram.

The pre-departure interviews (see Appendix) were semi-structured interviews and were conducted within the two months prior to participants' departure; between the end of November 2016 and the start of January 2017. Quotations from this set of interviews are labelled as "interview 1" in the chapters of analysis. The interviews took place at a place and time of the participants' choice; mostly on their university campus, but also in nearby cafés. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. These interviews served several purposes. First, they were an opportunity to get to know the participants and collect demographic information about them such as their age, family background, prior studies and current living conditions. Second, the interviews were an attempt to explore participants' histories as language learners and the reasons for their investment in learning French and going abroad. Third, their upcoming experience abroad was discussed, with a focus on their goals, their expectations and their plans. Fourth, their use of social media was covered, including usage frequency and type, the reasons for their investment in using social media and the composition of their contacts/friends lists. Finally, the interviews were opportunities to formally connect with participants on their social media platforms.

The online observation started at the end of the first interview when participants added me to their contact list on both Facebook and Instagram and finished at the post-sojourn interview. For the purpose of my research, I created a researcher account (Figure 2) on both platforms including the minimum information required to do so. The profile name for both was "Irwin Compiègne Uts".

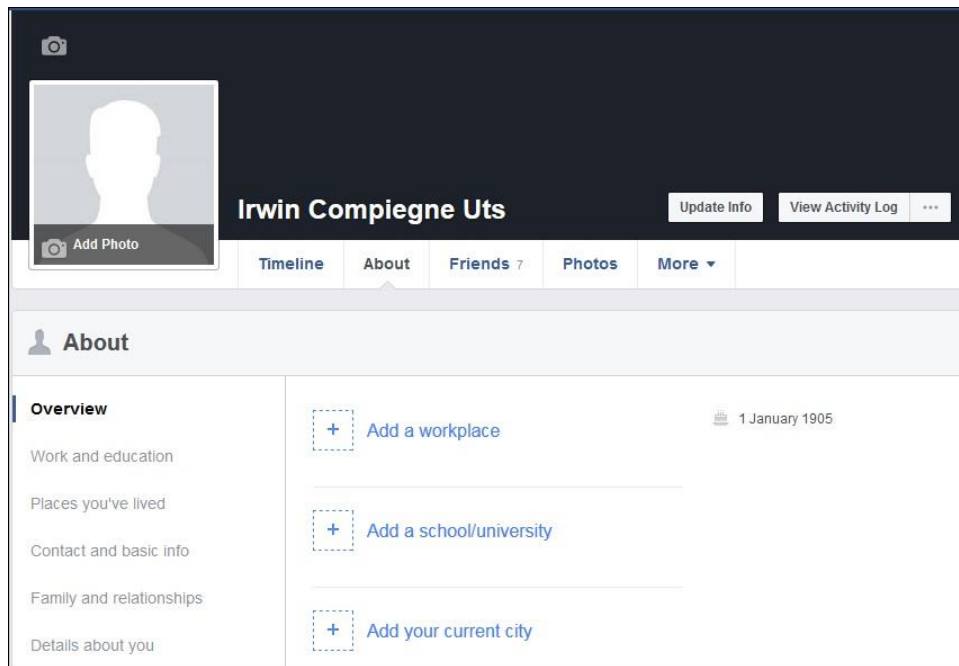


Figure 2: Facebook researcher's profile.

This account was for online observation only. No content was generated or posted and no interaction with participants occurred. The aim, put simply, was to fade into the background among their hundreds of friends and followers.

Data were collected by screenshotting posts published on the research account's news feed and directly on participants' Walls. Screenshots were captured using Microsoft Windows Snipping Tool and anonymised upon collection using Microsoft Paint prior to storage and use for analysis. These data include posts, comments and any relevant publications, including photographs, during their experience abroad. In total and across the seven participants, 1576 screenshots were collected from Facebook and 894 from Instagram. Data collection occurred on a daily basis. Alongside the observations, field notes were made about participants' experiences, their activities abroad, their encounters and their social media activities, including communications with host and home networks through comments. These notes, as well as the routine process of browsing participants' Facebook and Instagram Walls for collecting the data, enabled me to closely follow and track their activities and get to know them and the people they spent their time with better.

The mid-sojourn interviews were conducted via Skype and lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, depending on how much participants responded to the prompts. They were audio and video recorded using Amolto Call Recorder transcription software. In the Chapters

Four, Five and Six, quotations from this set of interviews are labelled as “interview 2”. The interviews were conducted using photo-elicitation method based on participants’ posts, mostly photographs, on both Facebook and Instagram that were relevant and representative records of the first part of their experience such as settling in the host environment, their travel activities and their social networks. The interviews focused on the way they documented their experience and the reasoning behind the posts. Comments from contacts were also taken into consideration when choosing the photographs to discuss during the interview. Notably those that generated high levels of engagement (comments, likes) were selected. The mid-sojourn interviews were conducted between the end of June 2017 and the end of August 2017, when students were likely to be travelling during their summer break from studies. Along with the difficulty of finding a suitable date and time, participants were asked to make sure that their Internet connection was reliable enough to support data-hungry Skype conversations.

Immediately before the mid-sojourn interview started, participants were emailed a PowerPoint presentation containing approximately ten slides with at least one screenshot of a post from their accounts on each slide. An updated version of these posts was collected the day before the interview to make sure that all the comments made on the posts were included and potentially discussed during the interview. The interview was conducted based on these prompts, slide by slide, without the student having had the chance to review these images on their own before our conversation. The aim of this peremptory email was, firstly, to collect narratives as spontaneously as possible, but also to preserve participants’ emotions and their reactions when viewing the posts that I selected without having had time to prepare their answers.

The post-sojourn interviews followed a similar process as the mid-sojourn interviews. Quotations from this set of interviews are labelled as “interview 3”. They were audio recorded, lasted between 60 to 90 minutes just like the mid-sojourn interviews and ultimately transcribed. These interviews were also based on photo-elicitation methods but were conducted face-to-face after participants returned in March 2018. As with the mid-sojourn interviews, PowerPoint presentations were made containing posts collected from their social media accounts, this time focusing on the second part of their experience. These interviews were also an opportunity for participants to reflect on their overall experience and discuss their return to Australia and their family home.

Table 1 summarises the data corpus including the total number of screenshots collected for each participant on each social media platform, the duration of the interviews and the number of words in transcriptions and field notes.

Table 1: Data in numbers

Participants	Screenshots		Interviews			Field notes
	Facebook	Instagram	Pre-departure	Mid-sojourn	Post-sojourn	
Erika	282	166	0:41:59 6586 words	1:12:10 10919 words	1:08:23 11199 words	9188 words
Anne	440	326	0:34:49 6423 words	0:54:48 8609 words	1:01:49 10040 words	11843 words
Trevor	62	84	1:24:21 17755 words	1:32:46 14990 words	1:27:46 12364 words	3189 words
Diana	423	174	0:57:05 9615 words	1:35:44 12930 words	1:12:09 11359 words	8714 words
Alexandra	112	44	0:53:02 8303 words	1:22:57 9804 words	0:50:47 6492 words	3098 words
John	172	54	0:54:44 9293 words	1:36:05 14642 words	1:07:24 12436 words	5314 words
Patricia	84	46	56:14 8079 words	1:13:39 7473 words	1:19:37 10856 words	2810 words
Total	1576	894	6:22:14 66054 words	9:28:43 79367 words	8:07:55 74746 words	44156 words

Participants

Seven participants were recruited and had completed three years of their degree in International Studies (IS) and a professional degree that is combined with the IS degree. The degree structure requires the completion of at least four semesters of French before their departure abroad. They were students learning French at a Sydney-based university in Australia. They were all born and raised in Australia and were aged between 20 and 21 at the time of their departure. They all lived in their family home in the Sydney metropolitan area before their departure abroad. All participants were native English speakers and active users of both Facebook and Instagram. Participants departed Sydney in January 2017 and returned in January or February 2018. A short biographical sketch of each of the participants follows (see also Table 2).

Erika

At the time of her departure for Switzerland, Erika was 20 years old and lived in Sydney in her family home with her parents and her sister. She is of Chilean background on her mother's side and Italian background on her father's side. There are strong family connections in both countries and Erika and her family have travelled to Chile and Italy a few times. She only spoke Spanish until she started school, when English rapidly became her language of education and socialisation. She said that both English and Spanish are spoken at home, but not Italian as her father is also fluent in Spanish. These linguistic and cultural connections came into consideration when she chose Lausanne as a destination for study abroad due to its proximity to Italy. Erika began to study French at university two years before her departure, completing four semesters of French. At the time, she was undertaking a double degree in Creative Writing and International Studies. Erika is an active user of both Facebook and Instagram, logging in to both platforms every day. She also frequently comments on and likes her friends' posts and posts regularly.

Trevor

At the time of Trevor's departure to Lausanne, he was 21. He lived in Sydney with his mother but had never left his family home except for a three-week study abroad sojourn in New Caledonia in 2016, organised by his university. He has Scottish background on his paternal side and a mixture of Hungarian, Slovenian, and German background on his maternal side, although he did not mention significant contacts with family from these countries. Trevor taught himself some French before he formally started his learning at university where he is studying a double degree in Social and Political Sciences and International Studies. Trevor describes himself as a heavy social media user; he claimed to spend on average five to six hours per day navigating his platforms.

Alexandra

Alexandra lives in her family home in Sydney with her parents, her brother and her sister. She was 20 at the time of her departure to Lausanne, which was the first time she had lived away from her family. She did not claim any specific ethnic or cultural background. She started to learn French at university and also studied the language for one term in high school. She was studying a double degree in Business and International Studies. Alexandra is an active user of Facebook and Instagram, but she stated that she does not

frequently post status updates on Facebook but rather shares photographs of her social activities using Instagram.

Patricia

Patricia was 20 at the time of her departure to Aix-en-Provence in France. She lives in her family home with her parents, her sister and her twin brothers. She has a dual citizenship — Australian and Irish — through her father. She studied French in high school for one year before recommencing it at university. When she left for France, she was studying a double degree in Visual Communications (Design) and International Studies. She had one previous experience of study abroad, when she went to Lausanne for a three-week program organised by her university. Patricia is active on both Facebook and Instagram but she prioritises the more private communication capability of Facebook over Instagram.

Anne

Anne lives in Sydney in her family home with her parents and her brother. She was 21 at the time of her departure to Montpellier in France, which was the first time she had been away from her family. Anne has a dual citizenship (Australian and American) thanks to her American mother. The first time she studied French was in year 7 in high school. She started to learn the language again at university, where she was enrolled in a double degree in Journalism and International Studies. Anne describes herself as an active user of both Facebook and Instagram but notes that she uses Facebook mainly for private communications and Instagram to share her photographs.

Diana

Diana lives with her parents and her two sisters. She has a Chilean background on her father's side. Among the participants, she has the most extensive history as a learner of French, having learnt French continuously since year 7 in high school. At the end of year 10, when she was 15, she participated in a three-month exchange program to France, staying with a French family in Quimper. She formed a strong friendship with the hosts' daughter who was about her age. They were still in contact when she went in France and were planning to see each other in Europe. When she left for France, she was enrolled in a double degree in Journalism and International Studies. Diana is an active user of both Facebook and Instagram, which she uses predominantly to post her travel photographs. Otherwise, she does not post very frequently.

John

John was 20 at the time of his departure to Lyon in France. He is the youngest of a large family of six children and lives with her mother and his sister in Sydney. He has an English background on his mother's side. He started learning French at university and, like Diana and Anne, studies Journalism and International Studies. John is an active user of both Facebook and Instagram. He uses Instagram to post artistic photographs that he edits using filters, but prefers Facebook for longer written posts and for sharing social events or political content.

Diana and John were in a relationship at the time of their departure to Lyon, France. They went through their experience together in the same city under the same roof. Back in Sydney, they routinely spend half of the week with each other, living together at one or other's home.

Table 2: Participants' demographic information

Participants	Erika	Trevor	Alexandra	Patricia	Anne	Diana	John
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Age	20	21	21	21	21	21	20
Nationality and background	Australian of Chilean and Italian background	Australian of Scottish, Hungarian, Slovenian and German background	Australian, no claimed background	Australian of Irish background	Australian of American background	Australian of Chilean background	Australian of English background
Degree	Creative Writing and International Studies	Social and Political Sciences and International Studies	Business and International Studies	Visual Communications and International Studies	Journalism and International Studies	Journalism and International Studies	Journalism and International Studies
Study abroad country and city	Switzerland: Lausanne	Switzerland: - Lausanne	Switzerland Lausanne	France: Aix-en-Provence	France: Montpellier	France: Lyon	France: Lyon
Previous exchange and/or study abroad experience	Nil	3 weeks in New Caledonia with the same university	Nil	3 weeks in Lausanne with the same university	Nil	3-month family stay in Quimper in high school	Nil

Data analysis

The three sets of interviews were coded and analysed using NVivo. A two-cycle coding method (Saldaña, 2009) was used to code the data for identifying themes and recurring patterns in participants' narratives on their social media posts and on their experience of study abroad. According to Saldaña (2009, p. 3), a code is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”.

Descriptive coding was employed for the first cycle. It was used to attribute descriptive labels to data in order to provide an inventory of their topics. Indeed, descriptive coding “summarizes in a word or short phrase — most often a noun — the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 70). However, these codes are not abbreviation of the content but rather identification of the topic of a passage (Tesch, 2013). Topic differs from “content” in that topic is what is talked or written about, whereas content is the substance of a passage. This coding technique was chosen for two main reasons. First, it was found to be particularly suitable for ethnographies especially when investigating longitudinal participant change, as well as studies with various form of data such as interview transcriptions and field notes (Saldaña, 2009; Wolcott, 1994). Second, it is framed and driven by specific research questions, which is essential to the research strategy on which my study is built. Indeed, the selection process for participants' posts that were discussed during the photo-elicitation interviews was the result of my initial interpretation of the data collected through online observation. Additionally, as mentioned in “Photo-elicitation: definition, origin and benefits”, the purpose of combining data sources is to elicit information that digital ethnography alone does not comprehensively capture. Thus, digital ethnography raises questions that were then explored during the interviews. Descriptive coding essentially leads to categorisation and summarising of the data corpus. However, since “coding with simple descriptive nouns alone may not enable more complex and theoretical analyses as the study progresses, particularly with interview transcript data” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 105), this first cycle coding method was complemented with a second cycle.

The second cycle, using pattern coding, was then undertaken with the purpose of strategically assembling the data into broad category headings. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 69), pattern codes are:

explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis. They are a sort of meta-code [...] Pattern Coding is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69)

This second cycle coding method was chosen because it is appropriate for developing major themes from the data, exploring social networks and patterns of relationships between individuals and processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). Once the pattern codes were identified, the analysis and the discussion were framed and informed by the two theoretical frameworks involved in this study; van Gennepe's (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage and Arnett's (2000, 2010, 2012) notion of emerging adulthood.

For instance, Figure 3, used as a base of the analysis and the discussion in Chapter Four, illustrates how codes from the first circle coding were assembled to analyse their commonality and to create the pattern code "Social Networking". This pattern suggests that social networking was one of the most salient aspects of their experience that participants promoted on social media. Three main networks were identified, with sub-categories. For the final step of the analysis, the theoretical frameworks were applied to analyse the type of relationships that participants had with individuals from each sub-category, their dynamics of power, what fostered or hindered them, the influence of the context and the impacts on participants' identity transition and their overall experience of study abroad.

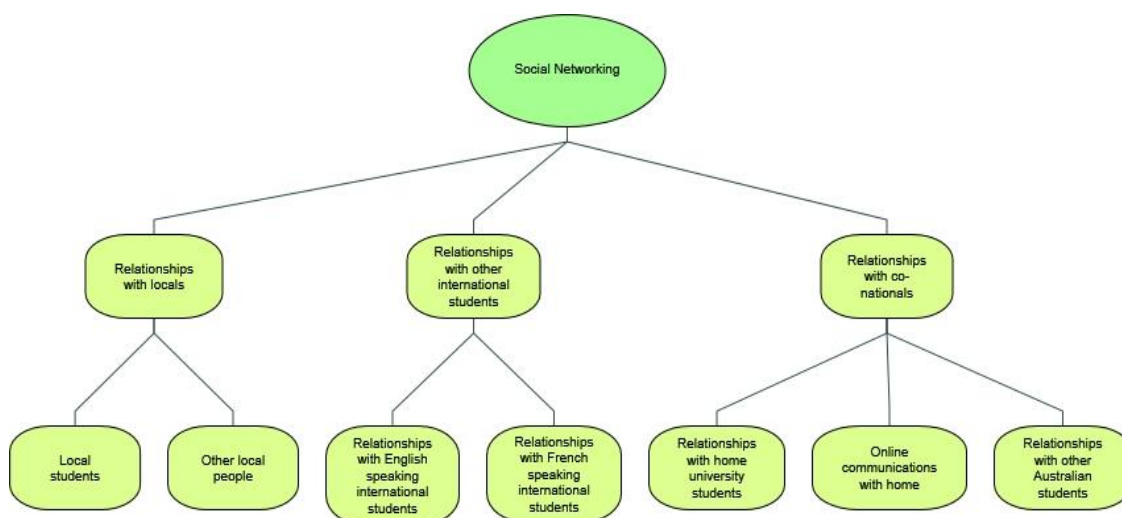


Figure 3: Pattern code “Social Networking” and sub-categories.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology used in the study. The research is based on a digital ethnography of seven Australian university students of French studying in France or Switzerland in a year-long study abroad program. The research strategy has been informed by the research questions and was designed to address the emerging issues of the increasing use of social media among study abroad students. The method employed in this study is therefore aligned with students’ practices as they document and present various aspects of their selves in relation to their experience and their identity changes. The digital ethnography was subsequently complemented with participants’ narratives on their social media posts collected during photo-elicitation interviews, as well as field notes taken throughout the online observation. In total, three sets of interviews were conducted: before participants’ departure using semi-structured interviews, halfway through their experience and after their return in Australia, both using the photo-elicitation method.

The data collected were analysed using a two-cycle coding approach and interpreted through the lens of van Gennep’s (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage and Arnett’s (2000, 2010, 2012) notion of emerging adulthood. Three main themes emerged from the analysis and are presented in the following chapters. First, the need to rethink students’ social networking as the rise of social media and the changing landscape of study abroad

challenge the traditional perception of students' social network development. Second, the importance of travel in participant's experience, which allows for the repositioning of study abroad as a rite of passage. Third, the visit from participants' relatives during their sojourn, which highlights the end of the transition phase to emerging adulthood and the beginning of a new intermediate phase of rites of passage: the pre-incorporation phase.

Chapter Four:

Rethinking Students' Social Networking in a Study Abroad

Context

As the number of students travelling abroad for higher education continues to increase (UNESCO, 2018), it is crucial to better understand how students learn from and interact with the different communities they are in contact with while abroad. In the field of study abroad, most research has investigated factors fostering or hindering students' access and engagement with native speakers in the host community with the research objective to assess learners' linguistic gains (Fraser, 2002; Isabelli-García, 2006; Pellegrino, 1998), with a particular focus on short-term study abroad programs (Allen, 2010; Dewey, Ring, Gardner, & Belnap, 2013; Freed, 2008; Goldoni, 2013; Kinginger, 2009, 2010; Shiri, 2015; Trentman, 2013, Wilkinson, 1998). More research, however, is needed to understand how students create, develop and maintain their social networks over time and engage not only with locals but also with the different communities they encounter while abroad, and the implications for the non-linguistic aspects of their international sojourns.

The research on the composition of and the specific functions that each social network for study abroad students fulfils is long-standing (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985). However, most of these studies are network density analyses, confined to counting the number of contacts from each social network type a subject has. Therefore, this chapter responds to more recent calls (Dewey et al., 2013; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Schartner, 2015) for more longitudinal and qualitative research exploring social network development in study abroad. Consequently, participants' investment in creating and developing social networks while studying abroad is examined. My study's online methodology offers insight into how students create and maintain their different social networks during their sojourn and allows for significant understandings of the composition and the structure of these networks, as well as the interconnections between them. Moreover, the data collected from participants' social media platforms, as well as their narratives about their posts, highlight the need to reconceptualise the divisions in study abroad students' social network development that are traditionally recognised in the literature, which considers only three categories of networks (Bochner et al., 1977; Coleman, 2013, 2015; Furnham

& Alibhai, 1985; Hendrickson et al., 2011, Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Schartner, 2015): the compatriot network composed of co-national students, the multi-national network comprising other international and study abroad students from all around the world, and the host national network encompassing local people such as domestic students and homestay families.

Consequently, this chapter explores the composition, structure and nature of the relationships that study abroad students create and maintain abroad, as well as the role of the home and the host institutions in the process, to complement and extend the discussion on social networking in the study abroad context. Findings point to three insights. First, social media are at the core of participants' strategies of social networking. Ongoing connections with home via social media induce the emergence of an additional social network as yet not addressed in the literature. Indeed, participants' interactions with home directly influence the way in which they develop and maintain their social ties in their host context. Second, the social ties composed of multi-national students who are proficient or native speakers of the target language should also be considered as an extra hybrid category of network as they bring specific benefits to other study abroad students. Third, the "international side" of participants' networks, which is composed of co-national students and multi-national students, are largely compartmentalised from their connections with locals.

Social network representation via social media

The categorisation of participants' posts on social media provides an insight into the composition and the structure of students' social networks abroad. The overwhelming majority of people in their posts, represented either textually or visually, are multi-national students, students from Australia also studying abroad and participants' relatives and friends from Australia. Participants' heavy documentation of their compatriot and multi-national networks allowed to follow, almost day by day, their activities with members of these networks and the types of relationship they developed. By contrast, photographs of local people were almost absent which, at first, did not help to understand the formation and the development of relationships among the local network. While this initial observation could give the impression that, consistent with previous studies (Merrick, 2004; Brown, 2009; Sam, 2001; Schartner, 2015), participants were unable to develop relationships with local people, their interview data proved to be extremely

valuable in reconstructing their stories and uncovering a much more complex reality, in which locals were indeed present.

Table 3 summarises the categories of people who could be identified in the posts (most often photographs) collected from participants' accounts. Three categories emerged from the digital ethnography: family and friends, multi-national and Australian students, and locals. For each category, posts were counted and reported by platform (either Facebook or Instagram). The percentages were calculated against the total of posts collected for each category and platform.

The family and friends category includes posts featuring participants' family and friends, who were mostly also from Australia. Two types of posts dominate in this category; first, the posts published at home, before participants' departure abroad and upon their return a year later. Second are the posts published while participants' families, and sometimes friends, came to visit them in their host location, which are further examined in Chapter Six. The majority of the posts in this category were published during the year abroad when participants, family and friends were travelling together and visiting the participants' host city and/or country. The multi-national and Australian students' category groups photographs with participants' peers from Australia, either from their home university or other Australian universities, as well as other students from all over the world studying abroad. Lastly, the "locals" category gathers together photographs including local people, mostly local students. The overwhelming majority of the posts concerned only one out of the three social networks. Only few posts could be related to two social networks at most. Those two networks were always family and friends along with the multi-national and Australian students. Most of these few instances were photographs of participants' parents and other Australian students also on exchange. These posts were counted twice, once for each concerned network.

Table 3: Categories of people identified on participants' posts on Facebook and Instagram

Participants	Family & friends		Multi-national & Australian students		Locals		Total	
	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook	Instagram
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Erika	2 (3.51)	3 (8.12)	54 (94.74)	34 (91.89)	1 (1.75)	0	57 (100)	37 (100)
Anne	14 (11.76)	45 (75)	103 (86.56)	14 (23.33)	2 (1.68)	1 (1.67)	119 (100)	60 (100)
Trevor	0	1 (9.1)	27 (100)	10 (90.9)	0	0	27 (100)	11 (100)
Diana	325 (88.55)	50 (86.21)	39 (10.63)	7 (12.07)	3 (0.82)	1 (1.72)	367 (100)	58 (100)
Alexandra	10 (11.76)	1 (5.26)	74 (87.06)	17 (89.47)	1 (1.18)	1 (5.26)	85 (100)	19 (100)
John	99 (78.57)	3 (42.86)	26 (20.64)	4 (57.14)	1 (0.79)	0	126 (100)	7 (100)
Patricia	13 (32.5)	5 (50)	24 (60)	5 (50)	3 (7.5)	0	40 (100)	10 (100)
Total	463 (56.39)	108 (53.47)	347 (42.27)	91 (45.05)	11 (1.34)	3 (1.48)	821 (100)	202 (100)

In total, 821 posts were made to Facebook and 202 to Instagram in which people were present. The paucity of local people in their posts is striking: of a total of 1023 posts, only 14 include locals. Based on this observation, and as described in numerous studies on study abroad students' social contact patterns (Bochner et al., 1977; Coleman, 2013, 2015; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Schartner, 2015), three broad categories of social ties constituted participants' social networks in the study abroad context. The first tie was formed from their compatriot students, often referred as co-national students, from their home university and other Australian universities. The second tie was composed of other multi-national study abroad students, or non-co-national students, also enrolled in study abroad programs, such as the Erasmus exchange program, as well as American and Canadian short-term study abroad programs. The third tie comprised host nationals, including domestic students.

In the analysis that follows, these networks are each analysed in turn, taking into consideration the implications of the quasi-permanent connection with home through social media. This justifies the need for a reconceptualisation of study abroad students' social network development.

Compatriot networks

The compatriot network refers to the social tie composed of other sojourning compatriot students and is identified in most studies as the primary social network (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Maundeni, 2001; Neri & Ville, 2008; Schartner, 2015). This network was found to provide students with a sense of continuity in their cultural identity (Maundeni, 2001), which contributes to reducing their acculturative stress (Kim, 2001; Wilkinson, 1998) and facilitates their adjustment to the new environment (Woolf, 2007). However, negative impacts were also found. For instance, DeKeyser (2007) and Dewey (2008) reported that the predominance of co-nationals in students' social networks limits interactions with host nationals, consequently affecting language learning. Additionally, Hendrickson et al. (2011) found that co-national friends may ultimately negatively impact students' cultural adjustment and their overall satisfaction with their experience abroad. These studies only consider co-national students as part of this network. However, a quasi-permanent connection with home through social media was found to have deep implications in the way participants developed and maintained their social networks while studying abroad which, therefore, challenges the traditional categorisation of study abroad students' social ties. Since the advance of social media in social interactions has radically transformed the nature of study abroad (Kinging, 2013), it is imperative to reconceptualise students' social network development. I argue that researchers must now differentiate between "on site" and online co-national networks.

"On site" co-national network

The "on site" co-national network refers to the compatriot network as traditionally described in the study abroad scholarship (Bochner et al., 1977; Coleman, 2013, 2015; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Schartner, 2015). It is composed of other sojourning compatriot students and is a base from which participants draw to expand their social connections. Before their departure abroad, participants studied together in the same small language and culture classes for years at their home university. Consequently,

Erika, Alexandra and Trevor were already close friends. John and Diana were a young couple and went to Lyon together. Anne also went to Montpellier with several peers, including one of her closest friends. Patricia was not particularly close to the other Australian students before departing to Aix-en-Provence, but she rapidly developed friendships with most of them, as is customary with students in this program. Moreover, due to the home university having arranged their outbound travel, they travelled to their host cities as a group. For instance, Trevor, Alexandra, Erika and another Australian student from their home university flew together to Switzerland like a group of friends on vacation (Figure 4). Participants also spent the first weeks of their sojourn almost exclusively together, helping each other with their administrative duties at the host university and exploring their city (Figure 5).

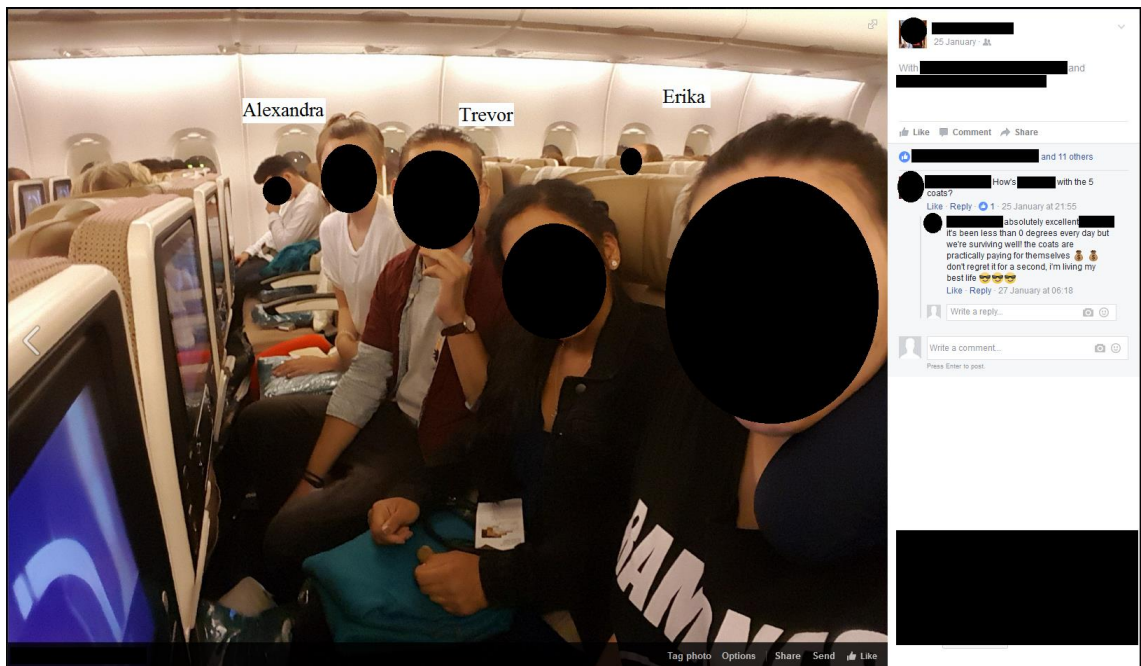


Figure 4: Erika’s Facebook post. Photograph of Erika, Alexandra, Trevor and another peer on their way to Switzerland.



Figure 5: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook. Photograph of Patricia and other Australian students in Aix-en-Provence.

