THE EFFECTS OF DISCLOSURE ON THE REENTRY EXPERIENCE OF U.S. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURNING FROM A SEMESTER ABROAD

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THE EFFECTS OF DISCLOSURE ON THE REENTRY EXPERIENCE OF U.S. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURNING FROM A SEMESTER ABROAD

by

Susan Lillian Steen

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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THE EFFECTS OF DISCLOSURE ON THE REENTRY EXPERIENCE OF U.S. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURNING FROM A SEMESTER ABROAD

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Abstract of a Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF DISCLOSURE ON THE REENTRY EXPERIENCE OF U.S. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURNING FROM A SEMESTER ABROAD

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August 2007

This study investigated the effects of disclosure on American college and university students' experiences of intercultural reentry following a semester of study abroad.

Data were provided by twenty students returning from an overseas study program in France operated by The University of Southern Mississippi and consortium partners. Each experimental participant wrote four essays focusing on his or her cognitive and emotional experiences associated with reentry. The effects of disclosure were examined for improvements in reentry shock, identity confusion/distress, psychological and emotional distress, and interpersonal relationship problems. Participants' essays were also analyzed to determine if beneficial progress occurred.

Limited support was found for the influence of disclosure. Some significant differences were found in positive and negative relationship changes, but these were not consistent with predictions. No significant differences were revealed by dependent variables measuring reentry shock, identity confusion, and psychological/emotional distress. However, reentry shock scores exhibited a trend in the expected direction, and exploratory analysis conducted on
participants' essays likewise demonstrated some progress towards "closure" in students' thoughts and feelings about returning to the U.S. These findings suggested implications for future research and prompted recommendations for international education practitioners working with students returning from abroad.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T. S. Eliot, 1942

In recent years, increasing numbers of U.S. students have crossed national boundaries to study abroad; in 2004–05, nearly two hundred and six thousand American students studied overseas for academic credit (Koh Koh Chin & Bhandari, 2006). As part of their experience, student sojourners adapt to an alien academic and cultural environment, establish cross-cultural friendships, develop different interests, and take part in new activities. Once they conclude their program, however, they relinquish the lifestyle they established abroad and return home. Cross-cultural reentry is the process through which intercultural sojourners attempt to re-adjust, re-adapt, and re-integrate into their home culture upon returning from abroad (Martin & Harrell, 1996). A complex phenomenon involving cultural, social, and personal dimensions, reentry—also termed repatriation (Howard, 1980a) or reacculturation (Martin, 1984)—may occur as both a problematic and a developmental experience. “Reentry shock” (or “reverse culture shock”) is a term used to describe and encompass the range of personal problems associated with the reentry transition.

Since the “discovery” of reentry in the 1960s, the concept has received increasing attention in the psychological, communication, anthropological, and international studies literature, with researchers seeking to understand the nature of the reentry experience, how and which variables affect it, and what coping
mechanisms are most effective (Citron, 1996). International education professionals are particularly interested in understanding reentry and in identifying means of appropriate support for students whose reentry experiences are especially difficult. According to Gaw (2000), students returning from a program of study abroad may experience “depression, alienation, isolation, loneliness, general anxiety, speech anxiety, friendship difficulties, shyness concerns, and feelings of inferiority” as well as academic difficulties (p. 101).

Martin and Harrell (1996) contend that three fundamental assumptions anchor current practical and theoretical understandings of reentry. First, the reentry experience must be considered within the context of the entire sojourn; as Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) proposed, reentry may be usefully viewed as the last stage of a “continuum” of adjustment which commenced when the sojourner first entered the new culture. Second, reentry transitions are similar to other “life transitions” insofar as they involve loss and change, and present opportunities for personal and intellectual growth. Finally, reentry and cultural adaptation are complex phenomena involving cognitive, affective, behavioral processes. According to Carlisle-Frank (1992):

. . . relocation is a complex personal, social, and environmental transition which not only changes location of housing but also alters activities and domains (e.g., employment, commuting, recreation, and peer relations.) These changes . . . are neither short-term nor confined to the residential domain but are enduring and affect almost every aspect of the individual’s life situation (p. 837-838).
Hence, the effects of relocation—which intercultural sojourners undergo twice, first in the initial sojourn and second upon their "reentry"—may be both far-reaching and long-lasting.

The concept of educational travel and study abroad is an old one, dating back to antiquity when students "journeyed to Athens for philosophy and letters, to Rhodes for rhetoric, and to Alexandria for medicine and science" (Stitworth, 1989, p. 213). The tradition continued into the 19th century, when intellectuals and well-heeled sons of aristocratic families traveled abroad to broaden their intellectual experience. The first institutional programs of study abroad for American undergraduates were established by Marymount College and the University of Delaware in 1923, offering the "junior year abroad." Other universities followed, but until the 1950s study abroad remained the purview of the affluent and was undertaken primarily by females seeking to enhance their foreign language skills (Stitworth, 1989).

In the 1950s and '60s, new emphasis on international and intercultural relations changed the landscape of study and travel abroad. The Foreign Service was established to provide intercultural training to government and corporate employees going overseas. Emerging technologies in travel, communication, and information were bringing the world closer together, and markets were becoming globalized. As a result, people of different cultures were brought into closer contact, arousing new interest in multiculturalism, interculturalism, and race relations, and educational institutions began encouraging study abroad for increasing numbers of students. In 1968, Abrams declared that study abroad was
“no longer the province of the few – the well-to-do and the specialist – but is coming to be an accepted instrument for the general education of the many” (in Stitsworth, 1989, p. 213-214).

Abrams’ words proved prophetic. In 2004–05, the most recent academic year for which statistics are available, 205,983 U.S. students studied abroad, a seven percent increase from the prior year (Koh Koh Chin & Bhandari, 2006). As the number of students annually crossing borders has continued to burgeon, and as research from various fields has focused on issues related to the intercultural experience, reentry has claimed heightened importance. At international education conferences each year, reentry seminars and workshops often overflow with administrators seeking strategies to help their students cope with the reentry experience and re-engage with their home culture, campus, and community.

A model that may be helpful to individuals experiencing reentry difficulties is one introduced by social psychologist James Pennebaker (1989, 1997a). Pennebaker proposed a paradigm for helping individuals come to terms with traumatic and/or significant personal experiences that has received widespread empirical support. The experimental treatment involves people disclosing, verbally or in writing, their deepest thoughts and feelings about a traumatic or significant personal experience in their lives.

Pennebaker’s model derives from numerous experimental studies conducted with various populations, and his studies employ a range of assessment measures before, during, and after the treatment. These include
psychological and physiological tests such as EEG, blood pressure, skin conductance measurements, brain waves, self-reports of health and mood, reports involving frequency of visits to health clinics, and more. In the short term, participants often experience distress and negative moods; long term, however, participants feel better, function better, have fewer problems, visit doctors less frequently, and are less absent from work (Pennebaker, 1997a).

Pennebaker's studies have been conducted with a wide range of populations, from college students experiencing the transition from high school, to Holocaust survivors, to spouses of individuals who committed suicide. Approximately 30% of participants realize substantial benefits from disclosure (Pennebaker, 1997); the author speculates that those who don't may either already have existing outlets to discuss their thoughts and feelings, or else they may be so severely distressed that they are “beyond help,” at least beyond the beneficial realm of the disclosure exercise (Pennebaker, 1999).

Importantly, Pennebaker's model is not one of “social support.” Benefits derive from the oral or written articulation of thoughts and feelings about a significant event, rather than from emotional support provided by friends or family. In this sense, Pennebaker's paradigm may offer real advantages to students experiencing reentry problems. Experienced as personal upheaval, reentry shock may not be clearly recognizable to the one undergoing it; “victims” often do not understand why they are experiencing emotional turmoil, and may therefore be unlikely to reach out to others or seek help. If these individuals can be persuaded to disclose their thoughts and feelings throughout the reentry
transition in some form, the exercise may provide clarity and meaning to the reentry experience and thereby alleviate the personal distress they encounter.

This study will apply Pennebaker's disclosure paradigm to the reentry experiences of US students returning from a semester or year abroad. It is hoped that the process of confronting the emotional and cognitive processes involved in reentry will aid students in coping with the transition.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reentry Literature

Among the myriad complex issues related to the intercultural experience, reentry is one of the most compelling. Robert Kohls, a prominent psychologist who specializes in cultural and reentry adjustment, describes the "discovery" of culture shock and reentry shock as "monumental milestones in the development of the intercultural field" (1986, p. xix). Scholars have widely noted the importance of acculturation and repatriation studies in the intercultural literature for their theoretical as well as their applied value.

History of Research

The literature concerning reentry emerged from acculturation research, which focused on the notion of change as a result of contact with different cultures (Sussman, 2000). Kim (1988) noted that the origins of intercultural research lie in the work conducted in the 1930s by anthropologists attached to a "Subcommittee on Acculturation" of the Social Science Research Council. The primary subject of their research was group-level cultural change; this group viewed acculturation as the result of contact between groups of people from different cultures, which prompted changes in either or both groups. However, with the creation of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in 1946, anthropologists Edward T. Hall, Ray Birdwhistell, and George Trager began investigating the effects of intercultural adaptation on the individual (Cox, 2001).
Following the close of World War II, the U.S. government attempted to establish international diplomatic ties with various countries, and government personnel who were sent abroad as part of this mission found themselves unprepared for the cultural differences between home and host cultures and, consequently, for their subsequent difficulties in adapting to the new culture. Realizing that linguistic training alone was not sufficient, FSI anthropologists focused their research on cultural dimensions in order to better prepare diplomats for overseas assignments (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990) and produced a body of research throughout the 1940s and '50s that today still informs intercultural scholarship.

During the 1950s, U.S. businesses began expanding to overseas locations, and U.S. universities initiated overseas exchange and study-abroad programs. In the 1960s, both the Peace Corps and the Aid for International Development were established, sending U.S. professionals and scholars to assist in developing countries while likewise bringing scholars from these same countries to the United States to study agriculture, engineering, and technology.

These international activities prompted an increasing need for research in the intercultural field, especially as government agencies and corporations found their personnel returning prematurely and/or unsuccessfully from assignments abroad (Cox, 2001). During the 1970s, intercultural concerns became "institutionalized" in academia, as courses in psychology, communication, and international business were created and as diversity training broadened the scope of "intercultural" contexts. The 1980s and 1990s were a major growth
period for intercultural research as scholars expanded existing theories to include intercultural contexts, and developed new theories to explain and predict episodes of intercultural interaction, acculturation, and repatriation.

**Acculturation Studies**

Initial acculturation research focused both on the process of adapting to a new cultural environment, and on the “culture shock” that often occurs as part of the adaptation process (Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson, & James-Hughes, 2003). Culture shock is a normal component of intercultural adaptation stemming from the loss of familiar ways of doing and being and the presence of unpredictable, unfamiliar stimuli (Oberg, 1960; P. Adler, 1975; N. Adler, 1981). Sussman (2000) defined culture shock as “an intense, negative affective response, both psychological and physiological, experienced by new expatriates when faced with unfamiliar symbols, roles, relationships, social cognitions, and behavior” (p. 1.) Culture shock can trigger affective, physiological, and cognitive responses in the sojourner. According to P. Adler (1975):

Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability, and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured, or disregarded (p. 13).

Researchers studying intercultural adaptation frequently described the process in stage or phase terms (Adler, 1975; Oberg, 1960; Smalley, 1963) or
depicted the transition in charts or graphs (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955). Culture shock, according to these models, tends to occur after the initial excitement of being in a new culture has passed, and the sojourner begins to notice differences between home and host cultures which can lead to disorientation.

One of the first descriptions of cultural adjustment came from Lysgaard (1955), whose study involving Norwegian Fulbright scholars in the U.S. suggested a process of intercultural adaptation which resembled a “U” curve. In this model, acculturation is portrayed as a “U-curve” temporal process involving an initial elation or “honeymoon” period, a culture shock stage, a recovery stage, and finally, an integration stage, which signifies that acculturation has occurred. Although the hypothesis has received little empirical support (Anderson, 1994; Ward, Okura, & Kennedy, 1998), it is nonetheless widely referred to even today by intercultural trainers. Onwumechili et al. (2003) suggest that the model’s strength lays in its general illustrative nature, rather than its precise depiction of the adaptation process. Similarly, Oberg (1960) proposed a “stage” model of cultural adaptation whose phases mirrored the processes depicted by the U-curve model; other stage/phase models followed.

A prominent acculturation researcher, Berry (1974, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1997, 1999) proposed a model of adaptation that focuses on two opposing dimensions: maintenance of original cultural identity and maintenance of relationships with other groups. According to Berry, these competing “poles” create a series of strategies employed by sojourners during acculturation,
including integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

Kim (1988) developed a “systems theory” of adaptation which characterizes the sojourner as a system interacting with the host environment. The sojourner experiences stress and culture shock during adaptation, and seeks to alleviate this through communication with host culture members. Adjustment occurs through this interaction, and personal growth ultimately results from the stressful encounter and subsequent adjustment process.

Other intercultural adaptation studies have focused on sojourner outcomes (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Church, 1982; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 1996); variables affecting the acculturation process (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Chang, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Ward & Searle, 1991); coping strategies (Anderson, 1994; Berry, 1999); the impact of cultural identity on intercultural adjustment (Adler, 1975; Sussman, 2000, 2001, 2002; Ward & Kennedy, 1993b, 1994; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999); the effect of social support on cultural adjustment (Martin & Harrell, 1996; Ward, 1996); and culture shock (Adler, 1987; Ward, 1996).

Repatriation/Reentry Studies

Austin (1983) suggested that an article published in China in 1925, describing the experiences of Chinese students who had returned from overseas, is the first known work focused on reentry. Gaw (2000) identified a 1944 study by Scheutz, investigating problems of armed forces veterans returning from overseas, as one of the earliest reentry studies. Citron (1996) cited a 1958 article.
by Cajoleas, describing challenges of international teachers who were educated in the U.S., as one of the first reentry studies published in the U.S. Until the 1960s, however, intercultural reentry did not receive much scholarly attention.

In 1963, Gullahorn and Gullahorn published a landmark study documenting the repatriation experiences of American professors, students and scholars, which suggested that reentry was an extension of intercultural adjustment and should be examined within the framework of the entire sojourn. Extending Lysgaard’s (1955) “U-curve” model, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) introduced the “W-curve” to include the repatriation process. Although the W-curve model has been found by various researchers (Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Brislin, 1981; Sussman, 2001) to have significant shortcomings, the study was important in two ways: first, like the U-curve, it had illustrative value, and second, it marked the first extension of intercultural adjustment research into the reentry experience (Onwumechili et al., 2003). Following Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) study, reentry emerged as a topic of widespread interest throughout fields of international education, communication, psychology, and anthropology.

Theoretical Perspectives on Repatriation

Sussman (2001) proposed a typology of repatriation literature based on the way scholars perceive reentry: similar to other kinds of transition processes; unlike most transition experiences but akin to acculturation; or unique, sharing some characteristics of acculturation but having distinct properties of its own.

In Sussman’s schema, those who view “all transitions, adjustments, and adaptations as variants of the same processes, such that the underlying
mechanisms for overseas transitions, repatriation transitions, or domestic geographic transitions are the same” (p. 111) are considered “reductionists.” In the sense that transition experiences are thought to share certain commonalities, sojourners returning from abroad might therefore be conceptually or operationally treated by scholars as being like first-year college students, newlyweds, or new parents, which, Sussman argues, overlooks important distinctions. Scholars in this tradition include Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall (1992) in their investigations of corporate sojourners; and Anderson (1994) and Bennett (1977) in their examinations of psychological adjustment and coping strategies.

A second approach suggests that cultural transitions are different from other kinds of transitions, but that acculturation and reacculturation involve comparable processes. In this perspective, the focus is on the response to changing environments and different norms governing appropriate behavior, both in the initial cultural adjustment and in the reentry transition. Harris and Moran (1979), in their investigation of overseas transitions and the role social support plays, along with Furnham and Bochner's (1986) and Taft's (1977) studies emphasizing social and cultural learning, are representative of this position. Sussman (2001) finds shortcomings with this notion, noting that if the cultural environment itself were key to the adjustment process, reentry problems would be less widespread. In her view, the home culture environment is unlikely to have changed drastically during the sojourn; therefore if the environment itself played a critical role in adjustment, repatriation would theoretically be fairly problem-free.
Instead, Sussman suggests that the critical variable in repatriation lies in the sojourner's perception of her or his identity.

A third approach, according to Sussman, casts the reentry experience as markedly different from other transitions. Adler's (1981) predictive model of reacculturation coping strategies acknowledges the uniqueness of the reentry transition, as do Rogers and Ward's (1993) investigations of the effect that expectations have on repatriation. Sussman proposed a model of cultural identity change that accounts for the distinctiveness of the repatriation experience as well as the problems encountered as part of reentry. In her model, identity salience, cultural adaptation, and sense of self mix to produce four distinct kinds of changes in a sojourner’s cultural identity, which are not “activated” until reentry. The “reentry-is-distinct” tradition features descriptive and empirical research that demonstrate the uniqueness of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes triggered during repatriation (Sussman, 2001).

The Reentry Experience

Citron (1996, p. 1) defined reentry as encompassing the “challenges, new understandings, and personal growth that travelers encounter when they return to and resume living in their home culture after an extended overseas living experience.” The process can involve disorientation and confusion (Martin & Harrell, 1996), and is often described as being more problematic than the initial transition to the host culture, in part because sojourners do not expect to encounter difficulties re-adjusting to home (N. Adler, 1981; Brislin & Pedersen, 1976; Howard, 1980b; Sussman, 1986, 2000).
Perhaps one of the best descriptions of the reentry experience came from Sidney Werkman (1980). Werkman conducted studies involving four groups of American subjects: adolescents and adults he interviewed during consultation trips to international schools overseas; university students who had lived overseas at least one year with whom Werkman conducted extensive tape-recorded interviews; patients in his clinical practice whose problems were associated with living overseas; and a research sample of 172 adolescents living abroad which he compared with control group of 163 adolescents in the U.S.

