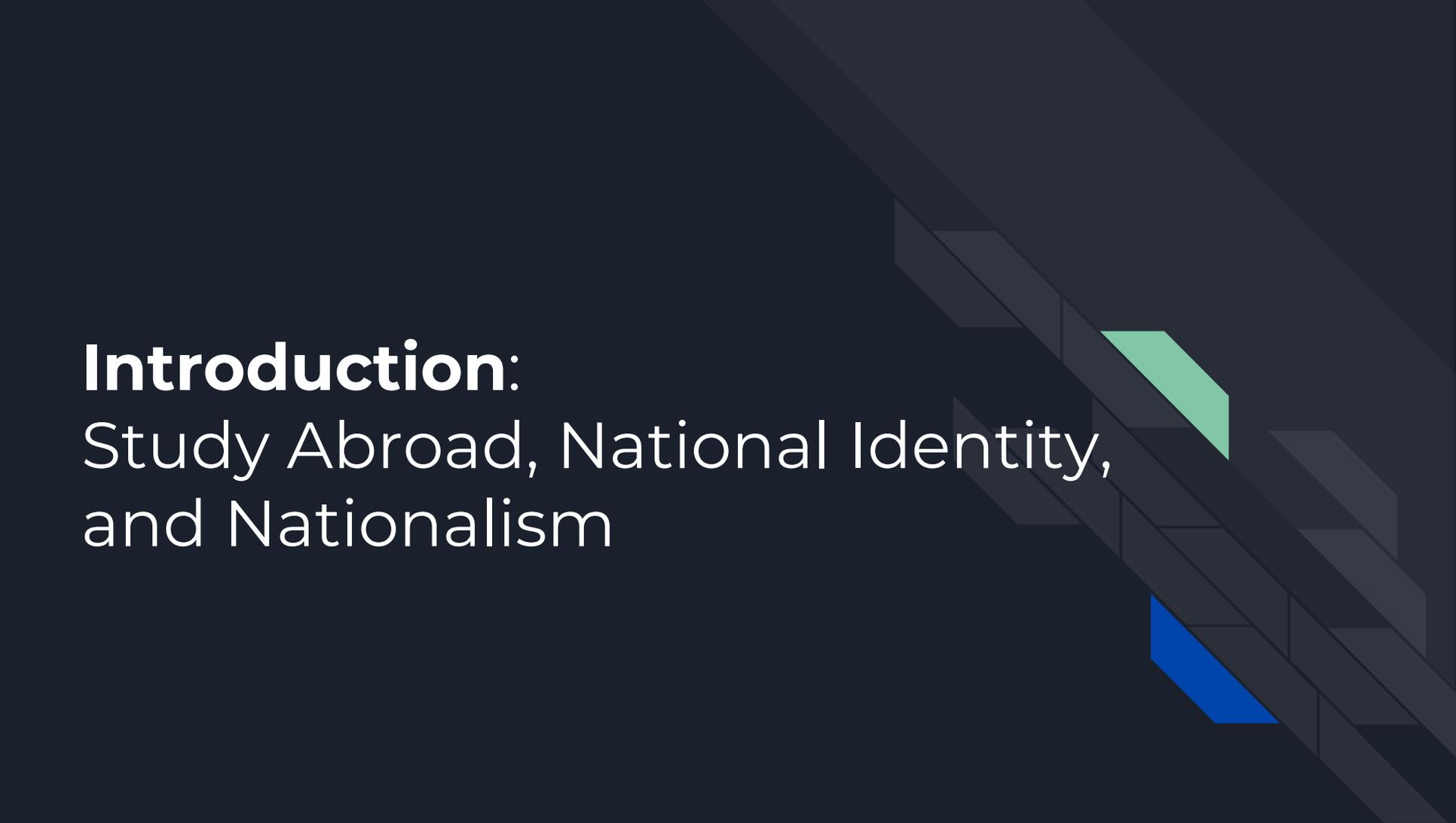




# Educating U.S. Students about National Identity and Nationalism at Home and Abroad

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# **Introduction:**

Study Abroad, National Identity,  
and Nationalism



# Presentation Goals

- To provide a theoretical and pedagogical framework for national identity and nationalism(s)
- To describe student perceptions of experiences
- To share programming efforts to encourage critical reflection
- To interrogate the role of international educators in student learning and development

