You have to become a citizen of Cagli: An Examination of How a Digital Storytelling Program Abroad Takes Students from Casual Tourists to Global Citizens

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Abstract

This study, through the lens of communication as dialogue, explores the concept of global citizenship as an outcome of a study abroad experience, specifically in a program that intentionally engages students in host community interaction through the use of digital storytelling. Literature presented in this thesis examines the framework of dialogue theory, the concept of global citizenship, study abroad as experiential learning, and the method of digital storytelling. Qualitative interviews were conducted to uncover the stories and experiences of students who have participated in Gonzaga University’s Graduate International Media program in Cagli, Italy. The process of analyzing the interview transcripts, supported with researched literature, revealed that through their participation in the Cagli program students formed their own understandings of global citizenship, and that the act of engaging in digital storytelling played a role in transforming from a tourist to a global citizen. Often used to bridge understanding and connection with other groups and cultures in a globalizing world, digital stories intensify the ordinary story. When connected to a study abroad experience, this study suggests digital storytelling provides an opportunity for a deeper connection to a host culture and a greater understanding of what it means to be a global citizen.
We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Importance of the Study

American students have been traveling and communicating abroad for nearly eighty-five years. Study abroad is an opportunity for students to expand their minds by learning to live among another culture and seize opportunities not available in their home culture. As social distances decrease in a globalized world (Kelly, 2010) students are less inclined to fully connect to their host culture when the connection to home is at the click of an email, or as instant as video chatting across oceans. Without meaningful connections to host communities, as the English writer Charles Caleb Colton wrote in his book Lacon in 1821, “those who visit foreign nations, but who associate only with their own countrymen, change their climate, but not their customs; they ... return home with travelled bodies, but untravelled minds” (p. 177).

Encouraging, or even providing ways for students to engage dialogically in the host community abroad should be a priority in the study abroad experience. Digital storytelling, a method of recreating stories as lived by ordinary people, is a creative way to return the focus of study abroad back to the experience of making genuine connections with host communities rather than casually dipping in and out like a tourist. The process engages the student in becoming an active participant in a foreign community instead of just a visitor or tourist. As part of the process of creating a digital story, relationships among storytellers may form, active participation is necessary, and a higher level of engagement for students on a study abroad program is presented. In making a serious and meaningful connection to a host community and learning through encounters with dialogue, this study seeks to explore in what ways students
understand the concept of being a global citizen in “connecting the global to the local” (Lou, 2009, p. 30), as a result of their participation on a digital storytelling program.

Statement of the Goal

The goal of this study is to examine the available literature that addresses global citizenship as evidenced through participation in a study abroad experience. This study is based in dialogue theory as communication, that through dialogue, participants approach meaning making through fusing prior knowledge with knowledge gained in dialogue with another. In examining a specific study abroad program, International Media in Cagli, Italy offered by Gonzaga University, its intentional use of digital storytelling enters the equation as a means for students to engage dialogically with members of the community of Cagli. The stories and experiences of graduate students who participated in this digital storytelling program abroad were analyzed for this narrative research based study. Qualities of global citizenship may take shape through making meaningful connections by immersion within the host community. Digital storytelling in an abroad setting is a creative method in navigating and unraveling the interconnectedness of our global lives contributing overall to a view of global citizenship.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The next chapter will discuss researched literature relevant to this thesis. The literature review is organized into four sections: (a) communication as dialogue, (b) the relationship between study abroad and global citizenship, (c) study abroad as experiential learning, and (d) a summary of the concept of digital storytelling. Chapter three presents the chosen research method - narrative research. Chapter four reports on the study with findings and discussion.
Chapter five closes with summaries and conclusions. Terms and concepts specific to this study are defined in context within the thesis paper.
Philosophical & Theoretical Basis and Assumptions

In today’s world of cultural, political, and societal tensions, there is a need to understand an interconnected, globalized world community. Study abroad is an opportunity to make sense of the differences faced in and among foreign cultures. Active involvement in a study abroad experience often demonstrates a student’s motivation for curiosity and learning. In remaining close to home, or not engaging in local culture, the less one will learn (Plaza, 1998) and the less one will gain from a study abroad experience. John Dewey’s philosophy on experiential education, as applied to study abroad, provides grounding for understanding the process as reciprocal. Engaging in the local culture begins the process of social and individual change and insight for both sides (Smith, Knapp, Seaman, & Pace, 2011). The act of engagement may occur through dialogue, as understood through the philosophy of Martin Buber’s I-Thou relationship. The purpose of dialogue in the I-Thou relationship is to create new meaning in relation and experience to another person (Griffin, 2009). Understanding the viewpoints of the other is recognizing meaning beyond self. A broader concept in study abroad is to think beyond self to recognize one’s role and responsibility in the world.

Benefits and goals of study abroad referred to in the literature include: language acquisition; global understanding; global awareness and mindfulness; increased involvement with other cultures; development of a global world view, widening intellectual and ethical development; fostering intentional learners; education in citizenship; global citizenship; adaptation to difference; and cross-cultural competence (Crabtree, 1998; Deegan, 2004; Kelly, 2010; Hovland,
Musil, Skilton-Sylvester, & Jamison, 2009; Lou, 2009; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Slimbach, 2010).

Literature surveyed does not distinguish between, nor directly relate goals and outcomes of study abroad to the length of a program. The spectrum of study abroad programs ranges from simplistic, academic tourism to fully-involved programs that emphasize social justice and global citizenship (Larson & Moja, 2010) for undergraduates and graduate students. Hoffa and DePaul (2010) point out in their historical overview of U.S. study abroad that what was once traditionally conceived of as an academic year study experience has seen an increase in short-term (4-6 weeks) study abroad programs. And yet, the goals and benefits remain the same. With intentional planning and design, whether it is two weeks or one year, Larson and Moja (2010) advocate for study abroad opportunities that “emphasize the importance of participating in the life world of people living in the host country” (p. 178).

The aim of this literature review is to present research that explores communication as dialogue, global citizenship, experiential learning, and digital storytelling, connecting their elements that, in a creative, cohesive method, may help students, and programs, reach the benefits and goals of study abroad especially in understanding the concept of global citizenship.

*Communication as Dialogue*

Simply being present is not enough to fulfill the goals and benefits of study abroad. One must engage, act, be aware, participate, and communicate. Yoshikawa (1977), more than thirty years ago, addressed a need for meaningful dialogue among cultures that had never been more critical. In the article, Yoshikawa approaches dialogue as understood through Martin Buber’s philosophy of “the between” - “what is truly human emerges in the relationship or dialogue between man
and men, man and the world, and man and the eternal Thou” (p. 103). It is in a relationship with others that wholeness is found. For Buber, the focus is not on the student self, nor the other self, but the new selves that are created from the dialogic encounter. In dialogue, we walk what Buber calls a “narrow ridge,” that on either side are subjective and objective values (Griffin, 2009). Through engagement with the other we find ourselves in “the between,” standing our own ground while being open to the other (Griffin, 2009). By coming together, students and local community members engaging in dialogue find authentic experiences and create new world views.

Baxter (2006) presents communication as dialogue from Mikhail Bakhtin’s perspective. Similar to Buber, Bakhtin views dialogue as a “simultaneous differentiation from, yet fusion with, another” (p. 101). Buber’s “between” becomes an “interplay of voices” for Bakhtin. Interplay is what creates the new meaning that is formed out of the already known meanings between the two communicators. Baxter asserts that the formula for growth and change is through the difference each person brings to the dialogue. It is through difference that a new social world is constructed in relation to the dialogue that occurs between self and other.