According to Werkman (1980), the process of reentry begins with the initial departure for the intercultural experience, which involves separation and loss that have important consequences for later adaptation. In going abroad, the sojourners must relinquish ties with their family and friends and find overseas substitutes for their U.S. "sociocultural supports." They must adapt to a different culture and environment, and establish new friendships, all the while knowing that they will eventually return home.

At the same time, leaving home "frees a person from participation in family and community problems. He [sic] cannot visit aging parents or comfort lonely aunts, nor can he [sic] participate in church committees and local political campaigns" (Werkman, 1980, p. 240). As a result, Werkman suggested, sojourners lose touch with issues or problems that would be relevant back home, and develop new interests

\[\ldots\] based on an entirely different premise, that of being an observer and guest. As a visitor, his [sic] attention tends to be drawn to the timeless,
proud expressions of a host country's culture – art, music, architecture, theatre, holidays – rather than the mundane, daily ones. He [sic] loses contact with the anchoring points of daily life both in the United States and overseas (p. 240).

Moreover, Werkman suggested that sojourners learn “special competencies”—conversing knowledgeably about museums, politics, and restaurants; using different modes of transportation; interacting tactfully with different peoples—which make life abroad easier and more successful. These skills ultimately contribute to “an aura of distinctiveness” (p. 238) in people who have lived overseas.

Having developed new interests, a new sophistication, a new way of life, and new friendships, sojourners often find themselves at a loss upon returning home. Werkman argued that much of experience is nonverbal, and that the difficulty of “translating” into words certain exotic smells, tastes, sights, and feelings encountered abroad, which influenced the sojourner's self-definition and consciousness, erected “painful barriers to comfortable communication” with family and friends. Furthermore, the special skills learned abroad seemed to have little use back home; and if the sojourner had not kept up with national and local events in the U.S., s/he found it difficult to regroup. Finally, returning sojourners once again had to relinquish new-found friendships and ways of life, leaving behind unfinished tasks and goals. Werkman believed this resulted in personal upheaval reminiscent of a grieving process. He concluded, “Though most returning Americans seem to make a good surface adjustment to this
country, that adjustment may, at times, cover over a host of barely contained feelings of uncertainty, alienation, anger, and disappointment” (238-239).

A Typology of Reentry Problems

As Werkman's (1980) description suggests, reentry shock manifests itself in various ways. Locke and Feinsod (1982) contend that reentry problems may include

... hostility toward American culture and a romantic idealization of the travel experience; the feeling that one has no role or position of importance at home; feelings of alienation or estrangement from Americans; anger, depression or anxiety regarding changes in home life which occurred during travel; and preoccupation with one's travel experiences (p. 818).

Intercultural researchers have identified a variety of reentry challenges that they classified into distinct categories. Published more than thirty years ago for international educators working with foreign and study-abroad students, Asuncion-Lande's (1976) “Inventory of Reentry Problems” was a comprehensive typology of problems anticipated by international students returning to their home countries after studying in the U.S. Asuncion-Lande identified six broad domains of reentry difficulties: social, cultural, educational, linguistic, political, and professional. Social challenges involve the sojourner's attempts to re-establish social networks, and include feelings of alienation/marginalization and frustration at differences in values/beliefs/attitudes between the home and host cultures. Cultural adjustments involve confusion over identity. Educational problems occur
in attempting to re-adjust to the home country’s educational system. Linguistic problems typically entail re-adjusting to speech patterns back home, when one’s own have been changed by the language and informal speech of the host country. Political adjustments involve negotiating the difference between a new “global” perspective on political, social, and economic issues acquired abroad, and the prevailing political climate of the home country. Professional challenges involve workplace issues, such as uncertainty over how to translate scientific terminology learned abroad into one’s native language back home.

Similarly, Brislin (1974) suggested four “levels” of reentry problems: personal, social, cultural, and political. *Personal* problems involve perceived changes to one’s goals and plans, and sadness at leaving friends and adventures behind. *Social* difficulties include isolation, boredom, loneliness, alienation, resentment/jealously from others, feelings of superiority, and inability to communicate to others what they learned from being abroad. *Cultural* challenges stem from being more informed, appreciative, or critical about one’s own country, “which may have made it more difficult . . . to fit in with those at home” (Citron, 1996, p. 6); and *political* problems arise from the returning sojourner’s difficulty in reconciling newly acquired perspectives on world and national politics with what s/he finds back home.

More recently, Citron (1996) employed open-ended surveys to identify major categories of reentry problems experienced by US undergraduates and determined the challenges could be classified into five major areas: loss of
relationships, language problems, cultural frustrations, identity stress, and inability to share/communicate their experiences of studying abroad.

A review of extant literature reveals three broad categories into which reentry difficulties may be classified, and which provide a framework for the problems described in this paper. *Identity confusion/distress* stems from perceived changes to an individual's personal, social, or cultural identity following an overseas sojourn, and as such presents challenges in re-engaging with the home culture. *Psychological/emotional* difficulties include depression, anxiety, loneliness, and related individual problems. *Interpersonal/relational problems* involve challenges in returnees' significant personal relationships with friends, family, romantic partners, and others.

This typology is derived as a useful means of framing, organizing, and contextualizing the discussion of reentry difficulties. It is important to note, however, that category boundaries are not necessarily discrete and that the problems described therein may be influenced by problems associated with other kinds of difficulties. Identity confusion, for example, may contribute to personal distress and could likewise lead to challenges in interpersonal relationships.

*Identity Confusion/Distress.* A number of researchers (Gaw, 2000; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kittredge 1988; Sussman, 2001; Werkman, 1980) suggest that reentry is problematic in part because it involves issues of identity and personal change, a sometimes painful part of human growth and development. Indeed, Sussman (2001) argued that sojourners who experience changes in identity experience a much more difficult reentry than those who
don't, and that one of the strongest predictors of "repatriation distress" is cultural identity change.

According to Kim (2000), cultural identity is created and maintained through a complex process of "continuing interpretive activity internal to individuals as a result of their acculturation experience" (p. 48). Cultural identity represents an inseparable relationship between ingrained cultural patterns and an individual's sense of self. Sussman (2000) refers to cultural identity as being a kind of "psychological counterpoint" (p. 4) to "national" identity (American, British, Japanese, etc.), involving a sense not only of nation-state and shared geography but also a common language and shared notions of the self.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) were among the first to conclude, based on results of their landmark study examining the reentry experience of returning American scholars, that difficulties in re-adjusting to life at home following an intercultural sojourn, particularly amongst the younger returnees, stemmed from perceived changes in identity:

"Particularly for those who had not yet "found themselves" in their own culture, the resolution of their identity conflict abroad often meant they had become zealously converted to new values, and they were reluctant to relinquish the security they had finally achieved (p. 40)."

Less than a decade later, Brein and David (1971) realized similar findings in their examination of Peace Corps volunteers' return experiences. In their study, Peace Corps participants encountered and assumed new values and beliefs during their stints abroad, and upon returning home became aware of
their own previously unnoticed, taken-for-granted behaviors and beliefs which reflected the home culture's ideology. The returnees found it difficult to reconcile these and had trouble re-adjusting to life back home. Similarly, Gleason (1973) interviewed American college students returning from abroad and found that they experienced a number of problems, including confusion about their personal identity.

While likewise concluding that the intercultural sojourn and reentry transition may result in significant personal change, P. Adler (1975) was among the first to suggest that the experience was not merely problematic but positive—"an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth" (p. 14). According to Adler, a "successful" cross-cultural experience was defined by "a movement of personality and identity to new consciousness of values, attitude, and understandings" (p.14).

The transitional process which occurs in the cross-cultural experience is a depth experience. It marks the growth and development of personality along a number of dimensions. At the perceptual level, it represents the movement of personality through a symbiotic state of single reality awareness to a differential state whereby there is an awareness and acceptance of the interdependence of many realities. Emotionally, the transition marks the change from dependence on reinforcements to independence, while in the largest sense of self-concept, it is the change from a monocultural to an intercultural frame of reference. Significantly,
transitional experiences can be essential to a working through the self-concept (P. Adler, 1975, p. 15).

Adler concluded that a transitional experience such as this involves a “journey into self” (p. 22) and that significant personal change can result from the intercultural and reentry experience.

An experimental study by Nash (1976), designed to assess the impact of a year of study abroad on American students in France, revealed that the study abroad experience engendered increased personal autonomy, producing an “expansion” or “differentiation” of self. Locke and Feinsod (1982) reported similar findings in their study of young adults traveling abroad. According to these authors, “... readjustment problems are likely to be greater among those who have not yet ‘found themselves’ in their own culture and who ‘resolved’ their identity crisis while abroad” (p. 818).

Using a combination of questionnaires and interviews, LaBrack (as cited in Sussman, 1986) investigated the experiences of returning Japanese students and identified a number of reentry issues, including changes in personal values, which contributed to difficulties in re-adjusting to the home culture. In a later presentation, LaBrack (1985) argued:

... for the proverbial average sojourner, a reentry is not a return to normal, or at least not in the usual sense of a resumption of earlier goals, values, and perspectives ... The underlying reason why a person sometimes experiences difficulty readjusting is precisely that they do not
feel normal, nor may they necessarily desire to resume a condition of
existence which they left (p. 10).

Likewise, Uehara (1986) conducted a study comparing the re-adjustment
experiences of U.S. students who had spent a substantial length of time
overseas with U.S. student domestic travelers. He found that the intercultural
sojourners experienced reentry shock, whereas the domestic sojourners did not;
and that changes in the returnees' values and beliefs, which occurred as a result
of their experiences abroad, posed significant problems during reentry. Uehara
suggested that sojourn and reentry experiences were essentially vehicles of
increased cultural and self-awareness.

Raschio (1987) published a descriptive study examining the reentry
experiences of 11 American college students who had spent between three
months and one year in Europe or South America. The author, who employed a
self-designed questionnaire and also conducted oral interviews with participants,
concluded that all participants experienced reentry shock to some degree,
stemming primarily from the acquisition of new perspectives in the foreign culture
and conflicts that arose as participants became aware of changes in themselves
and others. Participants also reported a new sense of independence and
autonomy, and increased clarity about their own values and beliefs.

A descriptive study by Kittredge (1988), in which the author interviewed
American sojourners returning from abroad, revealed that the returnees felt their
self-identities were different as a result of their overseas experiences.
Consequently, the returnees found it hard to fit back into the American
mainstream lifestyle, instead identifying with non-majority groups in a way they had not prior to living abroad.

Stitsworth (1989) conducted an experimental study in which he documented personality changes in adolescents who traveled to Japan for 1-month homestays, which suggests that an overseas sojourn need not necessarily be lengthy in order for significant changes to occur. Participants took the California Personality Inventory three times: six weeks prior to departure, on their last day abroad, and four months after they returned. Results revealed that the personalities of the sojourners abroad changed with regard to three factors: communality (related to how conventional or unconventional a person is); flexibility (adaptability of thought and behavior), and achievement via independence (which, according to Stitsworth, purports "to measure those factors of interest and motivation that facilitate achievement in any setting where autonomy and independence are positive behaviors" p. 222). Intercultural travelers’ scores indicated that they became more daring, courageous, pleasure-seeking, flexible, and independent, and that they adopted less "conventional" attitudes than control group members.

Significantly, Stitsworth found that certain personality changes didn’t occur immediately but rather emerged after a period of time; whereas changes that did appear immediately seemed to disappear over time. The author suggests this provides a general indication that an exchange experience may require a certain amount of "post-exchange processing time during which exchange participants assimilate the experiences into their personalities" (p. 223).
A descriptive survey by Stelling (1991, cited in Gaw, 2000) revealed that returnees were likely to experience a different cultural identification than the one they held prior to going abroad. Kidder (1992) likewise found that Japanese university students who had lived abroad struggled with how to incorporate the physical, behavioral, communicative style, and other changes experienced as a result of the sojourn into their lives back home.

In a descriptive cross-national study examining the experiences of high school exchange students who had spent a year abroad in a homestay, Wilson (1993) found that reentry was problematic for the majority of participants due to perceived identity changes. Participants – from Australia, Ecuador, Sweden, and Norway – responded to survey questions derived from pilot study interviews, and reported that coping with personal change and deciding on an identity were particularly challenging.

Sussman (2001) examined the effects of preparedness, perceived changes in cultural identity, and attributions of causality on the reentry experience of 44 American corporate managers who had been overseas on assignment for a time period of six months to four years. Using an author-designed “Repatriation Experience Assessment Scale,” Sussman found that those who had experienced perceived changes in cultural identity encountered the most problematic reentry adjustment.

The descriptive and empirical studies described above suggest that intercultural reentry entails significant transformations in sojourners’ personal, social, and/or cultural identity. Although these changes may ultimately be
perceived as positive indicators of maturation and growth, they can also create
crash and contribute to difficulties in re-adjusting to, and re-engaging with,
the home culture following an intercultural sojourn. As such, identity
confusion/distress constitutes a major challenge for returnees during the reentry
transition.

_Psychological/Emotional Distress._ A second category of problems relates
to emotional upheaval and psychological distress experienced during reentry.
Sahin’s (1990, cited in Gaw, 2000) study investigating the experiences of Turkish
secondary school students returning from a sojourn abroad found that 18% were
suffering from clinical depression and 45% reported problem anxiety compared
with a control group in which 11% of participants experienced depression, and
28% reported problem anxiety.

An examination by Rogers and Ward (1993) of the relationship between
expectations, experiences and psychological adjustment during cross-cultural
adaptation and reentry lends support to Sahin’s (cited in Gaw, 2000) findings.
Twenty high school students from New Zealand who studied abroad completed
two questionnaires, one during their placement and one following their return.
Results suggest that when participants’ reentry experiences were more
problematic than anticipated, they experienced psychological distress; significant
correlations between reentry problems and depression (r = .37) and anxiety (r =
.52) were found.

One of the most compelling reentry studies in recent years is Gaw’s
(2000) investigation of the influence of reentry experiences of 66 American
college study-abroad participants on self-reports of problems, willingness to see a counselor, and utilization of student support services. Gaw found that students who experienced a high level of reentry shock were “more likely to report more personal adjustment and shyness problems/concerns than were returnees experiencing a low level of reverse culture shock” (p. 99). Surprisingly, Gaw’s research also revealed a negative correlation between student support services usage and reentry shock. Although it seems reasonable to anticipate that students encountering greater reentry difficulties would be more likely to utilize such services, Gaw’s study found just the opposite; students classified with higher reentry shock accessed student services less often than students with lower reentry shock. Gaw concluded:

The overseas-experienced American college student may indeed experience reverse culture shock. If so, this student is likely to experience depression, alienation, isolation, loneliness, general anxiety, speech anxiety, friendship difficulties, shyness concerns, and feelings of inferiority (p. 101).

Furukawa’s (1997) longitudinal study of 199 Japanese high school and college students who participated in homestays abroad revealed similar problems associated with the reentry experience. The author found that students experienced substantial emotional distress, even up to six months after they had returned home. Furukawa concluded that readjustment to the home culture may involve “significant psychosocial problems” (p. 263) for the returnee and found
correlations among the personality trait of neuroticism, the emotion-focused coping style, and elevated distress levels of returnees.

The studies by Sahin (cited in Gaw, 2000), Rogers and Ward (1993), Furukawa (1997), and Gaw (2000) described above indicate that reverse culture shock can cause emotional and psychological distress in the returning sojourner, a finding echoed in almost every empirical and descriptive study involving reentry. Hence, reentry distress poses a major challenge not only for the returnee but also for his/her support networks—personal or institutional.

*Interpersonal Relationship Problems.* In addition to identity crises and emotional distress, returning intercultural sojourners may also encounter relational problems; research has revealed links between the reentry experience and conflicts in interpersonal relationships with family members, friends, and colleagues. Gaw’s (2000) investigation, for example, found that, in addition to emotional problems such as anxiety, hostility, and depression, returnees may experience shyness and speech anxiety, suggesting that their ability to connect interpersonally may be impacted.

An early study by Gama and Pedersen (1977), in which the authors conducted interviews with 31 returned Brazilian scholars who had undertaken graduate studies in the United States, likewise revealed relational problems during reentry. Returnees experienced moderate problems in re-adjusting to family life, citing value conflicts and lack of privacy as overriding factors. Moreover, 68% of the scholars encountered value conflicts in their professional roles, claiming that their expectations for their professional roles weren’t met.
Corey's (1979, cited in Sussman, 1986) examination of Saudi Arabians returning from graduate studies in the US likewise revealed family and professional relationship difficulties, which the returnees attempted to ameliorate by adopting a "conservative mask" in their interactions.

Similar relationship problems were identified by Martin (1986a) in her study of 173 American students returning from homestays in Turkey and Germany. According to Martin (1986a), empirical findings from various studies indicated that a returning sojourner's interaction with friends and family was a crucial variable during reentry. Through analysis of a questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions, Martin found that returnees reported a positive change in their relationships with parents and siblings, but a negative change in their relationships with their friends. Seiter and Waddell (1989) likewise reported a negative correlation between reentry shock and general relationship satisfaction, such that the more reentry shock a person experienced, the more dissatisfied they were with their relationships in general.