As shown in other studies (Geeraert et al., 2014; Kim, 2001; Maundeni, 2001; Woolf, 2007), at that early juncture in the study abroad period, ties with co-national students had an important emotional support function in easing the acculturative stress and the feeling of homesickness. For Trevor, the presence of his peers, including Erika and Alexandra, helped him to reduce his feeling of loneliness:

I had the [XX (mention of the home university’s name)] girls with me as well. You only really feel this crippling homesickness when you are alone. If you’re with other people and you’re doing stuff, you’re not just sitting in your own room. (Trevor, interview 2)

Anne had a similar view about the support that she obtained from her peers in Montpellier, specifically on the language learning front, but also when they had to deal with administrative issues:

We really wanted to get better at language, so I think that’s a good thing to drive each other. And then again, if we have questions, we try and work out amongst... We always

joke that if we have to deal with admin or something, we go in pairs. Between the two of us, we should be able to get a point across. (Anne, interview 2)

As opposed to some studies that found that friendships with compatriots in a study abroad context adversely affect language acquisition (Maundeni, 2001), it seems that the mutual support that co-national students provide sustains motivation to learn, fosters interactions in real life situations with the host community and helps to overcome the lack of confidence that study abroad students often experience, especially at the beginning of their sojourn. In their study based on a short-term study abroad program involving Australian university students in New Caledonia, de Saint-Léger and Mullan (2018) similarly found that co-national students “provide support and a sense of security to students” (p.305) to engage with the host communities.

Upon arrival, co-national networks also helped participants to put their experience into perspective and reduce the initial shock that study abroad students often face when arriving in the host culture (Gu & Maley, 2008). Alexandra recounts how, after her first unpleasant night in her room in Switzerland, talking with students who were experiencing the same emotions helped her to overcome her feeling of homesickness:

The next day, we met up with the other [XX (mention of the home university's name)] students and then we all shared our equally awful night. After a week, it was completely fine. I didn't want to go home. (Alexandra, interview 2)

Participants found considerable support in their compatriot student networks and drew on this social capital to adjust to their new lives and overcome the initial shock when arriving in their host locations. This is especially likely to occur when students depart in groups from the same home university to the same host destination.

For all participants, the compatriot network remained the base from which they expanded their social connections into the other networks. Although this network was not the largest, it was the one containing participants' closest friends, which ensured a sense of continuity for them as year-long sojourners, as most multi-national study abroad students were staying for only one semester. Throughout their experience, friendships were formed and affinities differed, but their connections with their peers remained:

Erika was there, because we started out everything together and we went everywhere together. That was very helpful just to have someone there all the time. Then, we would go different ways briefly and make our own... There's some people that she would get along with better, or vice versa. But then, we would always come back and be on the core sort of friendship. (Alexandra, interview 2)

The sense of continuity and stability provided by the compatriot network proved essential for students, not only to reduce the acculturative stress and facilitate adjustment to the host environment (Kim, 2001; Wilkinson, 1998; Woolf, 2007) but also to expand their social connections since they felt that support was available if needed.

The connections with on-site compatriots were strengthened because members of this network shared similar goals and interests. Participants travelled across Europe with their peers; Alexandra and Erika often travelled together. Trevor sometimes travelled with them and also joined other groups of Australian students. The same holds for Diana and John, Anne and her best friend (from her home university studying with her in Montpellier), and also Patricia, who travelled with other Australian students from other host cities. In sum, each participant could count on the support of their peers to ease their acculturative stress, overcome the initial shock upon arrival in their host locations, strengthen their self-confidence when interacting with native speakers of the target language and expand their social networks.

Although the influence of the co-national network was positive overall, it could nonetheless negatively impact participants' investment in developing connections with the host community. According to John, friendships with Australian students were facilitated thanks to a shared language and culture and, although conscious of the objectives of his exchange, he never felt the necessity to limit his interactions with other Australian students and prioritise connections with locals:

We used to hang about, like all the Australians. There's no language or cultural barriers. But I was conscious of the fact we were hanging out with Australians a lot. And we were in France. But, at the same time, I really liked them so I didn't want to be just like: "Well, good bye. I need to find French people or European people to hang about with because I could hang out with you at home". (John, interview 3)

A primary social network of on-site compatriots can keep participants in a comfort zone and hinder their willingness to socialise with the host community. As Kim (2001) suggests in her cross-cultural adaptation process theory, contact with peers from the same cultural and linguistic background offers short-term support but can then hinder the adaptation process. Conversely, the continuity in support and the confidence to take risks and form friendships was stronger in my participants' experience thanks to this network. Similarly, de Saint-Léger and Mullan (2018) highlight the benefits of this network which "boosts self-efficacy, allowing learners the confidence to go outside their comfort zone and interact with the local population, which in turn generates learning and a sense of personal and collective achievement" (p.305). Furthermore, John points out that forming friendships with Australian students was almost effortless due to the shared language and culture. In fact, the analysis of the composition of participants' networks and the types of relationships they formed in their different networks shows that there was a structural separation between the multi-national and the compatriot network on one side and the local network on the other. Indeed, socialisation with multi-national and compatriot students was actively encouraged by the host institutions, whereas fewer initiatives were made to create bridges with the host national network.

In sum, participants often travelled in groups to their study abroad locations where they maintained, and even strengthened, their relationships through a strong sense of commonality built around common goals and challenges. The separation phase, when students withdraw from their home community and depart to their host locations, therefore, does not necessarily mark for them the loss of their social capital. In their framework based on van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage, Grabowski et al. (2017) refer to the individual rather than the group, and typically describe the experience of one individual who would go through the three phases of study abroad that would provide them with a new social status. My participants' experiences challenge this view. As shown in this section, the separation phase and the beginning, at least, of the transition phase, were undertaken in a group or pair scenario. The separation from the home network is therefore not as abrupt as traditionally described, when the student would completely immerse themselves alone into a new cultural and linguistic environment. Instead, the sense of commonality that the compatriot network provided was found to be beneficial to participants overall to preserve their balance, expand their social networks and overcome their unsureness, especially when interacting with locals.

In the literature (Bochner et al., 1977; Coleman, 2013, 2015; DeKeyser, 2007; Dewey, 2008; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Maundeni, 2001; Neri & Ville, 2008; Schartner, 2015; Wilkinson, 1998) though, discussion of the outcomes associated with the compatriot network is often limited to other students also studying abroad. Social media and digital communication have nevertheless challenged this traditional framing and students' ongoing connection with home has to be taken into consideration in the analysis of their social network development.

Online co-national network

Ongoing connection with home through social media and digital communication forces researchers to reconceptualise students' social network development in the study abroad context. Participants are not deprived of social capital when arriving abroad after their separation from home; their social capital is maintained across borders after the separation phase through a quasi-permanent connection with home via social media. Just as the compatriot network helps to reduce participants' stress upon arrival in the host country, social media also contribute to their emotional adjustment.

For John, who suffered from homesickness during his first days in France, being able to communicate with his family and share his experience was important for reducing his acculturative stress:

Everything was so new and bizarre. Everyone at home was in the same exact place I left them, but I had to come to this place which was almost completely opposite because it was freezing cold and rainy, and, at home, it was sunny. So I just wanted to show the family where I was and what was going on, and how different it was where I was to where they were. (John, interview 2)

Being able to communicate their emotions and share their experience with their supporting networks at home through social media helps to reduce homesickness and smooth adjustment to the new environment. Unlike the traditional view of rites of passage in which the individual is strictly separated from the home community, in the context of study abroad, social media allow contact with home and prevent students from feeling lonely and disconnected by maintaining a sense of stability in their social capital. Mikal and Grace (2012) point out that "the Internet provides continuity in two ways: (a) by

allowing students to maintain contact with members of the home culture; and (b) by serving as a transitional device, providing sense of community and the perception of available support” (Mikal and Grace, 2012, p. 14). The perception that support is available if needed is essential in the reinforcement of students’ self-confidence and emotional stability, which was proven to benefit students’ ability to enjoy their experience abroad and their willingness to engage with the host community (Mikal et al., 2014).

Study abroad students, whose sojourns are by definition temporary, are not likely to forsake their social networks when they study abroad. Conversely, they seek support and validation through social media. This ongoing connectivity and access to their supporting networks from home raises new questions that are essential in order to extend and update the literature on students’ network development. In addition to the three social ties that are traditionally recognised, I argue that a fourth one has emerged with the advance of digital technology and needs to be addressed when analysing students’ social networks in the study abroad context.

Erika’s and Alexandra’s experiences with online compatriot networks are particularly instructive, albeit in different ways, about how their offline social networking at the beginning of their sojourns can only be fully understood in light of their ongoing access to their home supporting networks. On Alexandra’s initiative, both she and Erika took part in a ski trip organised by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) in the French Alps with forty other study abroad students, who were mainly from Quebec and Australia. In organising the trip, Alexandra was putting into practice advice that her mother had given her earlier during a conversation on Skype:

My mum had given me a big lecture of being like, “You have to say yes to everything. It doesn’t matter if you don’t know anyone. You just have to go.” So, I was like, “Okay, I’m going to say yes to everything” so, I did... Erika didn’t want to go, because she was like, “We don’t really know anyone that well yet”. But I dragged her with me.
(Alexandra, interview 2)

There is a direct correlation between Alexandra’s mother’s advice and the way that she strategically planned to increase her chances to socialise with multi-national students, even against Erika’s apprehensions. This demonstrates how Alexandra’s permanently accessible social support from home directly influenced her offline social networking.

For Erika, her first couple of weeks were very challenging and she reported feeling sad and struggling to adjust. At that time, she was communicating extensively with her mother, who was supporting her. Incited by Alexandra, she finally decided to take part in the ski trip. The significance of Erika's behaviour can only be appreciated through the online connection with her mother which was, at that time, like a digital umbilical cord:

It was the first time I was doing something so spontaneous because a few days before actually going, I wasn't going to go. And also, we were in the middle of nowhere, we didn't have Wi-Fi or any data so it was very much learning to live without a phone for a few days in the middle of nowhere and not speaking to my mom, which I did a lot back in the beginning, and just relying on the friendships that I had with those people. It was definitely me becoming more independent and me being okay with just being in the middle of nowhere in France with a bunch of students. It was definitely an experience that was rewarding because I learned how to ski and I got to travel like I'd never travelled before. (Erika, interview 2)

For Erika, more than the physical separation from home, it was the lack of connectivity in the French Alps that forced her to cut the apron strings with her mother and fully rely on herself and her friends. This was, by Erika's later admission, for the best because this trip was a turning point in many ways for both her and Alexandra. In taking part in this trip they widened their social networks and created friendships with other study abroad students. Those they met during this trip became their closest friends during the first semester. Erika and Alexandra also got to strengthen their friendship with one another. Furthermore, Erika increased her cultural capital through learning how to ski and experiencing a new way of travelling. More importantly, she realised that she could, even temporarily, disconnect from her supporting network at home, and gain independence and self-confidence.

Erika's narrative of this trip accordingly raises questions about when to situate the real separation from the home networks in a study abroad context in the age of social media. Travel within study abroad and the lack of digital connectivity with the home network are found to play a crucial role in the process of separation and seem intertwined. Indeed, the trip caused the digital disconnection that consequently triggered the transition phase of the rite of passage. For Erika, the separation from home was therefore achieved in two

steps; the physical separation with the departure abroad followed by the digital separation while travelling that completed the process. From this initiatory trip, Erika's self-confidence and independence kept on growing. This trip could have been nothing more than a regular trip to enjoy the snow but, because she was still relying extensively on her supporting network at home via digital communication, the temporary disconnection turned the experience into something more meaningful that triggered the start of her transition phase to independence and self-confidence.

Multi-national networks

Multi-national networks include the friendships and relationships that students form with other study abroad students from other countries (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Maundeni, 2001; Neri & Ville, 2008; Schartner, 2015). These networks were found to increase students' intercultural awareness as they expose them to many different cultures (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017), foster a sense of commonality among multi-national students that contributes to their adjustment to the host environment (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Schartner, 2015), and provide opportunities for students to learn and practice the target language through interactions with other study abroad students who are also learning the language (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Most studies that discuss this category of social network in the study abroad context group all non-co-national and non-local students together regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, among participants' multi-national networks, a number of the students also studying abroad were native French speakers or quite proficient in the language and thus brought specific linguistic, cultural and academic benefits to participants.

Multi-national networks were actively encouraged by the host universities and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), which was active in every host city and aimed primarily at Erasmus students. However, all students, regardless of their nationality or their study abroad program, could enrol and take part in the events and activities offered. Most participants sought practical information and found out about the ESN on Facebook before their departure. They made connections with the network and participated in events upon arrival. The goal was to pre-establish and rapidly expand their social networks when arriving in their host location (Kim, 2001). In their study discussing the social networks of British students who were studying abroad in France, Spain and Mexico, Mitchell et

al. (2017) reported that introductory events organised by the host institutions “led to the formation of enduring relationships, which provided friendships and social support for many participants throughout the year” (p.146). My participants in a given location ended up at the same events with many of the same study abroad students. Examples of this phenomenon are numerous. Figure 6 is a photograph that Erika posted, which was taken during a dinner organised for study abroad students. Alexandra also appears in the photograph. Figure 7 is a photograph in a bowling alley posted by one of Patricia’s American friends, who were also studying abroad. These multi-national network events were typically documented on participants’ social media accounts, either by the participants themselves or through posts in which they were tagged by their multi-national student friends. Comments on these posts, such as the one in Figure 6, “*Oi querida*”, often reflect the multicultural and multilingual character of these networks. Another large part of participants’ photographs was related to short distance or regional travel that they undertook with members of these networks.



Figure 6: Alexandra’s Facebook post. Photograph of Alexandra and Erika dining with other study abroad students.



Figure 7: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Patricia with other study abroad students in a bowling alley.

Soon after arrival, participants started their intensive French classes. The common positioning as study abroad students in a foreign country facilitated the creation of friendships. As students were coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, participants had the opportunity to learn, not only about the host culture, but also about other cultures:

There are three people who lived there [in Lyon] who are refugees from Syria who are learning French. Obviously you learn a lot from them. There was [sic] lots of Americans, a few people from England and Korea. It was a really fantastic cultural experience, and we were speaking the whole time in French as well. (John, interview 3)

Participants’ language classes grouped together not only study abroad students, but also new migrants, giving them opportunities to learn from different perspectives (Rienties, Nanclares, Jindal-Snape, & Alcott, 2013). John also practised and improved his French

through interactions with his classmates, and made connections with other students. Moreover, by being exposed to the reality of refugees in France, he had the opportunity to reflect on his own position as a study abroad student investing in study abroad and develop empathic feelings towards them:

It must be tough for people who actually have to leave their countries and come to new ones because there's no choice for them. And that was good to make me maybe empathise with that a little bit more. (John, interview 3)

Through their French classes, all of the participants socialised with students and were exposed to cultures from all over the world. They rapidly formed connections and friendships, and there is a certain convenience to have friends from all over the world when one is travelling. For instance, during their summer trips, John and Diana stayed with a friend from Denmark whom they met during the first semester. In addition, to save on accommodation expenses, they had a travelling experience in Denmark that tourists can rarely have. Overall, for participants, expanding their multi-national networks was made easier than connecting with locals since it was fostered by the host universities through language classes and the ESN.

Students who are either proficient or native speakers of the target language

Among participants' multi-national networks, some had friends who were proficient in French or even native French speakers. Universities in France and Switzerland routinely host students at different stages of their learning process and as part of both specialist language schools catering to learners of French at various levels of proficiency and students enrolling in discipline-based classes in the main university. Some of the students that participants encountered in their multi-national networks were therefore already proficient in French or native speakers. This reflects the changing landscape of study abroad, where second language learning is no longer the primary objective (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2015).

Erika's experience illustrates this changing reality. When she arrived in Lausanne, she attended the orientation week, met several Québécois students also studying abroad who had been already living there for a few weeks and took part in the ski trip mentioned in

the previous section. They comprised most of her multi-national network during the first semester:

I saw them every day and it was from that orientation week. It wasn't until I met them that things started looking up. They were definitely the reason that I started feeling better and I had things to see ... I had places to go to with people and if I wanted to go grocery shopping I could do it with somebody else and not just by myself sort of thing. They definitely changed the entire experience for me for the better for sure. (Erika, interview 2)

Erika's first weeks in Lausanne were very challenging emotionally. She was destabilised by the separation from her supporting networks from home and her family. Forming friendships with these students from Quebec was a way to reduce her acculturative stress and adjust to her host location. Her friends — all native speakers of French but also still study abroad students like her — were mediums through which she felt empowered enough to engage with her host environment. Although her narratives made it difficult to establish the role played by her friends' particular nationality in her ability to connect with the host environment and the host culture, it seems that they acted, especially at the beginning of her sojourn, as buffers in her interactions with locals, arguably because of their proficiency in French and greater knowledge of the host location, as they had arrived in Switzerland before her. The benefits of her friendships with them were multiple:

I did learn things but if anything I learnt swear words in French. They helped me out with assignments if I had questions, if I had to interview people I would interview them. They did help me to understand French better. In terms of how fast they spoke. Maybe it's just because I spent so much time with them that I'm only used to hearing them speak French. (Erika, interview 2)

Erika learnt aspects of the language that she might not have learnt otherwise in the formal context of her French classes. She was also exposed to different accents and vocabulary as well as what she perceived to be the higher verbal speed of the Québécois. In this regard, she exemplifies language learning outside the classroom. She benefitted not only linguistically from her Québécois friends, but also academically; in addition to receiving support from them for her assessments, she interviewed them as part of the same assignments. She also clearly identified her friends from Quebec, who were studying

abroad for only one semester, as relevant resources to explore intercultural issues as part of an academic task.

Anne's experience with her university's soccer club is also enlightening in how students who are proficient in French bring specific benefits to other study abroad students. By joining the soccer club, Anne met several local students, as well as other multi-national students from various origins who were all proficient in French:

I met another two girls who weren't French but one was from Australia and one was from Spain and their French was very, very good. And then a few weeks after that an American exchange girl, who I hadn't met before she joined but again, she's been speaking in French for eight years as opposed to my two, so she was quite comfortable straight away. I found that was really intimidating at first but I really am glad I did it.
(Anne, interview 2)

According to Anne, she was the one with the lowest level of French which, at first, did not reinforce her self-confidence and increased her feelings of isolation, as might be expected, in the local network. However, it did not prevent her from fully taking part in soccer training and becoming a fully-fledged member of the team. She earned her position in the team based on her skills and playing ability — which were not dependent upon her linguistic proficiency — and played in tournaments with them. Furthermore, as Erika did, Anne interviewed her teammates, including the other study abroad students, as part of an assignment for her home university in relation to intercultural learning. Anne studied the representation of women's soccer in French society and collected relevant perspectives that she then compared to the Australian context. The benefits of her engagement with this multi-national network were therefore cultural, intercultural, academic and linguistic.

More research is needed to further explore the role played by study abroad students who are either proficient or native speakers of the target language in the way other students access the host culture. As demonstrated in the data, this sub-category of students within the multi-national networks brings specific advantages to other study abroad students who are less proficient in the target language. They can potentially facilitate access to the host culture and ease interactions with local people. These are assuredly the kind of encounters that any instructor or study abroad adviser would like their sojourners to have, and multi-nationals would be valuable connections for students. This social tie is an alternative

source of exposure to the target language, more accessible than local people who, as is described in the next section, are often difficult for study abroad students to connect with. Study abroad students often share the same desire to create social ties rapidly (Kim, 2001) and they are even structurally encouraged to do so. Unlike the locals, study abroad students who are proficient or native speakers of the target language present the double advantage of speaking the language and seeking friendship among other study abroad students. Lastly, although they are not representatives of the host culture, they exemplify the cultural diversity of the target language speakers, the francophone world in this study and, therefore, are legitimate points of access to the global target culture.

In light of the description of the composition and the functions of their compatriot and multi-national networks, the next section explores participants' host national networks. The discussion is framed by participants' narratives of their encounters with locals and the photographs that they posted on social media.

Host national networks

Across all participants' social media platforms, only fourteen posts (all photographs) include local people. Out of these fourteen photographs, five must be set apart; those collected from John's and Diana's accounts. Those photographs include Diana's French friend whom she had met several years ago during her first sojourn in France. These will be discussed separately. Participants' narratives on the nine remaining photographs are particularly insightful about the type of relationships with locals that they developed and the activities in which they were involved that determined their online behaviour. Five themes emerged from the data. First, forming friendships with locals requires a high level of investment from participants. Second, the encounters with locals were limited to participants' daily life, and were therefore largely outside the main subjects for photographs and posts. Third, participants perceived cultural differences in social media use among locals that potentially hindered their online social networking. Fourth, most of the bonds created were weak and transitory and/or occurred within unfavourable conditions for adding locals to social media accounts and documenting their encounters. Fifth, there was structural compartmentalisation between the multi-nationals and the locals, partly due to the organisation of host institutions.

Developing friendships with local people requires a high level of investment and connecting with them has proven to be difficult for study abroad students (Brown, 2009; Merrick, 2004; Sam, 2001). The cases of Patricia and Anne illustrate how this investment was based on their goals for study abroad including developing networks within the host national community.

Three photographs including local people were collected from Patricia's accounts (Figures 8, 9 and 10). All three are related to the same network of people. The first photograph (Figure 8) was posted directly by Patricia, the other two are group photographs in which she was tagged: one in a student bar near her host university (Figure 9) and the other one at a friend's farewell party (Figure 10).

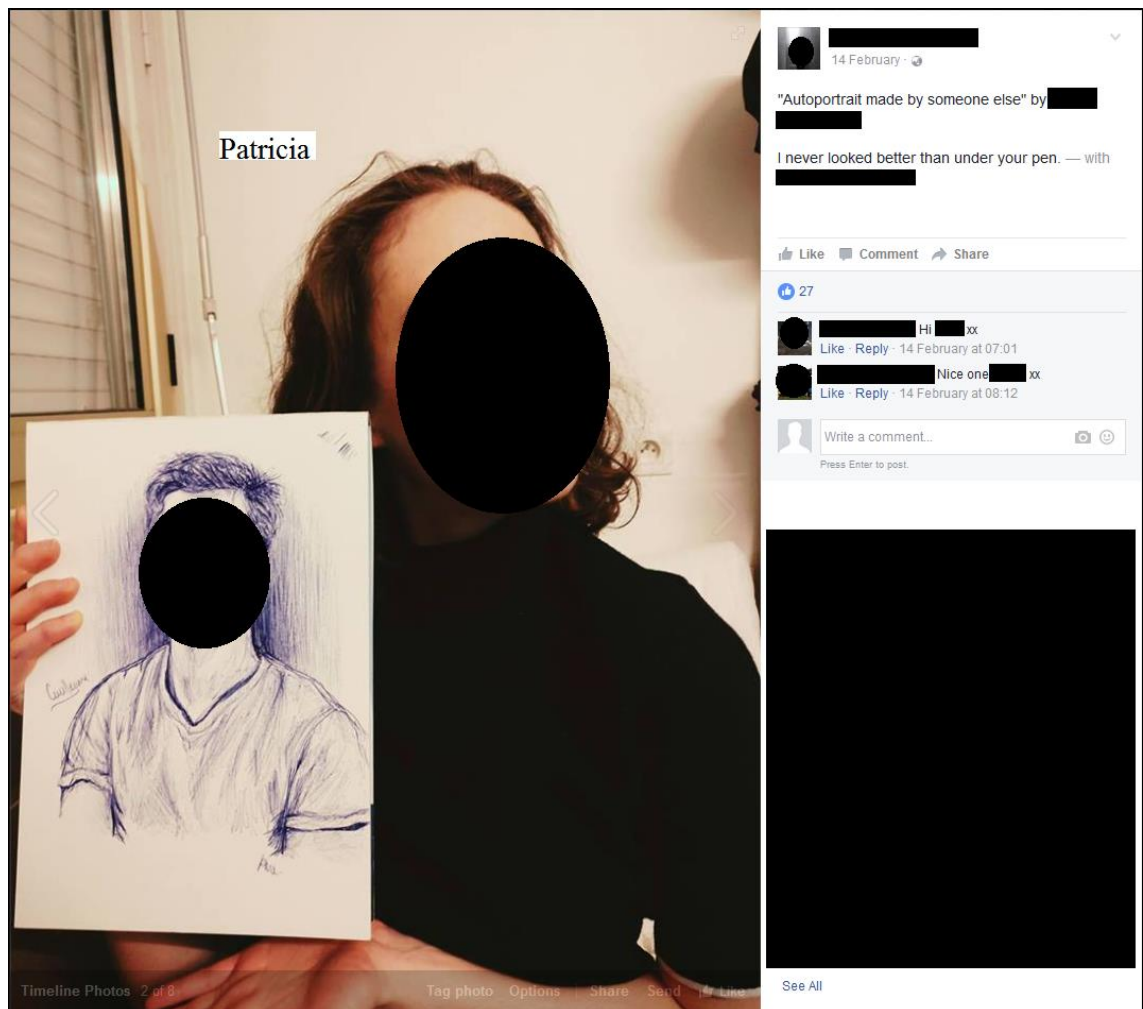


Figure 8: Patricia's friend's Facebook post. Photograph of Patricia holding a drawing.

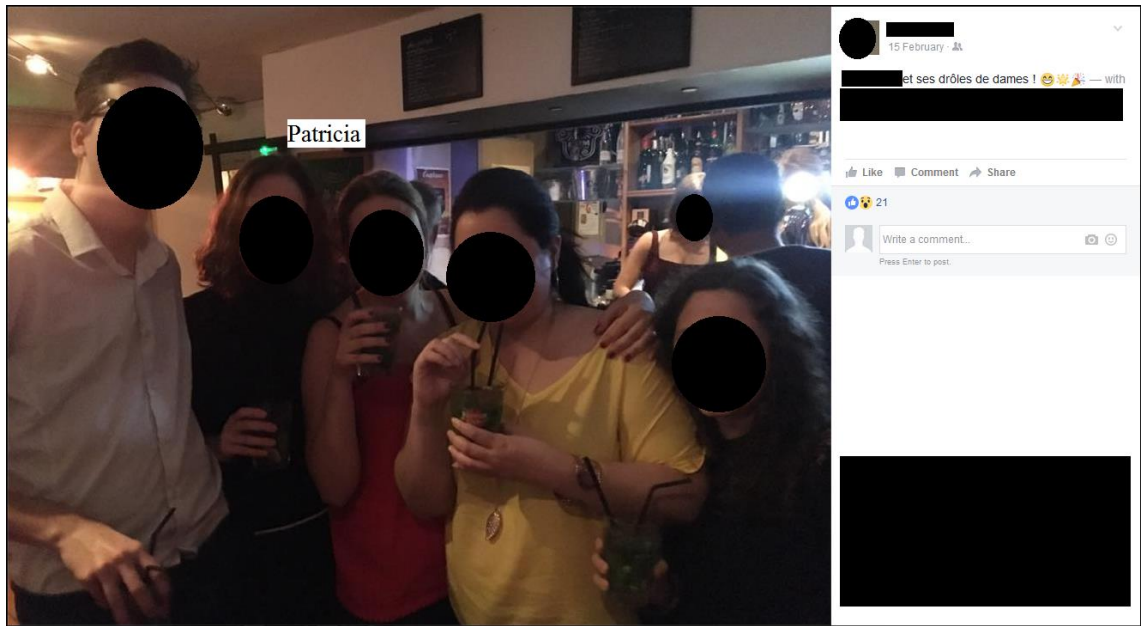


Figure 9: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Patricia in a bar with local students.



Figure 10: Patricia’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Patricia at a farewell party with local people.

At the beginning of her sojourn, in February, Patricia met the male student who can be seen in Figure 9 and on the drawing that she made of him in Figure 8. He introduced her to his group of friends and invited her to his farewell party, as he was leaving for New Zealand:

Most of the people at the party, that was the first time I met them. XXX [Her friend’s name], which is the one in both the photos, I met him in town when we were out one night and became quite close friends with him. This was his farewell party, he was

going to New Zealand. He invited me, and most of them spoke French. I did my best to communicate that night. (Patricia, interview 2)

Patricia was on her own at this party. None of her co-national friends were there with her and, although she knew some of the guests, it was the first time that she met the majority of the group. She was the only outsider, and what is more, was the only non-native French speaker. At that time, she lacked confidence and the French language was still a barrier for communication:

I felt quite nervous and a little bit awkward, but they were really nice people so it was good. The second photo actually, at the bar, those three girls hardly spoke any English at all so that was quite interesting. (Patricia, interview 2)

Despite these difficulties, she invested in socialising with this group since meeting French people was one of her biggest goals of study abroad. In order to achieve it, she stepped out of her comfort zone, took risks and acted as she normally would not:

I think it was quite adventurous of me. Because I really wanted to speak French and it was his farewell, so I felt like I really needed to go to that. Yeah, just meeting new people, make [sic] more connections in Aix. (Patricia, interview 2)

As she had recently gone through the same process of leaving home for an overseas sojourn, participating in somebody else's separation ritual positioned her as part of the host community for their rite of passage. There was arguably a mutual interest with her friend. Indeed, her Australianness and proximate familiarity with New Zealand culture and English (just like the Québécois students in Switzerland) was of value for her friend, just as his Frenchness and his social network were valuable to her. The expected benefits were clearly to expand her social networks and practice her French. Throughout her sojourn, she regularly met up some of people from this group and kept in touch with them via social media, even after her return to Australia.

Like Patricia, Anne demonstrated a high level of investment in forming friendships with locals. Two photographs with locals were collected from her accounts (Figures 11 and 12). They were taken before a soccer game and posted by Anne's teammates. Anne plays soccer in Australia and joining a soccer team in France was one of her biggest goals.

Before her departure, she used Facebook to research the different options for teams available. Her level of investment in joining a team and, consequently, meeting local students was maximal. As with Patricia, Anne took this initiative on her own and none of her co-national friends were with her. Her case highlights how study abroad students can seize opportunities through local sporting clubs to increase their chance to make connections in the local network and achieve their goals (Mitchell et al., 2017).