In addition to Yoshikawa and Baxter, Johns (1978) would agree that meaning is formed by fusing previous encounters with a dialogic encounter. Johns names his concept “man-in-dialogue.” The starting point for learning is interaction of self and the world. According to Johns, the responsibility of man-in-dialogue is to see life as a conversation, responding to community challenges and actions through dialogue. The interconnectedness of self and the world is where experience occurs, which develops into a globally-minded image of self in relationship to the world.
The purpose of dialogue is to engage with the other (Stewart, Zediker, & Black, 2004) and learn from other cultures (Baraldi, 2006). The world we know, and the world we might know, depends upon interaction. Beyond the basic communicative act of speech, a story unfolds in dialogue. Pearce and Pearce (2004) assert that dialogue becomes a story “told by a specific person, in a specific language and is told in a specific time and place” (p. 53). The authors further state, in accordance with Yoshikawa, Baxter, and Johns, that the self, as well as the relationship between the communicative agents, are transformed through dialogic engagement.

In connecting a study abroad student’s personal knowledge to the local knowledge, dialogue plays a key role in forming a new global knowledge. According to Deegan (2004), “societal and cognitive development results when students step out of their comfort zones into contact zones, through participatory learning dependent on dialogue and collaboration” (para. 18). Study abroad experiences, particularly those that engage students in culturally interactive experiences of dialogue, bring forth an awareness of different perspectives, ideas, and understanding of issues, that contribute to the overall concept of global citizenship (Hendershot & Sperandino, 2009).

Study Abroad and Global Citizenship

According to the 2010 U.S. Open Doors Report from the Institute of International Education, 260,327 U.S. students studied abroad in 2008-2009 for academic credit (Open Doors, 2010). Though numbers are slightly down compared to the 2009 report where 262,416 U.S. students studied abroad in 2007-2008 (Open Doors, 2009), and the total percentage of U.S. students enrolled in higher education who study abroad hovers around a paltry one percent (Deegan, 2004; NAFSA, 2010), the promising trend is that the number of students choosing to study abroad has increased by double in the last ten years. In the past decade, after the events of
September 2001, colleges and universities began increasing their global initiatives in support for study abroad, encouraging students to engage in cross-cultural study to seek a perspective on what it means to be a global citizen. The U.S. government affirmed support for global learning and increasing student participation with a Senate resolution designating 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad (Hubbs, 2006).

However, Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) write that study abroad alone, by its general nature, does not grant students automatic global citizenship, as there are students who never become engaged with the local culture of the host community. In an increasingly globalized world, social distances are decreasing (Kelly, 2010) as space and cultural borders are defined by technology (Slimbach, 2010). In the push for global citizenship, Richard Slimbach, author of *Becoming World Wise: A Guide to Global Learning* (2010), addresses the “cultural convergence” (p. 2) students face when going abroad. Viewing foreign lands as a reflection of globalized thought and solely learning about the world through internet surfing, or classroom texts and lectures, is not enough. Study abroad also requires more than the act of simply being there. Slimbach supports personal encounters with the host community in feeding intellectual and ethical development of the study abroad student. In advocating for traveled consciousness, Slimbach uses his book to offer guidance in how to positively impact visited cultures and environments, as well as offer advice in understanding the encounter with self that the student often discovers.

Slimbach’s outlook is far more positive in contrast to the opinion article, “What Students Don’t Learn Abroad,” by Ben Feinberg for *The Chronicle for Higher Education* (2002). Feinberg writes of the flippant attitudes expressed by students at his institution of employment regarding
their study abroad experiences. To his disappointment students “talk about interactions with outsiders only in vague abstractions, while expostulating brilliantly about the nuances of American students’ interactions with one another” (para. 12). The stories students are returning to tell are stories of a world already known - the globalized world - a perception of the world that some college study abroad programs don’t challenge. While this article has a harsh outlook on the ability of a student to critically think and reflect on the study abroad experience, one can see a grain of truth in Feinberg’s overgeneralization.

Larson and Moja (2010) counter Feinberg with their study of New York University students on a summer program to South Africa. A program that emphasizes student participation with people of the host country, students found a sense of connection through the stories shared by the local community. Personal relationships formed from meaningful community contact. Students reported that South Africa would no longer be just another country on a map. With intentionality set on meaningful connection with the host community, students returned with greater commitment to, and awareness of the global community.

Bellamy and Weinberg (2006) simply define global citizenship as one who sees the world from different cultural viewpoints. A global citizen is not a bystander. A global citizen, as defined throughout the literature, is productive, aware of the world’s complexities, appreciates difference, communicates across cultures, and seeks intercultural understanding (Bellamy & Weinberg, 2006; Hendershot & Sperandino, 2009; Hobbs & Chemotsky, 2007; Larson & Moja, 2010). Among the various definitions, Larson and Moja (2010) point out the commonality that all “share a genuine concern for human beings beyond the self and a strong interest in working for
the greater sustainability of the world” (p. 178). This concept of developing global citizens, prevalent in much of the literature, is a widely held goal for today’s study abroad programs.

Nussbaum (1997) presents an argument for responsible citizenship as a cultivation of humanity, for which there are three essential capacities: critical examination of self and traditions; ability to see we are human beings bound together through recognition and concern; and the ability to think of the other, to understand their story and the emotions that come from the place they hold. Hovland et al. (2009) agree with Nussbaum’s thought and further state that global awareness and mindfulness are developmental stages along the way to global citizenship. Both concepts aim at moving away from “provincialism and toward serious engagement with the perspectives of others” (Hovland et al., 2009, p. 470).

As both Hovland et al. (2009) and Larson and Moja (2010) suggest, most programs are not intentionally designed to enhance the qualities of global citizenship, but rather are designed to fulfill the goals of academic tourism, which are to travel and experience new cultures while advancing academic progress. Larson and Moja challenge programs to be intentional about connecting academic tourism to greater visions of intercultural communication, tolerance, understanding, and global responsibility. Hovland et al. assert that if the aim of a study abroad program is to cultivate global citizenship, then the curriculum involved must be integrative, as the act of being a global citizen itself is integrative in involving knowledge, experience, and engagement with others.

Global citizenship is not an overnight status, but a process of thought that emerges from an experience that engages a student’s thinking of the role and responsibility one has in the broader global community. In responding to the call of global citizenship, those key experiences occur in
developing a greater capacity for engaging in “dialogue that brings together people from many
different national and cultural and religious backgrounds” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 8). As noted in
the literature on dialogue, the purpose of dialogue is to engage with the other and learn from
other cultures (Baraldi, 2006; Stewart, Zediker, & Black, 2004). Engaging in participatory
learning dependent on dialogue (Deegan, 2004) is a means to transforming global knowledge in
support of the cultivation of humanity in global citizenship.

Study Abroad as Experiential Learning

John Dewey’s philosophy on education as presented in his Pedagogic Creed in 1897 was that
“all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the
race” (Dewey, 1897, p. 3). Under Dewey’s philosophy, in rejecting the spectator theory of
knowledge, we come to know the world through our social interaction in it (Smith, Knapp,
Seaman, & Pace, 2011). Interaction and participation by students are key to experiential learning
in order to shape understandings. Not doing so would result in adoption of superficial
understandings that perpetuate cultural misunderstandings and dissonance (Smith et al., 2011).
This relates back to Feinberg’s (2002) discussion of what students don’t learn abroad when they
are not actively engaging in the social landscape of the study abroad program. Education through
experience then, in Dewey’s philosophy, is a reciprocal process (Smith et al., 2011).

Study abroad programs vary in form but all share a commonality of experiential learning in
its simplest form, that of learning-by-doing (Hopkins, 1999). Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich
(2002) assert that study abroad can lead to the development of global citizenship if experiential
education practices are employed. The authors define what they mean by experiential education
through a review of works by theorists such as Dewey and Kolb, concluding that study abroad
and experiential education “share the common goal of empowering students and preparing them to become responsible global citizens” (p. 46) through three critical elements - collaboration, reciprocity, and diversity. All three elements involve the incorporation of dialogue, not only among the group of students abroad, but most importantly, collaborating in communication and dialogue with diverse members of the host community, with their ideas and experiences, that is mutually beneficial to the community and students.