The literature reveals a broad array of problems associated with the intercultural reentry. Identity confusion and distress, emotional/psychological distress, and interpersonal problems represent significant challenges facing returnees as they begin the process of re-adjusting to life back home following an intercultural sojourn.

Variables Affecting the Reentry Experience

Research on reentry variables has produced inconsistent findings. Age, gender, length of sojourn, similarity of home and host cultures, amount of contact
the sojourner has with home culture members and events while abroad, prior experience abroad, level of “immersion” in the host culture, and the expectations/preparedness for reentry are among myriad factors researchers have examined.

Martin and Harrell (1996) reviewed existing research on variables which influence the reentry experience, and identified three broad categories: sojourner background, host country environment, and reentry environment factors. Sojourner background variables include religion, age, nationality, gender, ethnicity, personality, prior experience(s) abroad, and personal expectations. Host environment factors involve the degree of similarity/difference between the home and host cultures; amount of contact maintained with family and friends while abroad; length of sojourn; and level of adaptation or “integration” in the host culture. The primary reentry environment variable is the social support network available to the sojourner on her/his return.

Sojourner Characteristics

Gender. Gender appears to have some effect on the experience of reentry. Studies by N. Adler (1984, 1986); Brabant et al. (1990), Gama and Pedersen (1977); and Harrell (1994, cited in Martin & Harrell, 1996) suggest that females may encounter more reentry problems than males. Kim (1988, cited in Martin & Harrell, 1996), however, cautions that gender findings in intercultural research are often confounded with other variables, and suggests that these results may stem from intervening variables (e.g., spousal roles) rather than from gender itself. A review of reentry literature indicates that scholars have not
identified precisely how or why gender influences the reentry experience; nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that females may have more trouble re-adjusting than males.

Age. Studies involving age have, like gender, produced inconsistent results. Some indicate that younger returnees experience more problems during reentry than older, more established sojourners (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1986a and 1986b; Tamara & Furnham, 1993). In contrast, Brabant et al. (1990), Uehara (1990), and Furukawa (1997) found no relationship between age and reentry adaptation. Perhaps, as with gender, these inconsistencies may be accounted for by the presence of intervening variables. Tamara and Furnham (1993), for example, studied the effects of overseas experiences on returning Japanese children and concluded that not only age, but also developmental stage and amount of exposure to the host culture, play a role in the re-adaptation process. Moreover, Martin and Harrell (1996) suggest that younger sojourners may experience problems in reentry because they are more likely to be “changed” by the intercultural experience than adults, whose identities at the time of the sojourn are typically more fully and firmly established. If so, age would not be the only factor contributing to difficulties in re-adjusting; identity may be interacting with age to produce the effect.

Host Environment Factors

Other factors that have been examined in relation to reentry shock include length of sojourn, level of “integration” or adaptation abroad, degree of similarity
in the home and host cultures, amount of contact with home culture members, and prior experiences abroad.

*Contact with Home Culture While Abroad.* Researchers suggest that sojourners who maintain some contact with friends and family and who keep up with events taking place back home tend to experience an easier reentry than those who don’t. There is some empirical support for this notion (Brabant et al., 1990; Martin, 1986b).

*Differences in Home/Host Cultures.* Investigations by Locke and Feinsod (1982) and Uehara (1986) suggest that the greater the differences between home and host cultures, the more problematic the reentry experience. Researchers speculate that this may be due to the fact that sojourners may alter personal values, beliefs, and behaviors more drastically to adapt to cultures which are very different from their own; which would imply a more difficult transition back to the home culture.

Conversely, however, in a study involving two hundred corporate and governmental employees returning to Canada following overseas work assignments averaging two years in length, N. Adler (1981) found no relationship between culture “distance” and reentry problems. The author cautioned that, although it may seem logical to assume a more problematic repatriation experience in persons returning from a culture very different from their home culture (e.g., Saudi Arabia compared with Canada) than from a more “similar” culture (e.g., Britain and Canada), the research does not support this assumption. Consequently, caution is advised in making definitive conclusions.
about the relationship between home/host culture differences, and reentry difficulties.

*Level of Adaptation/Integration to Host Culture.* The sojourner's level of adjustment/integration to the host culture is a factor that continually challenges researchers, and different studies have produced contradictory results. For example, Harris and Moran (1991) and Sussman (1986, 2000), among others, argued that the better the adaptation to the host culture, the more difficult the reentry experience. Results from two empirical studies (Harris & Moran, 1991; Sussman, 2001) provide support to this claim. Indeed, Sussman (2000) proposed an "identity change model" which predicts that "successful adaptation to the host culture presages a significant change in one's behavior, cognitions, and . . . cultural identity. The effect of successful adaptation overseas would result in a more difficult repatriation period" (p. 120).

In contrast, N. Adler (1981) with corporate employees, and Furukawa (1997) with Japanese students, found that the better the adjustment to the host culture, the easier the reentry experience. In fact, Furukawa found that "maladjustment in the foreign community was the strongest predictor of maladjustment six months after returning to Japan" (p. 263). The author concludes that this may be because healthy, flexible, and adaptive individuals tend to remain so under challenging circumstances in both cross-cultural adaptation and reentry, while non-adaptive, inflexible people will likewise remain the same under these circumstances. Furukawa's explanation suggests that
adaptation and reentry problems may be a function of individual personality rather than level of adjustment to the host culture.

Alternatively, perhaps the differences in results occur because "level of adaptation" may be conceived and operationalized in varying ways. A study by Brabant et al. (1990) provides a good example of the importance of clearly defining "degrees" of immersion: the authors found differences in the reentry experiences of those returnees who had adapted "very well" to life abroad as opposed to those who reported adapting "fairly well."

Expectations. A number of authors (N. Adler, 1976; Brislin & Van Buren, 1974; Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Sussman, 2001; Westwood, 1984) suggest that returning sojourners don't anticipate difficulties in re-adjusting to their home culture, and that the surprise of reentry shock can create or exacerbate problems. In their investigation of the relationship between expectations, experiences, and intercultural and reentry adjustment, Rogers and Ward (1993) found that psychological distress in participants was associated with major discrepancies between expectations and actual experiences of the reentry transition when the reality was more problematic than anticipated. The authors also pointed out that when substantial differences between expectations and experience were due to a more positive reality than anticipated, psychological well-being was enhanced.

Likewise, Sussman's (2001) study investigating effects of preparedness on reentry experiences of American corporate managers whose professional assignments had sent them abroad for at least six months suggested that
expectations may indeed play a role. Results indicated that the participants who were the least “prepared” for reentry (i.e., those who didn’t know or understand much about the process) experienced the most problematic reentry transitions, compared with those who were better prepared.

Reentry Environment Variables

According to Martin and Harrell (1996), returning U.S. students reported that their relationships with friends and, in some cases, with family, provided them with social support that was helpful to their repatriation transition (Martin, 1985, 1986a, 1986b). Unfortunately, institutional support from colleges and universities is not always as forthcoming; institutions often demonstrate inflexibility in transfer of credit, financial aid, and registration deadlines (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992). Returning professionals reported similar difficulties in re-integrating to their work environment, saying that they felt out of touch with the home office, the environment was not supportive, and that the skills they had learned overseas were not appreciated, creating additional difficulties during the reentry transition (Martin & Harrell, 1996).

Summary

The reentry experience can involve significant personal upheaval for the returning sojourner across a variety of domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. As the research described in this paper has illustrated, the repatriation transition is associated with identity confusion, psychological and emotional distress, and relational problems, among other challenges. While reentry is a normal “part and parcel” of intercultural sojourns and may be critical
to the personal development of the returning sojourner (P. Adler, 1975), the experience can often prove problematic and painful. College students who take part in study abroad programs may be especially vulnerable to difficulties during reentry, as many of these participants are likely to be at an age and developmental stage in which their sense of personal, social, and cultural identity is still emerging.

Gaw's (2000) study, described earlier in this paper, suggested that among college study abroad participants, the higher the "level" of reentry shock, as indicated by higher scores on the Reentry Shock Scale (Seiter & Waddell, 1989), the more personal and interpersonal adjustment problems occur, as measured by the Personal Problems Inventory (Cash, Begley, McCown, & Weise, 1975). Alarmingly, Gaw's findings also indicated that the very students experiencing the greatest personal trauma may be the least likely to seek help from a counselor or administrator. According to Gaw, students experiencing problematic reentry transitions "may not seek help through available student support services if his/her reverse culture shock experience is significantly distressful. This puts the student at risk academically and developmentally" (p. 101).

Gaw's (2000) study highlights the challenges facing not only students returning from abroad, but international education professionals as well. In recent years, these administrators have sought to identify ways to assist returning program participants, establishing "reentry workshops," furnishing a variety of informative materials on the subject, and providing venues for returning students to meet with each other and with outbound students to discuss their experiences.
abroad. If Gaw's (2000) research is indicative, however, those students suffering the most may not take part in or benefit from these activities.

A model that might help returnees during repatriation but which has not yet been utilized is J. W. Pennebaker's (1989, 1997a) disclosure paradigm, which involves experimental participants writing or talking about their deepest thoughts and feelings about a significant or traumatic life experience. Pennebaker's model offers a potential measure of "self-help" that is simple, inexpensive, reliable, and psychologically sound, and moreover can provide insight to "helpers" (such as program administrators) about the sufferer's status.

This study will apply Pennebaker's disclosure model to the experiences of college students returning from a semester or year abroad. The experiment should both contribute to theory-building, an important goal of dissertation research, and furnish practical, much-needed support to those experiencing distress. Ultimately, if the treatment proves successful, the investigator would hope to see the model incorporated as an integral component of college and university study-abroad programs.

Pennebaker's Research Paradigm

The beauty of narrative is that it allows us to tie all of the changes in our life into a broad comprehensive story. That is, in the same story we can talk both about the cause of the event and its many implications. Much as in any story there can be overarching themes, plots, and subplots – many of them arranged logically and/or hierarchically. Through this process, the many facets of the presumed single event are organized into a more coherent whole.

Emotional expression has historically been considered an important factor contributing to physical and mental health. Psychologists have long viewed the repression or inhibition of emotions as detrimental, and the expression of emotions as salutary, to the health and well-being of individuals (Smyth, 1998). Work by J. W. Pennebaker and colleagues (e.g., Harber & Pennebaker, 1992; Pennebaker, 1989, 1993a, 1993b, 1997a, 1997b; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker & O’Heeron, 1984) has refined and furnished important empirical support to this notion.

The research paradigm developed by Pennebaker enables scientific investigation of the effects of disclosure on mental and physical health. In a number of controlled studies, and across a diverse range of populations, participants assigned to experimental conditions have been asked to disclose their deepest thoughts and feelings about a traumatic experience in their life, especially one they have not disclosed before, while control participants write or talk about trivial topics, e.g., their plans for the day (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992; Spera, Buhrfeind, & Pennebaker, 1994). According to Deters (2001), research suggests that childhood traumas are highly correlated with health problems, especially if the traumas have not previously been disclosed. Recent or current traumas, as Pennebaker’s work has demonstrated, are likewise associated with increased psychological and health problems. In numerous studies conducted by Pennebaker and colleagues, results generally indicate that participants who wrote or talked about their thoughts and feelings regarding significant or

Relevance to Communication

In its simplest conceptualization, the Pennebaker paradigm might be viewed as a “pure form” of interpersonal communication – the disclosure exercise is virtually devoid of contextual elements that normally influence an individual’s words and actions. In this sense, the experiment is analogous to many interpersonal experiments which take place in laboratory or laboratory-like settings, rather than in “real-world” (naturalistic) scenarios. Pennebaker’s paradigm works in part because it doesn’t require impression management – participants disclose their deepest thoughts and emotions in an evaluation-free environment. In a perfect interpersonal relationship, similar disclosure could take place, but because of self-preservation, most individuals choose what they will and won’t share with others – even their nearest and dearest. The writing exercise provides an opportunity to delve deeply into internal cognitive and affective elements without fear of reprisal.

Benefits of Disclosure

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Pennebaker’s paradigm is its widespread success across a diverse range of populations. Individuals who have experienced extreme trauma, such as Holocaust survivors (Pennebaker, Barger, & Tiebout, 1989), and relatives of suicide or accident victims (Pennebaker &
O’Heeron, 1984) have demonstrated psychological and/or physiological improvements. So have people whose significant personal experiences are not, as Deters (2001) describes, outside the range of normal experience, such as new college students adjusting to the transition from home to university life (Pennebaker et al., 1990) and laid-off employees coping with job loss (Spera et al., 1994). According to Pennebaker (1999), positive effects have been found in different socio-economic and ethnic groups in the U.S. and likewise in cross-cultural samples (e.g., Mexico City, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and French-speaking Belgium).

Research suggests that participants assigned to the treatment condition often experience short-term distress during or immediately following the writing/talking exercise: Their affect tends to be negative during or just after disclosure (Pennebaker, 1997b; Pennebaker et al., 1990; Smyth, 1998; Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999). However, over the long term, experimental participants benefit across a variety of outcome measures. Kunkel (2000) described these outcomes as taking the form of: fewer visits to their doctor or health center, enhanced physiological functioning (e.g., immune benefits, decreased negative physical symptoms, hepatitis B antibody levels, etc.), and behavioral markers (higher grades; decreased absenteeism from work; decreased distress levels, negative affect, and depression; greater insight into problems) which indicate personal improvement.

**Fewer Health Center Visits.** Results from several studies suggest that experimental participants make fewer visits to their physicians or health care
centers following disclosure, signifying overall better general health than they had prior to the experiment. An early study by Pennebaker & Beall (1986), for example, revealed that among 46 introductory psychology students, participants who wrote about traumatic or significant experiences paid fewer visits to the health center, compared with control group participants, in the six months following the study. The authors reported that participants found the exercise meaningful and valuable; indeed, 98% indicated that given the chance to take part again, they would do so. Following this 1986 study, a number of similar experiments (Greenberg, Wortman, & Stone, 1996; Krantz & Pennebaker, 1996; Pennebaker et al., 1989; Pennebaker et al., 1990; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker et al., 1988) likewise found that participants assigned to the experimental condition visited their health center or doctor less frequently in the weeks and months following the writing exercise.

Enhanced Physiological Functioning. The Pennebaker paradigm has positive effects on health. Working with healthy undergraduates, Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser (1988) assigned fifty participants to either the control or the experimental condition. Over four consecutive days, students in the experimental group wrote for 15–20 minutes about traumatic experiences while control subjects wrote about trivial topics. Following the study, experimental participants demonstrated improvements in cellular immune function, specifically, in helper T cell growth.

Other studies have similarly revealed enhanced immune function resulting from the writing exercise: in increases in helper T lymphocyte cells (Petrie,
Booth, & Pennebaker, 1998); in liver enzyme levels (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992); and in antibody responses to both hepatitis B vaccinations (Petrie, Booth, Pennebaker, Davison, & Thomas, 1995) and the Epstein-Barr virus (Esterling, Antoni, Kumar, & Schneiderman, 1990; Esterling, Antoni, Fletcher, Margulies, & Schneiderman, 1994).

According to Kunkel (2000), studies by Hughes, Uhlmann, and Pennebaker (1994) and Pennebaker et al. (1987) suggest that emotional disclosure also seems to cause health-promoting changes in skin conductance level and heart rate activity. Improvements in conditions such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis have likewise been observed. A study by Smyth, Stone, Hurewitz, and Kaell (1999) revealed that, four months after participation in the study, experimental patients suffering from asthma experienced heightened lung function, and rheumatoid arthritis patients demonstrated improvements in “overall disease activity” (p. 1304). On the whole, nearly half (47.1%) of the experimental participants experienced health benefits as a result of the study.

**Behavioral Markers Indicating Improvements.** In addition to health benefits, experimental participants writing about traumatic topics have realized improvements in what Kunkel (2000) referred to as “behavioral markers.” One such marker is grade point average: students assigned to the experimental condition in three separate studies (Cameron & Nicholls, 1998; Pennebaker et al., 1990; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996) experienced slight increases in grade point averages following participation.
In the 1990 study, authors demonstrated the effectiveness of the writing paradigm among first-semester students adjusting to college. Participants were assigned to experimental (writing about the transition to college) or control (writing about their day’s activities) conditions. The writing task was staggered over time; subjects in both conditions were divided into groups writing over a 3-day period during the 1st, 5th, 9th, or 14th week of classes. Results indicated that participants in the experimental group visited the health center fewer times following the study than the control group, and that the mean GPAs of experimental subjects increased very slightly from first to second semester, whereas controls subjects’ dropped (from 2.79 to 2.64). However, it is important to note that these results indicate a trend, rather than a significantly significant difference. Interestingly, the study revealed virtually no “wave” effects – whether experimental subjects wrote about their college transition in the first week or the fourth month of college, the experience was beneficial.

Another behavioral outcome resulting from the writing paradigm was discovered in a study of university employees writing about traumatic experiences (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992). Experimental participants showed decreased absenteeism in the six months following the study, as well as improvements in health and self-reported emotional well-being.

The writing exercise may even enhance individuals’ chances of finding a job after being laid off, according to a study by Spera et al. (1994). Working with 65 professionals who had recently lost their job with a large computer and electronics firm, the authors found that those who wrote about their thoughts and
feelings connected to the job loss were re-employed faster than those who wrote about trivial topics or those who didn’t write at all. The authors ruled out the possibility that increased effort by experimental participants was responsible for the surprising results; experimental and control group members sent out similar numbers of letters, made similar contacts, and made and received a similar number of phone calls. Spera et al. concluded, "Writing about the thoughts and feelings surrounding job loss may enable terminated employees to work through the negative feelings and to assimilate and attain closure on the loss, thus achieving a new perspective" (p. 730). Ultimately, as the results demonstrate, this "new perspective" may lead to faster re-employment.