She initially joined the team to train with them and maintain her skills. After some time, she was invited to play in one of the tournaments. Drawing on her skills as a soccer player, she rapidly became a fully-fledged member of the team and, although she did not play in her best position, she kept on investing in this activity since the benefits were various:

I didn't actually play the normal position I played a quite a few weeks because I didn't know how to say the word for it, but I learned. It was interesting as well, just the slang and how people actually talk. It was definitely towards the end that I was talking more to people. I've played ever since I can remember. So, for me, that was a way to meet people, because a lot of my day to day, most of my friends were other international students. So, that was where I made and tried to make French friends. (Anne, interview 2)

As previously described, Anne felt intimidated due to her lack of confidence with the French language. Notwithstanding, her skills as a player compensated for her presumed linguistic limitations and she kept on playing for the team because the benefits were clear to her. Indeed, she improved her French and learnt some slang and some specific vocabulary, and practised it through consistent exposure to and interactions with native speakers. Moreover, she interviewed some of her teammates about the representations of women's soccer in France as part of an assessment. In sum, Anne drew on her skills as a soccer player that she acquired in Australia to gain access to this host national network. It is mostly because her skills were valued by her coach and her teammates, that she was given a role on the team.



Figure 11: Anne’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and her soccer team.



Figure 12: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and her soccer team.

Patricia and Anne illustrate how study abroad students can rapidly make connections with local people. However, for both, creating friendships was the outcome of their effort to achieve their goals built around a strategy planned in advance, with clear perceived benefits such as expanding their social networks or practising their French. The imperative is thus for students to identify what aspects of their skills, like Anne, or of identity, like Patricia, they should draw on in order to make connections with the host community.

These few cases notwithstanding, most local or domestic students were outside participants' main sources of photographs: their travelling experiences and the events organised for study abroad students. Conversely, locals were part of participants' daily routines. They would typically meet on campus and in their dormitory. Consequently, as with Trevor, many participants explained the lack of photographs of local students in their social media platforms due to the fact locals did not travel with them:

They didn't really travel a lot as well. They would study and we would hang out but then we wouldn't really go to places anywhere because they wouldn't be like, "Oh my God, I have to go to Prague". They'd be like, "I've already been a few times. I don't really need to go now". (Trevor, interview 3)

Being outside the heavily documented travel-related activities, their experiences with the local networks did not benefit from the same exposure as participants' co-national or even multi-national networks when they visited and explored their host cities and regions. The priorities of the two groups, the multi-national and local students, were different and none of their local friends took part in their travelling experiences, even for local visits. Instead, participants entered a space where social networks and connections had already been established and maintained by local students (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Woolf, 2007). Mitchell et al. (2017) found in their study similar difficulties for their participants to break into local networks, indeed "sojourners acknowledged that their way of life was anyhow somewhat different from that of local peers, who often went home at weekends" (p.147). Local students have their family and friends nearby, perhaps a job and often a heavier study load. The motivation to explore and travel, as well as the free time to do so, is not comparable to that of the participants and other study abroad students which, as noted by Mitchell et al. (2017) consequently impact of study abroad students' social networks: "sojourners' enthusiasm for travel at weekends and in other breaks also shaped their social networks, and affected the extent of local integration" (p.148). Contacts with locals outside the daily activities of their dormitory and the university campus remained the exception for my participants. Where they developed strong friendships with local students, the trend toward non-representation on social media stands: few if any photographs were posted.

Alexandra's closest friend in Switzerland, for instance, was a local student that she met during the first semester. Despite the closeness of their relationship and their daily contacts, only one post containing a photograph of her friend was collected (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Alexandra's Instagram post. Photograph of Alexandra and her friend (domestic student).

The photograph was posted at the same time on Facebook and Instagram at the end of Alexandra's sojourn in Switzerland in January 2018. Before our second interview in August 2017, there was no online trace of encounters with local people. Alexandra explains the lack of photographs of her friend as due to the fact she was outside one of her main sources of photographs: the events organised by the ESN. By contrast, participants were involved in the ESN of their host city, which organised many events for study abroad and Erasmus students such as dinners or weekend trips. During these events, participants and other study abroad students would typically take numerous photographs that they would then share on social media. Since her friend was not a part of this network, Alexandra lacked photographs of her or of them together to post:

My closest friend here is a girl who isn't on exchange here. She lives on my floor. She's a local student, and we've become really, really good friends [...] I need to post more.

There's no picture of her, but that's because she doesn't really come to any of the ESN events where we get all of these photos, but I hang out with her a lot. (Alexandra, interview 2)

Alexandra acknowledges that her friend was probably underrepresented in her posts in terms of the closeness of their relationship. Although her friend is in Alexandra's contact list on both Facebook and Instagram, Alexandra had not felt the need to display this friendship on social media before, arguably because, as part of her daily life, she presumed that it would not interest her audience. According to Hetz et al. (2015), while abroad, students prioritise the bonding feature of social media through communication with family and friends back home. Alexandra did not deem her ability to make connections and create strong friendships with locals worthy enough to promote on social media or of interest to her audience. In fact, local students were often part of participants' daily life and routines; however, these were not aspects of their experience that participants tended to publicly document and communicate on social media.

For instance, during the second semester, Erika met two local students who lived on her floor in her student housing. They used to see each other on a daily basis for routine activities such as cooking and meals. Despite these daily contacts, only one photograph of them was visible on social media (Figure 14); this is the only photograph with locals collected on her accounts. As with Alexandra, the photograph was posted at the end of Erika's sojourn in December 2017:

I saw them every day like breakfast, lunch and dinner, they sort of became part of the norm for me. So I didn't just whip up out my phone and take photos of them cooking or something like that. Because it was just something I always saw. I have a lot of videos of them. But I don't think people would want to see, like us just dancing in the kitchen, and stuff like that. (Erika, interview 3)



Figure 14: Erika's Facebook post. Photograph of Erika and her friends in their dormitory.

Although her ability to create friendship with locals is evidence of a successful experience and could generate esteem from her audience, Erika still chose not to promote it on social media. This tends to confirm the finding that participants would not publicly communicate their daily life due to its intimate aspect and the presumed lack of interest from their audience, even if they had the material. Alternatively, Erika recorded her local friends via video that she did not publish on social media. If she shared those with her local friends, she did so privately or on another platform, such as Snapchat. As part of her daily routine, her “norm” of hanging out, she deems the activities that she engaged in with them as not remarkable enough to capture through photograph and display on social media. Erika thus internalised what her audience's expectations could be.

Contrary to many studies consistently reporting a lack of meaningful contact with host community (Brown, 2009; Merrick, 2004) across various locations, the participants in this research established strong but largely undocumented ties with local students. The narratives of Alexandra and Erika demonstrate how interactions with locals were typically restricted to participants' daily life, thus preventing locals from appearing in their social media publications.

As per the model of rites of passage, figures 13 and 14 present clear similarities with photographs participants posted immediately before their departure to their host destinations and are further analysed in the next chapter. The two photographs (Figures 13 and 14) are tributes to the friendships that they maintained with local students. The intent of these posts is quite clear: they are direct messages to their friends in order to bond the relationships about to be disrupted by the participants' departure. There is a parallel between their departure to their host destinations and this upcoming separation from the social networks they formed in their host environment, which most participants ultimately referred to as a second home. The difference is that this separation has a more clearly defined character as participants were definitely returning to their homes at the end of their experience abroad, while there is more uncertainty that they will ever see the friends met during their sojourn again. Social media are found to play a similar role in the separation process, as they enable participants to maintain networks and smooth separation after their return, as they all reported contacts with many local students, notably via private messaging. This separation from their study abroad social networks constitutes a cycle of rites of passage in itself as it directly influences students' identity transition to emerging adulthood.

During the interviews, both Trevor and Alexandra pointed out cultural differences between Australian and Swiss users of social media to explain the lack of photographs, including of locals, on their accounts. For instance, while Trevor's social network in Lausanne consisted of Australian, American, and Canadian students, as well as Swiss students with whom he lived in student housing, the photographs that he posted on Facebook and Instagram did not entirely reflect that reality. Only the Australian, American and Canadian students appear on the photographs that he posted on both Facebook and Instagram. According to Trevor, this is due to a lack of photographs taken with his Swiss friends:

They lived in the same building as me so I would just see them super often. But I guess I just never took as many photos when I was with my Swiss friends. (Trevor, interview 3)

He further explained that this absence of photographs was due to a perceived difference in cultural approach to social media, especially when it comes to privacy. In his

experience, while Australians tend to use their real names on their social media profiles, the Swiss act otherwise and use pseudonyms, making them difficult to find and connect with on social media:

I feel like Swiss people are very different with the way they do social media. I think with a lot of Australian people, if you know their name, their last name, they're relatively easy to find, or if you know people that know them or what they look like [...] But Swiss people, there is almost nothing that actually links to their account. I probably wouldn't be able to find it. Unless I knew what someone looked like and I knew that they had Instagram and I knew someone else's Instagram I could find it. But the same thing is like, if I know someone's Instagram, I can't find their Facebook. (Trevor, interview 3)

Therefore, even if Trevor had photographs of his Swiss friends, posting them on social media would arguably have been pointless as they were not in his contact list. They would not be able to see the photographs, which, consequently, would prevent him from further consolidating his relationships with them.

Similar cultural differences related to privacy concerns on social media were noted by Alexandra:

They [her Swiss friends] are a very private group. There's no view of any of them. They don't post anything anywhere. There is no trace of them. I don't know. They're too cool. They'll occasionally post a photo that's like a really artsy shot of like a rubbish bin or something. (Alexandra, interview 3)

According to Alexandra, her Swiss friends would simply not post personal photographs on social media. Since their Swiss friends were not taking any photographs, neither would the participants. Both narratives on this cultural difference indicate a relative adjustment to the host community's practices.

Curiously, this cultural difference was mentioned only by participants studying in Switzerland; no such observations were noted by those studying in France. Thus, while Facebook and Instagram offer the same features and functionalities to their users across the world, usage patterns differ (Jackson & Wang, 2013; Ji et al., 2010). This intercultural

lesson on what to expect in terms of social media use is likely to be important when preparing students for departure. In the instance of Switzerland, connecting with host-nationals through social media proved difficult while developing online networks among the community of multi-national students seemed to be easier. Alexandra noted that multi-national students more readily added each other on Facebook in order to keep in touch and share information for travelling opportunities:

The Erasmus people were always adding each other, because they think it's good to have as many contacts as possible, because people are always travelling somewhere.
(Alexandra, interview 3)

For study abroad students, social media are used to add as many people as possible from the same group, which shares the same goals, travelling for instance. The expected benefit is to expand their social networks as quickly as possible, with the aim of sharing and gathering as much information as possible to avoid missing opportunities linked to their goals of study abroad. The bridging feature of social media, which is prioritised within the community of multi-national students who add each other upon encounter, consequently widens their social networks. Conversely, according to participants in Switzerland, local students' priority is to protect their privacy on social media, as well as to maintain their already established social networks. While there are clearly benefits for multi-national students to add local people into accounts, the opposite is not necessarily true. Locals' online social networks — like their offline counterparts' — are already established and they do not always perceive the benefits connecting with study abroad students even though, as Patricia's example with her French friend departing to New Zealand shows, these connections can be valuable. Thus, the online world is the continuation of the offline spaces in which study abroad students sometimes struggle to establish friendships with local people due to language issues (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), intercultural issues (Russell et al., 2010), and the fact that locals' social networks are already formed (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017).

The experiences where bonds were formed with locals, though, were not universal, as the cases of Patricia and John attest. They were unable to develop enough bonds with some of the locals to create suitable conditions for taking and posting photographs on their social media platforms. Their narratives highlight the importance of the conditions in

which encounters with locals were made since, as previously mentioned, Patricia had demonstrated, from the beginning of her sojourn, her ability to connect with host national networks.

Language exchange sessions, conducted half in French and half in English, were identified by many as a very efficient way to improve their linguistic skills and, at the same time, meet new people (Mitchell et al., 2017). Some participants took part, but their encounters, as well as the venues in which they occurred (the sessions were organised in cafés), were not favourable to establishing strong and durable ties. These informal learning and peer-teaching environments gathered together English and French native speakers.

Since one of Patricia's main goals of study abroad was to meet as many French people as possible, she seized every opportunity to socialise with locals and, therefore, regularly took part in these sessions. She met many local people this way throughout her sojourn; however, despite numerous contacts, she was unable to really bond with any:

I met a lot of locals actually. I went to dinner with a couple of them afterwards. It was always different people each time. Towards the end [of her sojourn], it got a bit more regulars. (Patricia, interview 3)

Despite the recurrence of her encounters with local people, no posts of this aspect of her social life were retrievable, either visual or textual, through status updates. It seems that the concomitance of the superficial and ephemeral nature of these relationships did not lead Patricia to add those people to her accounts or document her experiences.

Similar phenomena characterised John's experience. In Lyon, he participated in workshops where he taught English to domestic students. Through these workshops, he met only one student with whom he felt that he connected; however it was three weeks before his return to Sydney and, therefore, he could not establish strong bonds with her:

She was really nice and I spoke to her. I was supposed to be teaching her English, but half way through I'd start to speak French because she said she'd help me with French. So that was good. And I really enjoyed her company, and liked her. But I met her three weeks before we left. So, there wasn't really chance to really get to become good

friends with her. Those kind of opportunities were there but, I guess, timing just didn't work out sometimes. (John, interview 3)

Language learning was the main purpose of the workshops. All parties, local people and participants, had a clear goal of improving their linguistic skills without necessarily developing friendships. Indeed, Mitchell et al. (2017) point out in their study that friendships between their participants and local peers “flourished best where partners found interests in common” (p.153). Unlike Patricia, who stated that meeting French people was one of her goals of study abroad, John did not really prioritise this aspect of his experience. Nonetheless, regardless of their level of investment in these sessions, the relationships with local people ended up the same way: superficial and ephemeral. Although the “teaching and learning” context brings people who share a common goal together, the nature of the relationships created does not necessarily foster propitious conditions for taking photographs or adding contacts on social media. Social media, however, cannot be excluded from the analysis. Although Facebook and Instagram did not play a crucial role in these encounters, Patricia, for instance, heard about the sessions through Facebook. My research supports the theory that, in a study abroad context, Facebook and Instagram serve to bond already established relationships rather than helping to create new ones (Hetz et al., 2015) and that is essentially due to the types of relationships and the conditions in which they are formed.

Across participants' narratives a theme emerged that, in the host environment, there was compartmentalisation of the multi-national and local networks, making it difficult for study abroad students to form friendships with locals. I argue that this separation was structural and contributed to by host institutions as well as the types of activities participants were engaged in within each network. The role of host institutions was found to increase the predominance of the multi-national student networks and, consequently, accentuate the separation from the host national community, although not necessarily the linguistic and cultural function it performs.

Compartmentalisation of participants' social networks seemed to be aided by the way host universities sometimes welcome multi-national students. For instance, the University of Lausanne set up a buddy system which paired a domestic student with a study abroad student. The three participants hosted in Lausanne had three different buddies. For Erika,

it was a good opportunity to ease her settling into her new environment by being assisted with logistical issues and to widen her local social network. However, she noticed that connecting with Swiss people was not an easy task:

I had my buddy when I got there. Because of her, I met some of her friends and stuff like that. I met... I became friends with them. But generally speaking, in Switzerland I found that they're very exclusive. They know who the foreign students are and there's not really much of an effort made on either side to mesh. (Erika, interview 3)

According to Erika, there was a clear separation between both communities and she describes a situation in which multi-national students, on the one hand, tend to stick together (for the different reasons discussed in the first half of this chapter), and the local students on the other, who do not demonstrate any interest in developing friendships with multi-national students.

Apart from the buddy system, nothing was institutionally organised to encourage interactions between these groups of students. In fact, the Australian study abroad students were almost isolated from local students due to the language classes that they had to take:

Like most people who are foreign students do subjects that are tailored for foreign students. And Swiss people do... No Swiss French is going to take an A2B1 class in French. (Erika, interview 3)

The language learning needs of the study abroad students kept them away from regular classes, preventing interactions within an everyday environment, a normal setting in which students connect with peers, for both communities. This, however, would not have been the case with the Québécois students. In the same vein, John pointed out the same barriers arising from the language classes that he attended in Lyon as a study abroad student:

I always imagined it would be fairly easy to make French friends, but I was in a language course, which was entirely for people in my situation. (John, interview 2)

Anne made similar observations about her experience in Montpellier:

It hasn't been easy making a whole lot of French friends just because I think, usually that's based around Uni and because we were separated in our classes. That was a bit harder. (Anne, interview 2)

Since participants' sojourns abroad started with intensive language classes, their first encounters were with other study abroad students or language learners, like the refugees, with whom they might have little else in common. Intensive classes were therefore an effective way to expand their social networks among the multi-nationals. Upon arrival in the host environment, study abroad students begin to search for new relationships (Kim, 2001). However, as explained by the participants both in France and Switzerland, the downside was a structural separation, throughout their sojourn, keeping both communities away from each other. This structural separation was internalised as a norm by the study abroad students. To bypass this obstacle, they identified alternative sources of target language exposure, as if to replicate the function of the local network:

I find most of the students who are from France, they keep to themselves a bit more. I think international students, because they don't know as many people they will talk more. But I've met girls from Thailand, one of my friends was from Algeria. So it's really interesting. Most of them are very talented and have a base level of English but we try and speak French and then they'll help me out with French when I don't know words. (Anne, interview 2)

In order to bypass the obstacle of structural separation from local students, like the participants in Switzerland who formed friendships with the Québécois students, Anne identified alternative sources of target language exposure and got closer to other study abroad students who were either native speakers or highly proficient in French. This type of student was a valuable resource for participants and brought specific benefits in various aspects, linguistic as well as intercultural, by providing them with a perception of French as a global language spoken by people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Through these relationships, participants developed a sense of belonging to a global network of French speakers.

Participants' narratives also highlight how challenging it is to spontaneously engage with the host community and break the barriers that separate study abroad from local students. Most relationships with locals were unbalanced from the beginning due to an unequal

division of power, unless the international had “value” for the locals, like Anne through her contribution to her soccer team, or Patricia, through her Australianness and near cultural familiarity with New Zealand to where her French friend was going. Despite their perceived linguistic abilities, Anne and Patricia could more easily integrate into host national networks.

The encounters with domestic students that were incited by the host institution tended to be “unnatural”, leading to unbalanced relationships. For instance, the buddy system often turned into a mentorship system in which domestic students took study abroad students under their wing, guided them through administrative duties and showed them around. At the beginning of his sojourn, Trevor’s local network consisted only of his buddy, who was there to help him deal with very practical aspects of his life:

She was just around because I was like, “Oh, what’s a good phone plan to get?” or “Where should I go to do this?”, “Where can I buy this thing?” because she lived here, so she was really helpful. (Trevor, interview 2)

It seems that their relationship was limited to practical aspects rather than personal or profound ones more suited to reciprocity that could carry to a relationship beyond its initial stages.

To that effect, John had doubts about this system and the domestic students’ motives for being buddies:

I am sure there was an ulterior motive that they wanted to put on their CV or something. But, good on them. It was good. But, that imbalance is just a bit odd. I don’t want to feel like I’m indebted to these people for showing me their country. It’s more you want natural things, which I guess is hard to organise for natural meetings. (John, interview 3)

According to John, transactional relationships fail to produce durable and strong friendships. While benefits on both sides are necessary to establish relationships, more profound and personal involvement is needed to form durable friendships, like Anne did by joining the soccer team.

In contrast with the preceding discussion of new social ties with local students, the five photographs collected from Diana's and John's accounts offer a different perspective on local networks. Diana had previously undertaken an exchange in France in high school. She had maintained contact with someone from that earlier sojourn. Soon after their arrival in Lyon, Diana and John travelled in Budapest in order to meet Diana's French friend, who lived in Paris, to visit the Hungarian city together. As her friend knew someone in Budapest, she invited Diana and John to join her on her trip. Diana and John, who were planning to go there later in the year, seized the opportunity and stayed there for five days. During this trip, they both took numerous photographs, of which five included Diana's friend (see Figures 15 and 16). These photographs are travel photographs typical of numerous others collected from all participants' accounts. However, unlike those, these two photographs are the only ones including a local person in a travel context. They exist because of the pre-established friendship between Diana and her friend and the common goal to visit Budapest. Diana's pre-existing social networks offered her, and indirectly John, a travel opportunity. Meeting her friend was also an opportunity to practise their French and gain self-confidence, especially crucial at the beginning of their study abroad experience. These photographs are unique among those collected, including local people essentially due to the pre-existing host national network combined with the travel context. As study abroad, global migration and international education in general become more common, it is likely that connections of this kind will occur more frequently, and will therefore need to be recognised in the scholarship.

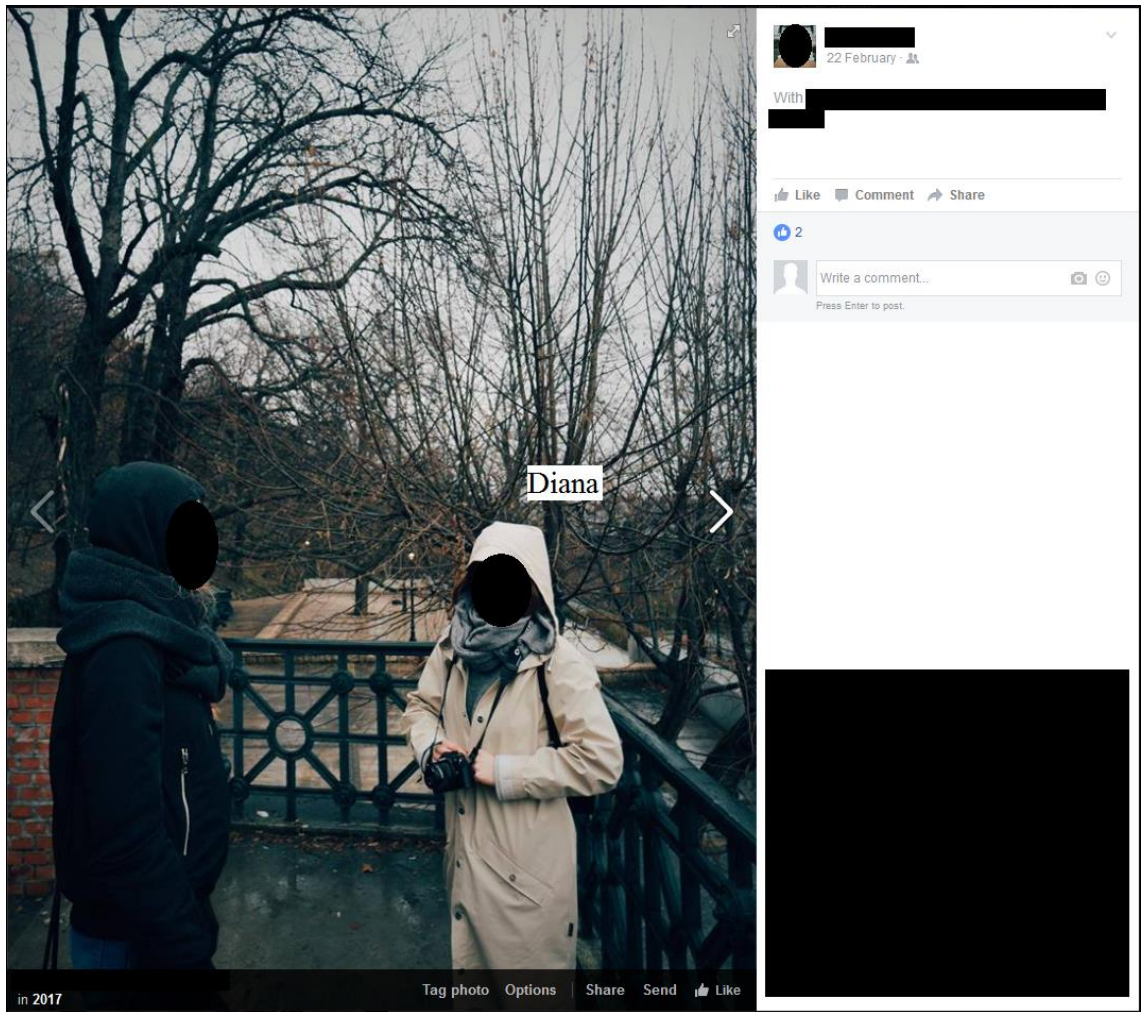


Figure 15: John's Facebook post. Photograph of Diana and her French friend in Budapest.

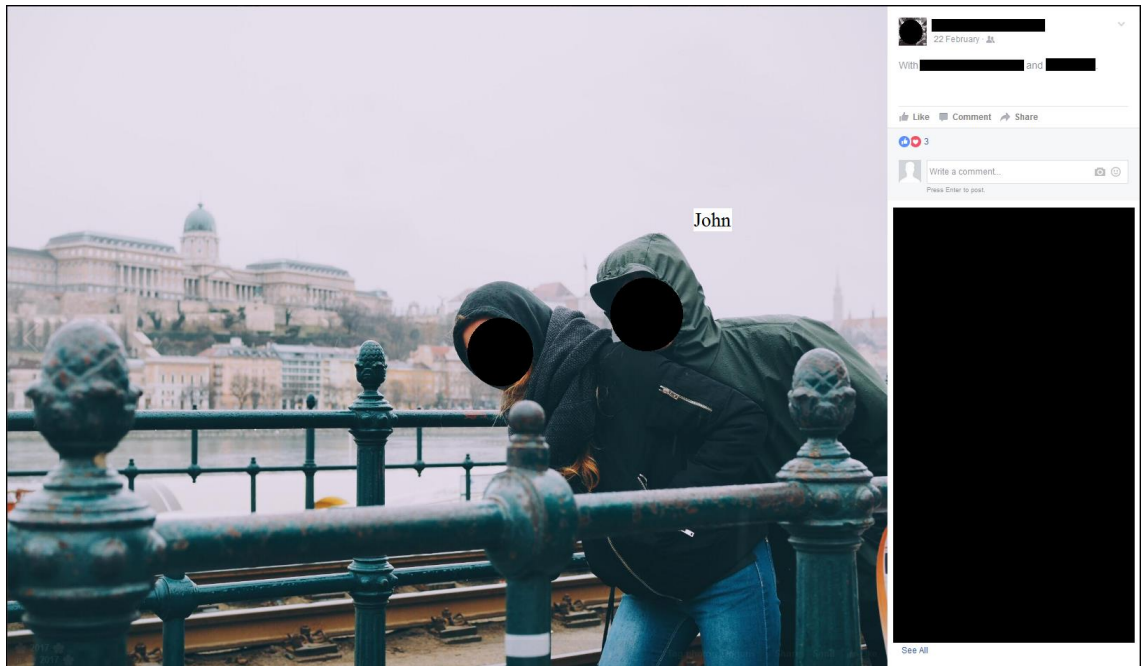


Figure 16: Diana's Facebook post. Photograph of John and Diana's French friend in Budapest.

Conclusion

Through social media data and participants' narratives on their posts, this chapter provides an insight into how study abroad students develop and maintain their social networks while studying abroad. The initial finding of a lack of posts including local people or domestic students on participants' social media platforms partially reflects the struggles participants faced in forming durable relationships with members of the host community. Conversely, the abundance of posts with multi-national and Australian students shows the main composition of participants' social networks, the type of relationships they maintained and activities they engaged in, which were more likely to also be pursued in online spaces.

This chapter contributes necessary refinements to the model of students' social network development in the study abroad context, as well as to the model of study abroad as a rite of passage. First, the quasi-permanent connection through social media and digital communication with social networks from home has radically transformed the study abroad experience. The direct influence of online co-national networks in the way participants socialise while abroad suggests that researchers and educators must account

for an additional social circle or network that is not, as yet, addressed in the literature. Moreover, the social network comprising multi-national students proficient in or who are native speakers of the target language was found to bring participants specific benefits and had a particularly beneficial impact on their experience. These students are representative of the changing landscape of study abroad where second language learning is no longer the main objective. Consequently, further research is needed to explore the influence of multi-national students proficient in or who are native speakers of the target language on the experiences of students whose primary reason for studying abroad remains second language acquisition.

The participants' narratives are also instructive for revising the model of rites of passage in two ways. First, social media challenge the traditional position of the separation phase as they extend the connection between students and their home networks after their departure. Mitchell et al. (2017) highlight in their study of British students studying abroad in France, Spain and Mexico that "contemporary sojourners could Skype, phone or message family and friends as often as they wanted to. The isolation reported by past sojourner cohorts did not affect this generation" (p. 162). Indeed, social media smooth the physical separation from home and give contemporary study abroad students more agency to choose the moment when they are confident enough to limit their digital communication with home and make the separation more definitive. Thus, in the age of social media, physical separation precedes a digital separation. Second, after a year, participants' host locations became their second home. Social media data reveal another phase of separation when the participants were about to return to Australia and online behaviours similar to those at the moment of their departure from home, were observed in their farewell posts. Chapter Five further explores this phase, which began when participants started to anticipate the end of their experiences and dread their return back home.

Across seven participants studying in two different countries and four different cities, the findings are consistent and show that while socialising with peers and other study abroad students is relatively effortless, and even encouraged in many ways by the host institutions, creating friendships with host nationals is much more challenging, notably due to structural separations of study abroad students and host communities. Although host institutions take initiatives to foster cross-cultural interaction between multi-national

and local students, they often fail to create environments conducive to spontaneous and balanced relationships. Home institutions have a key role to play in providing students with strategies to overcome the difficulties identified in this chapter. The buddy system or conversation sessions were found to often lead to unbalanced relationships based on a quid-pro-quo in which participants felt that they were put in a subordinate position of power. Consequently, before departure, students should be made aware that such systems are available and can prove useful on a practical front, for instance to help them settle in at the beginning of their sojourn or practise their linguistic skills. However, they must also be warned that they should not exclusively rely on this system to make connections with locals. Conversely, friendships with proficient or native speakers of the target language who are also studying abroad compensate for this lack of opportunity and balance in relationships with locals and are, therefore, advisable for students. Any blanket attempts to limit contacts with peers and other multi-national students could then negatively affect students' experience of study abroad, as the multi-national networks are essential, notably in the acculturative and adjustment process. As shown in this chapter, in these networks participants found the necessary support to take risks, step out of their comfort zones and have new experiences.