The authors highlight ten principles that are important to the design of experiential study abroad programs. The main elements that support the aim of this literature review focus on connection through dialogue and immersion and learning through experience. Similar to dialogue, connecting the learning experience to the student’s life or prior knowledge is the best kind of learning. Forming connections between content, experience, and relationships with local community members will enhance the learning experience. Collaboration and dialogue are essential for the student to encounter other perspectives, especially when involving a range of host community members. Immersion between the student and the host community will reflect upon the knowledge already shaped between the student and the global community. In meeting the goal of global citizenship, the student would further learning within and from the local community, not isolated in peer community.

Hopkins (1999) echoes the above assertions in a condensed form. When applying experiential learning to study abroad, students can see the applicability from content to context when applying classroom theory and research to the lived experience. In experiential learning, there is an inward and outward reflection of self. Similar to dialogue theory, merging self views with cultural views and assumptions creates a new cultural context, leading to self-development,
which for Hopkins is a special feature of experiential learning. In an intercultural experience, Crabtree (1998) claims that the outcome of working with the host community is that “both groups of participants [receive] a unique vantage point from which to see each other’s perspectives and experiences” (p. 186). A gap in the literature that neither the Hopkins nor Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich article addresses is the issue of culture shock as it relates to immersion goals of experiential theory. Due to the critical analysis and reflective nature of experiential learning, the degree to which culture shock occurs may not be as strong.

As a solution to bringing the focus of study abroad back to education and cultural immersion, Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) advocate for a program model of experiential learning that deliberately employs the international experience as an educational experience promoting global understanding through study abroad. This model stands out in providing an experience that cultivates an environment for interaction with foreigners in the host community and provides opportunities for critical evaluation and reflection in becoming global citizens.

The next section of the literature review will introduce the concept of digital storytelling which is suggested to be an experiential approach using dialogue in the form of storytelling to make meaning from lived experiences to share in a reconstructed form (Alexandra, 2008) that can bring forth a new shared meaning.

**Digital Storytelling**

The methods in which stories are told continue to evolve. The age-old conversational story can now be morphed into a new, engaging, creative story - a story “designed to amplify the ordinary voice” (Burgess, as cited in Rodríguez, 2010, p. 230). Through the use and incorporation of digital media, narrative stories are shaped into digital stories. Telling stories
with digital media is relatively new, but roots for the digital movement can be found through the usage of participatory videos that addressed community needs or goals; gave a voice to the voiceless; preserved cultural traditions; presented a reality that was forgotten; represented information; or recorded collective memory and identity (Li, 2008).

Digital storytelling is a form of story sharing in which a person combines recorded voice, music, or other sound elements with still or moving images to create a short, multimedia project telling a personal tale, recounting a historical event, or conveying an informational story (Alexandra, 2008; Li, 2008; Robin, 2006; Rossiter & Garcia, 2010). In the digital age, this form of storytelling is a timeless form of self-expression that lends a voice to a multitude of stories on everyday life as experienced by ordinary people (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009). Examples of digital stories provided throughout the researched literature suggest there are multiple interpretations and definitions of digital storytelling. Individuals, groups, and organizations may have specific formulas, but not all elements need be included to be considered a digital story (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010).

The framework of a digital story is basic in nature: (1) Choose a story; (2) map it out in script and images; (3) produce it on a computer. The story can document, but is not limited to, a personal experience, idea, feeling, or event. The Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) provides a “cookbook,” authored by Joe Lambert (2010), that establishes guidelines on what he, and the CDS consider to be the key ingredients in creating successful digital stories. The Digital Storytelling Cookbook is a standardized model for individuals to adopt and adapt in constructing a digital story. Multiple articles refer to and reference Lambert’s work, however, the formula
provided by CDS is only one product. There are other formulas in use and practice, such as NPR StoryCorps, that are valid and successful as the one drawn together by Lambert.

Separating itself from solely text-based presentation, digital storytelling is a creative, participatory medium for generating a product that can be shared repeatedly. Digital stories are re-created from a past experience, forming a new story, a new definition or representation of the storyteller and the experience (Rodríguez, 2010). Further research suggests the digital story, for the storyteller, serves as a point of reflection, learning, and empowerment (Rossiter & García, 2010). Involvement in digital storytelling allows the participant to craft what Hull and Katz (2006) call “an agentive self.” With control over the presentation of the story, the storyteller finds meaning and representation of the self and experience within the crafting process and product of digital storytelling.

Raimist, Doerr-Stevens, and Jacobs (2010) reference their University of Minnesota fall 2008 course description for “Digital Storytelling in and with Communities of Color” to show that in their (Raimist and Jacobs) classroom, digital storytelling is an avenue for students to construct meaning and make connections with others and the world. In this class students become familiar with media production and also become involved in culture identity work. The professors of this course acknowledge in addition to expanding personal understanding and understanding of societal roles among the immediate community and within communities of the world, digital storytelling contributes to the comprehension of complex realities of today’s world for today’s student.

Digital storytelling is an educational method that brings forth multiple skills. Bernard Robin (2006) asserts that students have the opportunity to develop their communication skills as they
learn organization and construction of ideas and opinions in crafting their digital stories. In addition, interpersonal communication skills and various literacies may be garnered as a result of participating in the creation process. Patricia Search (2009) presents an argument for the use of digital storytelling in improving cross-cultural communication. Through multi-media narratives on culture, ideas and events are relayed to the community in ways that promote the understanding of cultural differences.

**Conclusion**

Dialogue seeks a new understanding when engaging with another. Meaning forms from fusing previous encounters when one engages with and learns from another. In making a connection through dialogue with someone outside of our own culture, such as a study abroad student engaging with a local member of their host country, different cultural viewpoints present themselves for appreciation and understanding.

As a widely-held expected outcome of a study abroad experience, it is assumed that a student will gain appreciation and understanding and apply it to global citizenship. Study abroad programs employing experiential education elements of connectedness, collaboration, and community immersion encouraging involvement of the student in the host community, tend to see the adoption of global citizenship as a result. Digital storytelling, as a form of experiential education, engages students in dialogic acts that create new meaning and perspective in giving voice to everyday life experiences as lived by the other.

The discussion of the interconnectedness of the key concepts of dialogue, experiential learning, digital storytelling, and global citizenship as presented in the literature proceeds in asking the following research questions:
RQ 1: After participating in a digital storytelling experience abroad, how do students understand the concept of being a global citizen?

RQ 2: What role does digital storytelling play in contributing to the concept of global citizenship as a result of the study abroad experience?

These questions formed from the literature and a heightened awareness to the prolific use of the term *global citizen* in study abroad literature. Identifying a study abroad program that intentionally encourages dialogue through digital storytelling and promotes an outcome of global citizenship is of great interest for research in how a student may be led to understanding the concept of global citizenship.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Scope and Methodology

As the digital storytelling phenomenon grows in popularity, research suggests that it is being employed in study abroad programs as a means for community involvement, understanding, and a means of intercultural communication. Stories contribute to the understanding of ourselves and in connecting to others (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Digital storytelling is a new method of telling stories that bridges communication gaps. As a student enters into a new community abroad, engaging in an activity that promotes local connection is a method in developing intercultural communication skills and competencies that encourage the development of thinking as a global citizen in an increasingly globalized world. Digital storytelling invites a new dialogue to community discussion and creates an oral history to be digitally preserved for generations to come.