Finally, a number of experiments (Greenberg & Stone, 1992; Pennebaker, 1982; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986) have demonstrated benefits of disclosure about a traumatic or significant personal experience to general well-being, as indicated by decreases in distress, depression, or negative affect.

**Smyth Meta-Analysis**

Smyth (1998) conducted an important meta-analysis of experimental studies involving the disclosure paradigm developed by Pennebaker. His goals were to determine the overall significance and effect size of the writing task, and to identify moderating factors (sample characteristics, outcome type, treatment "dose," characteristics of the trauma) that influence the effects of disclosure. Smyth's criteria for inclusion in his review included a variety of factors: (a) the studies must contain experimental manipulation of written emotional disclosure; (b) experimental participants must have written about traumatic or significant
topics, whereas control subjects wrote about trivial events; (c) studies should contain outcome measures of health such as mental, physical, or general functioning; and (d) studies must have enough statistical information for Smyth to calculate an effect size.

Ultimately, thirteen studies were determined eligible for inclusion. Smyth's final analysis provided strong support for the Pennebaker model. He found significant health benefits for healthy participants; specifically, a 23% improvement in the experimental group over the control group, across the thirteen studies. Moreover, Smyth's synthesis revealed that the writing task produced health benefits across several outcome types, each measured at least one month after the experiment: reported health, psychological well-being, physiological functioning, and general functioning. Of these, effect sizes differed across outcome types, with psychological and physiological functioning ranking the highest. Smyth concluded, "The strong effect on physiological measures provides support for the biological impact of writing. Written expression may free physiological resources previously used for inhibition" (p. 180).

**Variables Affecting Outcomes**

Smyth (1998), in his meta-analysis, and Pennebaker (1999), in a summary article, identified a number of variables that affect the outcomes of disclosure. These include student status, gender, overall time period of the writing treatment, immediacy of the trauma (whether it occurred in the past or was currently ongoing), mode of disclosure, audience, writing topic, personality differences, and emotional well-being.
Student Status. Smyth's (1998) meta-analysis indicates that student participants showed significantly higher effects for psychological well-being outcomes than non-students although the overall effect size did not differ. Smyth speculates that this is because the student task involved writing about an ongoing, current problem which had immediate consequences for affect. This seems to contradict other findings which suggest that the "older" traumas may have a more pronounced effect due to longer inhibition. However, Smyth posits that recency may interact with the outcome type if "certain systems are more reliant on the physiological drain produced by inhibition," e.g., immune function may be more influenced by disinhibition, meaning that greater improvement would be expected with an older trauma than with a recent one, whereas systems that are more influenced by cognitive factors (e.g., affect) than disinhibition may show greater or equal improvement regardless of recency of the event.

Gender. Smyth (1998) found that writing was more effective for males than females. He suggests that males may use more problem-focused coping styles, meaning they would focus more on the trauma when writing than females. Alternatively, Smyth suggests that the results may differ because males are less likely to have engaged in emotional expression/disclosure before the writing exercise.

Time Period of Treatment. Another important finding has implications for the way the treatment itself is administered. According to Smyth (1998), lengthening the time period over which participants write may increase the
beneficial effect. The author suggests that a longer writing period provides
greater opportunities for introspection and internalization, which results in greater
“closure” and consequently, improvements in psychological and psychological
health. Smyth contends that this finding is consistent with other psychological
literature indicating prolonged exposure treatments afford better chances of
improvement. In his own analysis, ranges of 1–28 days were examined.

In addition, Kunkel (2000), whose study involving an emotion-disclosure
task in the Pennebaker tradition realized generally null results, attributed her lack
of findings to an abbreviated time period, two weeks on average, compared with
a 90–120 day interval for most studies, between the manipulation and follow-up
post-tests. Therefore, the interval between post-tests, as well as the length of
time over which participants write, may influence the outcome. More investigation
is needed, however, to determine what an “ideal” timeline is for such measures.

Recovery of Trauma. Smyth’s (1998) review also revealed that participants
who wrote about on-going or current events only, as opposed to those who wrote
about any trauma (past or current), demonstrated well-being outcomes higher
than the latter group. According to Smyth, “Addressing ongoing traumas more
intimately linked to daily life may produce greater well-being change than
addressing past traumas that may be less salient to daily experience” (p. 181).
Finally, perhaps because of this, participants who wrote only about current
traumas had more positive well-being than those who wrote about any trauma,
past or current. And, in seeming contrast to inhibition theory, participants writing
about past or present traumas had physiological outcomes superior to those assigned to write only about a past trauma.

*Mode of disclosure.* Whether the emotion-disclosure treatment involves talking or writing, results appear to be fairly consistent for both. Various authors (Donnelly & Murray, 1991; Murray, Lamnin, & Carver, 1989; Murray & Seagal, 1994) have examined the effects of the mode of emotion disclosure on the results of the experiment, finding that, in general, both talking and writing are equally effective.

*Audience.* Pennebaker (1999) contends that results of the writing experiment are not influenced by the presumed “audience.” Some studies have participants write on erasable tablets or allow them to keep their writing samples. Others have participants return the completed writing samples to the experimenter, with the understanding that the principle investigator(s) will read them. Regardless of whether or not their writing samples will be seen only by themselves, or by experimenters, the outcomes are consistent in finding positive benefits for experimental groups. This is an important finding: it provides support to Pennebaker’s theory that it is the act of linguistically encoding thoughts and feelings about a significant event which is the benefit-producing mechanism, rather than the “social” dimension of sharing with others. That is, talking about problems with a friend might presumably elicit sympathy and perhaps social support; one might reasonably conclude that the emotional support contributes an individual’s “healing.” Pennebaker’s theory, however, does not recognize this social element as important. Instead, inhibition theory suggests that the linguistic
encoding of thoughts and cognitions surrounding a significant event creates structure and order, which facilitates personal understanding, ultimately ending obsessive thoughts and behaviors and providing closure.

Writing Topic. Another variable that may be considered a potential influence on results of these studies is the writing topic itself. However, whether experimental participants are asked to disclose about traumatic experiences (such as rape, unexpected death of a loved one, surviving the Holocaust) or merely about significant experiences (being laid off, making the transition to university), results are consistent in providing positive impacts for experimental participants. The key lies in ensuring participants write or talk about their thoughts and feelings surrounding the significant event.

Individual Differences. One factor which has demonstrably influenced the outcome of the writing task is personality differences. A study by Christensen and Smith (1993) suggested that people who are suspicious or generally hostile may benefit more from the writing than individuals who aren't. Additionally, the meta-analysis by Smyth (1998) indicated that men tend to benefit from the writing exercise more than women, although the author cautions that the effect needs further experimental investigation before definitive claims of gender differences can safely be made.

General/Psychological Well-Being Before Treatment. According to Pennebaker and Seagal (1999), some evidence suggests that writing may not help severely depressed individuals, or those who have disordered cognitive processing. For example, the authors cited a large scale study of bereaved older
adults in the Netherlands (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996) and a small study of Israeli post-traumatic stress disorder patients (Gidron, Peri, Connolly, & Shalev, 1996), saying that neither group realized benefits from the writing experiment. The authors speculated that writing itself, in the absence of accompanying cognitive and/or coping-skills training, may not help populations with severe problems. Therefore, the state of a person's mental or emotional health as s/he enters the study may be a factor in the outcome.

Mechanisms for Success: How the Treatment Works

It is apparent that writing or talking about significant or traumatic personal experiences can produce a range of physiological, cognitive, and affective benefits. Pennebaker's paradigm has consistently demonstrated positive outcomes for a diverse range of experimental samples. Increasingly, researchers are seeking to understand why and how the writing exercise works.

Early work in emotional expression research emphasized the importance of emotional "venting," akin to catharsis, as important to health. Scholars in recent years, however, have increasingly focused on the central role of cognitive processing and sense-making. According to Smyth (1998), emotional expression alone is necessary, but not sufficient, for positive change. He concludes, "Written emotional expression leads to the transduction of the traumatic experience into a linguistic structure that promotes assimilation and understanding of the event, and reduces negative affect . . ." (p. 175).

According to Pennebaker's original theory (1989), actively inhibiting feelings and thoughts associated with a traumatic event requires physiological
work, evidenced by short-term increases in autonomic nervous activity, as individuals exert conscious effort to avoid thinking about it. Over time, this inhibition acts as a cumulative stressor on the body, increasing the likelihood of illness and other stress-related physical and psychological problems. Furthermore, active inhibition is associated with deleterious effects in information processing. When individuals don’t confront their thoughts and emotions about a traumatic experience, they don’t convert these into a coherent narrative that can aid in sense-making. Consequently, these people may experience increased “ruminations” such as dreams and obsessive thoughts (Pennebaker, 1997).

Whereas inhibition can be harmful, active confrontation of a traumatic or significant event through written or verbal disclosure is beneficial. By linguistically encoding cognitions and emotions surrounding a significant event, individuals impose an order or structure that facilitates understanding and assimilation. Over time, the physiological work of inhibition is decreased, and stress levels decline, ultimately resulting in fewer stress-related health problems.

Pennebaker and Seagal (1999) suggested three possible underlying mechanisms that may be responsible for the positive outcomes:

1. Through writing about emotional experiences, individuals become more health-conscious, which in turn impacts their health behaviors. As Pennebaker himself acknowledges, however, this is unlikely to be the cause. Smyth’s (1998) meta-analysis reveals that most experimental participants continue to eat, exercise, smoke, and socialize in similar ways to the control groups, suggesting that no significant change occurs in experimental subjects’ health behaviors.
2. Writing enables people to express themselves, and emotional expression contributes to good health. This is possible. However, scholars believe that “venting” alone is not especially beneficial. Pennebaker (1999) asserts that research (e.g., by Lewis & Bucher, 1992, and Pennebaker & Krantz, 1995) has not supported the clinical value of emotional expression in the absence of cognitive processing.

3. “Translating” emotions and images into words changes the way an individual organizes, processes, and thinks about traumatic or significant experiences. Esterling et al. (1999) suggest that writing provides benefits through increasing an individual’s insight, self-reflection, optimism, sense of control, and self-esteem; and that “therapeutic writing improves organization and promotes the development of adaptive coping strategies” (p. 92). Pennebaker and Seagal (1999) concur:

... the act of constructing stories is a natural human process that helps individuals to understand their experiences and themselves. This process allows one to organize and remember events in a coherent fashion while integrating thoughts and feelings... Once an experience has structure and meaning, it would follow that the emotional effects of that experience are more manageable (p. 1243).

Hence, although research has not conclusively demonstrated how the paradigm works, it suggests that neither emotional support from others, nor “venting,” are responsible. Rather, it seems likely that the act of “voicing” thoughts and feelings about a significant event provides a mechanism for
understanding and assimilation, which ultimately produces improvements in emotional, mental, and physical health.

*Linguistic Inquiry Word Count*

An important tool in the quest to understand how the writing exercise benefits experimental participants is the SLIWC (Second Linguistic Inquiry Word Count, formerly the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count) developed by Pennebaker and colleagues (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992b; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis, 1997). The LIWC and SLIWC are computer programs designed to analyze the text of experimental participants' essays, counting words associated with cognitive processing and with emotions. The cognitive dimension involves words that imply insight or self-reflection (such as understand, realize, know) or causal connections (because, reason, why), enabling researchers to detect whether participants are actively thinking during their writing task. The emotive dimensions are classed as either positive (e.g., happy) or negative (angry, guilty, sad, etc.).

Using the LIWC and the Second LIWC, authors (Pennebaker et al., 1997) reviewed several prior studies and identified important predictors of improved functioning and health:

1. Greater use of positive-emotion words, relative to negative-emotion words, is associated with improved health.

2. Moderate levels of negative emotion words likewise predict better health, as measured by fewer visits to doctor following the study, than low or high levels. The authors suggest this finding is consistent with psychological literature
that suggests individuals who use very few negative words are likely to be "repressive copers" and may have difficulty determining their emotional state; and those who use high levels of negative words may be neurotic or classic negative-affect people who complain constantly.

3. Participants whose writing "evolves" over the course of the task from lower to higher amounts of cognitive words demonstrate improved health and functioning compared with those who employ a similar number of cognitive words from start to finish. Pennebaker (1993) suggests, "... holding a coherent narrative to explain a traumatic or upsetting experience may not always be healthy at the beginning of therapeutic writing sessions. Movement towards the development of a narrative is far more predictive of health than having a coherent story per se" (p. 546).

The last finding, that people who move from less organized to more coherent conceptions of a significant personal event, is perhaps the strongest argument that benefits of the writing experiment stem from "sense-making" and causal connections. In essence, this implies that imposing order and structure on previously chaotic cognitions and emotions, through linguistic encoding, provides opportunities for individuals to construct a narrative that provides meaning and closure. According to Pennebaker and Seagal (1999):

Forming a story about one's experiences in life is associated with improved physical and mental health across a variety of populations. Current evidence points to the value of having a coherent, organized format as a way to give meaning to an event and manage the emotions.
associated with it... The topic may be general emotional concerns, or may be domain specific... An analysis of the writings that people produce has revealed copious use of positive-emotion words, a moderate use of negative-emotion words, and an increase in the use of insight and causal words. This is perhaps the most promising and direct evidence that benefiting from writing is linked to forming a story about one's experiences (p. 1252).

Summary and Predictions

To date, no published studies have applied Pennebaker's model of disclosure to sojourners returning from an intercultural experience. The present study will do so. Reentry shock represents a significant problem for many students returning from an intercultural sojourn; moreover, Gaw's research suggests that those experiencing the most difficult transitions may be unlikely to seek help. Pennebaker's paradigm could offer these individuals a means of beneficial "closure."

Previous research in the Pennebaker paradigm (Deters, 2001; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker et al., 1988; Pennebaker et al., 1990) has demonstrated the value to college students of confronting significant or traumatic experiences. In these studies, participants who expressed their deepest thoughts and feelings about such events demonstrated longer-term positive effects: improvements in psychological well-being, fewer visits to the health clinic due to illness, and improved immune function.
In particular, a number of studies (Fisher, 1988; Fisher, Murray, & Frazer, 1985; Pennebaker et al, 1990) have suggested that the transition to college itself counts among life's more stressful experiences; leaving one's family and friends and moving to a new environment, coping with academic challenges, and struggling to adjust to changes in personal identity and roles can cause significant upheaval. In the Pennebaker et al. (1990) study, experimental participants writing about the transition to college showed improvements in psychological and physiological health compared with those who wrote about trivial topics.

If disclosing about the experience of entering college/university is beneficial, it seems likely that disclosing about reentry would likewise be helpful. Students returning from a semester or year-long study abroad program have undergone a major transition--twice--in a relatively short period of time: the initial adaptation to the host culture and foreign academic system, and the reacculturation to the home culture and institution. Moreover, repatriation research suggests that reentry is typically more problematic than initial cultural adjustment, often resulting in the returning sojourner experiencing significant "reentry shock."

A review of reentry literature suggests that problems associated with reentry can be organized in three broad categories: Identify confusion/distress, psychological/emotional distress, and interpersonal/relational problems. Identity distress occurs as a result of perceived changes to one's personal, social, or cultural identity following a sojourn abroad. Personal upheaval involving
psychological and emotional distress can include depression, anxiety, physical ailments, hostility, and loneliness, among other symptoms. Interpersonal problems involve a returning sojourner’s difficulties in relating to, or relationships with, others.

This study is designed to examine the relationship between disclosing about reentry experiences and improvements in reentry shock levels, psychological and emotional distress, identity distress, and relational problems.

H1: Participants who disclose in the experiment will report less reentry shock at post-test than those who do not disclose.

H2: Participants who disclose in the experiment will report less identity confusion/distress at post-test than those who do not disclose.

H3: Participants who disclose in the experiment will report less psychological and emotional distress at post-test than those who do not disclose.

H4: Participants who disclose in the experiment will report fewer relational problems at post-test than those who do not disclose.
CHAPTER III
METHODS
Participants

Participants included 20 undergraduate college students (9 = experimental group, 11 = control group) who had recently completed a University of Southern Mississippi semester-long credit abroad program in France. Students were initially asked to volunteer for the project with no incentives provided. The first round of data collection (May–July 2004), however, yielded a 100% mortality rate from start to finish. Consequently, enticements were provided in subsequent attempts to secure participation. In the second (January–March 2005), third (June–August 2005), and fourth (June–August 2006) rounds of data collection, incentives (payment and a competition for a plane-ticket drawing) were established and approved by the University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee Chair. The percentage of respondents completing the study increased in subsequent experiments.

Students were informed about the opportunity to take part in the study by the resident director of their program while they were still abroad. The information was usually provided at the end of the program’s final weekend excursion to Normandy, with the director opening a general discussion on returning to the U.S. with a reference to the “American soil” (at the American cemetery in Normandy) they had just walked upon, and an invitation to reflect on the experiences of being abroad, and returning to the U.S., through participation in the present investigation. Approximately three weeks after their return, students
were contacted via email by the principal researcher and invited to take part in the study.

The 20 students who completed the study—sixteen female, four male—had taken part in a study-abroad program of 12 weeks' duration. Respondents were all U.S. citizens who ranged in age from 18–23 (median age 20.05), and who came from six different universities across the U.S. Seventeen of the participants described themselves as Caucasian. Most (ten participants) were classified as juniors, with one freshman, seven sophomores, and two seniors. Ten reported that they had lived, traveled, or studied overseas prior to their program in France, whereas ten indicated this was their first experience abroad.