One way to address the compartmentalisation between study abroad and local students would be to encourage forming of interconnections between the networks. For instance, most participants tended to develop their own networks of host nationals. As a result, the host nationals did not know each other or the other participants. The missing interconnections are therefore the ones between host nationals and also between participants and the other host national friends of their peers. This type of interconnection between the different social networks, especially those between participants and locals, are important for participants' immersion processes into the host socio-cultural environment. Where possible, it should therefore be promoted by inciting participants to introduce their peers to their local connections. Simple initiatives could be promoted such as reforming the buddy system by transitioning from pairings to small groupings, so a group of study abroad students could be assigned to a group of domestic students.

The obstacle posed in language classes could also be eased. Both language classes designed for study abroad students and regular classes that domestic students attend could become more open whenever possible. Domestic students, especially if they are studying

a relevant field, such as teaching French as a foreign language, education or cross-cultural communication, could be invited to language classes as language assistants or for cultural presentations. It would also be a networking opportunity for internationally-minded locals. Such relationships would have the potential to go beyond transactional relationships for the local students and could endure after the study abroad students leave. Similarly, study abroad students could be welcomed into regular classes as auditors, where permitted by institutional policy, in order to increase their chances of meeting local students. Nonetheless, such initiatives are not silver bullet as some participants, thanks to their advanced level of French, were allowed to attend regular university classes taught in French without significantly developing larger local networks. This issue only highlights the difficulties of integration encountered by study abroad and full-degree international students with local students even when attending the same classes (Arkoudis et al., 2013). My participants' experiences suggest that drawing on their own social and cultural capital and pursuing their interests are keys to establishing friendships with locals. Like Anne who successfully joined the soccer team and formed friendships with locals, students should be advised to engage in activities where locals constitute the majority of participants. These contexts are propitious to friendships, as study abroad students and locals share common interests and have mutual goals.

The lack of photographs of host nationals in online posts is an important finding of this analysis and is, to a certain extent, a reflection of the participants' difficulty to break into local networks. It is also a reflection of the lack of settings in which locals were involved, mainly the domestic setting of the host institution, in contrast to the abundance of places and activities depicted in the photographs with compatriot and multi-national students. This finding shows the crucial necessity to complement the digital ethnography with interviews in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of study abroad students' social networks. Future researchers eager to adopt similar methodology should therefore keep in mind that although, in this study, the few photographs including locals were very informative about the types of relationships that participants developed with locals, the methodology is limited, especially when social networking in the host community is the main focus. Future research must therefore develop research tools to go beyond these limitations and may therefore require a researcher visits of the participants for observations and interviews, questionnaires such as a social network questionnaire (McManus, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2017) and surveys.

Home and host institutions committed to internationalisation therefore have a decisive responsibility to help build bridges between multi-national and local networks and provide students — domestic and multi-national — with strategies to create opportunities to connect with the different social networks available. The overall pattern of living of my participants described in this chapter reveals a core temporary sojourner identity (Mitchell et al., 2017) through which they were labelled by locals as being passing through and having different interests and goals. The ease to join multi-national networks offering shared interests, emotional supports and friendships contrasts with the difficulty to break into local networks. The next chapter concerns a central element of participants' experience of study abroad that reinforced this labelling, their enthusiasm for travel and tourism.

Chapter Five: Travel during Study Abroad

According to Arnett (2000, 2010, 2012), emerging adulthood is a phase experienced by individuals from ages 18–29 who are taking time before settling down into a career. Within this period of development, they explore identity, relationships and career and education prospects. For young Australians, the transition to this stage of life may occur during acknowledged rites of passage, such as a gap year or schoolies week. Indeed, travel has long been understood in Australian culture as a rite of passage conducive to transformative experiences for young people to assist in their transition to adulthood (Adler, 1985; Giddens, 1991; Matthews, 2008; O'Reilly, 2006). Travel-based rites of passage such as the gap year often occur at the important time of transition between the end of high school and commencement of full time work or tertiary education.

A recent and growing body of literature suggests that study abroad should also be recognised as a rite of passage to emerging adulthood (Grabowski et al., 2017; Starr-Glass, 2016). Grabowski et al. (2017) draw on van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage to suggest a framework for analysing students' experiences in the context of study abroad. While Grabowski et al.'s (2017) previously theoretical model is shown to withstand empirical validation, my study suggests that two essential elements are missing from their analysis, and that these elements (travel within study abroad and the use of social media) challenge and extend the model of rites of passage. In the previous chapter, social media were found to blur the phase of separation from home. Before the advent of social media and digital communication, this separation occurred at the moment of departure. However, by maintaining interactions with home, social media attenuate that rupture and participants' narratives accordingly reveal the emergence of a second separation that complements the first physical one: a digital separation caused by a lack of connectivity, largely due to travel conditions.

This chapter therefore confirms my preceding findings and further explores participants' digital communication with home. The implications of both students' travel activities and use of social media are investigated through the framework of rites of passage. Working from the initial finding that participants emphasised their traveller identity on social media in line with their goals for study abroad as a platform from travel, the discussion leads towards the outcomes of travel within study abroad. Travel was found to trigger the

transition phase and highlight, to participants, their self-development and their sense of home in their host environment. Lastly, participants' narratives collected after their return to Australia indicate that the incorporation phase was a struggle for many, essentially due to parental non-recognition of participants' identity transition to emerging adulthood. In addition to empirically assessing Grabowski et al.'s (2017) framework with relevant data, this chapter extends the model of rites of passage and contributes to lively discussion on the relevance and benefits of study abroad in a more holistic sense.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first investigates the reasons why participants predominantly promote their traveller identity. It links the social media data to their goals of study abroad and to the significance of travel in Australian culture. In the second part, study abroad is mapped onto the framework of rites of passage. The discussion is guided by van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage as well as the framework suggested by Grabowski et al. (2017) for analysing study abroad as a rite of passage. Each of the three phases of their framework that typifies rites of passage are addressed based on participants' narratives and social media posts.

A year of travel

The first striking impression when navigating participants' social media accounts is the prominence of travel-related posts. Table 4 summarises participants' posts that were collected on Facebook and Instagram and categorises them according to the setting and type of activity depicted. The overwhelming majority of the posts are photographs; only a few are text-based, such as status updates and check-ins on Facebook.

The categories that emerged from the data were home, daily life and travel. For each category, Facebook and Instagram data were counted and reported separately. The percentages (in parentheses) were calculated against the total number of posts collected for each participant. The bottom row of the table tallies the number of posts collected for each category in each social media platform.

The home category includes posts published from and related to Australia, either before or after the sojourn. Some of these directly concern Australian society, issues or politics, such as the debate on same-sex marriage in Australia that was taking place during the study period. This category also contains farewell posts published either by participants

or their friends and family. The daily life category groups posts, mostly photographs, depicting participants' daily lives in various settings while abroad such as their university, their campus and their host city. Most of these posts are group photographs with other study abroad students engaged in activities, such as at dinner or a picnic. A few photographs such as those analysed in Chapter Four, "Host national networks", in relation to the local social network provide a glimpse of more intimate aspects of their study abroad life, such as their dormitory or room. The initial period of exploration of the host environment, when participants posted photographs just like tourists would when visiting a new place, are excluded from this category and were instead placed in the travel category. The last category, travel, compiles participants' posts in relation to their travelling activities, inside and outside their host country.

Table 4: Proportion of activities and settings represented in participants' posts

Participants	Home		Daily life		Travel		Total of post	
	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook	Instagram
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Erika	7 (2.48)	11 (6.62)	40 (14.18)	48 (28.91)	235 (83.33)	107 (64.45)	282 (100)	166 (100)
Anne	17 (3.86)	1 (0.03)	4 (1.23)	2 (0.06)	419 (95.23)	323 (99.1)	440 (100)	326 (100)
Trevor	9 (14.28)	5 (5.95)	21 (33.33)	20 (23.81)	33 (52.38)	59 (70.14)	63 (100)	84 (100)
Diana	5 (1.18)	1 (0.57)	27 (6.38)	23 (13.22)	391 (92.43)	150 (86.21)	423 (100)	174 (100)
Alexandra	7 (6.25)	3 (6.82)	32 (28.57)	11 (25)	73 (65.18)	30 (68.18)	112 (100)	44 (100)
John	19 (11.05)	1 (1.85)	34 (19.77)	20 (37.04)	119 (69.19)	33 (61.11)	172 (100)	54 (100)
Patricia	0 (0)	2 (4.35)	30 (35.71)	10 (21.74)	54 (64.29)	34 (73.91)	84 (100)	46 (100)
Total	64 (4.06)	24 (2.68)	188 (11.93)	134 (14.99)	1324 (84.01)	736 (82.33)	1576 (100)	894 (100)

In total, 1576 posts were made to Facebook and 894 to Instagram. Of these, 1324 on Facebook and 736 on Instagram are travel-related. On average, posts depicting travelling activities represent 84.01% of the total of posts on Facebook and 82.33% on Instagram.

For participants such as Anne and Diana, travel posts constitute the bulk of their social media activity.

Participants' narratives collected during pre-departure interviews bring to light their reasons for displaying and promoting with such enthusiasm their travelling activities to their audience on social media. Indeed, the content of their posts highlights travel — one of their main goals of study abroad — and sheds light on what is valued by their home community in this experience. During the pre-departure interviews, every participant identified travel as one of the main goals of their study abroad experience. Typifying all the participants, Alexandra stated that travel was one of her main aspirations and reasons for studying abroad:

I want to travel to as many countries as I possibly can while I'm over there. That's actually one of my biggest goals. (Alexandra, interview 1)

Many participants reported that their year abroad was a unique opportunity to travel around Europe before finishing their degree and likely entering the workforce back in Australia. Host locations were projected to be a second home base from which trips around Europe would be organised. Some, like Erika, had already a precise idea in mind before departing:

From the first of July to the beginning... about ten days in September, I am gonna be backpacking around Europe and Egypt. (Erika, interview 1)

Some of this ambition to venture out from France or Switzerland and see Europe may stem from the prominent place Europe holds in relation to participants' personal identity. They are all either closely or remotely connected to Europe through their family history. For instance, Patricia indicated before her departure that she was planning to visit her relatives in Ireland and Scotland, which she did:

I have plans in the summer break to go travelling around Europe. I would probably start in France and then... I have relatives in Ireland and Scotland. (Patricia, interview 1)

Others like Anne, who had visited England when she was a child, had already been to Europe under different circumstances, either with their parents or as part of short-term exchange programs. The opportunity to rediscover Europe and travel were nonetheless among Anne's main goals:

Yeah, to travel as much as possible, because I hadn't really been properly to Europe. I'd been to England once, when I was five. That was my only experience of Europe.
(Anne, interview 1)

Anne's statements suggest that her previous European experience, of only one country and at a time when she was probably too young to remember anything, was tantamount to not having had a "proper" European experience, which may be perceived as being some combination of non-Anglophone, continental or simply multi-national. Spending a year abroad presented her with a unique opportunity to "properly" travel in Europe, by herself and not only in England.

Family history, though, only partly explain participants' fascination with Europe. John's narrative on the importance of travelling around Europe in Australian culture is enlightening:

Some people do a Europe gap year, or go on holiday to Europe, but I get to go for a year and really experience France for a full year. Yeah, I'm excited about that. (John, interview 1)

As John points out, study abroad is much more than a gap year. While it also offers similar travel opportunities, study abroad implies settling in a host country for an extensive period of time, living in an immersion context, creating a sense of home, establishing a routine and developing social networks while still offering travel opportunities. In this sense, study abroad extends the model of travel-based rites of passage and raises questions on the most salient aspects of study abroad that trigger identity transition: the establishment of a second home and/or the travel activities.

The travel dimension and the principle of separation from one's family are fundamental characteristics of both study abroad and travel-based rites of passage. Identified as a primary goal of participants' study abroad experience, travel and sightseeing have been

identified as substantial components of students’ activities while studying abroad (Carr & Axelsen, 2005; Stone & Petrick, 2013). Consistent with these findings, the participants in my study all travelled extensively across Europe, just like backpackers. They all, to different extents, planned their leisure trips before departing, often saving considerable sums of money to cover the associated costs. In addition to the mid-semester breaks and the numerous weekend excursions, the three-month summer break was dedicated exclusively to travel around Europe and, to a lesser extent, North Africa. Over that period, participants travelled widely in the Grand Tour style (O’Reilly, 2006; Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003), echoing the extended tour of Europe undertaken between the 17th and the 19th centuries by young, upper-class English men as part of their education. The participants’ travels are summarised in Table 5, which lists the countries they visited.

Table 5: Countries visited over the three-month summer break

Participants	Countries
Erika	Italy, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Egypt, Switzerland, Ireland
Anne	Germany, France, Italy, England, Croatia, Greece, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Scotland, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Poland, Iceland, Morocco
Trevor	Greece, Hungary, France, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland
Diana	Austria, Hungary, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Portugal
Alexandra	Netherlands, France, Spain, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Ireland
John	Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, England, Portugal, Hungary
Patricia	Netherlands, Iceland, Ireland, England, Sweden, Denmark, France

Since travel was one of the participants’ chief goals of study abroad and travel is commonly recognised as a rite of passage, the question of its implications for students’ identity transition and the overall outcomes in relation to study abroad is legitimate. In the following section of this chapter, study abroad is mapped onto the rite of passage framework through participants’ narratives on their social media posts, with a particular focus on their travel experiences. Each phase of the rites conceptualised by van Gennep (1960) — separation, transition, incorporation — is examined.

Separation

According to Grabowski et al. (2017), the first stage of a rite of passage is separation, when students “exit the home country by limiting their interaction with their social groups. They are detached from their former self via some kind of ritual, for example, a leaving party” (Grabowski et al., 2017, p. 144). Social media data from participants’ accounts show a form of this ritual at the moment of departure that consists of taking a picture with the “Departures” sign at Sydney’s Kingsford-Smith international airport terminal, which is conveniently positioned at head-height for passengers to take photographs. Students, whose travel for this particular study abroad program is arranged by the university, therefore tend to do this with fellow study abroad students, like Alexandra and Trevor did (Figure 17), or with their family (Anne, in Figure 18).



Figure 17: Alexandra’s Facebook post. Photograph of Trevor and Alexandra posing at the airport.



Figure 18: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and her family posing at the airport.

Posting such photographs is the way to let friends and contacts know of a departure. This gives the home community the opportunity to acknowledge the departure of its member and bid them farewell. Commenting on such posts also demonstrates support and social solidarity for the departing member of the community, as evidenced by the high numbers of “likes” and reactions of various sorts, and comments.

Departures were often announced well in advance through farewell posts, either from the participants themselves or their friends or family members. For instance, two weeks before her departure, Erika published an original post on Instagram to thank her friends and family for attending her farewell party (Figure 19). The post is a meta-photograph of a compilation of Polaroid snapshots of her with friends and family. Family members also commonly published farewell posts on social media and tagged departing participant. John’s father posted two pictures for John’s and Diana’s departure on Facebook (Figure 20). John’s father felt the need to specify in the main text of the post that their departure to France was not for touristic purposes or for a gap year, but as part of their university degree. Although we must infer his intent, his statement informs the audience — not only John’s and potential Diana’s contacts but also his — that there is a serious educational frame for his son’s sojourn.

Both examples are edited posts on which the authors spent some time and effort. They celebrate the bonds between the departing member and the rest of the community. This is

a form of commemoration, during which the community gathers together to celebrate the member about to undergo a transformative experience. Both the relationships and the member's identity are presumed to be greatly impacted and transformed. Since the departing member and their social status will no longer be the same, the separation phase is often described as a symbolic death (van Genneep, 1960).



Figure 19: Erika's Instagram farewell post.


[Redacted] added 2 new photos — with [Redacted]
 9 January · 

Wishing my son [Redacted] and his girlfriend [Redacted] a safe and happy time in France. They leave Sydney this afternoon & will be 12 months in France. This is part of their University course in journalism & international studies.



John



John

Diana

 Like
  Comment
  Share

   [Redacted] and 90 others

 [Redacted] All the best [Redacted] Such an exciting time in your life. Enjoy every minute 😊
 Like · Reply ·  3 · 9 January at 13:00

 [Redacted] Great photos Dad xxx
 Like · Reply ·  2 · 9 January at 13:15

 [Redacted] This afternoon?! [Redacted] have a super safe trip and super awesome time in France! [Redacted] too 😊 Hit me up once were both there!
 Like · Reply ·  2 · 9 January at 13:30

 [Redacted] Fantastic experience for them.
 Like · Reply ·  2 · 9 January at 13:42

 [Redacted] Thanks Dood, love you heaps xx
 Like · Reply ·  3 · 9 January at 15:11

 [Redacted] All the best. [Redacted] ❤️
 Like · Reply ·  1 · 9 January at 17:05

Figure 20: John's father's Facebook farewell post.

Transition

The participants' departure marks the beginning of the second phase of the rite of passage which is the transition, or liminal phase, where the individual is in an in-between situation that is dominated by uncertainty. In relation to study abroad, Grabowski et al. (2017) describe this phase as when new relationships are developed with the host community and other study abroad students. During this phase, "[a]doption of new behaviours and expansion of knowledge occurs in order to 'fit in'" (Grabowski et al., 2017, p. 144). Participants spent the first days in their new environment fulfilling administrative duties, moving into their accommodation and attending their first intensive French language classes. As they settled, they created new routines and social networks. Several studies have demonstrated how studying abroad can be a transformative period that greatly impacts students' identity (Block, 2007b; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2004, 2010, 2013), notably in the way living abroad increases their intercultural competence (Clarke et al., 2009; Starr-Glass, 2016; Rexeisen et al., 2008; Schartner, 2016; Twombly et al., 2012), being away from home fosters independence and self-confidence (Bachner & Zeustchel, 2009), and the way their social connections with local and study abroad students encourage global and open mindedness (Gammonley et al., 2007; Hadis, 2005). However, less attention has been given to students' travel experience while studying abroad as an indicator of this negotiation of identity. Stone and Petrick (2013) argue that there is a lack of studies looking at outcomes of the travel component of study abroad on the educational benefits of travel, and that studies of this type are necessary to differentiate outcomes of travel in study abroad from those of study abroad more generally. In the analysis that follows, participants' narratives about their travel-related posts are discussed and the implications of travelling while studying abroad in students' identity negotiation are examined.

The participants' first travel experiences occurred upon arrival and took the form of exploration of their host city. Although they spent the first weeks fulfilling administrative duties, moving into their accommodation and attending their first intensive French language classes, most of the posts collected during this period were portrait photographs and selfies with their peers. These snapshots are akin to those of tourists visiting a new city (Figures 21, 22, 23 and 24). By contrast, images or posts reflecting daily life were almost absent.



Figure 21: Anne’s friend’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne and Australian students in Montpellier.



Figure 22: Anne’s Instagram post. Photograph of Anne in Montpellier.



Figure 23: Alexandra's Instagram post. Photograph of Alexandra in Lausanne.

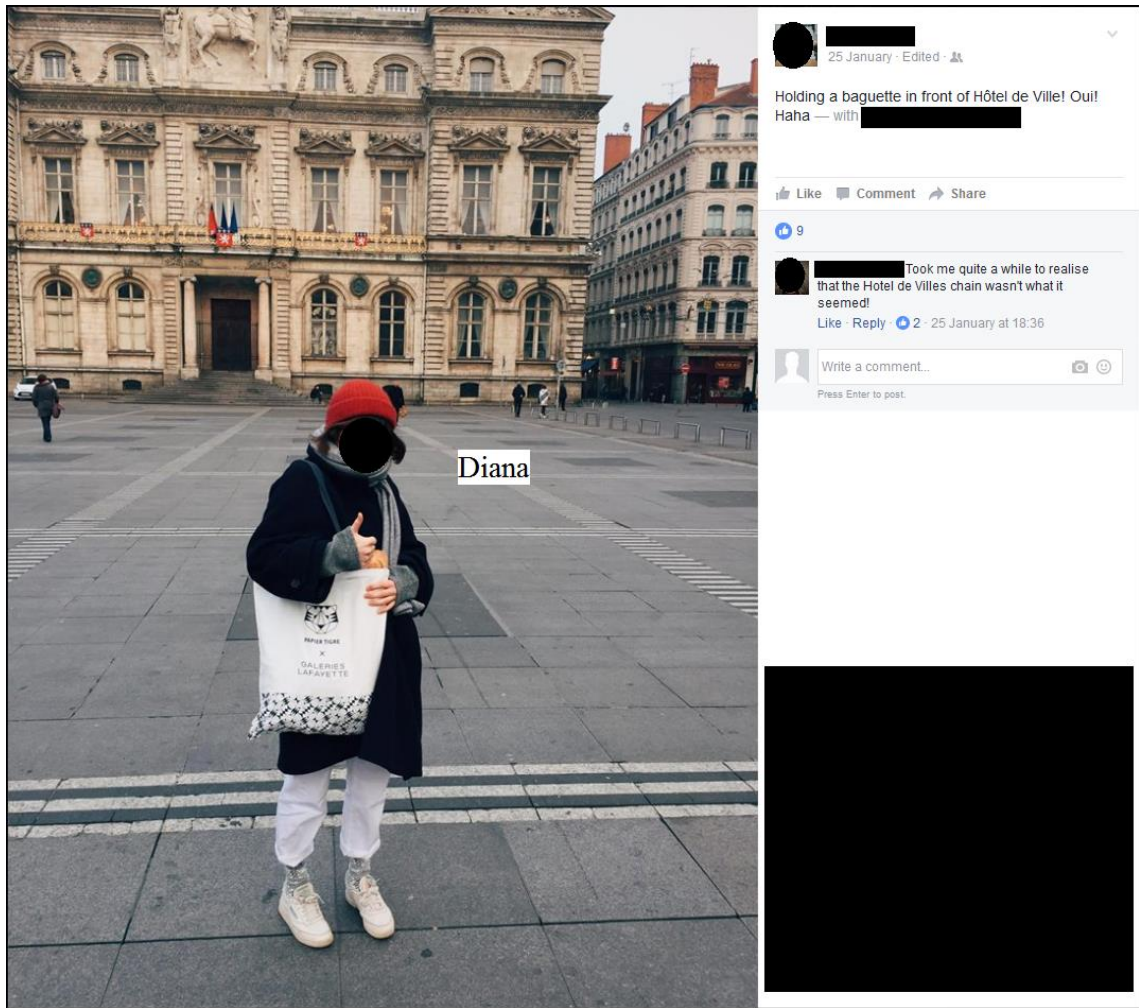


Figure 24: John's Facebook post. Photograph of Diana in Lyon.

Anne's first weeks in her host location were representative of the experiences of the rest of the participants. While caught up in the tumult of her move, she thought that she had nothing worthy of sharing with her friends on social media:

The first couple of weeks I was here, it was very much just trying to get everything organised, I had some friends go: "More pictures, please! What are you doing?" I said, "I know. I'm literally being boring. I'm going to Uni. I'm sorting out my dorm, things like that". (Anne, interview 2)

Anne assumed that documenting settling into a new country and the constituents of her new everyday life was not exciting enough to interest her audience. The first photographs that she then posted or was tagged in were selfies and group portraits with other Australian students in front of monuments, taken during the first explorations of their host city.

Figures 21 and 22 are typical of her first posts on social media. As her caption on Figure 22 — “Sent the day ‘exploring’ (aka taking a ridiculous amount of photos)” — makes clear, exploring the city meant taking a lot of photographs. Although, the hashtags “tourists” and “lostintranslation” are very enlightening about her identity claim, exploring her host city was also a way of becoming familiar with her new environment. In this regard, Alexandra’s caption on her Instagram post (Figure 23) — “what a RIPPERonne” — is a way to adopt the place through language play. The photograph was taken at Lausanne’s famous square, Place de la Riponne, and “ripper” is Australian slang for something great, or excellent. Despite their blatantly touristic orientation, these photographs depict activities that are inherent to study abroad and give audience a sense of the students’ new environment, though they do not convey this environment’s more intimate or domestic aspects such as the students’ dormitory or even their university. As participants became more familiar with their host city and created a stronger sense of belonging, these type of photographs were less common. Nonetheless, the focus on the travelling aspect of their experience remained a dominant part of their social media activity essentially because it was deemed appealing to their audience, who asked for these kinds of images.

Throughout their sojourns, participants accordingly emphasised their traveller identity on social media. They internalised that travel was among the activities of the study abroad experience that their home culture and ideology valued the most. Conversely, their daily life was almost undocumented on their platforms. Darwin and Norton (2016) note that, whether across national boundaries or online spaces, people are constrained by structures of power reproduced by ideological practices, which push people to act and think in certain ways. Through the digital tether of social media, participants were still part of an online co-national network and, thus, still subject to their home ideology. Through their posts and photographs, they claimed and promoted specific aspects of their identity (Van Dijck, 2008) in compliance with what they thought were their audience’s expectations. If the volume of posts on the topic are to be taken as indicative, they all deemed their travelling experiences to be the most exciting and desirable content for sharing on social media.

Trevor’s perceptions of his travelling experiences illustrate the appealing nature of his travel-related posts on social media:

I don't know why certain moments just stand out, but I think that my travel moments are the most fun and the most exciting. (Trevor, interview 2)

All participants extensively posted photographs of monuments and landscapes, selfies and portraits across Europe. Like Anne, many did so in order to cater to their online audience's direct requests for photographs and updates. For instance, John noted that he prioritised the appealing characteristics of his travel photographs when posting on social media:

When you're posting photos, which is the majority of what I've posted, you want to show people something cool, rather than something ordinary. (John, interview 2)

However, focusing on predominantly sharing their travelling activities could give their audience a limited impression of the overall experience abroad.

Upon her return to Australia, some of Anne's contacts questioned her about her activities in France and queried whether she actually studied while she was there:

I always get people telling me "Did you even study when you were over there?" And I was like, "Well, no I actually did, I just didn't feel the need to put a photo of that." So second semester was quite busy in terms of that. So I guess it was part of the everyday, so it wasn't a significant event that I needed to really document. (Anne, interview 3)

Both John's and Anne's statements show that participants established a routine in their host location, signalling that their transition was ongoing. Although they travelled extensively, the majority of their time was dedicated to their everyday life as students; going to university, studying, meeting up with their friends, playing sport, and engaging in other leisure activities. However, according to both John and Anne, that was part of the ordinary like in a second home, and thus deemed not interesting enough for their audience. Participants' family and close friends would arguably have a more comprehensive impression of their overall experience as the participants also communicated privately, mostly via Facebook Messenger, Snapchat and Skype. Although those private communications were not part of this study for privacy reasons, participants indicated during the interviews that it was through these modes that they kept their

relatives and close friends updated about their daily life, their living conditions and their academic activities.

As previously demonstrated, travelling activities were largely documented on participants' social media platforms due to their appeal for their audience and their relevance to Australian culture (Lewis, Kerr, & Pomeroy, 2010). Indeed, travelling is not only an activity that Australians enjoy doing, but is also considered as a rite of passage to adulthood (Adler, 1985; Giddens, 1991; Matthews, 2008; O'Reilly, 2006). Participants' narratives accordingly indicate that they invested in displaying, on social media, an attractive traveller identity in order to receive endorsements from their contacts back home. Such investment reflects participants' strategy of visibilisation of the travelling aspects of their experience, aiming to display attractive sides of their identity that are valued in Australian culture, receive validation from their contacts and, consequently, obtain social distinction. This functions as a legitimisation of their transition to emerging adulthood.

John's narratives about his digital communication with his relatives on his travel exemplify the importance of receiving endorsement from home to legitimise his transition to emerging adulthood. While travelling in Portugal with his girlfriend Diana, who was also studying abroad, they both posted numerous photographs on their respective Facebook accounts. On one of John's posts (Figure 25), Diana's sister commented twice and explicitly communicated the empty space that she felt due to their absence: "Miss you guys", "This picture actually made me cry lol". Here is what John recounted about those comments:

I think she [Diana's sister] cried when she saw the photo of Diana like that. I think that was her communicating how much she missed us. Obviously it's a nice photo of Diana. I think that kind of was able to strike a chord. It's nice when you do get a couple of comments that show that people are really enjoying the photos, but also thinking of you as well. So it was nice to receive. (John, interview 2)



Figure 25: John’s Facebook post. Photograph of Diana in Portugal.

In purist conceptions of rites of passage, this type of interaction and reinforcement is not possible after the separation phase. As seen in Chapter Four, however, the use of social media challenges this traditional model, in this case by blurring the separation and transition phases. Social media enable students to remain in contact with home and gather feedback on the aspects of their experience they choose to display. Indeed, social media were found to extend the influence of home onto participants’ social network development, as previously exemplified in Erika’s and Alexandra’s narratives on their ski trip.

For John, there is also a positive outcome to this digital connection, since he obtained the assurance that he remains present in his relative’s mind, which arguably reasserted their bond. This is consistent with Kim and Tussyadiah (2013) who found that, while travelling, users seek support from their social network through social media. Social

media allowed participants to stay in contact with their supporting social networks from Australia but also provided a platform for self-presentation, where users perform positive aspects of their self in order to create the best image possible to impress their audience. On social media, users are highly concerned with the way their contacts perceive them and deliberately choose photographs to present themselves in the best possible way (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013; Valkenburg, Peter, & Shouten, 2006). According to John, Diana's portrait photograph in Portugal conveyed powerful elements, such as their happiness and their travelling experiences, which emotionally impacted her sister. As social media users seek social acceptance with their self-presentations (Farquhar, 2012), John's investment in promoting positive aspects of their experience of travelling aimed to generate stronger attention and feedback from his contacts. Moreover, Facebook and Instagram allowed the home community to witness their member's achievements and acquisition of new skills, such as becoming an independent and effective traveller, which is viewed in middle and upper class in Australia as quasi-essential for transitioning to emerging adulthood. Through positive and constructive comments on social media, social support networks back home show participants their acceptance of their self-presentations, which are all the more significant when they come from adults rather than a contact or a relative of approximately same age such as Diana's sister.