The purpose of this research was to explore how a study abroad participant understands the concept of global citizenship upon completion of a digital storytelling program abroad and what role digital storytelling plays in recognizing that understanding. Narrative research, a qualitative research method, was chosen based on its characteristics of gathering participant narratives that focus on the meanings people attribute to their experiences which provides “insight that befits the complexity of human lives” (Josselson, 2006, p. 4). “Narrative research,” according to Josselson (2006), “rooted in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology, strives to preserve the complexity of what it means to be human and to locate its observations of people and phenomena in society, history and time” (p. 3). Though individuals and their experiences are
unique, narrative research seeks understanding of patterns and differences that develop among the individuals and the shared phenomenon (Josselson, 2006).

Participant interviews were conducted to identify specific experiences that resulted from student participation in a digital storytelling program abroad. Narrative-minded, open-ended questions were asked to encourage a response in the form of story. It is the stories the participant tells in talking openly from their own point of view that hold the most value in gathering data in narrative interviewing (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Furthermore, narrative inquiry is a channel in which we communicate meaning to ourselves and the world (Spector-Mersel, 2010). Learning more about digital storytelling and global citizenship lends itself to the narrative research approach in learning how a specific group has been impacted by these contemporary phenomena using participant stories to measure outcomes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Factors of consideration that did not limit the research included prior experience by the participants in intercultural settings (living, working, traveling), age of participants, and the passing of time as participants reflected on an experience of the recent past as “stories of the past are always told from the vantage point of the present” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 212).

Sample

The sample for this study was chosen from the population of Gonzaga University (based in Spokane, Washington) students who participated in the 2009 and 2010 Intercultural Media program (also known as the Cagli Program) offered through the Communication and Leadership graduate program. The Intercultural Media program is a six-credit, short-term (17-day) summer study abroad in Cagli, Italy, a town of 10,000 in the Marche region. In the creation of the digital
stories, students were afforded the opportunity to be extensively involved with the community as
the city center population is relatively small, and the location is in a more remote area of Italy.

Each student, by the end of the program, completed coursework in Italian language,
intercultural communication, photography, writing, and storytelling. The goal of the program was
to produce a profile story on a community member (2010 program), or on an aspect of Italian life
in Cagli (2009 program). In producing this final product, two interpreters were available to
students to conduct interviews and discussions with community members in the Italian language.
The purpose of the program is to give students an intercultural experience that combines cultural
immersion through learning communication and multimedia skills. According to the 2010
program handbook, “students will be ready to become facilitators in the intercultural dialogue
that the modern world requires” (Caputo, 2010, p. 3). The underlying assumption of the program
is that students will be taken from a casual tourist to a global citizen (International Media in
Cagli, Italy, n.d.).

Participants

Out of the 33 overall student participants of the 2009 and 2010 Cagli programs, 10 Gonzaga
University graduate students became the purposive sample. The sample included 8 women and 2
men, ranging in age from 24-60 years old. As graduate students of Gonzaga University, it can be
expected that students have already achieved, at minimum, a Bachelor’s degree level of
education. At the time of the program students were either in their first or second year of the two
year communication program that operates with students who are campus-based and those who
are online-based students. Of the participant sample, 7 were online students and 3 were campus-
based students.
With consent from the director of the Cagli Program to contact the students, all 33 students were invited, by e-mail, to participate in one, 30-45 minute individual interview. Ten participants responded with consent and availability to participate in the study. Any consent to participate in the study was voluntary. Participants were ensured anonymity and were allowed to relinquish their volunteer status if desired. The scheduled interviews then took place either on the Gonzaga University campus, or via phone or Skype, during the course of one week. Participants were more than willing to discuss their experiences with the Cagli program. To honor the anonymity agreement, pseudonyms were used to present the findings of the study.

*Interview Procedures*

In order to draw out personal elements of their experience, participants were led through the interview process by way of a narrative interview, encouraging the participant to engage in story-like conversation. Narrative research calls for questions to be open-ended so that the content of the story is open to the definition of the participant, not of the researcher (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The aim of the interview was for the students to share their experiences with cultural immersion and digital storytelling, talk about the program experience in terms of favorite and challenging moments, and share their reflective thoughts on how they thought they went from being a casual tourist to a global citizen through this experience.

In reporting narratives, the level of involvement of the researcher should be noted so that the reader is clear about the influences of the researcher (Trahar, 2008). The researcher, as a 2010 participant in the Cagli Program (not counted in the overall total of 33) and as a professional in the field of study abroad, was personally and professionally interested in the outcomes of the study. In committing to narrative research as a methodological approach, the researcher
recognizes that “stories will differ depending on the listener and the teller, when the story is told and in what context” (Trahar, 2008, p. 260). In narrative research the interviewer is also an active participant keeping the conversation flowing and asking followup questions.

*Interview Guide*

Following narrative research structure, the interview process consisted of open-ended questions intended to encourage the participants to share their experiences from their points of view in reflecting on specific events that occurred. Each interview was captured with a voice recording device. The interview began with warm-up questions to identify background information including expectations of the students within the program and an overview of the stories in which each participated. The interview then moved toward eight informing questions that were asked of all participants:

1. In this intercultural setting, could you describe any challenges you faced in interacting with community members?
2. If you were to go as a tourist, do you think you would have these same experiences or respond to situations the same way? What made Cagli different?
3. In what ways did Cagli become part of your community?
4. Through this experience, how do you see yourself fitting into the global community?
5. What aspects of the program do you think contributed to having a more globally-minded frame of awareness?
6. When you travel now, do you, or will you, be as curious about another culture/person as you were/had to be in order to complete your Cagli project?
7. What characteristics would you use in defining a global citizen?
8. What did the Cagli program do to create, or enhance the idea that you’d become a global citizen?

As a result of the narrative questions format, flexibility was required as there were opportunities for clarifying questions to be asked in between the informing questions. All participants were asked the above interview questions, but were also open to expansion based on what emerged from the interviews. The student participants were also given the opportunity to add any final thoughts before the close of the interview.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded with a voice recording device and later transcribed. Transcripts from each interview were analyzed using an open coding process in order to examine and compare the data (Boeije, 2010). This first step in narrative analysis is also known as restorying (Creswell, 2008). The transcripts were first examined as individual pieces to conceptualize the general points of view, elements, and unique experiences for each student.

Once conceptualizations were pulled from the conversations, the method of axial coding determined the dominant elements (Boeije, 2010) that reoccurred across participants. Specific interview segments from the informing questions were pulled from all 10 transcripts and sorted into smaller fragments and codes within the subject of the question to identify links.

Finally, selective coding connected the data into themes (Boeije, 2010) to add depth to the insight and organize the themes into a sequence (Creswell, 2008). The axial coding information was cross-compared to find dominant influences that collectively emerged in determining how students understood the concept of global citizenship upon completion of the Cagli International Media program and what role digital storytelling played in that understanding.
Reliability, Validity and Ethics

In narrative research there are three contexts in a story: 1) the immediate relationship in which it was produced, 2) the social field in which it evolved, and 3) the meta-narratives that provide meaning (Spector-Mersel, 2010). No story can contain all memories, interpretations, or feelings. It is assumed that stories and experiences shared in the interview process are authentic. As the researcher was the interviewer, and a former participant of the 2010 Cagli program, the findings were interpreted with support from the reviewed literature. In reporting the stories and experiences of the students, the researcher was committed to preserving the voice of the study’s participants in the findings.