Procedures

Data were collected in four separate samples: May–July 2004; January–March 2005; June–August 2005; and June–August 2006. All prospective participants were initially informed about the opportunity to take part in a study related to their experiences returning to the U.S. by the resident director of their study-abroad program (not the principle investigator) during their last week abroad. Students were told that they would be contacted via email following their return to the U.S. and that they would be furnished with additional information about the study at that time.

For each of the four separate data collection groups, the experiment commenced approximately three weeks following participants' return to the U.S. This timeframe was chosen to give participants a chance to settle in back home and to allow the first flush of excitement in seeing family and friends to fade a bit;
in my experience, reentry challenges often occur at around this point in the return home.

Prospective participants were sent an email inviting their participation in the study, which they were told would take place entirely through email. The use of email to collect data constitutes a departure from many disclosure exercises in the Pennebaker tradition, which typically involve a researcher or colleague meeting participants in person and escorting them to a designated private location wherein they wrote and completed questionnaires. In this investigation, email contact was deemed necessary due to respondents' locations; participants in the study abroad program came from various U.S. colleges/universities and were returning to their homes across the country. Using email to collect the data may even enhance the writing experience of the participants, as they would be taking part within their own familiar settings and, to a certain extent, on their own schedules, a more natural activity than visiting a laboratory.

In the present investigation, no screening of participants occurred; anyone who wanted to take part was allowed to do so. Participants were assigned to one of two treatment conditions: experimental or control. Separate email messages outlining the expected involvement and time commitments were sent to each respective group; those assigned to the experimental condition were informed that they would be asked to complete and return a set of email attachments four times over the next two to three weeks and again four to six weeks later, whereas control group participants were told their participation would involve completing two separate sets of email attachments approximately
six to eight weeks apart. Both notes concluded by advising participants that they could anticipate receiving the first set of attachments within the next few days.

Studies in the Pennebaker paradigm suggest that while participants benefit from disclosure in the long-term, they may experience negative emotions during or after the disclosure exercise. Anticipating that experimental respondents in the present investigation may experience personal distress during writing or soon thereafter, two provisions were established. First, referral sources in the form of phone numbers to the USM counseling center and a national crisis "helpline" were included in each set of email attachments (see Appendix G). In prior research applying a similar disclosure paradigm to more intense personal experiences (family traumas, e.g.), this contingency was not utilized, nor was there any indication that it was used in the present investigation.

Participants' essays and completed essay evaluation forms were read within 24 hours of receiving them. If participants requested assistance on the Essay Evaluation Form (a form designed to examine individuals' reactions to the writing exercise and provide information about the duration of the writing; see Appendix H), I planned to contact them and remind them of the option to contact the counseling center or 24-hour intervention hotline. No student requested such help, although one did indicate she was "close" to responding affirmatively to that question. When I followed up with her, the participant replied that she had experienced momentary distress but was feeling much better and did not need to utilize any of the referral sources or other options for assistance.
Experimental (Disclosure) Condition

On Day 1 of each round of data collection, I sent an email to participants assigned to the experimental condition explaining the attached forms, which included questionnaires, informed consent form, referral sources, writing instructions along with several blank pages for the writing itself, and the Essay Evaluation form. Participants were told that the first day's participation, which was estimated to take about 25–30 minutes, included Part 1 (informed consent form and referral sources); Part 2 (four questionnaires plus the demographic survey); and Part 3 (writing session instructions and the essay evaluation).

Respondents were asked to complete and return the attachments within the next 24–48 hours, and were asked not to discuss the project with others. They were reminded that they would be contacted on three additional occasions over the next two weeks and asked to fill out and return a set of attachments estimated to take 15–20 minutes each time. Finally, students were advised that general results would be shared with anyone who requested them on completion of the study, and that they were welcome to contact the investigator if at any time they had questions about the project.

In the set of email attachments, forms for experimental participants were divided by cover sheets into Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3 in accordance with the divisions described above. Instructions located at the bottom of Part 1 forms advised students to proceed to Part 2, and once all pre-test questionnaires in Part 2 were completed, instructions guided participants to Part 3's writing instructions. Writing instructions (see Appendix F) were as follows:
For the next 15 minutes, I would like you to write about your experiences and emotions associated with your return to the US and what life has been like for you since you returned. During the writing session, I want you to really explore your deepest thoughts and emotions. Please write continuously for the entire 15 minutes. If you run out of things to say, simply repeat yourself or try to be more detailed. In your writing, do not worry about spelling, grammar, or sentence structure. Instead, I want you to focus all of your thoughts and emotions on your return to the US and your experiences since you came back.

On Day 2 of each data collection round, which usually took place three to five days after the first day’s e-mail attachments were sent, a second packet including a cover note, writing instructions and the Essay Evaluation form was e-mailed to participants. On Day 3 (normally, three to five days after the second packet was sent), and Day 4 (usually three to five days later), the Day 2 procedures were repeated. In the cover note for Day 4’s attachments, students were thanked for their participation and reminded that they would be contacted in four to six weeks to complete a final set of surveys which were estimated to take about 10–15 minutes of their time.

Six to eight weeks after the data collection period commenced, participants were contacted via email once again. They received a cover note thanking them for their participation and asking them to complete and return the set of attached questionnaires, which included the Reentry Shock Survey, the
Ego Identity Process Questionnaire, the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale, and the Relational Change Questionnaire.

Experimental participants (n = 9) who returned all five sets of data, from Day 1 to follow-up tests, were contacted shortly after the investigator received their final surveys to outline procedures for payment and request a current mailing address. Payments for their participation ($20 per respondent) were then mailed accordingly.

Control Condition

The present investigation departs from many studies in the Pennebaker disclosure paradigm in its approach to the control group's participation. Rather than having control group participants write on trivial topics, as is common, in this study the control subjects were asked only to complete survey measures at pre-test and at follow-up, and were not asked to write at all. This change occurred for two reasons: Having the control group write nothing at all provided an even stronger test of the experimental treatment's value; and I judged there was little to gain in asking control subjects to write on trivial topics and thereby run a greater risk of losing them, something I believed more likely to occur in my email survey than in a laboratory experiment.

On Day 1 of each round of data collection, participants assigned to the control condition received an email explaining the attached forms, which included questionnaires, an informed consent form, and referral sources. Although I did not anticipate that control subjects would become distressed as subjects in the writing condition might, referral numbers were nonetheless included in control
participants' packets. Much like the experimental group, control subjects were told that the first day's participation, which was estimated to take about 15 minutes, included Part 1 (informed consent form and referral sources) and Part 2 (four questionnaires plus the demographic survey). No Part 3 section was included in the control subjects' email packet.

Respondents were asked to complete and return the attachments within the next 24–48 hours, and were asked not to discuss the project with others. They were reminded that they would be contacted in six to eight weeks and asked to fill out and return an additional set of attachments, and they were informed that general results would be shared with anyone who requested them on completion of the study. They were also told that they were welcome to contact the investigator if at any time they had questions about the project.

Six to eight weeks after data collection commenced, control participants who had filled out the first set of email attachments were contacted via email again. They received a cover note thanking them for their participation, and they were asked to complete and return the set of attached questionnaires identical to those included in the experimental subjects' packets. Control group subjects (n = 11) who returned both sets of data (Day 1 and Follow-Up) were contacted shortly after the investigator received their final surveys to discuss procedures for payment and request a current mailing address. Payments for their participation ($20 per respondent) were then mailed accordingly.

Over the course of the four separate data collection rounds, I modified my procedures fairly extensively in hopes of achieving a higher participation rate. For
example, participants in the first round of data collection (May–August 2004) did not receive incentives, and none completed the follow-up portion of the project. In the second data collection round (January–March 2005), prospective participants were informed that if the participation rate reached 95%, those who completed the project would have their names thrown into a hat for a drawing, with the lucky winner receiving a plane ticket to France. Five completed the project; although this number didn’t qualify the participants for the drawing, I informed them that I’d put their names into the hat alongside others who completed the project in the next data collection rounds. In the third and fourth data collections, participants who completed the project not only had their names entered into a drawing for a plane ticket, but each received payment of $20.00.

Another strategy introduced to gain greater response from experimental participants, since these appeared more vulnerable to mortality than the control group, was the pre-assignment of more prospective participants to the experimental condition than to the control. Whereas in the first two rounds of data collection the prospective participant pool was divided fairly evenly into experimental and control respondents, in the third and fourth rounds approximately two-thirds of the potential respondent pool was assigned to the experimental condition and one-third to the control condition. In the fourth data collection, for example, 46 prospective participants were invited to take part in the study. Thirty respondents (just over 62% of the pool) were pre-assigned to the experimental condition and eighteen (37% of the pool) were identified as
potential control subjects. These assignments were stratified to ensure that each group's proportion of males and females approximated that of the entire pool.

One of the most important methods adopted over the course of the investigation to realize a higher response rate was also the most time-consuming. Each round of data collection became increasingly more "personalized" and tailored to the individual student as I discovered that their responses did not always occur in the timeframe I had initially envisioned. For example, to start each experiment I would initially send a generic email to all participants in the respective treatment conditions asking that they complete and return the attachments within 48 hours of receiving them. In the earlier rounds, if a participant did not respond in that timeframe I would still send the next set (so a participant who hadn't yet completed Day 1's forms and writings might awaken to discover Day 2's sitting in her/his email in-box). In the later rounds of data collection I continued to receive experimental students' responses anywhere from one day to one week after my initial solicitation. I responded individually to those students and tailored their subsequent schedules to the "new" timeframe. In most cases their responses still fell within the two-to-three week window originally planned for the writing samples.

Likewise, I followed up with individual participants more consistently and personally in the third and fourth rounds of data collection than I did in the first two. In these latter rounds, if someone agreed to participate but did not follow through or if s/he sent one set of data but not another, I would contact the student three additional times before consigning him/her to the "attrition" pile if no
response was forthcoming. While I didn't want to pester the students, I did want to give them every opportunity to complete the project. In several cases, students I followed up with in this way went on to finish the investigation.

These efforts to encourage higher participation from start to finish resulted in some success. In the first data collection period, eleven participants, out of 48 who were invited, began the study, but none completed it. In the second round, nearly half of those who started the study completed it. In the third sample, nine of the twelve students who started the study completed it; and in the fourth collection, six of ten respondents completed all tasks.

Measures

Dependent measures in the present study included four questionnaires. The Reentry Shock Scale (Seiter & Waddell, 1989) was employed to provide an indicator of each student's "level" of reentry shock. The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) was utilized to determine students' identity status. The Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965) was used as an indicator of psychological/emotional distress. Finally, Martin's (1986) Relational Change Questionnaire was used to explore participants' perceptions of significant relationships (e.g., friends, family members) following their return from abroad. All tests were administered to participants in both control and experimental conditions at the start of the experiment and again six to eight weeks later.
Reentry Shock Scale

The Reentry Shock Scale (Seiter & Waddell, 1989) is a 16-item, 7-point Likert-type questionnaire which has been used in at least two experimental studies involving intercultural reentry (Gaw, 2000; Seiter & Waddell, 1989). Seiter and Waddell, who developed the scales, reported an internal-consistency alpha coefficient of .83. The scale responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with a mid-point value of 4 (neither agree nor disagree). The survey is scored by summing the item scores, then dividing by 16, which produces an index score ranging from one to seven – with seven indicating extreme reentry shock and one suggesting none. An RSS index score mean of 4.4 (M = 4.3, S.D. = .96) was reported by Seiter and Waddell (1989) for their sample of 54 sojourners returning from abroad, whose average stay overseas was one year.

In the present study, one item ("I miss the foreign culture where I stayed") was inadvertently deleted from the questionnaire administered to participants, who ultimately completed a 15-item survey. See Appendix A for a copy of the Reentry Shock Scale employed in the present study.

Ego Identity Process Questionnaire

Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger’s (1995) Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Appendix C) is a 32-item instrument (20 positive, 12 negative) developed to assess the dimensions of identity exploration and commitment in eight domains: religion, politics, sex roles, dating, values, occupation, family, and friendships. Participants indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to
each statement across a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 6 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), with scoring reversed for negatively-worded items. Item scores are added to identify total scores for exploration and commitment, respectively, and participants are assigned to one of four categories based upon these dimensions. According to Schwartz (2000, pp. 209-210):

Achievement (high exploration, high commitment) represents the consolidation of a sense of self following a period of exploration. Moratorium (high exploration, low commitment) represents active exploration without commitment, and it often serves as a precursor to achievement. Foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment) represents adopting goals, values, and beliefs from parents or other authority figures without much critical thought. Diffusion (low exploration, low commitment) represents a pattern of apathy, disinterest, and lack of direction.

Balistreri et al.'s study yielded alpha coefficients of .75 for commitment and .76 for exploration. In the present study, the EIPQ survey was employed at pre-test and again at follow-up for both experimental and control participants. See Appendix B.

Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale

A modified form of the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965) was used in this study. The survey is comprised of 20 symptoms linked to affective, psychological, and physiological indicators of depression; ten items are positive and ten negative, with positive items reverse-scored so a higher index score signifies greater depression (Deters, 2001; Zung, 1965). Items are scored
across a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none or little of the time) to 4 (most of the time). Gabrys and Peters (1985) report high alphas (.88 and .93) and high item-total correlations (.82 and .85) for depressed and non-depressed participants, indicating that the Zung SDRS has strong internal consistency. The survey has been used widely in cross-cultural research and has proven valid and reliable in at least 12 countries (Cox, 2001; Ward & Chang, 1997; Zung, 1969; Zung, 1972).

A minor change was made to the survey with the deletion of two items ("I still enjoy sex" [a positive item] and "I have trouble with constipation" [negative]). For this study involving young students with ages starting at 18, the first statement was deemed potentially sensitive and removed from the questionnaire. There is precedence in deleting this item; Searle and Ward (1990) removed it in a study of cultural adjustment in secondary school students, and Cox (2001) deleted it in his recent study of reentry shock among missionary sojourners, since most participants were single and were members of a religious organization that discouraged "extramarital sexual conduct" (p. 45). Searle and Ward's 19-item scale yielded a .79 alpha coefficient, indicating strong internal consistency. The second item removed from the survey asked respondents to report on constipation and was eliminated due to concerns that students may not only be reluctant to divulge their intestinal workings, but also may take the instrument less seriously in their other responses. See Appendix C.
Relational Change Questionnaire

Martin's Relational Change Questionnaire (1986) assesses participants' perceptions of changes in their reentry relationships with others. The survey asks participants to think about three relationships (with, respectively, a parent, a sibling, and a friend) that had been important to them prior to their study abroad experience, and report, for each relationship, how much positive and/or negative change had occurred in their relationships with those individuals. (In the present study, participants were also asked to evaluate changes to relationships with a romantic partner, if applicable.) The questionnaire (Appendix D), which was used at pre-test and during follow-up, also invited respondents to attribute these relational changes to either their experience abroad or to other circumstances.

Demographic Survey

The Demographic Survey (see Appendix E), completed by both experimental and control groups at pretest only, asked participants for basic biographical data and information related to their study abroad experience: length of stay, whether they have been abroad before, and amount of contact with host culture/home culture members. The survey also asked students about levels of disclosure regarding their experiences returning to the U.S. prior to their participation in the study.

Essay Evaluation Form

The Essay Evaluation Form (Appendix H) consists of nine items on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal), along with a question asking participants to let the investigator know if they needed to be
contacted right away (a safety precaution in the event experimental participants became unduly distressed by the writing process) as well as a question I added to monitor the writing time for each essay. This form was used on all four writing days at the conclusion of each writing session.

Similar kinds of evaluations have been used in a number of disclosure studies (Greenberg & Stone, 1992; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986); the one used in the present study is almost identical to that used by Deters (2001) in her study of the effects of disclosure on post-traumatic stress disorder, with the additional item related to the timing of the writing session. In most disclosure studies, the length of writing sessions are controlled by experimenters or accomplices, who are near the participants and simply tell them when to stop. In the present investigation, participants were relied upon to monitor the time themselves, and were asked to indicate on the Essay Evaluation Form their start and finish times, as well as overall writing time, in each session.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Participants

Participants were twenty students who had recently returned from a semester-abroad program in France sponsored by The University of Southern Mississippi and consortium partners. The population consisted primarily of participants from four consortium universities: 85% of participants were from The University of Southern Mississippi, Midwestern State University, Wayne State University, and University of Wisconsin-River Falls. All were abroad for a duration of approximately three months.

Certain items on the demographic survey were designed to provide information and context surrounding participants' experience of the reentry transition. For example, participants were asked to describe how much association they had with host culture citizens, how much contact they maintained with family and friends back home, whether and to what extent they had disclosed their thoughts and feelings about returning home prior to taking part in the present experiment, and whether they had encountered any significant personal problems since their return such as romantic break-ups, family illnesses or deaths, etc.

Most students (60%) characterized themselves as having a fair amount of contact with members of the host culture, 20% described their contact as extensive, and the remaining 20% reported little contact. The counterpoint to this, a question asking about participants' contact with friends and family back in the
United States, indicated that 10% had extensive contact, whereas 35% described a fair amount of contact and 55% reported minimal contact.

An overwhelming majority of participants (90%) reported that they had talked or written about their thoughts and feelings associated with returning home prior to participation in the present study. Of this group, 30% indicated their previous disclosure was extensive and 40% reported moderate levels of disclosure, with 20% reporting only a little disclosure. Finally, 25% of participants revealed that they had encountered recent personal difficulties whereas the remaining students reported none.

Scale Reliability

Preliminary analysis was conducted to assess internal reliability and validity of the Reentry Shock Scale, the Ego-Identity Process Questionnaire, and the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale,

A fifteen-item version of Seiter and Waddell's (1989) 16-item Reentry Shock Scale (RSS) yielded a Chronbach's alpha coefficient of .83 at pre-test and .82 at post-test.

