

THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACTS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDY ON OMANI NATIONALS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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Related literature

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Supporting the personal, academic, and professional goals of international students is a university-wide responsibility, but campus departments specifically designed to manage those supports are challenged to maintain contemporary and innovative practices to meet the needs of this ever-changing population. The focus is almost entirely on the experience that happens while the international students are at the host institution, but what happens when the student returns home?

01 INTRODUCTION

Data collected from Omani citizens who studied in the United States and now live and work in Oman will inform international education practitioners on the lasting impact of the international student experience after graduation.

02 OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study is to glean an understanding of the long-term impacts on study abroad participants' concept of self-identity and to also examine transformative learning experiences in an international setting.

03 METHODOLOGY

Executing a qualitative research study method to capture data by implementing semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and narrative inquiry to support oral history telling, a phenomenological approach was used.

- Sixteen participants (n=16).
 - Seven, three-part, 1-hour video interviews
 - Two focus groups, divided by gender
 - One oral history interview

04 ANALYSIS

- Anonymized recruitment with informed consent. Confidential storage set-up. Pseudonym assignment.
- Transcription application utilized to preserve authenticity of data. Multiple, in-depth transcript reviews.
- Inductive analysis and axial coding to capture and synthesize main themes

Several themes emerged from all 16 participants interviews. First, all participants noted that they **persistently and actively reflect** on the experience. Second, all participants noted **encouraging study abroad** within their spheres of influence. Lastly, the participants all expressed a feeling of **dual identity** both in being Omani and a newly acquired American sensibility. Each participant also articulated that their experience was **unequivocally changed** how they perceive themselves which fosters their advocacy for the experience to others.

05 FINDINGS

- **Persistent Active Reflection.** The participants reflect upon their experience no matter how much time has passed. Even if reflections are negative, new meaning can be derived.
- **Advocating the Experience.** Participants make meaning of their experience by advocating for it to others. They do this both actively and passively.
- **Broadened Personal Connections.** The participants' note meeting people with different backgrounds as one of the best outcomes of the experience. Doing so continues to play an active role in their lived experiences.
- **Considering their Self-Identity.** All participants indicated they were changed because of the experience and continue to believe the experience informs their own concept of self-identity

06 CONCLUSION

Studying abroad can foster personal development beyond acculturation. Participants in this study believe their experience impacted them in ways which they continue to apply in their daily lived experiences. They also demonstrate a direct connection to their concept of self and their experiences studying abroad. Moreover, participants continue to make meaning of their experience as they age.