The goal of this qualitative, narrative research was not to generalize the participant views of global citizenship to all study abroad experiences, nor to be the final word on the topic, but to seek particularistic findings unique to the individual students. The aim was to understand rather than convince (Creswell, 2007). Validation is based on dialogue with the participants focusing on the richness of the data received through each interview. Critical elements derived from the qualitative interviews were measured with support provided in researched literature and finding credibility in the theory of dialogue as communication. All findings are meaningful and relative to the participants; similar experiences may occur for other study abroad participants, but each story is unique to time, place, and person. Findings such as those presented in this study are always open to reinterpretation (Creswell, 2007).
Chapter 4
The Study

Findings

In analyzing the responses of the narrative interviews, dominant experiences emerged through student responses to the interview questions. Below, the dominant experiences are presented and sequenced into themes on: (a) intercultural challenges, (b) community, (c) global citizenship, (d) immersion, (e) interaction with community members, (f) courses, (g) intercultural learning, and (h) casual tourist to global citizen.

Intercultural Challenges

As far as experiences go, differences are usually noticed first. As students reflected on their acclimation to the community, the number one challenge that the majority of the students cited was the language barrier. A large percentage of Cagli’s residents do not speak English, or feel they don’t speak it well enough to converse with an American. With no program language requirement, a translator was available for the formal digital story interview between the student and their chosen Cagliese resident, but the students were on their own the rest of their time in interacting with community members. Rebecca and Jenny (names used are pseudonyms) responded:

The language barrier was the hardest for me. It really did prevent me from even engaging with some people. I had zero confidence in my Italian ability. I felt lots of culture shock in the first few days. I felt a lot of pressure that I had to develop these relationships and so quickly. I just failed at that. I couldn't get past my own reservations of feeling awkward and communicating. I couldn't communicate that way. - Rebecca

The language barrier was my hardest hurdle. I got so frustrated because I wanted to communicate so badly, but I couldn’t. Then I
was embarrassed and didn’t want to talk to anyone because I felt I was slaughtering their language. - Jenny

Both students reported that as the program continued, they became more comfortable with the language barrier as they established solid relationships with community members as opposed to the initial passerby interactions:

I walked in there and stumbled out my Italian asking for postage. He hands me the stamps and says, in English, “that was really nice that you tried.” He appreciated I made the attempt, which made me feel good. The time I’m spending in trying to integrate is worthwhile. That made the interaction more rich for me. - Rebecca

I felt like they understood I was trying. My words were coming out a little better. The last week I felt a lot more confident and willing to try as much as I could to speak Italian and not be too concerned if I was saying a word wrong, or didn’t know the words. - Jenny

The second most common response to intercultural challenges was “acclimating to the rhythm of the community,” as Kay addressed it. Stefanie learned to make personal adjustments in finding out “there’s a whole other way to live.” In becoming acclimated to the long lunch hour where most places of business in town close for several hours, to the late dinners, or to the concept of paying for a cappuccino after you have completed it, Elizabeth concluded that though these were definite challenges to get used to, “it was more internal. [I was] getting frustrated that things weren’t as easy as I wanted them to be.” These lifestyle differences they acclimated to, as the students continued to reflect, were differences that they now miss here at home.

Acknowledging difference, students found understanding in community.

Community - Cagli and Global
When asked how Cagli has become part of their community now, students talked of the differences they had grown accustomed to and want to return to, as well as the connections they made that now make the world feel smaller:

Everyday, I look at the weather in Rome. I was so amazed by this whole experience. I feel protective of Cagli. It’s enormous that this village is cut off from the railroad. You can’t get there by train. That’s very purposeful and I realize that. - Kay

I talk about it all the time. I feel it has been an amazing, life-long, forever-to-remember experience. The experience that happened made it feel more like a community, more than a trip away from home. It helped you realize you have commonalities with people outside of your community, even among different parts of the world. - Jenny

My husband and I have “piazza time” several times a week. The whole concept of piazza is to stop and simply be there and enjoy friends and community. I like the idea of having a community place that you go to. - Elizabeth

[Cagli has] become a closer connection to my own life and upbringing. The town I grew up in had less people than Cagli does. I could relate to the small town. I’ve put meaning around what it is like to live in Cagli as compared to what it is here in the States. - Paul

In addition to the lived experience of Cagli, Elizabeth also cited the course readings as framing an understanding of global community and citizenship:

I found the reading extremely valuable. I was reading about understanding your dominant culture and I thought, why am I reading about America? I’m American. I should be reading about Italy. But in fact, what I go back over and over again is what frames our concept of culture. That it is simply a framework, and understanding that I’ve been influenced by that since I was born.

Students’ reflections on their experience in terms of difference and community led to reflection on their understanding of global citizenship.
Global Citizenship

When asked what characteristics would define a global citizen, students returned similar responses. One common response was that a global citizen is someone who seeks out information. This person is not passive when it comes to educating themselves on other cultures and countries. Through intercultural and international experiences, a global citizen, according to Rebecca, is open to communicating:

[A global citizen] isn’t afraid to engage with the locals, or afraid to venture off of the Rick Steves tour hotspots. [It’s] somebody who is really willing to dive in head first in the culture and the location and really intermix with the locals. To do what the locals do and see what the locals see, and not try to see things as right and wrong, but to observe that this is how it’s done here.

A global citizen, according to Joy, whether in country or far from a foreign environment, keeps aware through news and events, or stays connected with people met along the way.

Through global connectedness, Winston noted that a global citizen recognizes humanity. Kay continues that notion to say that a global citizen is “conscious of the impact of their behavior on the lives of others; pauses and considers that before moving forward.” Elise believes that with the impact we have on each other, there is no longer any way to detach ourselves from the rest of the world; we must recognize the benefits others see in doing something differently:

There are different ways of doing things. It doesn’t have to be the Eurocentric, or Americentric way of doing something. Everyone has something to contribute. What happens in one country affects another country, either directly or indirectly.

In considering the other, responses also included characteristics of suspending judgement, being tolerant, and releasing egocentrism.
A global citizen who considers the other does this through awareness of alternate perspectives. Several noted that a global citizen is open-minded and open to experiencing and learning that which is new. Joy believes a global citizen has a “curiosity about difference.” Through this curiosity one recognizes difference and may adapt to or accept the circumstances that play out in negotiating difference. According to Paul, a global citizen will also consider their core values in these situations of recognizing alternate perspectives:

The world view is really nothing more than just taking in a broader spectrum of thought and opinion. Having a world view is having the courage to step back and question your beliefs and look at other’s ideas. They’re going to change your way of thinking, or they’re going to solidify your way of thinking.

Overall, when asked for their definition of global citizenship, students gave responses that showed their comprehension of the term. For one student, the term wasn’t one she had applied to herself previously:

I don’t think I thought of global citizenship that much before I went, even though I had already studied abroad and traveled.
- Francesca

For another, while she understood global citizenship and thought the program helped her step in that direction, she didn’t think she was automatically a global citizen by dipping in, then out of the community:

I feel like I’ve definitely taken away learning about a culture and myself through the difference in that culture, but at the same time I don’t know if I’m truly a global citizen. I feel like I won’t have the chance to interact with this community in person. I don’t know if I’ll ever go back. I feel like it’s more like a global citizen in terms of knowledge and learning, but not interaction. I don’t know if I would go so far that yes, I’m a global citizen now, but definitely moving me into that direction. - Joy
The insights on global citizenship relate to the actions demonstrated in the immersion experience.