The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire was used in the present study to assess participants' identity status across two dimensions: commitment and exploration. Initial reliability results revealed that certain items did not correlate with the scale as expected and were consequently dropped from analysis: items 12, 13, and 17 on the commitment sub-scale were dropped at pre-test, resulting in an alpha rating of .70; and items 8 and 17 were dropped at post-test, yielding an alpha rating of .70. Likewise, some items on the exploration sub-scale were
dropped at pre-test (4, 6, and 11) and at post-test (4, 6, 11, and 28). Reliability for the exploration subscale achieved alpha coefficients of .79 at pre-test and .72 at post-test.

Although the scale revision resulted in a range of 2-4 items being dropped from each analysis, the removal of these items is not viewed as having changed the nature or meaning of the survey and consequently is not considered a threat to scale validity. A review of the eliminated items suggests that they may have proved problematic for this population due to two factors. The use of "always" and "never" in the statements (e.g., "There has never been a need to question my values") may have restricted the range of responses, and many of the problem items involved prescriptive relational roles (e.g., "My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older"), which may have had little relevance or meaning for the young participants in this study.

A modified form of the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965) was utilized in this study to examine participants' affective, psychological, and physiological indicators of depression. Two items were removed prior to administering the survey ("I still enjoy sex") and ("I have trouble with constipation") due to concerns that these items may detract from the credibility of the study for the young respondents. The resulting 18-item scale produced coefficient alphas of .82 at pre-test and .85 at post-test.

**Hypotheses Tests**

The central premise of the present investigation was that returning study abroad participants who engaged in a disclosure exercise related to their reentry
experience would demonstrate diminished levels of reentry shock, identity confusion and distress, emotional/psychological distress, and relational problems compared with participants who did not take part in the disclosure exercise.

Reentry Shock

The first hypothesis predicted that participants who participated in the disclosure exercise would experience decreased levels of reentry "shock." A modified version of Seiter & Waddell's (1989) Reentry Shock Scale was administered to identify reentry shock scores.

A 2 X 2 mixed-design ANOVA was calculated to determine the effects of disclosure (experimental and control groups) and time (pre-test and post-test) on participants' Reentry Shock Scale scores. No significant main effects or interactions were found. The main effect for group ($F(1,18) = .31; p = .59; \eta^2 = .02$); the main effect for time ($F(1,18) = .02; p = .91; \eta^2 = .00$); and the effects for interaction of group and time ($F(1,18) = 1.16; p = .30; \eta^2 = .06$) were all not significant. However, mean scores of the disclosure group revealed a slight decrease in reentry shock levels from pre-test to post-test, a trend in the expected direction.
Table 1

Reentry Shock Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disclosure</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identity Confusion/Distress

The second hypothesis predicted that “Participants who disclose in the experiment will report less identity confusion/distress at post-test than those who do not disclose.” A 2 X 2 mixed-design ANOVA was calculated to determine the effects of disclosure (experimental and control groups) and time (pre-test and post-test) on participants’ Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) scores.

No significant main effects or interactions were found for the Commitment or Exploration sub-scales of the EIPQ. On the Commitment sub-scale, the main effect for group ($F(1,18) = .01; p = .94; \eta^2 = .00$); the main effect for time ($F(1, 18) = 4.01; p = .06; \eta^2 = .18$); and the effect for interaction of group and time ($F(1,18) = .47; p = .50; \eta^2 = .03$) were not significant. On the Exploration sub-scale, the main effect for group ($F(1,18) = .18; p = .68; \eta^2 = .01$); the main effect for time ($F(1, 18) = 1.47; p = .24; \eta^2 = .08$); and the interaction of group and time ($F(1,18) = .39; p = .54; \eta^2 = .02$) were likewise not significant.

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Psychological/Emotional Distress

The third hypothesis proposed “Participants who disclose in the experiment will report less psychological and emotional distress at post-test than those who do not disclose.” A modified version of the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale was administered to assess psychological and general well-being of participants.

A 2 X 2 mixed-design ANOVA was calculated to determine the effects of disclosure and time on Zung SRDS scores. No significant effects were revealed. The main effect for group ($F(1,18) = 1.58; p = .22; \eta^2 = .08$); the main effect for time ($F(1,18) = .86; p = .37; \eta^2 = .05$); and the effect for interaction of group and time ($F(1,18) = .48, p = .50; \eta^2 = .03$) were not significant.

Relationship Problems

The fourth hypothesis, “Participants who disclose in the experiment will report fewer relational problems at post-test than those who do not disclose,” was tested using Martin’s Relational Questionnaire, a survey which asks respondents to report on the level of positive and negative change that has recently occurred in their relationships with others (a parent, a sibling, a friend). For the purposes of the present study, an additional relationship category, that of romantic partner, was also included.

To test the effects of disclosure on positive and negative relationship change, a 2 (disclosure: experimental and control groups) X 2 (time: pre-test and post-test) X 2 (valence: positive and negative) MANOVA was calculated.
Parents. Changes in participants’ relationships with a parent were examined first. The main effect for positive and negative change on parental relationships was significant (Walks’ Lambda(1,18) = 34; p < .001; eta² = .65). Results indicate that students reported more positive change (M = 2.95) than negative change (M = 1.68) in their relationship with a parent.

Table 2

Parent Positive/Negative Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Change</th>
<th>Negative Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main effects for time (Walks’ Lambda(1,18) = .30; p = .59; eta² = .02) and disclosure (Wilks’ Lambda(1,18) = .04; p = .85; eta² = 00) were not significant. Likewise, the interactions of positive/negative change and group (Wilks’ Lambda(1,18) = .06; p = .81; eta² = .001); time and group (Wilks’ Lambda(1,18) = .30; p = .59; eta² = .02); positive/negative change and time (Wilks’ Lambda(1,18) = .06; p = .81; eta² = .001); and positive/negative change and time and group (Wilks’ Lambda(1,18) = 1.03; p = .32; eta² = .05) were all not significant.
**Siblings.** Participants' relationships with a sibling were reviewed next. A main effect for positive and negative change was found \((Wilks' \Lambda(1,18) = 22.52; p < .001; \eta^2 = .56)\). Students reported more positive change \((M = 2.68)\) than negative change \((M = 1.45)\) in their relationships with siblings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Change</th>
<th>Negative Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main effect for time on participants' relationships with a sibling was likewise significant \((Wilks' \Lambda(1,18) = 7.38; p = .01; \eta^2 = .29)\), with results indicating more positive and negative change at pre-test \((M = 2.25)\) than at post-test \((M = 1.88)\).
Table 4

Sibling Change at Pre-test and Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive/Negative</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No additional significant differences were found for changes in sibling relationships. There was no main effect for group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 18) = .00; \( p = .91; \eta^2 = .001 \)). Likewise, no interaction effects were significant for positive/negative change by group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 18) = .001; \( p = .99; \eta^2 = .001 \)); for time by group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 18) = 1.30; \( p = .27; \eta^2 = .07 \)); for positive/negative change by time (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 18) = .15; \( p = .70; \eta^2 = .01 \)); or for positive/negative change by time by group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 18) = 1.26; \( p = .28; \eta^2 = .07 \)).

Friendships. No significant main effects were found in changes to participants’ relationships with friends for positive/negative change (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 17) = 1.75; \( p = .20; \eta^2 = .09 \)); for time (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 17) = .25; \( p = .63; \eta^2 = .01 \)); or for group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 17) = 2.57; \( p = .13; \eta^2 = .13 \)). Likewise, no significant effects were found for the interactions of positive/negative change and group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 17) = .04; \( p = .85; \eta^2 = .001 \)); of time and group (Wilks’ Lambda(1, 17) = 1.29; \( p = .27; \eta^2 = .07 \)); or of
positive/negative change and time (Wilks' Lambda(1,17) = .63; \( p = .44; \) eta\(^2 = .04\)).

A significant three-way interaction of positive/negative change by time by group was detected (Wilks' Lambda(1,17) = 12.74; \( p = .002; \) eta\(^2 = .43\)). Post-hoc analyses were accordingly conducted to determine the source of the significance. A significant time by group interaction effect was revealed (\( F(1,17) = 10.09; \) \( p = .01; \) eta\(^2 = .37\)) for positive change in friendships. An independent-samples \( t \) test comparing the mean scores of the experimental and control groups revealed a significant difference at post-test (\( t(17) = 2.35, \) \( p = .03 \)). The mean of the control group was significantly higher in positive changes to friendships (\( M = 3.0, sd = .77 \)) than the mean of the experimental group (\( M = 2.13, sd = .83 \)). No significant difference (\( t(18) = .47, \) \( p = .64 \)) was found in comparing the mean scores of the experimental group (\( M = 2.56, sd = 1.24 \)) and the control group (\( M= 2.36, sd = .50 \)) at pre-test, indicating that the positive changes to friendships was similar at the outset of the experiment but increased for the control group several weeks later. Likewise, a paired-samples \( t \) test revealed no significant difference (\( t(7) = 1.93, \) \( p = .10 \)) between the experimental group's scores at pre-test (\( M = 2.75, sd = 1.16 \)) and at post-test (\( M = 2.13, sd = .83 \)) and no significant difference between the control group's scores at pre-test (\( M = 2.36, sd = .50 \)) and at post-test (\( M = 3.0, sd = .77 \)).

The main effect for group (\( F(1,17) = .56; \) \( p = .46; \) eta\(^2 = .03 \)) and time (\( F(1,17) = .00; \) \( p = .98; \) eta\(^2 = .001 \)) on positive intensity in changes to friendships was not significant.
No significant effects were found in the post-hoc analysis of negative change in participants' relationships with a friend. There was no significant main effect for time \(F(1,17) = .56; p = .47; \eta^2 = .03\) or group \(F(1,17) = .10; p = .75; \eta^2 = .01\), and no significant interaction between time and group \(F(1,17) = .56; p = .47; \eta^2 = .03\).

**Romantic Partners.** Changes in participants' relationships with their romantic partners were explored last. No main effects were significant for positive/negative change \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = .50; p = .49; \eta^2 = .03)\); for time \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = .44; p = .52; \eta^2 = .01)\); or for group \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = 2.43; p = .14; \eta^2 = .15)\). Likewise, no significant interaction effects were found for positive/negative change by group \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = 3.04; p = .10; \eta^2 = .18)\); for time by group \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = .44; p = .52; \eta^2 = .03)\); for positive/negative change by time \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = .61; p = .45; \eta^2 = .04)\); or for positive/negative change by group by time \((\text{Wilks' } \Lambda(1,14) = .61; p = .45; \eta^2 = .04)\).

**Exploratory Analysis**

Exploratory analysis was conducted on the essays provided by disclosure participants in order to gain a better understanding of students' reentry experiences. First, word counts on each writing sample were undertaken. The number of words written in a single essay ranged from 213 to 888, while the number of words written in all four essays ranged from 1,284 to 3,159 and averaged 2,224.11. These word counts suggest that participants seriously undertook the writing task.
I anticipated that the 15–20 minute writing task would yield more words in the earlier writing samples as participants struggled to articulate their initial thoughts and emotions, and the later essays would exhibit fewer words as participants resolved their experiences and began to express their thoughts and feelings more concisely. In the first essay, the average word count among all participants was 638; the second and third essays each had an identical average of 540 words, and the fourth essay averaged 505 words. These averages provide general indication of decreasing word counts from earlier to later essays, consistent with the expected direction.

One interesting finding emerged from the word count which suggested that further analysis might be useful. The two participants whose essays' content and tone indicated they were experiencing the most difficult reentries also employed the most words total of all participants, 3159 and 3083, respectively. Moreover, one of these same participants had the greatest reentry shock score at the beginning of the experiment. To determine if a correlation existed between the number of words written and participants' level of reentry shock, I correlated the two variables but no significant relations were detected.

As a second component of the exploratory investigation, students' essays were examined for subject content and tone. Common topics emerged across the writing samples, furnishing a framework for a researcher-created content analysis system. Essays were subsequently examined to detect the presence of the following themes: Resolution of distress from the first essay through the last (i.e., decreased negative emotional state and increased analytical processing);
discussion of personal change (e.g., identity changes, re-examined and changed academic or career goals, etc.); diminishing anger/resentment at America and Americans; examination of relational changes and problems; and finally, a movement from generalized "longing" or "homesickness" for their experience abroad to specific enumeration of what participants missed most.

Resolution of Personal Distress and Increased Analytical Processing

All of the participants indicated some level of distress and sadness at having left France and returned to the U.S., a finding consistent with reentry literature (Furukawa, 1997; Rogers & Ward, 1993; Sahin, 1990, as cited in Gaw, 2000), and all were consistent throughout their writing samples in expressing a longing to return. However, whereas eight of the nine participants' earlier essays suggested a high degree of anguish in the form of anger, sadness, and even depression, the latter essays exhibited more reflective, analytical, and philosophical processes, indicating that students were "working through" these emotions over time. "As I begin this final writing series . . . I do think I'm close to being back to 'normal' although I know that there will always be a part of me that will never be the way I was before," wrote one participant. Another declared "Right now I'm doing all right, at first I was really missing France but now I'm settling in back at home . . . I would like to go back soon but it's going to be ok."

Indeed, these latter essays not only shifted to a more positive tone, but were also more likely to look forward instead of backward. Most students wrote of changed or re-focused goals (life, career, academic, etc.); an optimistic determination to go abroad again; personal changes they had experienced;
improvements in personal relationships or at least heightened understanding of underlying causes of relational difficulties; and feelings of closure and peace about being home.

Identity/Personal Change

In the present investigation, eight of the nine disclosure participants referenced some degree of personal transformation resulting from their experiences abroad, as well as problems stemming from these changes. Again, this finding is consistent with reentry literature (Gaw, 2000; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kittridge, 1988; LaBrack, 1985; Nash, 1976; Raschio, 1987; Sussman, 2001; Wilson, 1993) which suggests that participants perceive differences in their self, social, and cultural identity and in changes to goals, values, and beliefs as a result of their experiences abroad. These changes may pose unexpected difficulties during reentry.

The disclosure students in this study wrote of changes in religious beliefs and/or changes in the ways these beliefs were manifested; changes in their sense of personal identity; and, altered academic or career goals. One participant, for example, wrote that the program afforded him an opportunity to "explore a different side of myself and I liked it. Since returning, it's been a change that hasn't gone unnoticed . . ." and another explained that he had learned to appreciate art, although he described himself as "not an art fan," and that he had added French as a major despite not being "good with languages." Yet another recorded that while abroad she "made all these discoveries and decisions" about herself which she felt compelled to "put into action" and in a
separate essay wrote that "... it's like everyone here is stuck in their lives here so they don't want to or can't understand how I feel living two different lives in two different worlds." Additionally, one student reported, "My experiences of coming back to the U.S. were pretty much as I expected, however, my feelings were not... I figured after three months I'd be through and go back to normal life unchanged. However, that was not the case."

**Diminishing Anger/Resentment of America**

For seven of the nine disclosure participants, the first and in some cases, second and third essays all revealed resentment and anger at America and Americans. In keeping with Locke and Feinsod's (1982) article describing feelings during reentry of "hostility towards American culture and ... feelings of alienation or estrangement from Americans," these early essays offered a contemptuous critique of various facets of American society -- the government, the culture, the commercial/corporate nature of society, the food, the perceived gluttonous and wasteful people, the lack of community, the lack of public transportation. One participant wrote that his views on the American government's handling of "alcohol and drugs did change since I've been back... I get a mental picture of the Uncle Sam poster saying, no you're not mature, you're not old enough, you can't make your own choices." Another wrote that "when I first arrived (back) I felt anger. Anger towards Corporate America. Since it was high in Christmas season, it was even worse than usual I think... Material things should not be the focus in gaining happiness."
Along with the study by Lock and Feinsod (1982), the literature on reentry contains a variety of references (Asuncion-Lande, 1976; Brislin, 1974; Citron, 1996) to returnees expressing distress about, or anger towards, America. It is not known whether this phenomenon is unique among returning American students or whether other internationals returning to their home countries experience similar hostility. However, international education practitioners working with U.S. returnees have long observed this occurrence, which usually arises from the acquisition of new “global” perspectives by first-time sojourners in particular.

In the present investigation, the outrage and dismay over the nature of the American government, society, and practices appeared to subside over the course of the students' writing samples. Indeed, by the final day of writing, six students had referenced either a resigned acceptance of the country's problems, or a sense of gratitude about living in this country. One student declared that he was angry at America when he first returned but “I have a lot of appreciation for America now. I see the U.S. as a very unique and liberating country.” Another declared, “I see faults with America that I never saw before I left . . . But with the faults I also see things about America that make me prouder than I ever was before.”

Relational Difficulties

Seven of the nine participants wrote about problems that developed following their return from abroad in relationships with family, friends, and/or romantic partners. Indeed, two focused primarily on relational issues throughout the course of their writing. Complaints about family typically focused on anger
and distress at having the independence and autonomy they'd enjoyed abroad be snatched away or reduced by parents, with whom most were living upon return. One outraged student wrote “All I can think is that I need to get away. I can't stand it here. My life in France was a million times better. I was truly independent – instead of having my independence squashed by my mother.”

Another participant explained:

When I think about the struggles I am having with my parents, I realize that a large part of that might be due to the fact that I had finally for the first time in my life gotten used to not having my parents be a large part of my everyday life. I was able to really start to see myself as separate from them. Then my return has made it hard for me to want to let them back in.