Regarding the same trip to Portugal, John's father also commented on Diana's album on Facebook: "Really miss you John but I love Diana's pics & glad you're having a good time" (Figure 26). Despite their noted absence, John's father accepts the situation and reassures them of his support. Interestingly, through his comments, John's father endorses their travelling activity and acknowledges it as part of their experience of study abroad, even though previously he was emphatic about the educational nature of their year away. Moreover, John's interpretation of this post mentions Facebook as their preferred means of communication:

Me and my dad don't talk heaps, so Facebook comments and Facebook Messenger is the way that we interact. That was kind of a small comment but it was one of those key moments in chatting to dad this year. (John, interview 2)

According to John, this interaction with his father was a pivotal and transitional moment through which he obtained his father's endorsement, reinforcing his decision to study abroad and validating his transition to emerging adulthood:

They obviously do miss us, but I don't think they're trying to communicate "I wish you'd come home". Or I never take it that way. I always just take it as "you're doing what you're doing but missing you around". (John, interview 2)

Thus, John's relationships with his relatives were strengthened and maintained through social media (Liu & Brown, 2014; Tong & Walther, 2011) which, in the model of rites of passage, is significant within relationships with adults, even more so with a parent. For a young man like John, it is arguably the adult whose approval would signal a successful transition. His response to his father's comment — "Miss you too dad and thanks - hope you've been keeping up to date with the Masters [Championship in golf] - looks like an interesting last day! Xx" — also signals how they now interact on a more equal footing through a shared passion for golfing.


[Redacted] added 25 new photos to the album 🌸

2017 🌸 — with [Redacted]
 9 April · 🌐



John

John

+21

Like Comment


2017
 21 posts

Following

👍
❤️
43

[Redacted] albums are my favourite thing
 Like · Reply · 🗨️ 7 · 9 April at 19:55

[Redacted] Hehe
 Like · Reply · 9 April at 20:38

Write a reply...

[Redacted] Really miss you [Redacted] but just love [Redacted]'s pics & glad you're having a good time xx
 Like · Reply · 🗨️ 3 · 9 April at 20:39

[Redacted] Miss you too dad and thanks - hope you've been keeping up to date with the Masters - looks like an interesting last day! Xx
 Like · Reply · 🗨️ 1 · 10 April at 07:40

Write a reply...

Figure 26: Diana's Facebook post. Update post announcing the addition of new photographs to her album.

Some of Anne's older contacts also sometimes shared common experiences of the places visited. Figure 28 is a Facebook post from Anne which contains a portrait photograph taken at Baker Street in London. She is posing next to a famous movie extra wearing a period police uniform. This is one of the most famous tourist spots in London due to its connection with Sherlock Holmes, 221B Baker Street being the fictional detective's home. One of her mother's friends, who had also been there, commented on the post: "X [person's name] and I have a photo with him! What an amazing place. Xo". Anne recounts that sharing similar experiences of places helped to connect with her contacts who could give her some advice and improve her experience:

That was really fun as well because when people explain when they have connections with places as well. I get a lot of people saying, if they see I'm somewhere, "try and check out this, I remember when I went there, I absolutely loved this". I think that's nice because it's conversation. People are sharing their experiences at the same time, facilitated by my sharing of experiences. (Anne, interview 2)

Anne demonstrates that sharing travelling experiences via social media greatly fosters interactions with contacts who had similar experiences.

Where social identity theory posits that individuals construct identities through their membership in social groups and on interactions with other members (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979), Anne is recognised for her membership of a group of competent and independent travellers which, in turn, grants her social distinction as a competent traveller. Travelling therefore equipped her with additional skills and knowledge, which are valued within her home community. Indeed, according to Desforges (1998), "by using travel as a form of cultural capital which serves as a sign of distinction, travellers gain access to a social class and its consequent privileges" (Desforges, 1998, p. 185). Anne earned recognition of her travelling experiences and skills which, in Australia, are deemed as assets to transition to adulthood (Thomson & Taylor, 2005).



Figure 28: Anne’s Facebook post. Photograph of Anne in London.

Overall, participants invested in promoting their traveller identity on social media in order to obtain endorsement of their experiences not only from peers, but perhaps more importantly from adults who hold places of esteem in their home social network. Social media posts become a proof of achievement and acquisition of new skills valued in the home culture for transitioning to emerging adulthood. In addition to eliciting the endorsements of others, participants’ narratives and posts on travel demonstrate how travelling can act as an indicator for the student–traveller of their personal growth and transition to emerging adulthood.

Like departing home to engage in travel for study abroad, travelling within study abroad takes participants away from a newly-familiar location and routine. While travelling, they are outside the comfort zone of their host environment, which produces new situations and new problems to resolve, in turn, potentially triggering the emergence of new behaviours. According to Grabowski et al. (2017), the adoption of new behaviours is

expected during the transition phase. I argue that travel within study abroad is an embedded rite of passage for students. It implies a separation from their host environment and their new social networks before entering another transition phase during which travel occurs and induces the development of new skills and behaviours.

Erika's travels to Zurich provide a rich episode to analyse how travel within study abroad is a major step in the transition to emerging adulthood. While looking at one of her posts about a weekend in Zurich at the end of the first semester (Figure 29), Erika recounted how during this trip she had to confront a new situation that triggered new behaviours:

I think I surprised myself in terms of my independence and I think that my independence impacted other parts of my personality. I've found that I would do things that I normally wouldn't. I went up to Zurich for the weekend with a friend and that was organised the day before and I would never have done that in a million years. We were there for two days and I was like, "My God, I'm in Zurich!" And I also fell off a bike. A car almost hit me basically. I fell off a bike and ripped my jeans, blood everywhere and normal... Old Erika would have freaked out. I'm in a German speaking city. I can't speak German. I would have stressed out but I started laughing.
(Erika, interview 2)



Figure 29: Erika's Instagram post. Photograph of Erika in Zurich.

Even in the midst of the events, as demonstrated by the consciously self-depreciative photograph and caption, the trip helped Erika to fully appreciate her personal growth in terms of independence and self-reliance. She realised, even without the reflective opportunity provided by the photo-elicitation interview, how operational the independence was that she acquired over the first semester of her sojourn. It also enabled her to compare the “old” her to the new version. One Erika was able to remain calm while the other would have panicked. These new behaviours and formulations of identity that result from them mark a transition to a new state: adulthood.

The rest of her narrative about the incident, how she handled the situation and what she learnt about herself that day, is particularly enlightening about how study abroad, including travelling, can be conducive grounds to transition to emerging adulthood (Sokol, Donnelly, Vilbig, & Monsky, 2017; Wintre et al., 2015):

It started raining, I had to rip the other side of my jeans to make it look even. Normal Erika would have freaked out. I would have started crying, I would have freaked out like, “I have to get this fixed!” Because I had to get it disinfected and stuff. Things like that, I think, have shown me how much I’ve grown in terms of just being more relaxed about things and taking it as it comes. Now, every time the slide doesn’t go my way I

don't really fuss about it too much. Because now I just figured there's a solution for everything. I just ride along problems and obstacles. (Erika, interview 2)

Independence, as a trait of maturity, entails assuming responsibility for one's actions as opposed to relying on others to make decisions and fix problems. Erika relied on herself, instead of someone else, and made decisions in order to resolve the issue with her knee and clothing. The ability to solve problems reveals the self-reliance that she developed during the first part of her sojourn. This supports the idea that there is a transition phase while travelling that is embedded into the broader transition phase of study abroad.

Erika's comments on Instagram and during the photo-elicitation interview reveal how travel allows students to measure their progress and encourages self-reflection. It seems that Erika's personal growth remained unreflexive and unnoticed until she went travelling. Decision-making, independence and self-reliance were in a way intertwined with or somehow blended in to her everyday practices to become partly unconscious. Because travel contrasts with routine, even new routines, and is often full of surprises and mishaps, it has the potential to stimulate students' self-reflection and sharpen their perceptions of their personal development and achievements. In its function as an eye-opener, students need the break that travel provides within study abroad to notice their progress and the operationality of the new skills acquired over their sojourn. It is from this second, smaller transition that they can appreciate the larger transformative experience of study abroad.

The participants' first travel experiences occurred simultaneously with their arrival abroad. Initially, they explored their host city and the surrounding areas as tourists. Throughout their year abroad, they also seized many opportunities to travel, especially on the weekends and during the mid-semester breaks. For all, the summer break between June and September was the most intensive period of travel. During that period, they all travelled across Europe, moving from one country to another, in extremely well organised and planned trips that they documented on social media, including through photographs. Participants' narratives show that their travel activities positively impacted their overall experience abroad, in that travelling triggered their sense of being at "home" in their host city.

Several studies in social and cultural geography investigating the process of home-making in mobility have already established the central role played by routine practices, feelings of familiarity and repetition of social interactions for creating a sense of “home” (Kellett & Moore, 2003; Nowicka, 2007; Prazeres, 2018; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). However, less attention has been given to the impact of travelling on the development of a sense of belonging to a second home or a host place during study abroad. Having established that travel is an “eye-opener” for sojourners in terms of their personal development, it is also possible to see how travel also creates a sense of being at “home” in the host society. This shift is crucial in the transition phase of rites of passage to emerging adulthood, as students must create new routines and relationships.

As many a folk song reminds us, travel enlightens us about where home is and allows us to step back and put experiences into perspective in order to attribute meaning to them. Trevor’s feeling of belonging in Lausanne, for instance, emerged in April after four months in-country, on a bus on his way back from a trip to Munich, Vienna and Prague:

That was a 16-hour bus ride, which is very, very long. I remember me and my friends were talking and we were so, so tired, and I was like, “I can’t wait to go home.” When I said that, I meant I can’t wait to be back in my apartment in Lausanne, where I can just have a shower and lie in my bed. It didn’t even occur to me to think of Sydney when I said that. All I thought of was Lausanne. I was like, “Oh, my God!” I didn’t realise at what point it had become a home to me, but by then, it had. It was a weird moment for me. (Trevor, interview 2)

Trevor remarks how his fatigue combined with his impatience to rediscover the comforts of his dormitory unveiled his sense of being “at home” in Lausanne. He experienced that very moment as a revelation of feelings that were unconscious until then and identified “home” as, above all else, a familiar environment where he had re-enacted feelings of comfort. Such feelings of familiarity and local everyday practices are essential for creating a sense of home (Kellett & Moore, 2003; Nowicka, 2007; Prazeres, 2018; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011) and, for Trevor, only emerged while he was travelling.

Anne similarly highlights her need to come back to Montpellier between her travels:

I realised that I could never do what a lot of Australians do and go over for three months of constant travelling. It's always nice to go back home to Montpellier. That was always nice, I don't think I could just do it [travelling] all in one hit. So it's always nice to get home. (Anne, interview 3)

Anne, like the other participants, opted for backpacking around Europe during the summer break. She moved from one city to another and from one country to another, staying in youth hostels and rental accommodations. As opposed to this nomadic and hectic mode of travel, participants' host cities represented a form of stability in which they established a new routine. The intensity of their travelling experiences accelerated the home-making process. Being temporarily out of place while travelling renders that process more perceptible to participants and then, as had Trevor, Anne did not hesitate to identify her host city as her home.

Also central for creating a sense of “home” is the sense of stability that is achieved through routine practices (Prazeres, 2018). Participants' host locations functioned as a base that brought together familiar everyday places and practices from which they could explore and travel. “Everyday practices” refers to the common daily activities of local people in a particular location — grocery shopping, cooking, doing laundry, going to the gym. Travelling for an extensive period of time resulted in participants feeling more appreciative of and willing to come back to their host location. A small but telling piece of evidence of home making was identified when Diana was shown her last photograph of her two-month summer trip (Figure 30). The most remarkable feature for her was her hair and her eagerness to go to her local hairdresser in Lyon:

That was our last stop before coming back to Lyon. I think that was even our last full day there, and we flew out the next night. Even just thinking to myself, looking at my hair, I had to go and get my hair cut a couple of times in Lyon. I have the place that I go now. I remember, my hair was too long by the end of the trip, and I was like, “Oh my God, it'll be so nice when I get back to Lyon and I can go to this place”. I know they can cut my hair well. It'll be so good to get back there and feel fresh. (Diana, interview 2)

Diana demonstrates how feelings of homeliness developed alongside a sense of familiarity with local practices and knowledge of her host city are disclosed by her travel

experiences. “Home” is a “knowable terrain” (Ahmed, 1999, p. 337) in which, upon arrival, participants had established routines and physical knowledge of their host city, including knowledge of where one could get a good haircut. These are all evidence of a successful transition.

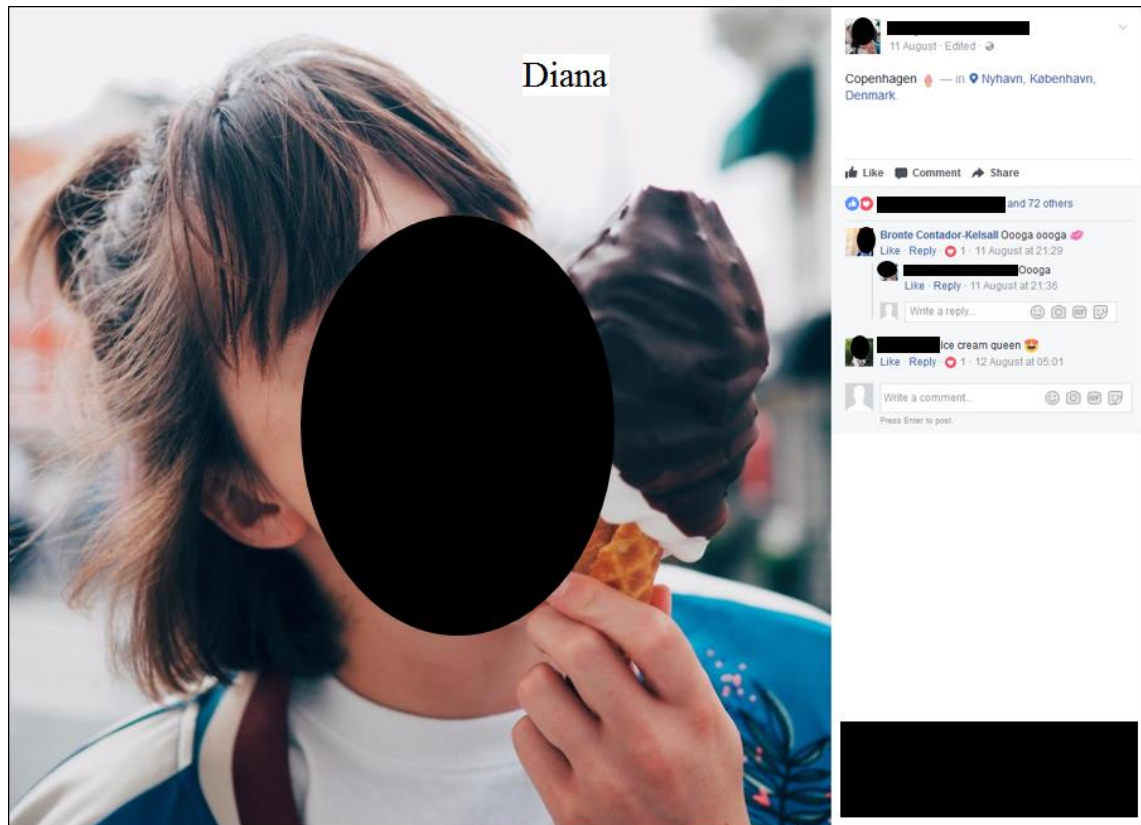


Figure 30: Diana’s Facebook post. Photograph of Diana in Copenhagen.

The process of home making can also be tightly tied up with social interactions and relationships. Feelings of belonging can be self-defined through a routine or the comfort of a dormitory, but also socially determined through social networks (Kellett & Moore, 2003; Nowicka, 2007; Prazeres, 2018; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Thus, Patricia associates her return from travelling with the surging of her sense of belonging in Aix-en-Provence:

When I came back after that three months, Aix was like a second home. I felt like it was a home. When I came back, I was like, “Oh, thank god”. Just to be back in something that I knew. [...] and my friends as well. (Patricia, interview 3)

Patricia links her lifestyle and her social networks to her feeling of homeliness that travelling revealed to her. Indeed, travelling, and especially the return or anticipated

return, reveals what was essential to participants and how their sense of belonging to their host place was reinforced. Their narratives on their travel activities highlight their changing definitions of “home” and provide insight into the ways study abroad students temporarily recreate homely practices, spaces and relationships in mobility.

The return from travel is thus akin to the incorporation phase in the rite of passage when students reintegrate their home community. Within the embedded rite of passage of European travel, this moment of realisation signals an intermediate phase of the larger rite of passage represented by study abroad, between the transition and the incorporation phase. It is when students feel as though they have a second home and are strongly attached to their host locations, where they have acquired personal skills such as independence and self-reliance and successfully developed social networks.

I have argued in this section that travel plays an essential role in study abroad students’ awareness of the process and, consequently, positively impacts the entire study abroad experience. This finding is contrary to the common assumption that travel, especially outside the target language territory, takes students away from the necessary linguistic and cultural exposure for an effective learning experience. In my study, travel is found to be beneficial to the study abroad experience since it offers something that participants could not learn otherwise. Prazeres (2018) points out that everyday practices are “habitual and unreflexive to locals” (Prazeres, 2018, p. 922) and suggests that “it is local people’s unflexivity within everyday practices which study abroad students want to develop in order to become local insiders abroad” (Prazeres, 2018, p. 922). I concur with this view and, based on my participants’ narratives, would take her argument one step further. After one semester, routine practices constitutive of the sense of belonging are also unreflexive to study abroad students and it is only through travelling that they become salient again. This period of their sojourn constitutes an intermediate phase in the model of rites of passage when students have already transitioned to emerging adulthood and are progressively heading towards the end of their sojourn and anticipating their return back home.

Incorporation

The third and last phase in the rite of passage framework, incorporation, is defined by Grabowski et al. (2017) as “where the student becomes competent in the new society and

has adopted a new status as a study abroad student. He/she is a member of a new group and upon return home, takes this status with him/her” (Grabowski et al., 2017, p. 144). This definition of the incorporation phase in a study abroad context is vague. First, there is no further clarification on what specific aspects of the status as a study abroad students are valuable for the home society. My participants’ narratives tend to indicate that their traveller identity is among the most salient aspects and that the outcomes linked to their travel activities in terms of self-development are particularly valued. Moreover, the presumed membership of a new group is questioned by the findings in Chapter Four, which explored students’ social network development in a study abroad context. Indeed, contact with host nationals proved to be difficult and, although friendships were formed with locals, most participants’ social networks comprised multi-national and compatriot students. Participants therefore belonged to several different groups, each differently beneficial, through which they acquired a wide range of skills valued in their home society. Lastly, the participants’ narratives indicate that taking their new status with them upon their return home was not as automatic and smooth as it seems in Grabowski et al.’s (2017) framework. It is this final point that is considered in this final part of this section.

Many participants mentioned that their return to Australia did not occur without tumult, particularly when reoccupying their “child” position in their family. Post-sojourn interviews conducted between one and two months after their return clearly show this struggle. According to Patricia, there was a form of regression in her independence after returning to her family dynamic:

It’s kind of backtracked a little bit to what it was before I left because my mom still does a lot of things around, just because she does it for my brothers. I guess she realises as well that I’ve had that... so I still have quite that independence, but I’m definitely still kind of the child. (Patricia, interview 3)

Patricia, like all the participants, had to reintegrate into her family home upon her return. Instead of assuming a completely new status, she had to readjust to an old position under the authority of other adults. The struggle lay in the contrast between full independence and having to answer to her parents again, even for basic or everyday matters.

Similarly, Erika was apprehensive about the return to her family. During the post-sojourn interview, she mentioned that coming back to her routine and lacking independence was the most difficult aspect of her return home:

I knew it was going to be difficult. I knew that from the get go, but I think I realised how deep into Switzerland I was when I got back. The tiniest things like catching a bus here and then thinking of the bus I used to catch at home. Then I would get upset.
(Erika, interview 3)

Interestingly, even a month after her return, Erika still identified Lausanne as her “home”. Her feeling of belonging to her host city did not suddenly disappear upon her return to Australia and was fed by her nostalgia as well as a feeling of being out of place in her family:

Even just like my mom’s cooking. I was excited to come back to it, but now I’m sort of annoyed by it because I was... If I open the fridge, I don’t know what I can eat because I don’t know what’s for dinner tonight. (Erika, interview 3)

As with Patricia, Erika struggled with the reduction in independence she had had in Switzerland and readjusting to her child position in her family was difficult. The greater agency and independence that she acquired through study abroad went from being assets to potential liabilities. It seems that, for both, the skills developed over their year abroad impeded their return home. They went through many changes in their identity while their family dynamic remained the same.

Erika’s narratives on her return to her family are enlightening with regard to how family has a central role to play in facilitating the incorporation phase:

I think especially with my family, they sort of expected me to come back and fit back into the life we have. Honestly, when I got back, it was as if nothing changed, and I hated it. I hated the feeling of things being the same. Yeah. I think that’s why I argue with my parents a lot. (Erika, interview 3)

The lack of changes in Erika’s family dynamics indicates that her parents reneged on the reward aspect of her rite of passage. She went through study abroad and became an

emerging adult but no space was made to welcome her into this new status. Erika perceived that her parents' expectation was for her to go back to the child position she occupied before her departure.

The struggle experienced by these two participants is proof of their identity changes and, at the same time, of a lack of recognition by the families of their transition. Social media may be a contributing factor, as it keeps students in contact with their home community. It may be an impediment to home's recognising the transition as less dramatic. Moreover, a parallel can be drawn between this incorporation phase and the first weeks of the sojourn abroad after the initial separation phase. Indeed, just as they had to settle and create new routines upon arrival in their host environment, they had to readjust to their home environment and find their rightful place as emerging adults. However, where rites of passage are theoretically supposed to enable individuals to access this new status within the home community, the experiences of Patricia and Erika demonstrate otherwise. Indeed, to be effective, the rite of passage and students' new status as emerging adult are subject to the home community's recognition. Patricia and Erika's narratives show that, upon return, their expectations were not in line with their parents'. Their new status as emerging adults were not honoured and that may be because study abroad was not, in the particular instances, recognised as a rite of passage. Rethinking study abroad as a rite of passage would facilitate a smoother reintegration into the community and enable returning students to fully embrace their new identity and their new status.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the contention that study abroad is a rite of passage. The particular focus on participants' travel experiences while on study abroad demonstrated that the three phases of van Gennep's (1960) conceptualisation of rites of passage are an effective framework to investigate students' transformative experience in study abroad and their transition to emerging adulthood. However, social media data also highlight the limitations of this model. In response, my study suggests the emergence of intermediate phases owing to the use of social media and the travel experiences undertaken while studying abroad. First, since social media enable students to communicate with their home social networks, the separation phase is extended and becomes blurred. As a result, the separation is less abrupt as students still have access to their supporting networks. Chapter Four demonstrated that these networks, through social media, had direct and

largely positive impacts on participants' socialisation. In this chapter, digital communications were found to allow students to strengthen their bonds with home, promote their traveller identity, display their ongoing transition and gather endorsements from their home community. Second, travel within study abroad constitutes a rite of passage in itself, and is embedded in the larger rite of passage of study abroad. Through separation from the comfort zone of their host location, travel triggers identity transition and negotiation and, upon return, makes students notice their self-development and sense of belonging to their host locations, which come to be perceived as second homes. This realisation signals the existence of an intermediate phase between the transition and the incorporation phase, in which students are already emerging adults and are anticipating the return to their homes.

I argue that travel while studying abroad is beneficial to the overall experience. Consequently, attempts to limit or dissuade students' travelling activities while studying abroad could negatively impact their overall experience. Trevor illustrated perfectly the embedding of rites of passage occurring during study abroad and summarised the benefits of travelling by using the metaphor of the crop circle in a corn field that only reveals its pattern from a distance:

Going overseas was like those alien movies where they do a crop circle and there's that moment where someone is just running through all the corn and they don't really know what's going on. Then the camera just kind of zooms up and you can actually see the whole crop circle and then it makes sense. It makes sense once you're above it, once you're outside of it. That kind of perspective that I got from the exchange was the biggest thing. (Trevor, interview 3)

Study abroad helped Trevor to make sense of his transition to and preparation for adult responsibilities, just like travel helped to make sense of his study abroad experience. For him, besides the commonly identified outcomes, such as independence and self-reliance, study abroad put his life into perspective. Where emerging adults are still exploring career and education prospects, studying abroad was, for Trevor, an opportunity to refine his desires and his plans for the future and, upon return, reorient the end of his studies.

Since travel makes visible students' identity development, and given that it is the aspect that participants predominantly promoted on social media, identity changes and personal

growth are likely to become observable via social media. Digital ethnography is therefore an important tool in studies looking at negotiation of identity in the study abroad context. The complementarity with photo-elicitation interviews has also proven to be effective in triggering memory and eliciting concrete information to analyse students' study abroad experiences. Indeed, important information was elicited through the visualisation of the photographs that participants posted. For instance, it is very likely that Erika's story about her accident in Zurich would have remained unknown to me if a traditional interview had been employed; it is unlikely, at the least, that it would have been rendered with such a high level of detail. Furthermore, photographs help participants to delve into their memories, relive specific moments of their experiences and unlock emotions and feelings, which are crucial in order to obtain the most comprehensive understanding possible. Participants posted each of their photographs because they were meaningful to them. Photo-elicitation interviews are a way to reveal this meaning and its significance in their study abroad experience. From a purely methodological perspective, therefore, relying solely on social media to obtain a comprehensive understanding of participants' activities can lead to piecemeal and limited insight. Complementing this initial view with interviews appears necessary to elicit information not provided by social media data alone.

The length of the sojourn is an important factor to take into account when analysing participants' narratives. Long-term stays provide more opportunities to experiment with different modes of travel, resulting, as demonstrated in this chapter, in various benefits. Furthermore, students are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging to their host environment in long-term stays. Participants' feelings of homeliness emerged after several months. This confirms the finding that long sojourns abroad are more likely to give students greater opportunities to negotiate their identities (Dwyer, 2004; Kinginger, 2013). Again, from a methodological perspective, social media are particularly suitable for following and observing students over time while studying abroad.

The findings of this chapter must necessarily be considered within the context of the participants' home culture. In Australia, especially in metropolitan areas, many university students still live in their family homes and studying abroad is often their first opportunity to leave home and live independently. Most students come back to their family home at the end of the experience. North American or European students may have experienced

the transition differently, since many already had moved from home for their tertiary studies.

Chapter Six explores an unstudied phenomenon that was revealed by the digital ethnography of student travel: relatives' visits during study abroad, extending the discussion in this chapter on the transition phase and parental recognition of students' identity changes.

Chapter Six:

'You don't fit here': Relatives' Visits during Study Abroad

Visiting friends and relatives is a long established and significant motive for travel (Crompton, 1979; Moscardo, Pearce, Morrison, Green, & O'Leary, 2000). It is also one of the most rapidly growing drivers of global tourism (Kashiwagi, Nagai, & Furutani, 2018). This type of travel has received significant scholarly attention, especially in the marketing and tourism literature, with a particular focus on migration (Dwyer, Seetaram, Forsyth, & King, 2014). However, its implications on study abroad students' experiences has yet to be considered, owing in large part to a lack of awareness or concern about the phenomenon on the part of researchers. Indeed, the methodologies traditionally used in study abroad research are based on students' self-reported data, and they have failed to capture this specific episode because students do not necessarily identify visits from home as part of their study abroad experience: these visits are likely to be seen as interruptions to the study abroad period. Moreover, since a significant amount of study abroad literature focuses on short-term programs, these studies are less likely to consider this issue. A student's presence abroad is, however, increasingly an excuse for their relatives to visit them and travel. The foreign location of the host society is just a jumping off point for more travels all together. Students thus also perceive and experience the time of the visit from home as a break that takes them away from study abroad.

The methodology employed in this study revealed the extent and importance of visits from friends and relatives and sought input from students on their experience of visiting family vis-à-vis the model of the rite of passage. Findings indicate that, first, to different extents, the presence of the relatives in the host environment caused disturbances in the participants' daily routine. Second, participants' greater knowledge and experience of both the target language and the host society, as acquired over their first semester, placed them in a position of power among their relatives, resulting in a change in the power dynamics between family members. Third, having to reintegrate into their family sent participants back, not without trouble, to their pre-departure subject positions, namely their child and Australian identities. These findings are of importance when considering rites of passage as a relevant model to conceptualise students' experiences of study abroad. Visits from friends and relatives highlighted the intermediate phase of the rite of passage identified in Chapter Five. This phase occurs between the end of the transition

phase and the incorporation phase upon the return home at the end of the sojourn. It happens when students have settled into their host environment, created a new routine and a sense of home, and developed social networks.

To contextualise the phenomenon of the visits from friends and relatives and the analysis that follows, it is important to note that all visits from home were planned before the participants' departure from Australia. These visits were made possible by the fact that participants stayed abroad for a full year and had three months between semesters to travel. Consequently, for the majority of participants, visits happened during the summer break at the end of the first semester when they had already spent one semester abroad, away from their families. Although the visitors spent some time in the participants' host environment, the main purpose of the visits was to travel together as a family. Typically, the relatives would arrive and stay for a few days in the host city where participants would show them around before departing for other destinations in Europe together. The family itineraries below exemplify these trends.

In France, participants' relatives and friends did not stay long in the host cities of Montpellier, Aix-en-Provence and Lyon. The first visit that Anne received was from her mother who came alone in February 2017, less than a month into Anne's stay. The visit was planned before her departure and was organised by her father who had offered her mother tickets as a Christmas present. According to Anne, her mother seized the opportunity to make sure that she was well settled. They stayed three days in Montpellier and then travelled to Spain. The second visit happened in September 2017 and involved the whole family, including her brother and his girlfriend, as well as a family friend. As a group, they travelled in England and Scotland and then returned to France where they spent two days in Anne's host city, Montpellier.