**Immersion**

A unique aspect of the Cagli digital storytelling program is that students are immersed in this small Italian community practically devoid of tourists. While short in terms of longevity abroad (seventeen days) compared to conventional summer study abroad programs (four-six weeks), the immersion aspect cannot be avoided and for the students, only added to the richness of the experience:

It gave me an opportunity that I wouldn’t have had outside of the program to really become part of the community for that time we were there. You’d recognize people on the street, say hello to the same people. You meet your neighbors. I appreciated I was here to stay. I didn’t have to go, see, do within the first day. I had time. - Stefanie

I appreciate culture more. It was the immersion... It’s forcing you to change. You have to become a citizen of Cagli. - Francesca

We were *living in our lab*. The class recognized that and gave credence to it. Get out there. Talk with the people. Sit in the piazza. Shop around. Witness the open market. Talk to the people at the stalls. That was a critical part of the class. - Kay

There was a focused effort to just be a part of it. We were told to go sit in the piazza, go watch, go have those conversations, go take those pictures. Go be a part of it. Take time to be a part of the culture. Not just be around the culture. Make connections and build relationships. - Rebecca

Noted as part of the immersion experience was the town itself. Located in the Marche region about an hour inland from Italy’s northeastern coast, Cagli is not on the well-traveled tourist path. Joy and Jenny cited the fact that the program chose Cagli was an impact on the immersion experience in seeing how Cagli is connected to Italy, and the rest of the world:
Cagli is a very tightly knit town nestled away from pretty much everything else. If we had done the same program in Rome, in my opinion, it wouldn’t have had the same result for me because of the hustle and bustle. - Joy

I like how we went from [Florence] to then being pushed into a more richer Italian culture with Italian speaking people and a smaller community. They didn’t really have that as much in Florence and Rome. I became more aware of people for who they are and what they truly did and what their culture is truly like instead of what I read in books. Instead I heard from other people. It allowed me to learn from other people. - Jenny

Immersion wouldn’t occur without interaction with community members.

*Interaction with Community Members*

For Elise, as part of the immersion process, it was the exposure to individual people for the digital story that contributed to understanding global citizenship: “When you feel like you have friends in different parts of the world, I think you become more interested in what’s going on globally.” Becoming part of the rhythm of the community occurred during afternoon lab time and during individuals’ morning and evening hours in the piazza spending time with community members. Many of the students, in talking about their digital stories, spoke of a connection that was made with an individual:

- She reminded me of my grandmother. - Winston
- We had an immediate connection. - Kay
- We had shared interests. - Francesca
- She was a genuinely nice person, an everyday citizen. - Elise
- People probably wouldn’t have reason to consider him. - Paul
- He seemed very curious and that intrigued me. - Joy

Winston reported that the accumulation of interaction with individuals took away a fear of the unknown. In a less touristy locale, the more intimate interactions on an individual basis had a great impact. Students were encouraged to be a part of it all, and that included learning the
stories and taking a genuine interest in the lives of the community members. “Overall,” according to Rebecca, “it’s the stories of the people I remember most.” Seeking interaction with community members to know their stories, students found their own confidence rooted in their daily courses and requirements.

Courses

Each morning of the program students attended one hour lessons each on language, intercultural communication, photography, and writing as foundational pieces for the overall digital story. The completed coursework and the topics discussed also contributed to understanding the role of global citizenship in the process:

The language lessons infused with a socio-cultural perspective were so fabulous. So impactful. We’ve carried that with us. Every time we hear Berlusconi ... It made learning the language so far beyond nouns and verb agreement to learn to have perspective on that culture. To have perspective on ourselves. - Kay

I think all the professors did a great job of letting us think for ourselves. [Helping us] recognize difference was the most important thing. We were all interested in understanding and learning the culture as it was. - Winston

I don’t think I could have read the texts we read outside the context of Cagli and still have the same meaning come from it. - Rebecca

We had to go out and take pictures of everything. It made you get out there. So much of the program is geared toward creating a connection between people. - Elise

Students talked of having heightened and greater awareness to discussions that took place in the classrooms because they were learning and living the experience at the same time. Connections were not only made with people, but in connecting academic life to real life, which bettered communication opportunities.
In taking the time to reflect on similarities and differences in making cultural connections, students shared experiences of moments where they understood a difference they wouldn’t have been able to see without interacting with a community member. For Rebecca, her digital story subject, a general contractor who had done years of renovation construction around Cagli, turned out to be unexpected and what she called an “expectation breaker:”

I got a pretty stoic man who didn’t have a lot of positive outlook on things. He seemed very set in his ways. I expected something different from that interview experience. One not so negative. [But now] I understand why he was upset. He put all this work into making something look the way that it was intended to look, to restore it to its original beauty. You have people who disregard that and build over the top of it, and don’t even do it in a nice way. I wouldn’t have really comprehended completely his anger had we not had our conversation and walked around and he pointed out the things that really upset him.

Stefanie spoke of tension in finding a person to interview for the digital story. “I think most of us thought that was a really hard thing. It was a good growth point for us.” In the end, as evidenced above, connections were made, and many found a shared interest with their person. “That shows me that people are people around the world, and you find people who connect us,” continued Stefanie.

With support of peers going through the same experience in a foreign cultural environment, students cited that having shared intercultural experiences instilled confidence to face the situations they were having, as well as confidence to be comfortable in future interactions. Paul noted that facing cultural differences and communications had him rethinking his daily activities:

I was so far out of my comfort zone in the day-to-day. In having to reevaluate even just the basic day-to-day living tasks, it really forced me to think about those little things that are second nature,
that I don’t need to think about. You get dependent upon that routine. In Cagli, because everything was so much different, I thought about everything.

In the end, Paul established somewhat of a routine, though not the autopilot status he runs on in the U.S. Rethinking day-to-day activity for Paul “forced [me] to get down on a different level to actually interact and be part of that little town.” Students faced conversations and routines that became less like those that a tourist would encounter.

_Casual Tourist to Global Citizen_

One of the simplest ways that students found themselves transitioning from a casual tourist to a global citizen was the living experience in Cagli. Students lived in shared rooms among various apartments in the city:

Immediately we saw ourselves as residents because of the structure of the program. Where we stayed. It felt like home. It didn’t feel like we were staying in a motel. Having a kitchen, a patio and garden. That view became our view. We got to hear the sounds of the community. - Kay

You’re having to buy your food, get your food at the appropriate time, figure out how to do laundry. When you know you’re there for two weeks you really do have to put down roots a little bit. - Elizabeth

I really think that living there was a major part of the experience. You have people over for dinner. You all come together. As a tourist I would go to a restaurant every night. As a tourist you move along quickly so you’re in a place for two-three days and you move to the next place. - Francesca

What we did was indulge in the culture, embrace the culture and dive into the culture. When you’re a tourist you don’t take the time to necessarily talk to the locals, or ask them certain questions, or get to know their family. We had to build relationships. We had to speak to the locals in Italian. It wasn’t a passerby situation. It was more of a living situation. - Jenny
After the shock or awkwardness of the first couple of days wore off, the students saw themselves not as tourists, but as temporary residents who were part of the community.

The community of Cagli has grown accustomed to American students establishing temporary residence in their city over the past few years. In forming a routine students reported feeling welcomed by the community:

They were very open to us and very welcoming to us. - Stefanie

The first couple of days I still felt like a tourist. I think the openness of the community and the fact that they saw us on a routine basis, and they were willing to try to teach us their language and show us different things, befriend us, made Cagli different. - Elise

Part of it was the comfort level and the fact that you were seeing the same people on a daily basis. - Rebecca

If I were a single tourist, or even with a handful of tourists, I don’t think I would have felt that comfortable. But because most of the community knew who we were as a group and why we were there, I felt like I had more of a license to really extend. I felt I was able to talk to more people and push myself to talk to folks I wouldn’t have approached as a tourist. - Joy

Transitioning from casual tourist to the mindset of a global citizen started to occur at the point of setting up a living situation to establishing a daily routine. By the time the program came to an end, students noted its overall impact:

[It was] the fact that our assignment was to get out there and interact with people. We were forced to do it and it was a good push. When people travel they might be a little more hesitant and stick with what they know. - Winston

The program as a whole had a pretty strong impact on me and helped me evaluate how I can be a global citizen. It opened my eyes to the way America does things. It’s not right, it’s not wrong,
it’s just different. Integrate into culture, respect a culture, notice the similarities and differences between another culture and my own. I notice that it’s not necessarily a bad thing, but just a different thing. - Rebecca

It was neat the way we ended with the dinner there and the rest of the people in Cagli. It flowed with the whole course. With the way the course was designed where we each got to know different individuals in town and then met and broke bread with them on the last night. You almost felt like in that point you were adopted by the town. - Paul

The immersion aspect of the program aided the students in making community connections. The assignment of creating a digital story by profiling a person or aspect of life in Cagli drew students closer to connecting life in Cagli to their lives at home. Through language and intercultural communication lessons, students enhanced their awareness and open-mindedness in understanding cultural differences and perspectives transitioning from casual tourists to global citizens. Discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions and the researched literature follows.