In this study, difficulties in friendships or romantic relationships appeared to stem from two factors: personal changes which made it hard for returnees to re-establish old relationships, and troubles arising from lack of understanding by friends and family at the profound changes students had undergone. One student wrote that “I know friendships have a natural tendency to change. However I feel that I have less time and/or interest in my friends.” Another described having finally told his girlfriend that he wanted to break up, and he attributed this to his experiences abroad: “I had to move 4,000 miles away for three months to build up the confidence” to sever the relationship. A third described with surprise his reaction to re-connecting with his friends: “I got to see all my friends when I got home . . . which was nice . . . But at the same time, these guys I had known for many years weren’t the same as the ones I had met back in France. It was a
different relationship.” Another wrote, “I can’t explain my emotions to ANYONE here. My family and friends are tired about my complaining about how much America sucks compared to Europe and I just can’t help it.”

Relational difficulties described by participants in this study are consistent with other reentry findings. Research by Gama and Pedersen (1977), Martin (1986), Seiter and Waddell (1989), Sussman (1986), and Werkman (1980), among other authors, suggests that returning intercultural sojourners frequently encounter relational problems in personal and professional life. Indeed, Seiter and Waddell’s (1989) study revealed a negative correlation between reentry shock and general relationship satisfaction; the higher the level of reentry shock, the more problematic their relationships. One participant summarized the difficulties he faced in this way:

Everyone always asks, “How was Europe?” And I always say the same thing. “It was amazing.” But I don’t know what else to say. I want to tell them, “It changed my life.” I want to tell them about all the crazy things that happened. I want to explain what the profound impact seeing Van Goghs and Monets, etc. etc. had on my life . . . I want to tell them what it was like standing in Anne Frank’s house, what it was like traveling alone to Dublin and to Kiev. What it was like to have such freedom. But I can’t. They couldn’t possibly understand, and I have a hard enough time articulating it to myself.
Movement of Generalized to Specific “Homesickness”

A final theme that emerged across six of the nine writers was a subtle but discernible shift over the course of their essays in how they described their “homesickness,” as they referred to it, for their program abroad. Their descriptions evolved from a non-specific anguish about missing the program and a desire to be back overseas, to an articulation in later essays of very specific aspects of the program (the food, their host family, the freedom and independence, the opportunity to travel, the professors, the classes, their rooms) or particular memories/moments (“sitting in my window seat looking out over the gardens with my roommates . . .”) that they long to experience again.

A study by Stitsworth (1989) may provide a framework for understanding this phenomenon. Stitsworth found that changes in returning sojourners did not occur immediately, but instead emerged over time. Although his study focused primarily on personality changes, Stitsworth’s concept of a “post-exchange processing time” (p. 223) as a pre-requisite to participants’ assimilating and making sense of their experiences may be relevant to the current example of the students’ movement from a generalized longing to specific articulation of those experiences that were important to them abroad, and which made them want to return again.

The Pennebaker research paradigm may likewise provide a context for understanding this shift. Pennebaker and Seagal (1999) argue that the act of linguistically encoding emotions and thoughts transforms the way a person frames, processes, and thinks about a significant experience. Esterling et al.
(1999) likewise suggest that therapeutic writing “improves organization” (p. 92) of cognition and emotion, and thereby strengthens one’s ability to cope with difficulties. It is reasonable to speculate that the “processing” which occurred through the writing exercise enabled students to articulate more clearly the particular facets of the experience they missed most. In other words, while participants may have been experiencing a jumbled and disordered emotional state at the outset which prevented them from enumerating their distress and longing in specific ways, the writing process itself equipped them with the “tools” to do so and they expressed this in later writing samples.

Summary

Although the dependent measures employed in the present investigation did not reveal significant improvements from pre-test to post-test by disclosure participants, exploratory analysis of their narrative data suggests that some “closure” or “healing” did indeed take place. Discernible changes in cognitive processing and emotional state occurred from the first to the final essays in all nine participants, even one who began the experiment declaring that she didn’t find her experiences abroad particularly life-changing or meaningful, but who reversed herself in her last two essays and explored her thoughts and feelings with a more positive and more analytical approach, acknowledging changes she had undergone. It is possible, of course, that control group subjects may have been experiencing similar changes. Nevertheless, some form of disclosure focused on the reentry experience would seem an important and positive tool for international education practitioners.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The following includes an overview of the reentry literature and the Pennebaker paradigm as they informed this study; a discussion of hypotheses tests; an exploratory analysis of the narrative data provided by students’ essays; a review of methodological issues which may have influenced the results; a summary of strengths and limitations associated with this investigation; and finally, suggestions for future directions.

This study was undertaken to examine the effects of disclosure on the reentry experience of university study-abroad students. Intercultural researchers assert that reentry often entails significant personal upheaval and that the experience is likely to involve an array of problems including “depression, alienation, isolation, loneliness, general anxiety, speech anxiety, friendship difficulties, shyness concerns, and feelings of inferiority” (Gaw, 2000, p. 101).

While reentry is a sine qua non of the intercultural sojourn and may be considered an essential component of the returning student’s personal growth and maturation, it is frequently associated with identity confusion, psychological and emotional distress, and problems in interpersonal relationships. College students are viewed as particularly susceptible to reentry distress due to their age and developmental stage, when their sense of personal, cultural, and social identity is likely still emerging. Moreover, those students experiencing the greatest difficulties may be the least inclined to seek assistance (Gaw, 2000).
Pennebaker's (1989, 1997) disclosure paradigm represents a prospective measure of "self-help" for students experiencing reentry problems. His model originally derived from inhibition theory, which suggests that the linguistic encoding of thoughts and emotions surrounding a significant event creates structure and order, facilitating personal understanding and ultimately providing closure. Pennebaker's studies typically direct experimental participants to write or talk over a prescribed period of time about their deepest thoughts and feelings concerning a significant personal experience, and the control and experimental groups are compared on dependent variables such as psychological, health, and behavioral improvements. The model has proven valid and reliable in a number of studies across a wide variety of populations.

In the present investigation, the disclosure exercise had little effect on the reentry experience. I predicted that participants who wrote about their thoughts and feelings concerning reentry would demonstrate decreased reentry shock, identity distress, psychological/emotional distress, and interpersonal relationship problems compared with participants who did not. With the exception of some difference in respondents' perceptions of positive/negative changes in their personal relationships with friends and family members, the study revealed no main or interaction effects for the dependent variables of interest.

Hypothesis Tests

Reentry Shock Improvements

Research suggests that reentry is a complex phenomenon affecting cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes and that it often involves
confusion, distress, and disorientation (Martin & Harrell, 1996). Seiter and Waddell (1989) describe reentry as a "difficult and stressful period" (p. 4) that typically involves often-unexpected conflicts between "cultural values, symbols, behaviors, and rules of the host and home cultures" (p. 5). The authors created the 16-item Reentry Shock Scale which assesses an individual's "level" of reentry shock.

The first hypothesis predicted that participants who took part in the disclosure exercise would reveal decreased levels of reentry shock compared with those who did not disclose. Results did not support this hypothesis. Interestingly, however, mean scores of the experimental group -- those who disclosed about the reentry transition -- revealed a slight decrease in reentry shock levels from pre-test to post-test, whereas the control group scores indicate a slight increase in reentry shock levels from pre-test to post-test. Although not significant, these scores indicate a trend that is in keeping with predictions; I expected participants in the disclosure group to exhibit lower levels on the reentry shock scale at post-test than at pre-test. Perhaps, with a larger sample size, these differences may have achieved significance. Assuming a moderate effect size and the sample used in this study, the probability of detecting significant difference was only .21. A sample size of 48, more than double the number of participants in this study, would be needed to achieve a power of .70.

Identity Distress

Reentry research reveals that issues of identity and personal change lie at the heart of the reentry experience and that these constitute a significant source

The second hypothesis predicted that experimental participants would demonstrate improvements in problems related to identity, compared with control participants. It was expected that students who disclosed about their reentry experience would exhibit heightened understanding and a stronger sense of their own identity, and consequently that a more positive identity status (such as "achievement" or "moratorium") would be evident at post-test, as assessed by the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire. The findings, however, do not support this assumption. No significant differences were detected between the groups following the disclosure exercise.

*Psychological/Emotional Distress*

The third hypothesis proposed that experimental participants would reflect diminished psychological/emotional distress at post-test, compared with the control group. Researchers suggest that emotional upheaval and psychological distress typically occur during reentry (Furukawa, 1997; Gaw, 2000; Rogers & Ward, 1993). I anticipated that participants who disclosed about their reentry experience would reveal diminished personal distress and depression levels at post-test compared with control participants, as measured by the Zung Self-Report Depression Scale. Results did not support this prediction.
Personal Relationships

The fourth hypothesis predicted that experimental participants would display greater relational satisfaction and fewer relational problems, compared with control group participants. Although this prediction was not confirmed, some interesting findings were revealed.

Results indicate that students perceived significantly more positive change overall than negative change in their relationships with parents and with siblings. This finding is consistent with Martin's (1986) study of 173 students returning from Turkey and Germany but, as Martin pointed out, it contradicts previous research (Asuncion-Lande, 1976; Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) depicting reentry as generally problematic for relationships. It is important, therefore, to distinguish between relationship types when examining interpersonal relationships in reentry. Martin (1986a) suggested that positive changes in relationships with parents, especially, may be due to increased self-reliance, independence, and maturity of returning sojourners that occur as a result of the intercultural experience.

Participants reported more positive and negative change with a sibling at pre-test than at post-test, a result that was not expected. It is possible, however, that this is a factor of the personal upheaval and mixed emotions often associated with the early stages of reentry, and that respondents were simply reflecting on specific instances of positive and negative interactions with their siblings.
Another interesting yet unexpected finding of this study is respondents' reports of changes in their relationships with friends. Although there was little difference between each group's mean scores at pre-test, the control participants revealed more positive change in their friendships at post-test than the experimental group. Moreover, in contrast to what I expected, the experimental group's scores decreased very slightly (though not significantly) from pre-test to post-test, indicating less positive change in their friendships following the disclosure paradigm.

This, together with sibling relationship change, was a finding in which time seemed to play a significant role. One possible explanation for the friendship anomaly is that the interval of time between pre-test and post-test was not sufficient to realize benefits from the exercise, and that, as Pennebaker's paradigm predicts, participants may experience negative feelings during and after the disclosure treatment which could have influenced perceptions of friendship. Numerous authors (Harber & Pennebaker, 1992; Kunkel, 2000; Pennebaker, 1989; Pennebaker et al., 1990; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999), for example, point to negative feelings of sadness, depression, and distress during and after the writing treatment. Although the discussion surrounding this phenomena has focused primarily on the immediate aftermath of disclosure, a study examining the effects of writing on adjustment to college (Pennebaker et al., 1990) revealed negative moods and poor psychological adjustment in disclosure participants some time after the experiment, suggesting that these effects may have a longer duration which could affect a variety of outcomes,
including perceptions of friendships. It is likewise possible that time may affect the four dependent variables differently; i.e., there is no reason to assume that each of the dependent outcomes in the present study would follow the same time pattern.

If negative feelings following disclosure were a likely explanation for the changes in friendships, we might expect to find similar results in other relationships. However, friendships are different in nature from family relationships; more vulnerable to emotional highs and lows that may affect feelings of closeness, and less inclined to welcome personal changes in returning sojourners. Martin (1986a) pointed out, for example, that friendships are typically based on similarities in attitudes, interests, and values, and consequently personal changes may not be tolerated well. A participant in my study illustrated this by writing that the study abroad experience “... put a great strain on my friendships once I returned; my friends after only a few days were tired of hearing me say I wanted to go back... they resent me for having left.”

Similarly, participants who did not engage in the disclosure exercise evidenced slightly increased positive relationship scores from pre-test to post-test. It is possible that personal differences resulting from the intercultural sojourn were more pronounced at the initial return, and in the absence of the disclosure exercise which may have made salient those experiences that were problematic for friendships, these changes may have faded or otherwise claimed less importance in the friendship several weeks later at the follow-up tests. A more likely explanation, however, is that this anomaly is the result of chance.
Exploratory Analysis

Despite the lack of significant results for the dependent measures of interest, an exploratory review of the participants' essays suggests that the students who engaged in disclosure about their return home shared some common experiences and demonstrated some progress towards "closure" in their thoughts and feelings about reentry. All nine of the disclosure participants were judged to have shown signs of improvement over the course of their writing.

Methodological Issues

Given the generally null findings associated with the dependent measures of this study, it is important to examine whether methodological challenges could have minimized chances of supporting the hypotheses. Although the issues described below may not wholly account for the results, they do warrant consideration for this study and well as for prospective future studies of this nature.

Discussion of the Reentry Experience Outside the Study

Ninety percent of the respondents indicated at the outset of the study that they had written about or discussed their reentry experience — with seventy percent of those describing their disclosure in amounts classified as extensive or moderate. Moreover, although participants were instructed not to discuss the study with others while it was on-going, there was no practical means of preventing this from occurring or monitoring whether it did.

Inhibition theory contends that actively inhibiting feelings and thoughts requires physiological work, which acts over time as a stressor on the body and
which precludes coherent information processing (Pennebaker, 1989). By linguistically encoding thoughts and emotions surrounding a significant event, individuals impose an orderly structure or “narrative” (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999) that facilitates understanding and assimilation. Ultimately, the physiological work of inhibition is decreased and stress levels decline, ultimately resulting in fewer health-related and psychological problems (Pennebaker, 1989; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999).

In most studies following the disclosure paradigm, respondents assigned to experimental conditions are asked to talk or write about a traumatic or significant experience that they have not disclosed about before. As Pennebaker (1993b) suggests, starting the disclosure exercise with a coherent narrative already developed may be less healthy, and less therapeutic, than the movement towards the creation of a narrative. If respondents in the present investigation had spoken or written in some detail about the reentry experience prior to taking part in the study, and/or discussed or wrote about it in other venues while the study was taking place, the potential beneficial effects of the disclosure exercise would almost certainly be minimized or lost.

Timing

Another variable that could have influenced the results of this investigation is timing. Three facets of the timing of the study could have affected the results: the length of time between students’ return from abroad and the study’s starting point; the time period over which the disclosure exercise occurred; and the
interval between the last day of writing and the point at which follow-up surveys were administered.

Reentry research has not precisely identified when the true reentry "transition" begins in terms of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral changes and processes. Indeed, it is likely that this will occur at different times for difference individuals. However, a study by Stitsworth (1989) indicates that a certain amount of "processing time" following the return is required for participants to cope with, register, and assimilate their experiences.

In each of the four rounds of data collection, I selected an interval of approximately three weeks after students' return to begin the experiment. This timeframe was chosen because my experience in working with hundreds of study-abroad participants for more than a decade has furnished numerous examples of students' reentry difficulties presenting at about this time. In the absence of specific research supporting this notion, this was a fairly arbitrary choice on my part and it is possible that reentry difficulties emerged earlier or later for these participants. If so, this could certainly account for a lack of disclosure effects. A review of participants' mean scores on the Reentry Shock Scale ($M = 4.84$, with a seven indicating extreme reentry shock) and the Zung scale ($M = 2.24$, with a one indicating little depression and a four depicting severe depression) at the outset of the experiment, however, suggests that students were indeed experiencing some effects of the reentry transition. It is unlikely, therefore, that the timing of the experiment's commencement accounts for the overall null results.
A second factor related to timing is the period over which the disclosure exercise occurred; not the length of writing time within each session, which normally lasts 15–20 minutes, but the time between writing sessions from first to last. In his meta-review of thirteen studies in the Pennebaker paradigm, Smyth (1998) analyzed studies with disclosure exercise periods ranging from four to twenty-eight days. Smyth found that those students utilizing a longer disclosure period resulted in greater improvements to health and psychological well-being, an outcome he attributes to increased opportunities for reflection and introspection with increased time between writing samples. The range for my own study was 14-31 days, with an average of 20 days, a seemingly sufficient timeframe for reflection. It is possible, however, that extending the “window” for the disclosure exercise would have provided greater opportunity for the manipulation to achieve positive results.

A third possibility with regard to timing of the study is the time between the final day of writing for experimental participants and follow-up questionnaires being administered. In the present investigation, follow-up procedures in each data collection period occurred between four and six weeks following the final day of writing. After experiencing a paucity of results for the impact of disclosure on certain health and psychological outcomes in her own study, Kunkel (2000) recommended that future investigations employ a timeframe for follow-up assessment similar to that used by Pennebaker and colleagues, at least 30 days after disclosure and in some cases more, e.g., six weeks (Pennebaker, et al., 1988; Francis & Pennebaker, 1992); two to four months (Pennebaker & Beall,
In the present study, I judged that a time period of four to six weeks after the final writing day would present the optimal collection point — long enough to detect potential effects of disclosure, and soon enough that students would still be inclined to respond. Indeed, I did not want to delay any longer and risk escalating attrition rates, especially since three of the four respondent groups would soon be facing the start of a new semester. Although this seems an adequate time lapse, and other researchers (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992; Pennebaker et al., 1988b) have achieved positive results using similar timeframes, increased time between writing and follow-up testing may have allowed for a greater impact of disclosure in my own study. Smyth (1998), for example, contends that lengthening the duration of the exercise, including the time between disclosure and follow-up, may enhance the effects of the paradigm.

Moreover, studies in this tradition frequently find that participants who disclose about significant or traumatic events experience some distress following the writing exercise. Long-term, benefits are expected to emerge. Short-term, however, participants may experience negative emotions which could influence the outcome of the experiment, if not enough time lapses between writing and follow-up.

**Sampling Issues**

Sampling difficulties may have contributed to the overall paucity of statistically significant results in the present study. Cell sizes for both groups in
the present investigation are less than ideal and this contributed to lack of statistical power to detect truly significant differences. This is particularly relevant for the Reentry Shock scores, since the means of control and experimental participants indicate a trend in the expected direction and results may have been strengthened by additional participants. However, this is less likely for the other variables because the means were not very close; effect sizes were small.