Patricia's parents came to visit her twice: the first time in May 2017 for two weeks and then at the conclusion of her study abroad period. Her mother arrived first and they stayed together in Paris. Her father joined them after a few days and they all travelled together throughout the south of France. They stayed in hotels and rental accommodation. They spent only a single day in Aix-en-Provence, Patricia's host city. Her sister also visited on her own in August and came back with Patricia's parents for the second visit, in December and January 2018, at the end of Patricia's sojourn. At that time, Patricia had already

moved out of her dorm in Aix-en-Provence. As a family, they travelled to Paris, the Czech Republic and Austria. They then all flew back to Australia together.

Diana and John, the couple, are considered together as their living arrangements in Australia were also somewhat shared to some extent. Diana's mother came to visit first. She had work commitments in Vienna, and Diana met her there at the end of May 2017 before travelling with her to Budapest. It was the second time that Diana travelled to Hungary, as she and John had previously met up with her French friend in Budapest. Mother and daughter then travelled to Rome where they met up with John, his mother, his younger sister and one of his best friends who, in the meanwhile, had arrived in Lyon and visited Liverpool in the UK. After John's mother and his sister went back to Australia, Diana's father and her two sisters arrived and they all toured around Europe for several weeks.

In Lausanne, the participant's relatives stayed for longer, probably due to practical considerations. As opposed to universities in France, the University of Lausanne has its campus close to the city, which offers numerous options for accommodation. Lausanne is also a very convenient location for exploring Switzerland and the eastern regions of France. Erika's parents came to visit her in May 2017. They stayed in Lausanne for one week in a hotel close to the campus. During that week, while Erika was still busy with her studies, she also showed them around. They then all travelled together to Italy to visit her father's extended family. In July, two of her best friends visited from Australia. Together, they travelled to Egypt and several European countries. In April, Erika travelled to Italy for a few days where she met her younger sister who was also on exchange via her high school program.

Alexandra's father and mother, along with her brother, also visited Lausanne in July 2017. They too stayed in a hotel near the campus for two days before visiting different cities in Switzerland, Italy and Croatia. Trevor's mother arrived in Lausanne in September 2017 and stayed for just under a week. After two days, his sister also came from London, where she lives, and they all stayed together in Lausanne where Trevor showed them around. His mother and his sister then went to London without him.

In sum, parents were always among participants' visitors, although some siblings and friends also came. They did not spend much time in the participants' host location which

was just a jumping off point. The main purpose of their visit was to travel, mainly outside of the host country, all together as a family. Such visits, however, were not without complications.

First tensions

The students' excitement about seeing their relatives again rapidly gave way to opposite feelings. Upon arrival, some participants had a sudden and unexpected reaction to their relatives' presence in their host environment. When their relatives arrived, participants had already settled in and had explored their host environment, been through their tourist phase, established a routine, travelled in many European countries, developed social networks, and acquired independence away from their family. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, at that time, the participants' transition phase was already largely completed. In the context of a well in train passage to adulthood, these visits were experienced as a disturbance of participants' established lives in their second home. Trevor, for one, quickly realised that his mother did not belong in this context:

I remember I was very excited for her to visit, but then the second that she actually got there I was like, "I don't want you to be here". (Trevor, interview 3)

Her visit was, for him, an abrupt revelation of his transition. After the separation phase, and with difficulties, participants had adjusted to and settled into their host environment away from their family. In the first phase of rites of passage, participants withdraw from their status and former self including their child position within their family dynamic. Despite a constant connection with home through social media, the feeling of separation predominates. The participants felt substantially disconnected from their lives in Sydney and thus perceived the renewed presence of their relatives as a disturbance:

It was very strange because it was like I was so detached from this part of my life here, and then seeing them wasn't bad, but it also felt odd because I was so not in my Sydney mindset. (Erika, interview 2)

In the same vein, Anne evokes the difficulty of reconciling her new life in France with her visiting parents after six months of separation:

It was a bit strange as well because it's weird to have a completely separate life from people at home and then to have that piece of home come here as well. (Anne, interview 2)

The intensity of the disturbance caused by the visits is correlated with the contrast between participants' pre-separation positions in their family home in Australia and the adult position that they had developed during one semester abroad. As yet, Trevor had only lived with his mother in Sydney, and apart from a three-week study abroad sojourn in New Caledonia, he had never really had the opportunity to leave his family home. Looking back on his study abroad experience, he commented:

I still live at home now, so I've lived with my mother for my entire life and then I had this space for my own. Having a space that was all my own, I've never really had that before. Having an apartment of my own, having a whole city of my own, having a whole life of my own that was just separate from the one back here. (Trevor, interview 3)

Trevor's strong sense of belonging to his host environment indirectly built on the separation from his mother. It is precisely because she was not a part of his experience abroad that he developed such a feeling of belonging that he described it repeatedly as an exclusive possession. Theorising study abroad as a rite of passage here takes on its full meaning. The separation phase allowed participants to withdraw from their child position, recreate a sense of home and transition to emerging adulthood. Understandably then, the visit from home was experienced as a breach in the separation phase and led some participants, like Trevor, to view their relatives as intruders:

Then she just showed up and I was like, "you don't fit here". It also felt a bit like an invasion of my space. (Trevor, interview 3)

Trevor's experience, although perhaps the most jarring, was not unique. During a whole semester, participants settled down in a new country for the first time of their lives, acquired new independence, appropriated a whole environment without the presence of their relatives and achieved a balance conducive to managing both mundane tasks and a significant study load. Kinginger (2013) notes that in immersion contexts "identity is destabilized and people must strive to achieve a new emotional and moral balance"

(Kinging, 2013, p. 341). The participants' new balance was intimately linked to a strong sense of belonging to their host place and separation from their Australian home.

Study abroad students' balance is also achieved through their capability to establish a form of routine abroad. However, the presence of their relatives could interfere with the daily life and routines they had established. Erika's parents came to visit her in Lausanne for ten days before they headed to Italy together to visit her father's family. Anticipating potential conflicts, she warned them beforehand that ten days would probably be too long. Indeed, tensions rapidly appeared when their presence impinged on her routine:

When they were here, I had to balance a life between saying goodbye to friends [some of her friends, also study abroad students, were going back home at the end of the first semester], spending time with them, doing my exams, handing in assessments, it was difficult and I kind of got annoyed. I didn't want it to be and I really tried hard for it not to be, because I wanted to be able to spend time with my family and be happy about it. (Erika, interview 2)

While her parents visited, Erika experienced mixed feelings; exasperation caused by their presence and the desire to enjoy her time with them despite the circumstances. There was a form of inevitability in her account, suggesting that the whole situation would be intrinsically conflictive. Her parents' visit occurred at a busy time for her, when she was overwhelmed with academic duties and commitments with her friends. Contrary to the rest of the participants who also reported tensions with their relatives, mostly while travelling, Erika's parents and Trevor's mother stayed long enough to impinge on their experiences and new adult life, which was marked by responsibilities and commitments to which the parents were not privy.

Within the conceptualisation of study abroad as a rite of passage, the sudden and abrupt disturbance caused by relatives' presence in the students' host environment underpins the prime importance of the transition phase resulting from a separation from home. As adults, study abroad students gain independence and self-reliance away from their family, develop social networks and create a sense of home elsewhere than in their family nest. The purpose of this separation is to allow students to leave behind their former self within their home community. The consequent phase of transition needs to be undertaken away from the home community and the former support networks, in order to help the sojourner

transition to emerging adulthood. However, relatives' visits suddenly interrupts this necessary separation. Consequently, the sojourner is constrained to again navigate their family dynamic, sending them back to their pre-separation identity. The data shows that, first, this readjustment from their recently acquired independence was a struggle for most students: the difficulty of the transition was inversely correlated to the level of independence that participants enjoyed before their departure abroad. Second, their relatives' presence reminded them of their Australian identity through language, accent and cultural clashes on the part of their relatives and this conflicts with the fundamental physical separation from home that determines the transition phase. While claiming that participants had developed a new identity as "locals" is uncertain, Chapter Five showed how participants developed a strong feeling of belonging to their host environment notably through their travel experiences. Instead of feeling like a French or a Swiss person, participants developed a feeling of homeliness built through habits and familiarity with the place and certainly strengthened by the separation from their family. Findings in Chapter Four confirms this point as some participants stated that their struggle to bond with locals prevented them from feeling "local".

Despite their semester's worth of growth in independence and self-confidence including as a result of independent travel, participants had to readjust to their child identity position when their relatives visited them. Alexandra's narrative highlights the fact that this transition back to her child position was natural to her parents when the family was reunited:

When they came over, it just kind of just floated back into the dynamic as a family.
(Alexandra, interview 2)

The return to the child position and, indeed, a family rather than an independent existence entailed by having to again navigate the family dynamic seemed to be expected by both sides. If there is a form of acceptance on Alexandra's part, it also seems that her parents were expecting to get back to their old ways, taking no notice of her transition, arguably not understanding or even realising that there had been one.

The students' perceptions of their new status could also differ from that of their parents. Patricia felt that, despite her personal growth, her parents still viewed her, before anything else, as their child:

I think I had become more confident in myself and gained a lot more independence but there was still this perception that I was their child. (Patricia, interview 2)

The ascribed transition back to the child position was an almost inevitable source of conflict for most families. As the students described it, the intensity of the struggle lay in the irreconcilability of their former self within their family dynamic with their new self, built through independence and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the level of independence that participants enjoyed back home before their departure needed also to be taken into account. The narratives of Erika, Trevor and John illustrate this. John, and also Diana, were already fairly independent in Sydney and only reported minor tensions with their relatives. Conversely, Erika and Trevor experienced more difficulties. For Erika, who had never before lived by herself, the transition back from her new emerging adult identity to her child position was a struggle:

It was difficult for me to have them around, and not because I didn't want them. It was just because, suddenly, I had to let them know where I was. And "when are you coming?" "Are we having dinner?" I just got so used to not telling anyone what I was doing. I could leave when I wanted. (Erika, interview 2)

During the first semester, Erika was completely independent and free to manage her daily life. During the ten days her parents were with her in Lausanne, she felt that they were impinging in many ways upon her daily routine and that they did so for too long. First, Erika's experience suggests that the longer and more proximate the stay in the host city, the more likely disruptions to participants' daily life were to occur. Second, the proximity of the hotel in which Erika's parents stayed also amplified the disruption of her daily life. According to her, her parents were relying on her to guide them around the city and plan their activities. The contrast between her independence and the constraint of having to justify herself again to the parental authority reinforced her feeling of animosity towards them.

Similarly, Trevor had never had the opportunity to live on his own for an extensive period before this experience abroad. Going overseas meant being separated from his mother for the first time, building independence and entering adulthood. The presence of his mother, who stayed for slightly less than a week, also abruptly sent him back to his child identity:

I don't think it's intentional but the way that she treats me, she treats me like I am a child, in that way. So I think that it was also kind of irritating because I was a cool and super fun adult, fully formed, having a great time, living my own life and then she just shows up and then, actually, I'm like a kid again. (Trevor, interview 3)

Trevor describes how abrupt and sudden was the disturbance caused by his mother. The self that he constructed over the first semester was ruined, almost in an instant, by the mere presence of his mother. The contrast between his former life and his independence acquired abroad explains the intensity of the disturbance. Moreover, in both cases, parents seemed to be unaware of participants' personal growth, new personal space and responsibilities. They acted as if nothing had happened during the past six months and expected that participants would return, with no questions asked, to their subordinate position within the family.

Even for John, who was already fairly independent before living abroad, having to again live again in close quarters with his mother was, to a lesser extent, a source of tension. Back home, he spends half of the week at his family home with his mother and his younger sister, and the other half with his girlfriend Diana at her family home. One of the only things that his mother still does for him at home is his washing, which became a subject of conflict when she came to visit him in Lyon:

She was pointing out the way I did it was wrong. And it was really annoying because I think the way I do it is fine, and I've been going along just fine for six months doing my own washing, so why should that change? I think the little jabs about the washing were really her communicating "You're doing your own washing now, but I can do better" kind of thing. (John, interview 2)

The way John describes his mother's reaction emphasises how she was not ready to give up on all of her remits as a parent. In John's case, the struggle was less profound and only affected minor issues such as the laundry since his gain of independence was not as dramatic as Erika's and Trevor's. Yet John still read into the laundry issue with his mother and viewed it as symbolic of his compromised transition to emerging adulthood.

While study abroad destabilises students' identity and position within their family and leads them to transition to adulthood, it also impacts parents and their roles. This finding

highlights the fact that study abroad also needs to be considered as pivotal for parental identity, especially in the Australian context where students often live at home until they go away on study abroad. Participants' perceptions of their parents' reactions reveal that parents are abruptly confronted with their unexpected empty nester position and struggle to accept it.

A relative's visit not only sends participants back to their pre-departure child position; to varying degrees, it also confronts them with their Australian identity. After his departure, Trevor did not talk with his mother frequently on either the phone or Skype. They mostly used Snapchat and text messaging to communicate. As such, he had grown unaccustomed to hearing her voice. When she arrived in Lausanne, he was astounded at her accent and this strengthened his initial negative feelings that she did not fit into the context:

It was so weird, even the way that she just said Lausanne [pronounced with a French accent] was just Lausanne [exaggerating the pronunciation with an Australian accent with a facial expression of disgust]. I would just scream because it was almost offensive. It sounded so Australian and I never noticed her accent before because I'd always heard it. [...] Just hearing her voice and her being there, she just seemed so out of place. (Trevor, interview 3)

His mother's accent symbolises the Australian identity that he had separated from and that she abruptly brought back into his personal space. The disgust that showed on his face while pronouncing "Lausanne" with an exaggerated Australian accent displayed his strong negative feeling about being sent back to his Australian identity through his mother, as if that accent altered the legitimacy that he assigned to the local pronunciation. In this exchange, he adopts a relative position of expert over his mother with an "authentic" French-speaking Swiss identity.

Trevor's experience exemplifies how the transition phase entails that students withdraw from their former identity to enter into an in-between situation that Block (2007a) theorised via the notion of ambivalence, which is "the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart" (Block, 2007a, p. 864). Students like Erika and Trevor were not completely detached from their former identity or from their social networks from home. As described in previous chapters, being in permanent connection with home through social media and digital communication had direct and beneficial implications on participants'

experience of study abroad, notably on their social network development and on easing the separation phase. However, the real-life presence of their parents in the host environment was not equally beneficial. Unlike on social media, participants could not simply log out and disconnect from them. For Trevor, his mother's presence amplified and reactivated feelings of not being fully integrated in the host community and pushed him to question his own place in his host location to which he had developed such a strong sense of belonging:

Everything that she would do I was just really upset with, and I didn't even really know why I felt like it was just ... I think it also reminded me that I didn't really fit there.
(Trevor, interview 3)

Trevor's comments on his mother's accent and actions identify what he saw as ability gaps. Notably, he complained about her lack of engagement with his host city and the host culture. For instance, he narrated that she deplored the more modest portions of food served in restaurants for breakfast compared with those in Australia. Moreover, he added that the fact that she did not speak French kept her from engaging with the host community, specifically his francophone friends. His ability to navigate between cultures and social networks was more advanced than hers, which triggered and amplified feelings of rejection closely linked to her Australianness. While he was reminded of his own position in the host society as a study abroad student, his study abroad experience also meant for him getting some distance from his Australian identity, as personified by his mother, and embracing a global citizen identity (Grabowski et al. 2017; Tarrant, 2010).

Visits from home abruptly interrupt the separation phase necessary for students to transition to new identity. These visits send them back to the former selves — not just “child” selves but foreign, less linguistically and culturally capable selves — selves that they were supposed to withdraw from. On the whole, the experiences of these participants indicate that visits bring more instability to a period already characterised by the destabilisation of their identity. Thus, the physical but not necessarily digital separation from supportive networks from home, especially from parents, seems to be essential for students in their transition.

Changes in the power dynamics

Forasmuch as parental reminders about a students' cultural identity can prompt anxiety about their progress in the host society, these visits can also reinforce for students the significant learning they have undertaken. This is especially evident in relation to participants' greater proficiency of the target language and larger knowledge of their host environment. Immersion settings like study abroad can challenge taken-for-granted perceptions and stimulate a negotiation of identity that "often takes place in contexts of unequal power relations" (Kinging, 2013, p. 341). After one semester abroad, all the participants viewed themselves as settled, independent, self-sufficient and self-confident, even if that was not objectively the case since they were still relying on their parents financially. Moreover, they became linguistically and culturally proficient enough to settle in a new country, navigate in a new environment, successfully engage in French language and regular disciplinary classes in their host university, establish friendships (to different extents) with compatriot, multi-national and local students, incorporate French into their daily life and demonstrate their ability to travel in Switzerland, France and numerous other countries. In this context, participants assumed a new "leader" position in their family during visits from relatives.

Some participants' relatives relied extensively on them while visiting, as none could speak French. Although speaking the local language is not a barrier to travel, it is very convenient to have someone who can speak the language, act as a buffer in interactions with the host community and enable access to places that regular tourists would not know about. Relatives therefore relied on participants' social and cultural capital acquired over the first semester, which impelled participants to a dominant position of power. As a result, two contradictory responses from the parents emerged from the data: their acceptance of the shift and, conversely, their resentment.

Representative of the first case scenario, Anne's mother came to visit her daughter for the first time early in the year away. She came alone for a few days and spent some time in Montpellier, where Anne showed her around. Anne relates how she felt changes in the dynamic of the relationship with her mother due to her linguistic skills:

I just found it a weird dynamic in that, for example, if we were just walking around, just say we went into a store, and someone started speaking French to her and she had

no idea what was going on. You're so used to the dynamic with your mum or your parents. It's like they were always the ones looking after you and things like that so it's kind of funny to have that different dynamic. (Anne, interview 2)

Anne's linguistic skills put her in a dominant position over her mother, resulting in a switch in their usual and only very recently altered power dynamics. As the linguistically capable party, she is no longer assuming a child position under her mother's supervision. Alternatively, she finds herself in charge and assisting her mother in a potentially uncomfortable situation.

Similarly, when Anne's entire family came later in the year for a summer tour in Europe, she reported taking the lead, especially when travelling in France, thanks to her linguistic skills and her greater knowledge of her host country:

When I was in France, I very much took the lead. I mean, I'd only been in Paris one time before that, and that was for a couple days. But I knew some places to go to. And then on the language front, even though, again in Paris, most people speak English very well, I would still try and order for them in French. I would try really hard to keep speaking French. So I was the go between for them. (Anne, interview 2)

In addition to assuming a new leader position, she acted as a buffer between her relatives and the host community in which her experience of immersion and her investment in keeping France as a francophone space where knowledge of French language and culture is essential to justify the effort she had gone to for her studies, played an important role. Anne's linguistic skills and knowledge of the host territory pushed her to take the lead from her family members, who seemed to accept her as a legitimate leader. Although, as she mentioned, her relatives could communicate in English in Paris, they would still go through her to interact with French locals. Consequently, Anne was empowered by playing on her ability to communicate with the host community, which gave her more opportunities to practise and potentially improve her French and learn more about the target culture. Whether her "translator" role was a way to push herself forward, assert her growth skills, or even both, her narratives show a smooth switch in the power dynamics. Her relatives' acceptance of her new role in the family was a determinant in the smooth running of the visit. It is in substance what Anne perceived from her mother's reaction to her identity transition and the switch in the family dynamic:

Being away, being a bit more independent, I think I noticed that shift as well. I think she did as well. But she seems to think it's a really good thing, so that's nice, I guess.

(Anne, interview 2)

Anne consequently obtained endorsement of her identity transition and her investment from somebody who matters to her.

Patricia noticed similar changes in the power dynamics in her family, and especially with her father, when they came to visit her in Aix-en-Provence in the summer and during their travel around France for a few weeks. She explained that although her father was usually in charge when travelling and interacting with local people, her linguistic skills granted her a dominant position in the family while they were in France:

My dad is one of those people that always thinks he's right on everything, and thinks he is a very smart man, but he didn't speak any French at all, so I'd be the one communicating with someone at a shop or asking someone for directions. (Patricia, interview 2)

As with Anne, Patricia's greater knowledge of both host language and territory pushed her to play a leading role in interactions with locals. This new position in the family was particularly delectable for her:

I think part of me really liked that I knew things my dad didn't [...] I felt pretty happy with myself. (Patricia, interview 2)

Patricia clearly felt rewarded by her ability to interact in French with local people and take on the leading role that would normally behave her father. Like Trevor, she saw an ability gap in her father that contributed to strengthening her transition and her investment. The position of power granted to Patricia by her family members was largely due to her linguistic skills, which could facilitate their travelling experience in France.

If the experiences of Anne and Patricia revealed positive outcomes from the relatives' visit, the same is not true for Erika and, to a lesser extent, Trevor. As described in the previous section, they were the students who had the most conflictive experiences with their relatives abroad. Erika noted shortly after the visit that her mother in particular was

struggling to cope with the changes that occurred in her relative position. According to Erika, her mother was disappointed by the fact that she was doing well without her:

I think she wanted me to be a bit sad. She wanted me to be like, “I’m so glad you’re here” [...] I think I wasn’t as reliant on her as she wanted me to be. She took it to heart. I don’t want to say offended but I think she was confronted with this new found independence. (Erika, interview 2)

Erika’s mother’s reaction to her transition was clearly perceived as negative. Although the reasons for this remain uncertain, the independence and self-reliance that Erika developed over the first semester were, apparently, the issue her mother struggled to accept. Perhaps, her mother expected to again find her dependent child who had left six months earlier, whereas Erika was seeking acceptance from her for the independent young adult that she had become. Assuredly, the visit from her mother brought instability to Erika.

This conflictual situation with her mother was reflected in Erika’s posting habits on social media. While she usually documented her experiences and the people she met extensively, she deliberately decided to limit her posts on this aspect of her experience. She published only two posts, a GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) of her parents on the shores of Lake Geneva, published on Facebook (Figure 31) and a photograph posted on Instagram which is a group shot of her and her parents in Lausanne (Figure 32). Both posts convey the tensions that occurred between the family members, especially through Erika’s caption in Figure 31 — “Me: Mum give me a caption / Mum: Shut up Erika / Ahh, reunited at last” — and her use of the hashtag “shitgetswild” in Figure 32.



Figure 31: Erika's Facebook post — GIF with her parents.



Figure 32: Erika’s Instagram post. Photograph of Erika and her parents.

Erika justifies her unusual posting behaviour by explaining the conflictive nature of her relationship with her mother:

I wanted to put up an appreciation post and be like, “I’m so glad that they came etcetera.” But the truth is, at the moment, my mom and I ... We’re not on bad terms; we’re not on good terms, but there’s still this tension, I think, between how it went down. (Erika, interview 2)

Erika’s relationship with her mother and their different expectations are at the core of her decision not to publish an appreciation post on social media. As she explained, she perceived her mother to be upset that she was not as reliant and dependent upon her as she used to be. In turn, Erika did not feel rewarded for her achievements nor recognised as a self-sufficient person. During her second interview, she also made the point that her publications and what her audience can see about her on social media must, in her estimation, fairly reflect her feelings; it is as though social media were used as a mood diary.

Unlike Erika, Trevor decided to publish an appreciation post for his mother’s birthday, after she left Lausanne. Her portrait is the only photograph posted on his accounts that documents her visit (Figure 33). As previously described, his experience of hosting his mother in Lausanne had also been conflictive; this is not reflected in the accompanying

text of the post —“happy birthday to the realest and best exchange mum of Lausanne !!! glad to see you love this city as much as i love you (beaucoup)”.



Figure 33: Trevor’s Instagram post. Portrait photograph of his mother in Lausanne.

In fact, in his decision to publish this post, there is a form of regret about how things went with his mother, even though he acknowledges that it was due to his own personal development, and therefore not her fault:

Obviously if someone that you really love is spending time around like my mom, it’s just kind of like, “I can’t really tell you that seeing you makes me upset”, because that will upset you. Even though it’s completely independent of you as a person, it’s also not. If you weren’t yourself we wouldn’t be having these issues, but at the same time it’s not personal even though it is about you. So yeah, I did a nice post for her to sort of be like, “I am glad that she’s here”. (Trevor, interview 3)

This explanation gestures towards the empathy that ultimately motivated him to posts, but also recognises the disturbance her visit occasioned.

The conflicts between Erika, Trevor and their mothers do not have the same origin. Erika perceived the tensions with her mother as tightly linked to her identity transition to adulthood and her mother's refusal to accept it, whereas, in Trevor's understanding, the conflict was more related to his questioning of his own place and identity. Despite the different nature of these conflicts, for both, the decision to limit their posts on social media about their parents' visit is linked to the conflictive nature their relationships had assumed as a result of the disturbance that the visits entailed. In both cases, social media offered participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and their bonds with their relatives. They both made the decision to publish (or not) an appreciation post based on mature introspection about the changes in their family dynamics.

It is worth here noting that the rest of the participants remained consistent in their posting habits during parental visits. Having their relatives in their host environment and travelling all together did not intrinsically constitute an event worthy of documenting on social media. The visits were not announced in advance on the platforms and the photos of their relatives appeared normally alongside their posts as they were documenting their experiences. Most of these posts were travel photographs and only a few were taken in participants' host locations. This reflects the activities that participants and their relatives did together and the places they visited. As in participants' solo posts, travel photographs were prioritised due to their projected appeal for the online audience. The fact that Erika's and Trevor's relatives spent more time in their host city could thus also explain the limitations in their posting with their relatives. However, whereas Trevor did not travel with his mother, Erika and her parents went to Italy where she had already been earlier in her sojourn. While she documented these earlier trips, in accordance with her general posting habits for her travel experiences, she did not post photographs about the trip that she undertook with her parents. The negative aspects of the overall visit experience thus appear to be at the root of this social media self-censorship, owing to her desire for the content published to reflect her feelings. Negative feelings therefore tended to be censored on social media, leading to conspicuous omissions, where only the positive aspects were mentioned, again because of their likeable aspects for her audience. Irony and sarcasm were nonetheless used to convey negative feelings in attenuated ways.

Apprehension about return

Relatives' visits not only destabilised participants' transitions but also forced them to foresee the future and apprehensively consider their return to the family home. During the post-sojourn interview, John retrospectively situates the moment that he began to anticipate his return, at the point when his relatives visited him in France:

Having your family there who you live with, because I live with my mum and my sister at home, having them there does remind you a little bit of everything at home and the way things go. (John, interview 3)

Similarly, Trevor's projection to the end of his experience abroad was triggered by the presence of his mother:

It also kind of reminded me that I had to go back because by this point it was September, so I only had a few months left. (Trevor, interview 3)

For most, going back into their family situation and anticipating their return to their home routine was difficult to conceive, especially after having enjoyed full independence apart from their family. Some even considered moving out after their return, a situation made difficult because of Sydney's high housing costs. After struggling to adjust to her new life in Lausanne, Erika was keen to retain her new found independence:

At first I was upset; I wanted to go home, I wasn't used to it. I got used to it, and now, I'm almost not excited to go back to Sydney because I know I have to go back and I'm going to be in a family home, and I think I'm going to want to move out. I think I'm going to want that independence. (Erika, interview 2)

In the same vein, Patricia expressed a comparable desire to move out from her family home. However, she resigned herself to returning, due to her financial dependence on her parents:

I really like having my own space. I got into a bit of a routine. I think it's been really good. I think I'd be ready to move out of home once I got back, but I will have no money. (Patricia, interview 2)

Study abroad is by definition temporary, just like the independence that the participants developed while they were away from their family. The situational return to the pre-separation position both during and after an ostensible successful transition contradicts the model of study abroad as a rite of passage in which students are supposed to take their new status with them upon return home. The model is therefore challenged by individual variables as well as the practical considerations inherent in the Australian context, where students tend to reintegrate into their family home after their experience of study abroad. Financial dependence on their parents also often represents an insurmountable obstacle. At least until the end of their studies, students will likely have to cope with this limited independence after having lived on their own for an entire year.

The unavoidable character of their forthcoming situation also arose in Diana's and John's narratives. Although, before living abroad, they already enjoyed more independence than the rest of the participants, neither was looking forward to reintegrating into their family homes and their home routines. For the first time in Lyon, they lived as a couple under the same roof, and going back to Sydney was perceived by Diana as a regression:

We keep saying how annoying it's going to be when we have to move home, and then away from one another, because it's taking a step backwards. We've moved in together: great. It's so much easier than before, and it's going well, and then now it's like, "oh no, it's not going to be like that anymore". We're both not looking forward to having to live separately. (Diana, interview 2)

Study abroad allowed participants to live remotely from their families and develop independence and self-reliance. The transition phase of this rite of passage provides participants with these essential features of emerging adults but also confronts them with the apprehension of reintegrating into their family and their previous lives. By triggering this anticipation of the return, the visits from relatives — even if only halfway through the year — brought to a close participants' idealisation of their experience. Indeed, many reported that studying abroad and living in France or Switzerland was an unreal experience, far from what they previously knew, with exceptional living conditions that they will not be able to find again in the near future. Understanding that the experience is unique and only temporary is not necessarily a negative outcome. It allows self-reflection and encourages students to enjoy every aspect of their time abroad. Furthermore, since

students have to go back home and reintegrate their family dynamics and their old identity, data suggested a period of readjustment that was often felt as a regression. This feeling of regression fundamentally troubles the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage meant to equip students with a new status and a new identity.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the little-studied phenomenon of the visit from home, which significantly affected participants' experience of study abroad. Having their relatives visit them had both positive and negative implications. The first challenge was to overcome the initial and inevitable disturbance caused by the family reunion in the host environment. Those whose parents spent the most time in the host city had the most conflictive experiences, notably due to the disruption to participants' daily life. Staying for a short period of time in the host city before travelling together seemed to be a wiser solution. Despite the conflicts that arose, relatives could see for themselves the participants' living environment and appreciate their personal growth, notably highlighted by the switch in power relations that occurred during the visits. These noticeable changes notwithstanding, parents still continued to expect that participants would naturally go back to their pre-separation positions in the family upon return, as if nothing had changed.