Discussion

This study set out to find student responses to understanding the concept of global citizenship and the role digital storytelling played in that understanding. From the student responses, dominant themes were presented in the findings. The discussion below shows how the findings answer the research questions with support from the reviewed literature.

RQ 1: After participating in a digital storytelling experience abroad, how do students understand the concept of being a global citizen?

Understanding the concept of being a global citizen comes from a combination of program aspects. Forming a definitional understanding, students drew from individual experiences and the
points where they saw difference or challenge and how that framed their perspective of a global citizen coming from the Cagli program. Prevalent in much of the literature, a widely-held goal for today’s study abroad program is to develop global citizens though many are not intentionally designed to enhance the qualities of global citizenship. In a handbook preface to participants, the Cagli program director cites that “the communication discipline is uniquely positioned to respond to both globalization and diversity” (Caputo, 2010, p. 2). Interpreting the findings, the Cagli program incorporates an intentionality, by way of integration (Hovland et al., 2009), for its participants to develop characteristics of global citizenship.

Development of global citizenship characteristics takes place through experience. In Nussbaum’s (1997) argument on cultivating humanity, the three essential capacities: critical examination of self and traditions; noticing humans bound together through recognition; and understanding the story, emotions, and position of another, are three steps that students exhibited in their responses to the interview questions. Students spoke of sharing cultural and communication differences in their daily intercultural communication course. By addressing intercultural differences in the daily class, students became part of Bakhtin’s dialogic interplay of voices where new meaning is formed out of the already known meanings between two communicators (Baxter, 2006). This first step of examination of self and experience aided in recognizing the perspectives of the Italian culture.

The two students that reported their encounters of a language communication barrier found that the effort to speak the little Italian they knew was enough to make a meaningful connection. Making time for quality interaction and repeat interaction with individuals in the community came with an appreciation from the residents, in turn creating a more comfortable
communication environment for the students. From Nussbaum’s second stage of cultivation of humanity, this is a sign of the students’ ability to see human beings as bound together through recognition and concern.

In acclimating to the “rhythms of the community” as a couple students coined it, they learned to make personal adjustments in acknowledging the way life is lived in Cagli. It was through the dialogic exchanges that students began to understand the reality of Cagli’s community. Being exposed to cultural differences, students realized or reaffirmed the interconnectedness of self and their new community, shaping or reshaping perspectives held of the other. This deviation from provincialism and engagement with perspectives of others (Hovland et al., 2009) is on the right path to being a global citizen.

In seeking out information, considering the other, and being aware of other perspectives, a global citizen is understanding of various cultures and beliefs which is in line with the simple definition Bellamy and Weinberg (2006) give global citizenship - one who sees the world from different cultural viewpoints. According to summarized student responses, a global citizen is a person who seeks out information, is tolerant of others, and has an awareness and open-mindedness of cultural perspectives and beliefs. This falls in line with one of the primary objectives of the program in understanding “communicative processes across cultural boundaries” (Caputo, 2010, p. 4). Larson and Moja (2010) point out the commonality that global citizens “share a genuine concern for human beings beyond the self and a strong interest in working for the greater sustainability of the world” (p. 178).

In the eight months since the end of the program, a connection to Cagli is still present in all the students. Similar to the study of American students in South Africa by Larson and Moja
(2010), students in that study reported that South Africa would no longer be just another country on the map. Whether it stems from checking the weather in Italy, to setting aside “piazza time,” there is a string of connections that bridge life in the U.S. to life in Italy, especially for the two students who grew up in rural communities, and for one, was able to put meaning around what it means to live in Cagli based upon his own upbringing. In recognizing a connection between home community and community in Cagli, the students garnered a broader view of themselves living within a global community.

By applying Nussbaum’s third stage of cultivating humanity, in first understanding our own frame of being we are better able to understand the story, emotion, and place of another. The outcomes of student situations in dealing with the language barrier and the cultural nuances of community are evidence of their evolving characteristics of global citizenship and involvement in global community. Regarding oneself as a global citizen may not be entirely accurate for some, but an understanding of the concept is prevalent in the findings. The program at very least planted a seed of thought. The findings are conclusive that through knowledge, experience, and engagement by the students within the Cagli program there was a cultivation of global awareness in understanding the concept of being a global citizen.

RQ 2: What role does digital storytelling play in contributing to the concept of global citizenship as a result of the study abroad experience?

Overwhelmingly, it could be said that the largest impact that contributed to understanding the concept of global citizenship was the opportunity for interaction with community members of Cagli. The Cagli program did not allow for passive participants. Students were required at the very least to make a connection with a local person in the community in order to take part in the
program’s assignment of creating a digital story on an individual or on an aspect of life in Cagli. Slimbach (2010) wrote that personal encounters with host community members feeds intellectual and ethical development of the study abroad student. Discussion follows of aspects of the program emphasized in the findings and how, overall, digital storytelling took them from a “casual tourist to a global citizen” (International Media in Cagli, Italy, n.d.).

As noted in the literature, Larson and Moja (2010) advocate for study abroad opportunities that “emphasize the importance of participating in the life world of people living in the host country” (p. 178). From the very first day in Cagli and finding their bearings, students were immersed in the community. Devoid of tourists and set off the beaten path, the richness of the immersion experience emerged in having to find a story to tell within the first few days. In order to do that, the assignments to get out in the community - speaking, photographing, observing, and writing - immediately placed students as participants in the community. Commented on by students, had they been a tourist, they would have been less likely to become involved in a community as such. It was in finding their story that the students felt less like a tourist and more like a traveler with a serious curiosity and interest in a community and its people.

With the supported experiences of personal interactions through assigned coursework that required spending time out in the community, students recognized the type of meaningful connections they could make. A curriculum objective of the Cagli program is “identifying how one’s socio-cultural background affect values and communication styles” (Caputo, 2010, p. 4). Undergoing the process of creating the digital story inspired confidence in the students’ communication with a culture and language outside of their own. The purpose of dialogue is to engage with the other (Stewart, Zediker, & Black, 2004) and learn from other cultures (Baraldi,
2006). A story “told by a specific person, in a specific language and told in a specific time and place” (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 53) unfolds in dialogue. The student, and the relationship between the student and the community member, are transformed through dialogic engagement in learning from this other person on some aspect of their life in Cagli in creating the digital story. Similar to dialogue itself, digital stories fuse past experiences, forming a new story and a new definition or representation for the storyteller and participants (Rodríguez, 2010). Through their interaction with community members in accomplishing their digital story, students expanded personal understanding and understanding of roles among the community of Cagli that contribute to comprehending the complexities of our global community.