Moreover, it is important to remember that only about 30% of disclosure participants in the Pennebaker paradigm realize substantial benefits; the rest, according to Pennebaker, may be either beyond help or may already have existing outlets to disclose their thoughts and feelings in meaningful ways (Pennebaker, 1997a). In the present study, the experimental group was comprised of nine participants, and with such a small group, effects are less easily detected.

Another interesting finding from Smyth’s (1998) analysis is that gender constitutes an important variable in the disclosure paradigm. Smyth contends that, although additional research is needed to explore this finding more fully, males tend to benefit more greatly than females from writing or talking about their thoughts and feelings surrounding a significant event. With only four males, this study may be less likely to demonstrate effects of the disclosure manipulation.

It is likewise possible that individual personality differences may also account for a lack of results. Christensen & Smith’s (1993) study found that persons characterized as suspicious or hostile benefited from the writing compared with those who were not. The present study did not include personality
assessment instruments and therefore claims with regard to this variable must be considered with caution. It is reasonable to suggest, nonetheless, that these respondents who had elected to study abroad would not generally be described as hostile or suspicious. This conclusion is based on my own interactions with the individual participants (primarily through email) and from program evaluations and other reports by those who administered the program from which the sample was drawn, and who knew the students well. Moreover, the participants volunteered to participate in this study.

Mortality

The threat to validity called mortality (Smith, 1988) was undeniably a factor in the present investigation. In the first data collection attempt, none of the eleven students who began the experiment (out of forty-eight invited to take part) completed the project. Perhaps due in part to the incentives established after the first failed data collection round, subsequent attempts to sustain participation until completion were more successful. In the second collection period, twenty-seven students were notified about the project and five of the twelve who began the project completed it. In the third, out of twenty-two students invited to take part, twelve began the study and nine completed it. In the final collection period, six of ten participants who began the project (from 46 informed about the opportunity) finished it.

The issue of mortality may be most pertinent to the present study in reflecting upon whether there was some distinction between the participants who completed the study and those who did not. Although individual motivations are
difficult to determine, it seems plausible that those students who remained engaged until the end, particularly those in the disclosure condition, found the project somehow relevant and helpful to their reentry experience. The disclosure participants consistently rated their writing experiences as personal, meaningful, and helpful on the essay evaluation forms following each disclosure session.

The more distressing consideration, perhaps, is that those who did not complete the experiment might have "needed" it more than those who did. Gaw's (2000) study suggests that reentry distress is correlated with personal adjustment difficulties, interpersonal challenges, and less utilization of student support services than those with low reentry shock. Gaw concludes that students' reentry distress "... may have been a serious inhibitor in their reaching out for professional help" (p. 100). Although participation in the present experiment might not equate to "reaching out for professional help," it nonetheless required action on the part of the returnees which some may have been unwilling or unable to render. A comparison of reentry shock scores between those students who started the project but did not complete it (n = 25; M = 4.72) and those who completed the project (n = 20; M = 4.84) reveals little difference at the outset of the experiment. It seems logical to speculate, therefore, that those who failed to complete the experiment did so for reasons of inconvenience, perceived irrelevance, or apathy, rather than because they were too distressed to continue.

A two-pronged approach in future studies might prevent or minimize mortality: solicitation of greater numbers at the beginning of the study with the understanding that a number may drop out before completion, and a
strengthened incentive structure which provides incrementally heightened inducements with each writing sample completed.

Strengths and Limitations

Unlike most studies in this tradition which typically involve control participants writing on "trivial" topics, the control group in my study did not engage in a writing exercise at all. This was deemed at the outset a more "pure" and "powerful" application of the model itself, and seems an unlikely contributor to the null results. Indeed, in an effort to minimize potential effects of demand characteristics of the experimental paradigm, Deters (2001) recommended that consideration be given to adding a condition in which participants only complete the dependent measures but do not take part in disclosure.

Additionally, this study employed only one set of follow-up tests six to eight weeks after disclosure rather than two tests as do most studies in this tradition (Donnelly & Murray, 1991; Francis & Pennebaker, 1992; Kunkel, 2000; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker et al., 1990; Spera et al., 1994). Typically these studies measure responses immediately following the last day of the writing exercise and again at follow-up several weeks later. As research in the disclosure paradigm has consistently demonstrated that benefits emerge only after a significant period of time has elapsed between the final writing exercise and follow-up tests, this is not considered a threat to design validity. Indeed, collection of an initial set of post-tests at the conclusion of the disclosure exercise was deemed in the present inquiry not only as unnecessary, but a potential
contributor to respondent fatigue which could have reduced subsequent compliance.

A limitation of the present investigation is the method of data collection utilized. Participants were not administered surveys and writing assignments in a controlled laboratory setting as they are in the majority of studies in this tradition, but rather were asked to respond via email in their own environment and, to a certain extent, on their own schedules. Although I viewed this as a positive departure from the normal disclosure paradigm, believing this more “natural” approach would make any significant results ultimately more useful and replicable, it no doubt contributed to mortality and a lower number of total participants than originally envisioned.

This method may also have resulted in increased potential for everyday distractions to interfere with the writing exercise, rendering it less meaningful. Moreover, I was wholly reliant on participants to monitor and report accurately the length of time they spent disclosing (ideally, 15–20 minutes) on each writing day, and I had no control over any departures from this timeframe. Each participant reported a writing period that lasted from 15–20 minutes on each writing day, with one exception: a participant who reported writing for 31 minutes on the first day, and whose word count on the first essay (888) would seem to confirm this.

This study did not examine the content of the disclosure using the Second Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (SLIWC), a linguistic analysis program that was developed to investigate respondents’ essays and identify insightful or causal
words, positive and negative words, etc. Use of the SLIWC may have revealed interesting findings associated with the disclosure participants' essays. My reading of the writing samples suggests increasing coherence across many of the individual respondents' essays from start to finish, and SLIWC analysis may have provided further evidence of improvements.

A final limitation of the present inquiry involves the dependent variables. My investigation did not employ physiological or biological indicators of health, focusing instead on problems associated with reentry shock, identity confusion, emotional and psychological distress, and interpersonal relationships. Although it seems unlikely given the overall paucity of results, it is possible that participants experienced improvements to health not detected by the dependent measures employed in this study.

It is likewise possible that the variables associated with identity change, personal well-being, and interpersonal relationships may have been enhanced by the inclusion of different or additional dependent measures. On the essay evaluation forms completed after each writing sample, disclosure participants consistently rated the writing exercise as beneficial. My own impressions from a close read of the narrative data suggested that participants were demonstrating progress in their ability to "sort through" their thoughts and feelings related to reentry. Moreover, some respondents wrote long after their participation in the study had concluded to express their thanks and report that they felt the writing had helped them cope with their return from overseas. Given that the disclosure participants reported improvements and that my own analysis of their writing
samples supports this, it is plausible to speculate that different dependent measures, such as a scale designed by Sussman (2002) to assess identity change which was not available to me at the time of this experiment, might have detected specific improvements related to various reentry challenges that were not revealed by those employed in the current investigation.

Summary and Future Directions

Although research has revealed numerous psychological and physiological benefits from writing or talking about significant or traumatic personal events, the present inquiry provides limited support for the disclosure paradigm. The most likely explanations for this paucity of results include methodological issues of sample size and make-up, timing, and disclosure that occurred outside the realm of the study. Given the likelihood of these factors, the following recommendations are presented.

First, future studies might extend the time period of the writing exercise to once per week to allow ample time for processing and introspection; and might likewise lengthen the time period between the final writing and follow-up to a minimum of three months. While increased time for each writing session is not deemed necessary, as Smyth’s (1998) analysis found no difference in effect for length of time between 15 and 30 minutes and a 15–20 minute per-session writing timeframe has been consistently employed in numerous investigations with positive results, a longer time period over which writing occurs is suggested.

Second, to increase and diversify the sample, studies should draw from a broader population of study-abroad participants. Potential respondents should be
solicited from a variety of programs including those in differing locations; those employing different designs such as island, exchange, faculty-led, or semester abroad; those with different subject foci, e.g., science vs. liberal arts; and those of different durations, e.g., less than four weeks, one semester, or one year.

Third, future studies might usefully pre-screen potential participants to control for those who report they have already engaged in disclosure about their reentry experience. These studies might even utilize prior disclosure levels (none, moderate, extensive) as an independent variable potentially influencing the outcome of the exercise.

Fourth, future investigations might usefully include different incentives as a means of increasing compliance. Perhaps a system that provides payment after each essay is completed, with amounts increasing for each subsequent essay, might reduce attrition and strengthen compliance.

Although the present study did not realize predicted effects of the disclosure paradigm on specific problems of reentry, this field of inquiry presents superb opportunity for continued research. Following the somewhat naturalistic tradition employed by this investigation, an intriguing prospective study could involve examination of on-line "journals" and friendship sites such as Facebook or MySpace for entries related to reentry and use the SLIWC to content analyze these for narrative development and increased use of causal or insightful words over the (chronological) course of the entries. Participants who choose to take part would simply add the investigator as "friend," thereby enabling her/him to
view their entries, and would be asked to complete follow-up measures designed
to correlate journal entries to specified outcomes.

One final recommendation resulting from this investigation is that
international education professionals might usefully require returning study-
abroad participants to keep a journal not only of their experiences abroad --
something that is routinely recommended -- but also of their experiences,
thoughts, and feelings during the first several weeks following their return. Credit
or other incentives could be established to reward those who keep a journal
about their reentry experiences, and group reentry "workshops" or seminars
could follow, with participants drawing from their writings to share their
experiences with others in a round-table discussion.

Exploratory analysis in the present study revealed significant progress in
disclosure participants' reentry experiences during the course of their writing.
Moreover, findings of the narrative analysis were consistent with the decrease in
reentry shock mean scores of disclosure participants from pre-test to post-test, a
trend in the expected direction. These outcomes lend support to the value of
furnishing students with appropriate opportunities to disclose about reentry, and
journal-writing presents a simple and inexpensive means of "self-help" for
returning sojourners. The importance of disclosure about study abroad and
reentry can perhaps best be summarized with the closing comment of one
participant, who wrote in her final essay, "I miss it all but I think now I am moving
to the better missing it, where I am not so much bitter that I am not there
anymore, but happy that I went and excited to return home."
APPENDIX A

REENTRY SHOCK SCALE WITH ITEM 7 DELETED

Place a mark in the blank that best reflects how this statement applies to you at the present time:

1. When I returned home, people did not seem that interested in my experiences abroad.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

2. Life was more exciting in the host culture.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

3. My friends seem to have changed since I have been gone.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

4. When I returned home I felt really depressed.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

5. I had difficulty adjusting to my home culture after returning from abroad.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

6. Since I have been abroad I have become more critical of my home culture.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

7. I had a lot of contact with members of the host culture.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

8. I feel like I have changed a lot because of my experiences abroad.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

9. When I returned home I felt generally alienated.
   
   | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

10. My friends and I have grown in separate directions since I have returned.
    
    | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

11. Life in my home culture is boring after the excitement of living abroad.
    
    | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

12. I miss the friends I made in the host culture.
    
    | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

13. Since I have been abroad I have become more critical of my home culture's government.
    
    | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

14. My friends and family have pressured me to "fit in" upon returning home.
    
    | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

15. The values and beliefs of the host culture are very different from those of my home culture.
    
    | Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | Strongly Disagree |

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## APPENDIX B

### EGO IDENTITY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA=Strongly Agree</th>
<th>A=Agree</th>
<th>SLA=Slightly Agree</th>
<th>SLD=Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>D=Disagree</th>
<th>SD=Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t expect to change my political principles and ideals.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There has never been a need to question my values.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am very confident about what kind of friends are best for me.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My ideas about men’s and women’s roles have never changed as I became older.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I will always vote for the same political party.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have considered different political views thoughtfully.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>My values are likely to change in future.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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17. I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.

18. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.

19. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men’s and women’s roles.

20. I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.


22. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.

23. I am unlikely to alter my career/vocational goals.

24. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.

25. My ideas about men’s and women’s roles will never change.

26. I have never questioned my political beliefs.

27. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.

28. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.

29. I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.

30. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.

31. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in future.

32. My beliefs about dating are firmly held.
APPENDIX C

MODIFIED ZUNG SELF-RATING DEPRESSION SCALE

Please choose the number that most accurately describes how this statement applies to you at the present time, by marking an “X” in the line next to the appropriate number:

1 = None/little of the time, 2 = Some of the time, 3 = A good part of the time, 4 = Most of the time

1. I feel downhearted and blue. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
2. Morning is when I feel best. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
3. I have crying spells or feel like it. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
4. I have trouble sleeping at night. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
5. I eat as much as I used to. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
6. I notice that I am losing weight. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
7. My heart beats faster than usual. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
8. I get tired for no reason. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
9. My mind is as clear as it used to be. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
10. I find it easy to do things I used to. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
11. I am restless and can’t keep still. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
12. I feel hopeful about the future. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
13. I am more irritable than usual. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
14. I find it easy to make decisions. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
15. I feel that I am useful and needed. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
16. My life is pretty full. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
17. I feel that others would be better off if I weren’t around. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4
18. I still enjoy the things I used to. ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4

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APPENDIX D

MARTIN'S RELATIONAL CHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. For each category of relationships listed below, identify one person (in your mind) that was meaningful to you before your recent study abroad experience and indicate how much change (positive and/or negative), if any, has occurred in your relationship with this person.

Check one blank for positive scale and one blank for negative scale, for each relationship. If a relationship category does not apply to you (e.g., you don't have a sibling, or you were not involved romantically with someone before your study abroad program), please write “NA” beside that relationship.

a. Parent

Positive Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None
Negative Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None

b. Sibling

Positive Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None
Negative Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None

c. Friend

Positive Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None
Negative Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None

d. Romantic Partner

Positive Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None
Negative Change: ___ A great deal ___ Some ___ Little ___ None

2. Are these changes due to your having lived abroad or to other circumstances in your life? Indicated with an “X” in the appropriate blank below:

___ From having lived abroad
___ From other circumstances

3. Please make any additional comments you wish concerning your relationships since your participation in this study abroad program:
APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age:

2. Gender:

3. Nationality:

4. Ethnicity/Culture:

5. Home University:

6. Academic Classification (sophomore, junior, etc.):

7. Host Country (where you studied abroad):

8. Length of Time Abroad:

9. Date you returned to the US:

10. Before taking part in this program, had you studied, lived, or traveled abroad previously? If yes, for how long? Where?

11. During your program abroad, how much did you associate with members of the host culture (all the time; often; rarely; never)?

12. During your program abroad, how much contact did you maintain (via phone, email, etc.) with friends/family back home? As a percentage of your total time abroad, how much time do you estimate you spent in contact with family/friends in the US?

13. Have you discussed (verbally or in writing, e.g. via email) your thoughts/feelings about returning to the US with anyone, or kept a diary/journal about these thoughts/feelings? If so, how extensively have you talked/written about it?

14. Have you encountered any significant personal problems recently? (death of a relative, romantic break-up, etc.)
APPENDIX F
DISCLOSURE WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

For the next 15–20 minutes, I would like you to write about your experiences and emotions associated with your return to the US and what life has been like for you since you returned. During the writing session, I want you to really explore your deepest thoughts and emotions. Please write continuously for the entire 15–20 minutes. If you run out of things to say, simply repeat yourself or try to be more detailed. In your writing, please do not worry about spelling, grammar, or sentence structure. Instead, I want you to focus all of your thoughts and emotions on your return to the US and your experience since you came back.

Please monitor your time, and write no less than 15 but no longer than 20 minutes. When you have completed the day's writing, you will be asked to record the length of your writing session.
APPENDIX G

REFERRAL SOURCES

If you feel in need of counseling or intervention services, the following phone numbers are provided for your use. Individuals at these numbers may be able to provide other appropriate contacts. Fees may be involved for some of these services; if so, you would be responsible for payment of these fees.

USM Counseling Center (601) 266-4829

Clinic hours are 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday-Friday. No fees for USM students or staff.

Crisis Helpline (800) 233-4357

National Hopeline Network (800) 784-2433
APPENDIX H

ESSAY EVALUATION FORM

The following questions pertain to the essay that you have just written. Please answer these questions as honestly as possible by marking an "X" in the blank that most closely reflects your experience.

1. How personal was your essay?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

2. How meaningful was your essay?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

3. How severe was the event described in your essay?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

4. How revealing of your emotions was your essay?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

5. How much is the event described in your essay still affecting your life?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

6. How much have you talked with others about this event?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

7. How much have you wanted to talk with others about this event?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

8. How much have you actively held back from talking to others about this event?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

9. Do you expect this writing exercise to have some benefit – yes or no?
   Not at all    ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ A great deal

10. If you are upset enough that you would like to be contacted right away, please indicate by writing "Yes" and provide your contact information:

11. Please record the length of your writing session below:
    Start Time:       Finish Time:       Total Length:
APPENDIX I

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM

The University of
Southern Mississippi

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.1509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: R24051001
PROJECT TITLE: An Investigation of the Impact of Disclosure on the Reentry Experience
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 05/31/05 to 05/31/07
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation or Thesis
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Susan L. Steen
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts & Letters
DEPARTMENT: Speech Communication
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Renewal/Continuation of a previously approved project
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 05/15/06 to 05/14/07

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

5-10-06
Date
REFERENCES


Sussman, N. M. (2001). Repatriation transitions: Psychological preparedness,


Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1992). Locus of control, mood disturbance, and social...