On the theoretical level, visits from friends and relatives are infringements in the models of rite of passage that stipulate that a situational and temporal separation from the home community is fundamental to entering the transition phase. The tensions revealed in this chapter are indicators that participants' transitions had occurred and that the whole family is struggling to retrieve balance. At the same time, these tensions support the findings from Chapter Five, that there is an intermediate phase in the rite of passage between the transition and the incorporation phase. This intermediate phase occurs when students have settled into their host environment, created a strong sense of belonging to it, established new routines and developed social networks. This period in their sojourn also coincides with the moment when they start anticipating their return to their home which was, for participants in this study, partly triggered by parental visits.

Furthermore, the incorporation phase, described in the framework as when students take their new status with them upon return, is challenged by participants' experiences. Study

abroad is, for them, a parenthetical period from their home with their family. As such, the independence that they acquire while studying abroad becomes limited again when they reintegrate into their family home. Having to readjust to this limited independence after having lived on their own for a year is a major challenge that is not sufficiently considered in the existing models of rites of passage.

On the practical level, the unpredictability of the outcomes of the visits only accentuates the need for more research on this phenomenon. As no relevant literature is available and the outcomes of relatives' visits are evidently important for participants in framing their experience, it is imperative to further explore this issue in order to appropriately address it, in part by informing relatives and sojourners of what to expect before planning mid-sojourn visits. Addressing this phenomenon with the same attention as social network development or repositioning of study abroad as a rite of passage would help provide students and the relatives who intend to visit them with relevant information in order to make the most of any visit. Practical indications such as the best time to visit or the duration of the sojourn could be suggested. Owing to the potential rite of passage, relatives should also be made aware that they are unlikely to find their family member studying abroad to be as they were when they left and that the dynamics of their relationships will also be impacted.

On the methodological level, the phenomenon of the visits from home was revealed because of the use of digital ethnography. It is quite unlikely that participants would have spontaneously mentioned this episode of their experiences during a regular semi-structured interview inquiring into their study abroad experience. The photo-elicitation interviews were crucial to elicit participants' reflections on the visits. As shown in this chapter, these narratives were tightly tied to their emotions and the photo-elicitation method was a powerful research tool to capture them.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

My thesis has investigated in great detail the experience of study abroad in the age of social media of seven Australian students of French. Two broad research questions focusing on study abroad students' use of social media drove the study. Those questions led to the examination of specific aspects of participants' experience of study abroad that arose from their social media posts: their social network development, their travel experiences while studying abroad and the visits from their relatives. These aspects highlighted issues, sometimes little-studied, that challenge traditional models of study abroad: the model of social network development and the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage to transition to emerging adulthood.

The first key finding of the study is that there is the need to rethink study abroad students' social networking paradigm in the light of the digital communications with home and the changing landscape of study abroad. The research methodology employed in the study based on digital ethnography and photo-elicitation interviews gave insights into the composition and structure of participants' social networks and the nature of the relationships that they created and/or maintained while abroad. Participants' experiences, characterised by their quasi-permanent connection with home via social media and their encounters with other study abroad students who were proficient or native speakers of French are not accurately reflected in the three traditional social circles commonly described in the literature. Consequently, the study argues for the emergence of two additional social networks that are not, as yet, addressed in the literature. Future research and education strategies must account for the online co-national network and the multi-national network of students who are proficient or native speakers of the target language.

Study abroad students who are proficient or native speakers of French offered participants particular linguistic and academic benefits. This network also acted as a buffer for participants facilitating their adjustment to the host environment. Those students constituted an in-between network between multi-national and local students as they provided participants with an alternative source of the target language, more accessible than most local students since, as other study abroad students, they were actively seeking friendships.

Participants' online co-national network also facilitated their adjustment to their host environment. Quasi-permanent connection via social media helped participants to reduce their acculturative stress and feelings of homesickness. Moreover, the online co-national network was found in some cases to have direct impacts on the way participants developed their social networks while studying abroad. Social media were also a means for participants to obtain endorsement from home on their experience, their activities and the facets of their identity they chose to promote on Facebook and Instagram.

The digital ethnography employed in the study revealed the low number of posts on participants' social media platforms related to local students, compared to those including both multi-national and compatriot students. The analysis highlighted that forming friendships with local students was limited to participants' university-related activities, was contingent upon a high level of investment on the part of participants and was hindered by a structural compartmentalisation between study abroad students and local students.

Based on the detailed examination of participants' social network development, the study offers concrete applications for educators and study abroad program providers. First, recommendations were made in order to overcome the compartmentalisation of the social networks identified in the analysis, such as a reform of the buddy system which produces unbalanced relationships between host and study abroad students. Transitioning the system from pairing to small groupings could be a way to multiply connections with locals and possibly overcome the artificial and pragmatic nature of the relationships that the system often produces based on an exchange of services. Additionally, contacts with local students who are studying fields relevant to study abroad and/or second language acquisition should be fostered as those students, in addition to being internationally-minded, may have particular interest to forming friendships with study abroad students. Lastly, participants in the study who successfully formed friendships with locals were those who invested greatly in connecting with locals in alignment with their goals of study abroad. Participants strategically drew on their own social and cultural capital to join sports clubs and create propitious conditions to develop balanced friendships in which local and study abroad students share common interests.

More research is needed to further explore the outcomes of the digital communications with home. My study was limited to participants' posts and narratives. Gaining access to

more private communications with home though sits uneasy as it raises ethical concerns about privacy. Voice may therefore be given to relatives and friends from home to overcome this issue and complement participants' perspectives. Similarly, the benefits of friendships with study abroad students who are proficient or native speakers of the target language is little-studied in the literature. Those students' narratives must be collected in further research to complement the findings of my study.

The second key finding is the implications of study abroad students' travel activities within study abroad in the theory of study abroad as a rite of passage. Participants' experiences observed via social media and analysed through their narratives, demonstrated that the three phases of the model of the rite of passage — separation, transition and incorporation — are overall relevant to interpreting their experience conceived as transformative to transition to emerging adulthood. However, my study reveals that their travel activities while studying abroad and students' digital connection with home create the need to reconceptualise the traditional three phases and, notably, consider a new intermediate phase, the pre-incorporation phase. Furthermore, social media were found to extend and blur the separation phase effected upon departure to the host country. Through digital communications, participants had access to their home supporting social networks, which smoothed their acculturative stress and eased their adjustment to the host environment. The literature suggests that the transition phase starts upon separation from the home. My findings compel researchers to reconsider. Participants maintained a connection to home by seeking endorsement via social media on their activities and evolving identity.

Travelling was among participants' primary goals of study abroad and was found to constitute a rite of passage in itself, which was also embedded in the broader rite of study abroad, partly owing to the significant position that travel holds in Australian culture. The first consequence of travel identified in the experiences of some participants was that lack of stable internet access caused the digital separation from home which concretised the separation phase and marked the beginning of the transition phase. Travel experiences were a way for participants to gain independence and self-confidence, extend their social networks and widen their horizons away from the comfort zone of their host environment. Upon return from travelling, especially those voyages undertaken over the summer break between the two semesters, the study reveals that participants noticed their attachment to

their host location and they began to perceive it as a second home. This realisation occurred during a period of their sojourn that corresponds to an intermediate phase in the rites of passage when participants' transition to emerging adulthood had already occurred as a result of their strong attachment to their host location, where they had developed social networks and established new routines.

The practical implications for educators and study abroad program providers is that students should be encouraged to travel in a variety of different ways, in groups, alone, within the host country or in other countries. Against common assumptions that travelling while studying abroad takes away students from their immersion context and potentially negatively affects second language acquisition, travel was found to be beneficial for participants, equipping them with essential characteristics of emerging adulthood. However, the role of socio-economic status should not be ignored. Indeed, being able to afford a sojourn abroad for a whole year, extensive travelling experiences while there, and visits from parents and sometimes siblings indicates that my participants belong to at least middle class families. Not all students could afford such experiences abroad and this raises the question of social class in study abroad and the ability, for students from less privileged backgrounds, to access this mode of study and benefit from similar experiences. The question of class is somewhat of a recent object of focus in the field of study abroad (Mitchell et al., 2017) in which the impact of traditional demographic identity factors such as gender, nationality and age are still prioritised. It falls to home and host institutions to make study abroad more democratic and accessible regardless of financial capacity. In this regard, far from resolving all the issues, the Erasmus program provides some solutions by offering scholarships to low-income students. In countries where university fees are very high and students are often on student loans to cover their expenses during their studies, the issue of class is even more concerning and further research is needed to explore its impact on the experience of study abroad.

Further research should also investigate the outcomes of the different forms of travel that students undertake while studying abroad. Participants of the study experienced various forms of travel and the specific outcomes of each remain unclear. Moreover, little is known about the outcomes of travel undertaken with visiting relatives. More research is needed to explore this aspect and the implications in the model of rites of passage, identity positioning and power dynamics among family members.

The third key finding is the little-studied phenomenon of relatives' visits to the host location. These visits occurred during the pre-incorporation phase and had both positive and negative impacts. The relatives' presence in the host environment caused disturbances in most participants' routines. Visits meant that participants had to re-navigate their family dynamic and struggle against their child position. This signalled to them their already effected transition to emerging adulthood. These visits are a complication in the model of study abroad as a rite of passage in which the transition is effected in strict separation from home. The presence of the relatives therefore disrupted this necessary separation and shifted the power dynamics among the family members. Participants' greater knowledge of the host culture and language put them in a position of power and pushed them to act as buffer between their family and the host environment. Relatives either accepted or denied participants' identity changes and new status.

The third key finding has practical implications for educators and future study abroad students. Indeed, the study suggests the best time for the visits to occur and the length of the stay. It seems that the most propitious period is the mid-semester break when students have more free time to spend with their family and to travel. Short stays in the host location are advisable as relatives can interfere with students' routine and studies, which causes tensions. The attitude of the relatives towards students' identity changes is also of importance. Educators must let the relatives know that their family member has likely become an emerging adult and that their position in the family, as well as their relationship, have probably changed.

Most of the visits occurred during the mid-semester break and impelled participants to anticipate their return to home, not without apprehension. The incorporation phase, when participants return to their family home, echoed the relatives' visits in that they had to fit back into their family dynamic and go back into their pre-departure position within their family. The analysis has shown that this reintegration into the child position was expected by most parents and was also strongly felt by participants, who struggled to take up this subject position again owing to their transition to emerging adulthood experienced during their sojourn abroad. Therefore, the incorporation was challenging for participants who had to face the lack of recognition of their new status from their family. This finding reveals the practical consideration that both students and their family must be made aware that the return home will be likely problematic. Once again, the attitude of the parents is

essential as they are the ones granting or denying the new status acquired during study abroad.

Further research on this little-known area of visits from relatives is particularly needed as it seems like a common phenomenon, at least for Australian students. These visits seem planned well in advance and research on their motives is needed. Relatives' narratives can be collected and analysed to serve this aim. More research is essential to assess the extent to which the visits are motivated by capitalising on travel opportunities or a difficulty to cut the apron strings, which has implications for the model of rites of passage.

The theory of study abroad as a rite of passage allows for a holistic conception of both identity and the experience of study abroad. Within this approach, study abroad is viewed as an integrative part of students' life that enables them to transition to emerging adulthood. As part of a university degree, studying abroad responds to students' increasing calls for internationalisation, social distinction and employability, but also to their quest for independence, adventure and enjoyment. Consequently, my study contributes to the scholarship that conceives of identity development as the main outcome of the experience of study abroad and is, therefore, no longer limited to a variable impeding or facilitating the acquisition of a second language. Similarly, social media are not reduced to their impacts on second language learning. Instead, they are viewed as integrative parts of students' life through which they showcase their experience of study abroad to their audience and develop and maintain their social networks in both home and host countries.

There are, however, some limitations in this research. The central role played by social media in students' lives is acknowledged in the study and forms the basis of the methodology employed. Social media platforms are windows into students' experiences, activities and social networking. Social media enable students greater agency to express the facets of their identity and their experience of study abroad that they wish to promote, although the content that they post is aligned with their audience's expectations and constrained by their audience's dominant ideologies. Therefore, students' posts are representative of only a part of the reality and of their actual experience. Self-censorship and over-sharing are also issues to take into consideration when using social media as a tool to explore study abroad students' experiences since they can either hide entire parts of it or emphasise specific aspects. Researchers need to be mindful that what students

give to see is consciously curated and social media can be a distorting mirror and needs to be supplemented with other research techniques. Photo-elicitation interviews complement the initial insight provided by digital ethnography and help researchers to make sense of the posts. For instance, the lack of photographs of local people identified in Chapter Four proved to be a reflection of participants' difficulties to break into local networks but in no case of the impossibility to create durable friendships with local students. Notwithstanding, the narratives are still dependent on participants' perspectives and subjectivity. Furthermore, due to the modest number of participants, it is difficult to predict what would happen in other host cities and countries. For instance, cultural differences in social media use were spotted by participants in Switzerland, which demonstrates that the use of these platforms is highly cultural and therefore variable from country to country. Participants' experiences are accordingly dependent on the host environment's practices, as these impact the way students develop their social networks.

Participants' country of origin as well as the length of the sojourn are also to be taken into consideration. Chapter Two highlighted how Australian culture was propitious for travel-based rites of passage to transition to adulthood. The applicability of that theory to other contexts where travel is less laden with the symbolism of rite of passage, is uncertain. Yet, the three — or I would suggest four — phases of the rite of passage constitute a broad framework to interpret the experience of study abroad in any context. The fact that most Australian university students still live in their family home before departing abroad and have never been away from their family for an extensive period of time, is an important consideration in the study. The findings would likely have been different in a context such as the United States where more university students live away from their family. Moreover, the fact that participants stayed for a full year abroad contributed to the findings of the study. Indeed, long-term stays provide students more opportunities to travel in different ways while studying abroad, negotiate their identities and transition to emerging adulthood. The visits from relatives are also correlated to the length of the sojourn. They are likely to occur in long-term stays as they give relatives more opportunities to visit students in their host environment.

The study has shown the importance of study abroad for seven Australians to transition to emerging adulthood. Their experiences demonstrate the holistic character of study abroad that deeply transforms students' identity. The changing landscape of study abroad

due to the advance of technology and the advent of social media demonstrate the need for more research to determine what kinds of experiences study abroad students are having in the age of social media. It is essential that researchers continue to strive to understand the problematic and challenging nature of this changing field. The models of rites of passage and social network development are frameworks through which study abroad students' experiences can be analysed, and are a starting point to understanding these problems and challenges.

References

- Adey, P. (2017). *Mobility* (2nd ed.). Abington: Routledge.
- Adler, J. (1985). Youth on the road: Reflections on the history of tramping. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12(3), 335–354.
- Ahmed, S. (1999). Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(3), 329–347.
- Allen, H. W. (2010). Language-learning motivation during short-term study abroad: An activity theory perspective. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 27–49.
- Allen, H. W., & Dupuy, B. (2012). Study abroad, foreign language use, and the Communities Standard. *Foreign Language Annals*, 45(4), 468–493.
- Allison, P., Davis-Berman, J., & Berman, D. (2012). Changes in latitude, changes in attitude: Analysis of the effects of reverse culture shock – A study of students returning from youth expeditions. *Leisure Studies*, 31(4), 487–503.
- Anderson, A. (2003). Women and cultural learning in Costa Rica: Reading the contexts. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 9, 21–52.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2010). Localizing the global on the participatory web. In N. Coupland (Ed.), *The handbook of language and globalization* (pp. 203–231). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Arkoudis, S., Watty, K., Baik, C., Yu, X., Borland, H., Chang, S., Lang, I, Lang, J. & Pearce, A. (2013). Finding Common Ground: Enhancing interaction between domestic and international students in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 18(3), 222–235.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480.
- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Arnett, J. J. (2010). Emerging adulthood(s): The cultural psychology of a new life stage. In J. J. Arnett (Ed.), *Bridging cultural and developmental approaches to psychology: New syntheses in theory, research, and policy* (pp. 255–275). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Arnett, J. J. (2012). New horizons in research on emerging and young adulthood. In A. Booth, S. L. Brown, N. S. Landale, W. D. Manning & S. M. McHale (Eds.), *Early adulthood in a family context* (pp. 231–244). New York, NY: Springer.
- Australian Department of Education and Training (2019). International mobility of Australian university students. Retrieved from <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/pages/default.aspx>
- Bachner, D., & Zeuschel, U. (2009). Long-term effects of international educational youth exchange. *Intercultural Education, 20*(sup1), S45–S58.
- Back, M. (2013). Using Facebook data to analyze learner interaction during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals, 46*(3), 377–401.
- Bagnoli, A. (2009a). Beyond the standard interview: The use of graphic elicitation and arts-based methods. *Qualitative Research, 9*(5), 547–570.
- Bagnoli, A. (2009b). On ‘an introspective journey’: Identities and travel in young people’s lives. *European Societies, 11*(3), 325–345.
- Baldt, B., & Sirsch, U. (2019). What happens abroad stays abroad? *Journal of International Students*. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v0i0.1047>
- Bareket-Bojmel, L., Moran, S., & Shahar, G. (2016). Strategic self-presentation on Facebook: Personal motives and audience response to online behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior, 55*, 788–795.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2017). Investigating multilingual identity in study abroad contexts: A short story analysis approach. *System, 71*, 102–112.
- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2013). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Beames, S. (2004). Overseas youth expeditions with Raleigh International: A rite of passage? *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education, 8*(1), 29–36.

- Benson, P., Barkhuizen, G., Bodycott, P., & Brown, J. (2013). *Second language identity in narratives of study abroad*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Block, D. (2007a). The rise of identity in SLA research, post Firth and Wagner (1997). *The Modern Language Journal*, *91*(s1), 863–876.
- Block, D. (2007b). *Second language identities*. London: Continuum.
- Bochner, S., Hutnik, N., & Furnham, A. (1985). The friendship patterns of overseas and host students in an Oxford student residence. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *125*(6), 689–694.
- Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, *12*(4), 277–294.
- Borràs, J., & Llanes, À. (2020). L2 reading and vocabulary development after a short study abroad experience. *Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *17*, 35–55.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bown, J., Dewey, D., Belnap, R., & Shelley, H. (2012, March). *Study abroad as a gendered experience: American women in Egypt*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics, Boston, MA.
- boyd, d. (2007). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media* (pp. 119–142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210–230.
- Briggs, J. G. (2015). Out-of-class language contact and vocabulary gain in a study abroad context. *System*, *53*, 129–140.
- Brown, L. (2009). A failure of communication on the cross-cultural campus. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *13*(4), 439–454.

- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Carlson, J. S., Burn, B. B., Useem, J., & Yachimowicz, D. (1990). *Study abroad: The experience of American undergraduates*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Carpenter, C. J. (2012). Narcissism on Facebook: Self-promotional and anti-social behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(4), 482–486.
- Carr, N., & Axelsen, M. (2005). Sightseeing: An integral component of the study abroad experience. *Tourism*, 53(1), 77–83.
- Chen, L., & Yang, X. (2015). Nature and effectiveness of online social support for intercultural adaptation of mainland Chinese international students. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 2161–2181.
- Chua, T. H. H., & Chang, L. (2016). Follow me and like my beautiful selfies: Singapore teenage girls' engagement in self-presentation and peer comparison on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 55, 190–197.
- Churchill, E. (2009). Gender and language learning at home and abroad. *JALT Journal*, 31(2), 141–158.
- Clark, J. L., Algoe, S. B., & Green, M. C. (2018). Social network sites and well-being: the role of social connection. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(1), 32–37.
- Clarke, I., Flaherty, T. B., Wright, N. D., & McMillen, R. M. (2009). Student intercultural proficiency from study abroad programs. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 31(2), 173–181.
- Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2004). Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(12), 1507–1527.
- Code, J. (2012). Agency and identity in social media. In S. Warburton & S. Hatzipanagos (Eds.), *Digital identity and social media* (pp. 37–57). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Cohen, M. (2001). The grand tour. Language, national identity and masculinity. *Changing English*, 8(2), 129–141.

- Coleman, J. A. (2007). A new framework for study abroad research. In C. Way, G. Soriano, D. Limon & C. Amador (Eds.), *Enhancing the Erasmus experience: Papers on student mobility* (pp. 37–46). Granada: Atrio.
- Coleman, J. A. (2013). Researching whole people and whole lives. *Social and Cultural Aspects of Language Learning in Study Abroad*, 37, 17–44.
- Coleman, J. A. (2015). Social circles during residence abroad: What students do, and who with. In R. Mitchell, N. Tracy-Ventura & K. McManus (Eds.), *Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad* (pp. 33–52). [EUROSLA Monograph 4]. Amsterdam: European Second Language Association.
- Collentine, J. (2004). The effects of learning contexts on morphosyntactic and lexical development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26(2), 227–248.
- Collentine, J. (2009). Study abroad research: Findings, implications, and future directions. In C. Doughty & M. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of language teaching* (pp. 218–233). Malden: Blackwell.
- Collentine, J., & Freed, B. F. (2004). Learning context and its effects on second language acquisition: Introduction. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26(2), 153–171.
- Collier, J. (1957). Photography in anthropology: A report on two experiments. *American Anthropologist*, 59(5), 843–859.
- Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). New media, new learning. In D. R. Cole & D. L. Pullen (Eds.), *Multiliteracies in motion: Current theory and practice* (pp. 87–103). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Coryell, J. E. (2011). The foreign city as classroom: Adult learning in study abroad. *Adult Learning*, 22(3), 4–11.
- Croghan, R., Griffin, C., Hunter, J., & Phoenix, A. (2008). Young people's constructions of self: Notes on the use and analysis of the photo-elicitation methods. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 345–356.

- Crompton, J. L. (1979). Motivations for pleasure vacation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6(4), 408–424.
- Curtis, D. D. (2014). The ‘gap year’ in Australia: Incidence, participant characteristics and outcomes. *Australian Economic Review*, 47(1), 107–114.
- Curtis, D. D., Mlotkowski, P., & Lumsden, M. (2012). *Bridging the gap: Who takes a gap year and why* [Research report]. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Darvin, R. (2016). Language and identity in the digital age. In S. Preece (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 523–540). Abington: Routledge.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36–56.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2016). Investment and language learning in the 21st century. *Langage et Société*, 157, 19–38.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2009). Connecting international and domestic students. In M. S. Andrade & N. W. Evans (Eds.), *International students: Strengthening a critical resource* (pp. 211–215). Washington, DC: ACE/Rowman Littlefield.
- Deery, M., & Jago, L. (2010). Social impacts of events and the role of anti-social behaviour. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 1(1), 8–28.
- DeKeyser, R. (1991). Foreign language development during a semester abroad. In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Foreign language acquisition research and the classroom* (pp. 104–119). Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.
- DeKeyser, R. (Ed.). (2007). *Practice in a second language: Perspectives from applied linguistics and cognitive psychology*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- de Nooy, J., & Hanna, B. E. (2003). Cultural information gathering by Australian students in France. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 3(1), 64–80.
- de Saint-Léger, D., & Mullan, K. (2018). A short-term study abroad program: An intensive linguistic and cultural experience on a neighboring Pacific island. In C. Sanz & A. Morales-Front (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of study abroad research and practice* (pp. 293–307). London: Routledge.

- Desforges, L. (1998). 'Checking out the planet': Global representations/local identities and youth travel. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* (pp. 175–192). London: Routledge.
- Desforges, L. (2000). Traveling the world: Identity and travel biography. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(4), 926–945.
- Dewey, D. P. (2008). Japanese vocabulary acquisition by learners in three contexts. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 15, 127–148.
- Dewey, D. P., Belnap, R. K., & Hillstrom, R. (2013). Social network development, language use, and language acquisition during study abroad: Arabic language learners' perspectives. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 22, 84–110.
- Dewey, D. P., Ring, S., Gardner, D., & Belnap, R. K. (2013). Social network formation and development during study abroad in the Middle East. *System*, 41(2), 269–282.
- Dhir, A., Kaur, P., Lonka, K., & Nieminen, M. (2016). Why do adolescents untag photos on Facebook? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 55, 1106–1115.
- Díaz-Campos, M. (2004). Context of learning in the acquisition of Spanish second language phonology. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26(2), 249–273.
- Di Silvio, F., Diao, W., & Donovan, A. (2016). The development of L2 fluency during study abroad: A cross-language study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100(3), 610–624.
- Doerr, N. M. (2013). Do 'global citizens' need the parochial cultural other? Discourse of immersion in study abroad and learning-by-doing. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43(2), 224–243.
- Downey, G., & Gray, T. (2012, December). *Blogging with the Facebook generation: Studying abroad with Gen Y*. Paper presented at the Joint Australian Association for Research in Education and Asia-Pacific Educational Research Association Conference (AARE-APERA 2012) World Education Research Association (WERA) Focal Meeting, Sydney.
- Du, H. (2013). The development of Chinese fluency during study abroad in China. *The Modern Language Journal*, 97(1), 131–143.

- Duff, P. A. (2013). Identity, agency, and second language acquisition. In S. M. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 428–444). London: Routledge.
- Durbidge, L. (2019). Technology and L2 engagement in study abroad: Enabler or immersion breaker? *System*, *80*, 224–234.
- Dwyer, L., Seetaram, N., Forsyth, P., & King, B. (2014). Is the migration-tourism relationship only about VFR? *Annals of Tourism Research*, *46*, 130–143.
- Dwyer, M. M. (2004). More is better: The impact of study abroad program duration. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *10*, 151–163.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook ‘friends’: Social capital and college students’ use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *12*(4), 1143–1168.
- Elola, I., & Oskoz, A. (2008). Blogging: Fostering intercultural competence development in foreign language and study abroad contexts. *Foreign Language Annals*, *41*(3), 454–477.
- Elsrud, T. (2001). Risk creation in traveling: Backpacker adventure narration. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *28*(3), 597–617.
- Farquhar, L. (2012). Performing and interpreting identity through Facebook imagery. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, *9*(4), 446–471.
- Findlay, A. M., King, R., Smith, F. M., Geddes, A., & Skeldon, R. (2012). World class? An investigation of globalisation, difference and international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *37*(1), 118–131.
- Flynn, M. A. (2016). The effects of profile pictures and friends’ comments on social network site users’ body image and adherence to the norm. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *19*(4), 239–245.
- Forbush, E., & Foucault-Welles, B. (2016). Social media use and adaptation among Chinese students beginning to study in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *50*, 1–12.

- Foster, M. (2014). Student destination choices in higher education: Exploring attitudes of Brazilian students to study in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Research in International Education, 13*(2), 149–162.
- Frändberg, L. (2014). Temporary transnational youth migration and its mobility links. *Mobilities, 9*(1), 146–164.
- Fraser, C. C. (2002). Study abroad: An attempt to measure the gains. *German as a Foreign Language Journal, 1*, 45–65.
- Freed, B. F. (1995). What makes us think that students who study abroad become fluent? *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context, 9*, 123–148.
- Freed, B. F. (2008). Second language learning in a study abroad context. In N. Deusen-Scholl & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Vol.4. Second and foreign language education* (2nd ed., pp. 1215–1227). New York, NY: Springer.
- Freed, B. F., Segalowitz, N., & Dewey, D. P. (2004). Context of learning and second language fluency in French: Comparing regular classroom, study abroad, and intensive domestic immersion programs. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 26*(2), 275–301.
- Furnham, A., & Alibhai, N. (1985). The friendship networks of foreign students: A replication and extension of the functional model. *International Journal of Psychology, 20*(3–4), 709–722.
- Gammonley, D., Rotabi, K. S., & Rotabi, K. S. (2007). Enhancing global understanding with study abroad: Ethically grounded approaches to international learning. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 27*(3–4), 115–135.
- Gangadharbatla, H. (2008). Facebook me: Collective self-esteem, need to belong, and internet self-efficacy as predictors of the iGeneration's attitudes toward social networking sites. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 8*(2), 5–15.
- Geeraert, N., Demoulin, S., & Demeis, K. A. (2014). Choose your (international) contacts wisely: A multilevel analysis on the impact of intergroup contact while living abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 38*, 86–96.
- Georgalou, M. (2017). *Discourse and identity on Facebook*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gmelch, G. (1997). Crossing cultures: Student travel and personal development. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 21(4), 475–490.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2016). Emerging technologies integrating technology into study abroad. *About Language Learning & Technology*, 20(1), 1–20.
- Goffman, E. (1978). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Doubleday Anchor.
- Goldoni, F. (2013). Students' immersion experiences in study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 46(3), 359–376.
- Grabowski, S., Wearing, S., Lyons, K., Tarrant, M., & Landon, A. (2017). A rite of passage? Exploring youth transformation and global citizenry in the study abroad experience. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 42(2), 139–149.
- Gu, Q., & Maley, A. (2008). Changing places: A study of Chinese students in the UK. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 8(4), 224–245.
- Hadis, B. F. (2005). Why are they better students when they come back? Determinants of academic focusing gains in the study abroad experience. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 11, 57–70.
- Hamad, R., & Lee, C. M. (2013). An assessment of how length of study-abroad programs influences cross-cultural adaptation. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 23(5), 661–674.
- Hanada, S. (2019). A quantitative assessment of Japanese students' intercultural competence developed through study abroad programs. *Journal of International Students*, 9(4), 1015–1037.
- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13–26.
- Harper, N. J. (2018). Locating self in place during a study abroad experience: Emerging adults, global awareness, and the Andes. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 41(3), 295–311.

- Heath, S. (2007). Widening the gap: Pre-university gap years and the 'economy of experience'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(1), 89–103.
- Hendrickson, B., Rosen, D., & Aune, R. K. (2011). An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3), 281–295.
- Hetz, P. R., Dawson, C. L., & Cullen, T. A. (2015). Social media use and the fear of missing out (FoMO) while studying abroad. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 47(4), 259–272.
- Hine, C. (2008). Virtual ethnography: Modes, varieties, affordances. In N. Fielding, R. M. Lee & G. Blank (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of online research methods* (pp. 257–270). London: SAGE Publications.
- Hofer, B. K., Thebodo, S. W., Meredith, K., Kaslow, Z., & Saunders, A. (2016). The long arm of the digital tether: Communication with home during study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 28, 24–41.
- Howard, M., & Schwieter, J. (2018). The development of second language grammar in a study abroad context. In C. Sanz & A. Morales-Front (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of study abroad research and practice* (pp. 135–148). London: Routledge.
- Huensch, A., Tracy-Ventura, N., Bridges, J., & Medina, J. A. C. (2019). Variables affecting the maintenance of L2 proficiency and fluency four years post-study abroad. *Study Abroad Research in Second Language Acquisition and International Education*, 4(1), 96–125.
- Huesca, R. (2013). How Facebook can ruin study abroad. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 59(19), A23–A24.
- Hum, N. J., Chamberlin, P. E., Hambright, B. L., Portwood, A. C., Schat, A. C., & Bevan, J. L. (2011). A picture is worth a thousand words: A content analysis of Facebook profile photographs. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(5), 1828–1833.
- Ife, A., Vives, G., & Meara, P. (2000). The impact of study abroad on the vocabulary development of different proficiency groups. *Spanish Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 55–84.