In the classroom students learned the fundamentals of Italian, intercultural communication, photography, interviewing and writing as it related to crafting a digital story. Outside the classroom, the students took those fundamentals and put them into practice. Hopkins (1999) noted that through experiential learning, students can see the applicability from content to context when applying classroom theory and research to the lived experience. In working with the community of Cagli, “both groups of participants [received] a unique vantage point from which to see each other’s perspectives and experiences” (Crabtree, 1998, p. 186). For the one student who spoke of her digital story interview with the general contractor, it wouldn’t have been possible for her to completely comprehend his anger at the state of building restoration had she not conversed with him. In crafting her story, digital storytelling was a way of presenting her understanding of her subject’s point of view. The formula for growth and change is through the difference each person brings to dialogue (Baxter, 2006). When involving host community
members, collaboration and dialogue are essential for the student to encounter other perspectives in shaping a global knowledge.

With the digital storytelling assignment acting as a platform for interacting with the community, many students went beyond getting to know just one individual or group for their story. They found themselves in a sea of intercultural interactions. This is evidence of their transitioning from tourist mode to thinking, acting, and living like a resident of Cagli. Establishing a temporary residence and daily routine to become seriously involved in the community was a definite shift from conducting oneself as a tourist. In being welcomed by the community and becoming aware of the surroundings, attentive to the people of Cagli, and taking a vested interest in their culture and their lives, students gained a new perspective on their own lives in relation to life in Cagli.

The dialogue the students engaged in through their digital stories and subsequent community interactions played a role in obtaining or reaffirming global knowledge. When stepping out of comfort zones, societal and cognitive development results through participatory learning dependent on dialogue and collaboration (Deegan, 2004). Study abroad alone does not grant automatic global citizenship (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). In intentionally engaging in dialogue through community participation, such as digital storytelling, students can understand the concept of being a global citizen in discovering the voices and stories of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009).
Chapter 5
Summaries and Conclusions

This study examines global citizenship and how students understand the concept after participating in a digital storytelling study abroad program. It also looks at the role digital storytelling plays in contributing to the concept of global citizenship. The analysis of ten qualitative interviews conducted following the method of narrative research supports the examination of global citizenship and digital storytelling in relation to the Gonzaga University graduate International Media program in Cagli, Italy. From the experience students have formulated an understanding of what it means to be a global citizen. As a program that intentionally encourages dialogue through a digital storytelling experience, the interaction students had with community members established or reaffirmed a perspective of the role and responsibility one has in contributing to the global community.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is reasonable to believe that digital storytelling encouraged the students to form personal relationships with the locals of Cagli. Each student had a different level of closeness with their digital story subject, but in acting on the assignment, connecting with a local person was only the first step in producing the final product. It is also reasonable to believe students saw digital storytelling as the “forced” component in engaging with the community to create their stories as this was their assignment to complete. The amount of cultural and travel experience that influenced the level of comfort in a foreign environment was not taken into consideration for each student. Students more adept at travel, or students who’ve experienced a prior study abroad program may be more relaxed in engaging with foreign host communities.
This study was constrained to the location of Cagli, Italy only, and only of the experiences of the Gonzaga University graduate students, which in another study, are factors that could determine alternative responses to felt impacts. As a result of the remote location in comparison to the Italian tourist cities of Florence, Rome, or Venice, students stood out in the small town.

The qualitative narrative interviews were limited to 10 students because of time constraints on conducting this thesis and the availability of the volunteers from the sample population who were available for in-person or telephone interviews during the selected week. Student responses may have been shaped differently if reflection and recollection of the program occurred sooner than eight months after the program ended, or if research was conducted as the experience was lived.

Further Study or Recommendations

As scholarly debate on the theory and practice of global citizenship grows (Hovland et al., 2009), future studies on understanding global citizenship may consider cross-comparing programs. This study chose a program that was intentional in engaging students with the host community through dialogue and digital storytelling. What might the results be for a program that doesn’t provide a structure for interacting with the host community, especially for students who are studying independently on a program that does not have a faculty leader? A goal of study abroad may be global citizenship, but to what extent is action taken by the student themselves? Comparing a sample of students across various locations, in countries of varying language and local population size, may yield different results than this study. Future studies may also take into consideration the level of education of the participants. A study of undergraduate
reflections may turn out considerably different than this study of graduate students due to developmental and social maturities.

The timing of the study could be dramatically impacted if students had been interviewed immediately following the experience. Future research may consider this as the narrative interviews could be more rich in terms of stories since the experience would have been more recent. The interviews could also be accompanied by a survey of all participants prior to and after the program to gauge the difference in how the students understood the concept of global citizenship prior to and then following the program, and how the digital storytelling component had an effect on their understanding.

A question that derived from the study came in asking students if they would be as curious about another culture or person as they were in the Cagli experience. When speaking in terms of domestic travel, two students responded that they probably wouldn’t be as curious about someone here in the U.S. Outside the scope of this study, it would be interesting to find out why students would engage cross-culturally in an international setting, but don’t feel as compelled to in their travels in their own country. The two students recognized cultural differences in Americans, but saw their compatriots as being too similar to themselves. In being routine in their lives, people go unnoticed as the “everyday” and the “mundane” overshadow curiosity. As cultural dissonance is understood abroad, what can be understood of underlying dissonance that takes place in the culture from which we come?

Conclusion

This study enriches the available material on outcomes of understanding global citizenship as a result of a study abroad experience. If becoming a global citizen is to be an outcome of a study
abroad experience, as evidenced through the literature review, then providing purposeful ways of engaging with the host community through meaningful communication that tends toward dialogic conversation is required. With the Cagli program integrating digital storytelling as a way to draw out dialogue between students and the community, students develop an understanding of Buber’s I-Thou relationship in regarding the other as ourselves. Dialogue helps us realize the “rhythms of a community” by expanding viewpoints that are held in the “between” stage to reach a wider understanding of ourselves and of the other. What is truly human in an I-Thou relationship emerges through dialogue (Yoshikawa, 1977).

Study abroad can lead to the development of global citizenship if experiential education practices are employed (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). The International Media program in Cagli empowers students and educates them in and outside the classroom in experiential ways through collaboration in communication and dialogue with the host community, reflecting on the students’ knowledge that is already shaped, and the knowledge to be shaped through meaningful interaction. This reciprocal process of inspiring social and individual change (Smith et al., 2011) relies on the participation of the student among the community. Designing intentional ways of engaging study abroad students with the host community cultivates the capacity to develop empathy and insight into the life of another. Through the interactions the Cagli program students had with the community, new contexts of self views, assumptions, and cultural views emerged from direct participation and understanding of the other. If subscribing to Dewey’s philosophy of experiential education, then employing experiential education practices in a study abroad program should be standard considering, “the only way we can know the world is by interacting socially in it” (Smith et al., 2011, p. 7).
Curricular and co-curricular experiences form a contextual knowledge that encourages a student to view themselves as a local and global citizen whether at home or away (Hovland et al., 2009).

The technology that is available to students today allows for them to be physically in another country yet virtually connected to anywhere else. Being deliberate about the local communication connections made when studying abroad is to the student’s advantage in understanding the global community on a larger scale and the role and responsibility a study abroad student acquires in becoming a global citizen. It is evidenced in the findings of this study that the student participants of the Cagli program took seriously the opportunity to involve themselves within this Italian community. Learning Cagli’s culture from an “insider’s perspective” (Caputo, 2010, p. 2) through the stories the community tells are “given faces through the people of Cagli” (p. 2). The integrative curriculum of Italian language, intercultural communication, and digital storytelling elements within the Cagli program is an appropriate combination for creating an avenue for students to construct meaning and make connections with others and the world (Raimist, Doerr-Stevens, & Jacobs, 2010). The Cagli program, as a study abroad experience that engages students in culturally interactive experiences of dialogue, initiates an awareness of different perspectives, ideas, and understanding of issues (Hendershot & Sperandino, 2009) beyond the self that contribute to understanding the concept of being a global citizen.
References