- Institute of International Education (2018). Open Doors 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data>
- Isabelli-García, C. (2006). Study abroad social networks, motivation and attitudes: Implications for second language acquisition. *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts*, 15, 231–258.
- Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, identity, and study abroad: Sociocultural perspectives*. London: Equinox.
- Jackson, J. (2010). *Intercultural journeys: From study to residence abroad*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, J. (2011). Cultivating cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship through critical reflection and international, experiential learning. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 11(2), 80–96.
- Jackson, L. A., & Wang, J.-L. (2013). Cultural differences in social networking site use: A comparative study of China and the United States. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 910–921.
- Jarvis, J., & Peel, V. (2008). Study backpackers: Australia's short-stay international student travellers. In K. Hannam & I. Ateljevic (Eds.), *Backpacker tourism: Concepts and profiles* (pp. 157–173). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Ji, Y. G., Hwangbo, H., Yi, J. S., Rau, P. P., Fang, X., & Ling, C. (2010). The influence of cultural differences on the use of social network services and the formation of social capital. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 26(11–12), 1100–1121.
- Jones, A. (2004). *Review of gap year provision*. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Kapidzic, S. (2013). Narcissism as a predictor of motivations behind Facebook profile picture selection. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(1), 14–19.
- Kapidzic, S., & Herring, S. C. (2014). Race, gender, and self-presentation in teen profile photographs. *New Media & Society*, 17(6), 958–976.

- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.
- Kashima, E. S., & Loh, E. (2006). International students' acculturation: Effects of international, conational, and local ties and need for closure. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(4), 471–485.
- Kashiwagi, S., Nagai, H., & Furutani, T. (2018). VFR travel generated by international students: The case of Japanese students in Australia. *Turizam: Međunarodni Znanstveno-stručni Časopis [Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal]*, 66(1), 89–103.
- Keeley-Browne, E. (2011). Cyber-ethnography: The emerging research approach for 21st century research investigation. In G. Kurubacak & T. Yuzer (Eds.), *Handbook of research on transformative online education and liberation: Models for social equality* (pp. 330–238). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.
- Kellett, P., & Moore, J. (2003). Routes to home: Homelessness and home-making in contrasting societies. *Habitat International*, 27(1), 123–141.
- Kelly, D. (2010). Student learning in an international setting. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 150, 97–107.
- Kim, J., & Tussyadiah, I. P. (2013). Social networking and social support in tourism experience: The moderating role of online self-presentation strategies. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(1–2), 78–92.
- Kim, M., & Belcher, D. D. (2018). Building genre knowledge in second language writers during study abroad in higher education. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 35, 56–69.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- King, A. (2011). Minding the gap? Young people's accounts of taking a gap year as a form of identity work in higher education. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14(3), 341–357.
- King, R., Findlay, A., Ahrens, J., & Dunne, M. (2011). Reproducing advantage: The perspective of English school leavers on studying abroad. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(2), 161–181.

- Kinginger, C. (2004). Alice doesn't live here anymore: Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, 21(2), 219–242.
- Kinginger, C. (2008). Language learning in study abroad: Case studies of Americans in France. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92(s1), 1–124.
- Kinginger, C. (2009). *Language learning and study abroad: A critical reading of research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kinginger, C. (2010). American students abroad: Negotiation of difference? *Language Teaching*, 43(2), 216–227.
- Kinginger, C. (2011). Enhancing language learning in study abroad. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 58–73.
- Kinginger, C. (2013). Identity and language learning in study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 46(3), 339–358.
- Kinginger, C. (2016). Echoes of postfeminism in American students' narratives of study abroad in France. *L2 Journal*, 8(2), 76–91.
- Kinginger, C. (2017). Language socialization in study abroad. In P. Duff & S. May (Eds.), *Language socialization* (3rd ed., pp. 227–238). Cham: Springer.
- Kinginger, C., & Farrell Whitworth, K. (2005). Gender and emotional investment in language learning during study abroad. *CALPER Working Papers Series*, 2, 1–18.
- Kinginger, C., & Wu, Q. (2018). Learning Chinese through contextualized language practices in study abroad residence halls: Two case studies. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 38, 102–121.
- Kosinski, M., Matz, S. C., Gosling, S. D., Popov, V., & Stillwell, D. (2015). Facebook as a research tool for the social sciences: Opportunities, challenges, ethical considerations, and practical guidelines. *American Psychologist*, 70(6), 543–556.
- Kramsch, C. (2009). Third culture and language education. In V. Cook & L. Wei (Eds.), *Contemporary applied linguistics* (pp. 233–254). London: Continuum.
- Kramsch, C. (2013). Afterword. In B. Norton (Ed.), *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (2nd ed., pp. 192–201). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

- Kudo, K., & Simkin, K. A. (2003). Intercultural friendship formation: The case of Japanese students at an Australian university. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 24(2), 91–114.
- Langley, C. S., & Breese, J. R. (2005). Interacting sojourners: A study of students studying abroad. *The Social Science Journal*, 42(2), 313–321.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Pavlenko, A. (2001). (S)econd (L)anguage (A)ctivity Theory: Understanding second language learners as people. In M. Breen (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research* (pp. 141–158). Essex: Pearson Education.
- Larzén-Östermark, E. (2011). Intercultural sojourns as educational experiences: A narrative study of the outcomes of Finnish student teachers' language-practice periods in Britain. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 55(5), 455–473.
- Laubscher, M. R. (1994). *Encounters with difference: Student perceptions of the role of out-of-class experiences in education abroad*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Lee, E., Ahn, J., & Kim, Y. J. (2014). Personality traits and self-presentation at Facebook. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 69, 162–167.
- Lee, J. J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education*, 53(3), 381–409.
- Lee, K., & Ranta, L. (2014). Facebook: Facilitating social access and language acquisition for international students? *TESL Canada Journal*, 31(2), 22–50.
- Lee, L. (2011). Blogging: Promoting learner autonomy and intercultural competence through study abroad. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(3), 87–109.
- Lee, L. (2012). Engaging study abroad students in intercultural learning through blogging and ethnographic interviews. *Foreign Language Annals*, 45(1), 7–21.
- Lewis, C., Kerr, G., & Pomeroy, A. (2010). Self-identity and social norms in destination choice by young Australian travellers. *Tourist Studies*, 10(3), 265–283.
- Li, X., & Chen, W. (2014). Facebook or Renren? A comparative study of social networking site use and social capital among Chinese international students in the United States. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 116–123.

- Lin, J.-H., Peng, W., Kim, M., Kim, S. Y., & LaRose, R. (2012). Social networking and adjustments among international students. *New Media & Society, 14*(3), 421–440.
- Lipsman, A., Mudd, G., Rich, M., & Bruich, S. (2011). The power of ‘like’: How brands reach (and influence) fans through social media marketing. *Journal of Advertising Research, 66*(1), 40–52.
- Liu, D., & Brown, B. B. (2014). Self-disclosure on social networking sites, positive feedback, and social capital among Chinese college students. *Computers in Human Behavior, 38*, 213–219.
- Llanes, À. (2011). The many faces of study abroad: An update on the research on L2 gains emerged during a study abroad experience. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 8*(3), 189–215.
- Llanes, A. (2012). The short-and long-term effects of a short study abroad experience: The case of children. *System, 40*(2), 179–190.
- Llanes, A., & Muñoz, C. (2009). A short stay abroad: Does it make a difference? *System, 37*(3), 353–365.
- Llanes, À., Tragant, E., & Serrano, R. (2018). Examining the role of learning context and individual differences in gains in L2 writing performance: The case of teenagers on an intensive study-abroad programme. *The Language Learning Journal, 46*(2), 201–216.
- Löfgren, O. (2002). *On holiday: A history of vacationing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lumsden, M. & Stanwick, J. (2012). *Who takes a gap year and why?* [Briefing paper]. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Lyons, K., Hanley, J., Wearing, S., & Neil, J. (2012). Gap year volunteer tourism: Myths of global citizenship? *Annals of Tourism Research, 39*(1), 361–378.
- Lyu, S. O. (2016). Travel selfies on social media as objectified self-presentation. *Tourism Management, 54*, 185–195.
- McManus, K. (2019). Relationships between social networks and language development during study abroad. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 32*(3), 270–284.

- Magnan, S. S., & Back, M. (2007). Social interaction and linguistic gain during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40(1), 43–61.
- Magnan, S., & Lafford, B. (2012). Learning through immersion during study abroad. In S. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 525–540). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Martin-Rubió, X., & Cots, J. M. (2018). Self-confidence amongst study abroad students in an ‘English as a lingua franca’ university. *Language awareness*, 27(1-2), 96–112.
- Martinsen, R. A. (2010). Short-term study abroad: Predicting changes in oral skills. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(3), 504–530.
- Matthews, A. (2008). Backpacking as a contemporary rite of passage: Victor Turner and youth travel practices. In J. Graham (Ed.), *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance* (pp.174–189). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- Maudeni, T. (2001). The role of social networks in the adjustment of African students to British society: Students’ perceptions. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 4(3), 253–276.
- McLaughlin, C., & Vitak, J. (2012). Norm evolution and violation on Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 14(2), 299–315.
- Mellors-Bourne, R., Jones, E., Lawton, W., & Woodfield, S. (2015). *Student perspectives on going international*. London: UK HE International Unit and British Council.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merrick, B. (2004). *Broadening our horizons: International students in UK universities and colleges*. London: UKCOSA.
- Miceli, T., Murray, S. V., & Kennedy, C. (2010). Using an L2 blog to enhance learners’ participation and sense of community. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 23(4), 321–341.

- Mikal, J. P., & Grace, K. (2012). Against abstinence-only education abroad: Viewing Internet use during study abroad as a possible experience enhancement. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(3), 287–306.
- Mikal, J. P., Yang, J., & Lewis, A. (2014). Surfing USA: How Internet use prior to and during study abroad affects Chinese students' stress, integration, and cultural learning while in the United States. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(3), 203–224.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Millington, K. (2005). Gap year travel-international. *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 12, 1–50.
- Mitchell, K. (2012). A social tool: Why and how ESOL students use Facebook. *Calico Journal*, 29(3), 471–493.
- Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N., & McManus, K. (2017). *Anglophone students abroad: Identity, social relationships, and language learning*. London: Routledge.
- Montgomery, C., & McDowell, L. (2009). Social networks and the international student experience: An international community of practice? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(4), 455–466.
- Mora, J. C. (2008). Learning context effects on the acquisition of a second language phonology. In C. Pérez-Vidal (Coord.) and M. Juan-Garau & A. Bel (Eds.), *A portrait of the young in the new multilingual Spain* (pp. 241–263). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Mora, J. C., & Valls-Ferrer, M. (2012). Oral fluency, accuracy, and complexity in formal instruction and study abroad learning contexts. *Tesol Quarterly*, 46(4), 610–641.
- Moscardo, G., Pearce, P., Morrison, A., Green, D., & O'leary, J. T. (2000). Developing a typology for understanding visiting friends and relatives markets. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(3), 251–259.
- Mule, L., Audley, S., & Aloisio, K. A. (2018). Short-term, faculty-led study abroad and global citizenship identification: Insights from a global engagement program. *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad*, 30(3), 20–37.

- Müller, M., & Schmenk, B. (2017). Narrating the sound of self: The role of pronunciation in learners' self-constructions in study-abroad contexts. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 132–151.
- Murphy-Lejeune, E. (2002). *Student mobility and narrative in Europe: The new strangers*. London: Routledge.
- Nadkarni, A., & Hofmann, S. G. (2012). Why do people use Facebook? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(3), 243–249.
- Neri, F., & Ville, S. (2008). Social capital renewal and the academic performance of international students in Australia. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 37(4), 1515–1538.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. London: Longman/Pearson Education.
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation* (2nd ed.). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B. (2014). Identity and poststructuralist theory in SLA. *Multiple Perspectives on the Self in SLA*, 14, 59–74.
- Nowicka, M. (2007). Mobile locations: Construction of home in a group of mobile transnational professionals. *Global Networks*, 7(1), 69–86.
- Oberst, U., Renau, V., Chamarro, A., & Carbonell, X. (2016). Gender stereotypes in Facebook profiles: Are women more female online? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60, 559–564.
- Olding, A. (2013). *An investigation of the social relationships and social interactions amongst international students studying in Australia: A case study using Facebook* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Tasmania, Hobart.
- Ollier-Malaterre, A., Rothbard, N. P., & Berg, J. M. (2013). When worlds collide in cyberspace: How boundary work in online social networks impacts professional relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(4), 645–669.
- O'Reilly, C. C. (2006). From drifter to gap year tourist: Mainstreaming backpacker travel. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(4), 998–1017.

- Ozimek, P., & Bierhoff, H.-W. (2016). Facebook use depending on age: The influence of social comparisons. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *61*, 271–279.
- Papatsiba, V. (2006). Study abroad and experiences of cultural distance and proximity: French Erasmus students. In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and studying abroad: Research and practice* (pp. 108–133). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Park, N., Song, H., & Lee, K. M. (2014). Social networking sites and other media use, acculturation stress, and psychological well-being among East Asian college students in the United States. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *36*, 138–146.
- Pasfield-Neofitou, S. E. (2012). *Online communication in a second language: Social interaction, language use, and learning Japanese*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Patron, M.-C. (2007). *Culture and identity in study abroad contexts: After Australia, French without France*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Pavlenko, A. (2002). Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning and use. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 275–302). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, *29*(1), 9–31.
- Pellegrino, V. A. (1998). Student perspectives on language learning in a study abroad context. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *4*(2), 91–120.
- Pellegrino, V. A. (2005). *Study abroad and second language use: Constructing the self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perrefort, M. (2008). Changer en échangeant? Mobilités et expériences langagières [Change through exchange? Mobility and language-related experiences]. In F. Dervin & M. Byram (Eds.), *Échanges et mobilités académiques: Quel bilan* [Exchanges and academic mobility: What results?] (pp. 65–91). Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Pettigrew, S., Biagioni, N., & Jongenelis, M. I. (2016). Anticipating and addressing event-specific alcohol consumption among adolescents. *BMC Public Health*, *16*(1), 661.

- Pink, S. (2016). Digital ethnography. In S. Kubitschko & A. Kaun (Eds.), *Innovative methods in media and communication research* (pp.161–165). Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Plews, J. L. (2015). Intercultural identity-alignment in second language study abroad, or the more-or-less Canadians. In R. Mitchell, N. Tracy-Ventura & K. McManus (Eds.), *Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad* (pp. 281–304). [EUROSLA Monograph 4]. Amsterdam: European Second Language Association.
- Polanyi, L. (1995). Language learning and living abroad: Stories from the field. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 271–291). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Prazeres, L. (2018). At home in the city: Everyday practices and distinction in international student mobility. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19(7), 914–934.
- Prazeres, L. (2019). Unpacking distinction within mobility: Social prestige and international students. *Population, Space and Place*, 25(5). <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2190>.
- Puri, A. (2007). The web of insights: The art and practice of webnography. *International Journal of Market Research*, 49(3), 387–408.
- Qiu, L., Lu, J., Yang, S., Qu, W., & Zhu, T. (2015). What does your selfie say about you? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 52, 443–449.
- Ralph, D., & Staeheli, L. A. (2011). Home and migration: Mobilities, belongings and identities. *Geography Compass*, 5(7), 517–530.
- Rexeisen, R. J., Anderson, P. H., Lawton, L., & Hubbard, A. C. (2008). Study abroad and intercultural development: A longitudinal study. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 17, 1–20.
- Rienties, B., Beusaert, S., Grohnert, T., Niemantsverdriet, S., & Kommers, P. (2012). Understanding academic performance of international students: The role of ethnicity, academic and social integration. *Higher Education*, 63(6), 685–700.
- Rienties, B., Nanclares, N. H., Jindal-Snape, D., & Alcott, P. (2013). The role of cultural background and team divisions in developing social learning relations in the classroom. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(4), 332–353.

- Rienties, B., & Nolan, E.-M. (2014). Understanding friendship and learning networks of international and host students using longitudinal social network analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *41*, 165–180.
- Ritchie, B. W., Carr, N., & Cooper, C. P. (2003). *Managing educational tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Rivers, W. P. (1998). Is being there enough? The effects of homestay placements on language gain during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, *31*(4), 492–500.
- Robert, J. (2013, July). *Using language classes to prepare for study abroad: Confronting the challenge of ethno-culture*. Paper presented at the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities Colloquium (LCNAU). Australian National University, Canberra.
- Roberts, B. (2018, February 6). How the Internet screwed up study abroad [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://insidestudyabroad.com/blog/2010/09/how-the-internet-screwed-up-study-abroad>
- Rose, G. (2012). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual material*. London: Sage Publications.
- Rose, J., Mackey-Kallis, S., Shyles, L., Barry, K., Biagini, D., Hart, C., & Jack, L. (2012). Face it: The impact of gender on social media images. *Communication Quarterly*, *60*(5), 588–607.
- Rui, J. R., & Wang, H. (2015). Social network sites and international students' cross-cultural adaptation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *49*, 400–411.
- Russell, J., Rosenthal, D., & Thomson, G. (2010). The international student experience: Three styles of adaptation. *Higher Education*, *60*(2), 235–249.
- Sagarra, N., & LaBrozzi, R. (2018). Benefits of study abroad and working memory on L2 morphosyntactic processing. In C. Sanz & A. Morales-Front (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of study abroad research and practice* (pp. 149–164). London: Routledge.
- Sakurai, T., McCall-Wolf, F., & Kashima, E. (2010). Building intercultural links: The impact of a multicultural intervention programme on social ties of international students in Australia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *34*(2), 176–185.

- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.): London: SAGE Publications.
- Salom, C., Watts, M., Kinner, S., & Young, D. (2005). Schoolies week in perspective: Studies of alcohol, drug and risk-taking behaviour. *Of Substance: The National Magazine on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs*, 3(1), 26–28.
- Sam, D. L. (2001). Satisfaction with life among international students: An exploratory study. *Social Indicators Research*, 53(3), 315–337.
- Sandel, T. L. (2014). ‘Oh, I’m here!’: Social media’s impact on the cross-cultural adaptation of students studying abroad. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 43(1), 1–29.
- Sasaki, M. (2011). Effects of varying lengths of study-abroad experiences on Japanese EFL students’ L2 writing ability and motivation: A longitudinal study. *Tesol Quarterly*, 45(1), 81–105.
- Schartner, A. (2015). ‘You cannot talk with all of the strangers in a pub’: A longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students’ social ties at a British university. *Higher Education*, 69(2), 225–241.
- Schartner, A. (2016). The effect of study abroad on intercultural competence: A longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students at a British university. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 37(4), 402–418.
- Seargeant, P., & Tagg, C. (2014). *The language of social media: Identity and community on the internet*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Segalowitz, N., & Freed, B. F. (2004). Context, contact, and cognition in oral fluency acquisition: Learning Spanish in at home and study abroad contexts. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26(2), 173–199.
- Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54(3), 402–407.

- Sheldon, K. M., Abad, N., & Hinsch, C. (2011). A two-process view of Facebook use and relatedness need-satisfaction: Disconnection drives use, and connection rewards it. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 100*(4), 766–775.
- Shiri, S. (2015). The homestay in intensive language study abroad: Social networks, language socialization, and developing intercultural competence. *Foreign Language Annals, 48*(1), 5–25.
- Shively, R. L. (2011). L2 pragmatic development in study abroad: A longitudinal study of Spanish service encounters. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(6), 1818–1835.
- Simpson, K. (2005). Dropping out or signing up? The professionalisation of youth travel. *Antipode, 37*(3), 447–469.
- Sin, S.-C. J., & Kim, K.-S. (2013). International students' everyday life information seeking: The informational value of social networking sites. *Library & Information Science Research, 35*(2), 107–116.
- Sokol, B. W., Donnelly, K. G., Vilbig, J. M., & Monsky, K. (2017). Cultural immersion as a context for promoting global citizenship and personal agency in young adults. In M. Padilla-Walker & L. J. Nelson (Eds.), *Flourishing in emerging adulthood: Positive development during the third decade of life* (pp. 285–302). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sovic, S. (2009). Hi-bye friends and the herd instinct: International and home students in the creative arts. *Higher Education, 58*(6), 747–761.
- Starr-Glass, D. (2016). Repositioning study abroad as a rite of passage: Impact, implications, and implementation. In D. M. Velliaris & D. Coleman-George (Eds.), *Handbook of research on study abroad programs and outbound mobility* (pp. 89–114). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Statista. (2019). Most famous social network sites worldwide as of April 2019, ranked by number of active users (in millions). Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>
- Steinfeld, C., Ellison, N. B., & Lampe, C. (2008). Social capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*(6), 434–445.

- Stewart, J. A. (2010). Using e-journals to assess students' language awareness and social identity during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 138–159.
- Stone, M. J., & Petrick, J. F. (2013). The educational benefits of travel experiences: A literature review. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(6), 731–744.
- Strano, M. M. (2008). User descriptions and interpretations of self-presentation through Facebook profile images. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 2(2), article 5.
- Sundén, J. (2003). *Material virtualities: Approaching online textual embodiment*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In M. Schultz & M. J. Hatch (Eds.), *Organizational identity: A reader* (pp. 56–65). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Talburt, S., & Stewart, M. A. (1999). What's the subject of study abroad?: Race, gender, and 'living culture'. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(2), 163–175.
- Tanaka, K., & Ellis, R. (2003). Study abroad, language proficiency, and learner beliefs about language learning. *JALT Journal*, 25(1), 63–85.
- Tarrant, M. A. (2010). A conceptual framework for exploring the role of studies abroad in nurturing global citizenship. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(5), 433–451.
- Tesch, R. (2013). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software*. Bristol, PA: Falmer.
- Thomson, R., & Taylor, R. (2005). Between cosmopolitanism and the locals: Mobility as a resource in the transition to adulthood. *Young*, 13(4), 327–342.
- Tong, S., & Walther, J. B. (2011). Relational maintenance and CMC. *Computer-mediated Communication in Personal Relationships*, 53, 98–118.
- Tracy-Ventura, N., Dewaele, J.-M., Köylü, Z., & McManus, K. (2016). Personality changes after the 'year abroad'?: A mixed-methods study. *Study Abroad Research in Second Language Acquisition and International Education*, 1(1), 107–127.
- Trentman, E. (2013). Arabic and English during study abroad in Cairo, Egypt: Issues of access and use. *The Modern Language Journal*, 97(2), 457–473.

- Trentman, E. (2015). Negotiating gendered identities and access to social networks during study abroad in Egypt. In R. Mitchell, K. McManus & N. Tracy-Ventura (Eds.), *Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad* (pp. 263–280). [EUROSLA Monograph 4]. Amsterdam: European Second Language Association.
- Turner, V. (1976). *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Twombly, S. B. (1995). Piropos and friendships: Gender and culture clash in study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 1(1), 1–27.
- Twombly, S. B., Salisbury, M. H., Tumanut, S. D., & Klute, P. (2012). Study abroad in a new global century – renewing the promise, refining the purpose. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 38(4), 1–152.
- Umino, T., & Benson, P. (2016). Communities of practice in study abroad: A four-year study of an Indonesian student’s experience in Japan. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100(4), 757–774.
- UNESCO (2018). International student mobility in tertiary education. Retrieved from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019). Global flow of tertiary-level students. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow/>
- Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Schouten, A. P. (2006). Friend networking sites and their relationship to adolescents’ well-being and social self-esteem. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9(5), 584–590.
- Van Dijck, J. (2008). Digital photography: communication, identity, memory. *Visual Communication*, 7(1), 57–76.
- van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Van House, N. A. (2011). Personal photography, digital technologies and the uses of the visual. *Visual Studies*, 26(2), 125–134.

- Varis, P. (2016). Digital ethnography. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 55–68). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Vásquez, C. (2014). ‘Usually not one to complain but ...’: Constructing identities in user-generated online reviews. In C. Tagg & P. Seargeant (Eds.), *The language of social media: Identity and community on the internet* (pp. 65–90). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Volet, S., & Jones, C. (2012). Cultural transitions in higher education: Individual adaptation, transformation and engagement. In S. A. Karabenick & T. C. Urdan (Eds.), *Transitions across schools and cultures* (pp. 241–284). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Walsh, R., & Walsh, M. (2018). In their own words: American students’ perspectives on study abroad experiences. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 46(2), 129–146.
- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2005). *The psychology of culture shock*. Hove: Routledge.
- Ward, C., & Searle, W. (1991). The impact of value discrepancies and cultural identity on psychological and sociocultural adjustment of sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 15(2), 209–224.
- Ward, K. J. (1999). Cyber-ethnography and the emergence of the virtually new community. *Journal of Information Technology*, 14(1), 95–105.
- Waters, J. L. (2012). Geographies of international education: Mobilities and the reproduction of social (dis) advantage. *Geography Compass*, 6(3), 123–136.
- Waters, J., & Brooks, R. (2010). Accidental achievers? International higher education, class reproduction and privilege in the experiences of UK students overseas. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31(2), 217–228.
- Waters, J., Brooks, R., & Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2011). Youthful escapes? British students, overseas education and the pursuit of happiness. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 12(5), 455–469.
- Wearing, S. (2002). Re-centring the self in volunteer tourism. In G. M. S. Dann (Ed.), *The tourist as a metaphor of the social world* (pp. 237–262). Wallingford: CABI.

- Weaver, D., & Lawton, L. (2010). *Tourism management* (4th Ed.). Milton: John Wiley & Sons Australia.
- White, N. R., & White, P. B. (2004). Travel as transition: Identity and place. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(1), 200–218.
- Wilkinson, S. (1998). Study abroad from the participants' perspective: A challenge to common beliefs. *Foreign Language Annals*, 31(1), 23-39.
- Winchester, H., McGuirk, P., & Everett, K. (1999). Schoolies week as a rite of passage: A study of celebration and control. In E. K. Teather (Ed.), *Embodied geographies, spaces, rituals and rites of passage* (pp. 59–76). London: Routledge.
- Wintre, M. G., Kandasamy, A., Chavoshi, S., & Wright, L. (2015). Are international undergraduate students emerging adults? Motivations for studying abroad. *Emerging Adulthood*, 3(4), 255–264.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2008). *Ethnography: A way of seeing* (2nd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Wooley, S. (2013). Constantly connected: The impact of social media and the advancement in technology on the study abroad experience. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 4(2). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=822>.
- Woolf, M. (2007). Impossible things before breakfast: Myths in education abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3–4), 496–509.
- Wright, N. D., & Larsen, V. (2012). Every brick tells a story: Study abroad as an extraordinary experience. *Marketing Education Review*, 22(2), 121–142.
- Young, A. L., & Quan-Haase, A. (2013). Privacy protection strategies on Facebook: The Internet privacy paradox revisited. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(4), 479–500.

- Young, T. J., Sercombe, P. G., Sachdev, I., Naeb, R., & Schartner, A. (2013). Success factors for international postgraduate students' adjustment: Exploring the roles of intercultural competence, language proficiency, social contact and social support. *European Journal of Higher Education, 3*(2), 151–171.
- Yu, A. Y., Tian, S. W., Vogel, D., & Kwok, R. C.-W. (2010). Can learning be virtually boosted? An investigation of online social networking impacts. *Computers & Education, 55*(4), 1494–1503.
- Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior, 24*(5), 1816–1836.
- Zheng, W., Yuan, C.-H., Chang, W.-H., & Wu, Y.-C. J. (2016). Profile pictures on social media: Gender and regional differences. *Computers in Human Behavior, 63*, 891–898.
- Zuckerberg, M. (2017, June 22). Bringing the World Closer Together. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/notes/mark-zuckerberg/bringing-the-world-closer-together/10154944663901634/>

Appendix:

Pre-departure semi-structured interview — Questions

You

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your nationality?
4. Are you in the 4th year of your degree? What degree?
5. What languages do you speak?
6. Do you live in Sydney?
7. Any passions/interests?

Learning of French

1. When did you start learning French?
2. Why French?
3. Do you enjoy learning French?
4. Why are you learning French?
5. Have you ever been in France or Switzerland or any francophone country?

Study abroad

1. Why did you choose your destination country/region/state/city in particular?
2. What are your goals for your study abroad?
3. What do you expect as the main outcomes from your experience abroad?

Regarding your learning

Regarding your personal growth and experiences

4. Thinking of your experience abroad, what is worrying you the most?
5. What aspects of the culture are you excited to discover?
6. What do you think will challenge you the most?
7. Do you have already any plans while you will be there?
8. Did you already think of a topic for your assignment?

Social media

1. Are you currently using social media? Which one?
2. About how long have you been using social media platforms?
3. How would you quantify your use of Facebook/Instagram? How much time do you spend daily on Facebook/Instagram? How often do you post/comment/like/share/add photos?
4. What is the main purpose of your use of Facebook/Instagram?

5. Do you think that the amount of time you spend on Facebook/Instagram will change while abroad?
6. Why do you think that?
7. Do you think that your regular use of Facebook/Instagram will change while abroad?
8. Why do you think that?
9. Do you sometimes write in French or other languages on Facebook/Instagram? If not, do you think you will?
10. Do you anticipate other ways of communicating your experience? Are you active on other social media (Twitter, Reddit)?
11. Did you already somehow use Facebook/Instagram to prepare your experience abroad for example to connect to new people you might meet overseas?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?