Melissa Hardin, Ursinus College

# Students' Shifting National Identities: Selected Studies

- Dolby, Nadine (2004). *Encountering an American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity*. *Comparative Education Review* 48(2): 150-173.
- Dolby, N. (2007). *Reflections on Nation: American Undergraduates and Education Abroad*. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11(2), 141-156.
- Jones, Calvert W (2014). *Exploring the Microfoundations of International Community: Toward a Theory of Enlightened Nationalism*. *International Studies Quarterly* 58, 682-705.
- Jones, C. *The Surprising Effects of Study Abroad*. *Washington Post*, August 20, 2015.



# Dolby's *Encountering an American Self* (2004)

- Qualitative and interpretive analysis
- Interviews with 26 Midwestern university students who studied in various Australian locations
  - *Pre-departure* November-December 2000
  - *Re-entry* September-November 2001 **(9/11)**
- **Goal:** to understand how students make meaning of their experiences (not quantitative)



# Observations and Assertions

- Students “negotiate an ‘American’ identity within the context of their study abroad experience”
- “This encounter with an American self” is ***the most significant outcome***



# The Process

## Part I: They encounter “America” (*passive*)

- It's not good (and it's not *theirs*)
- They become the outsider
- They see American corporate culture *everywhere*

## Part II: They begin (re)construction (*active*)

- They recognize that they *don't* know
- They begin to negotiate



# The Process: Two Responses

## Assert “property rights” or display “infantile citizenship”

- They become more patriotic
- They conflate nation & state
- They may exaggerate stereotypical behaviors

## Create a “postnational identity”

- They separate nation & state
- They counter stereotypes
- They consider civic duty
- They decenter the U.S. perspective
- They may embrace a new cosmopolitanism



# Dolby's optimistic conclusion

“...what is possible, if not fully realized through these students’ experiences, is a postnational American identity, one that encounters and confronts itself in the context of the world, as part of a conversation, and as a participant in the human village. As this research suggests, study abroad is not simply a private good or individual experience. Instead, how students understand ‘America’ has implications for future practices of citizenship”



# Dolby's *Reflections on Nation* (2007)

- Qualitative and interpretive analysis
- **Goal:** to understand how students make meaning of their experiences (not quantitative)
- Focus groups with 50 students from 3 Midwestern universities who studied in multiple countries
- Conducted in 2004 (after semester abroad in 2003 or 2004)
- National identity shaped by US involvement in Iraq War.

Dolby, N. (2007). *Reflections on Nation: American Undergraduates and Education Abroad*. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11(2), 141-156.



## Dolby's arguments (2007)

“They found a way to hold on to their sense of a national identity and an affinity for people and place but at the same time to make room for others’ opinions and perspectives.” (151)



# Dolby's optimistic conclusion (2007)

- “a need and obligation to be grounded in an American identity but one that was expansive” (151)
- “the experience of constantly being questioned and probed about American foreign policy while abroad” (152)
- “structured, academic reentry programs engaged with the complicated issues of nation, power, and identity that arise for American undergraduates abroad” (153).



## **Jones' *Exploring the Microfoundations of International Community* (2014)**

- Natural experiment approach
- Survey data gathered December 2008 - January 2009
- 571 American students from 11 US universities
- Studied in mostly Western European countries.
- *Treatment group*: Just returned
- *Control group*: About to study abroad
- **Goal**: to test international relations and other theories about cross-border contact and its effects on individuals



# Hypotheses and Testing Methods

1. **Cross-border contact fosters a sense of shared international community** (shared values and understandings, and feelings of warmth and generalized and situational trust)
2. **Cross-border contact reduces the degree of perceived threat posed by the visited country** (hypothetical situations)
3. **Cross-border contact increases nationalism** (nationalism and national pride)



# Results: Hypothesis 1

## Hypothesis 1 not supported.

- ***Returnees expressed having significantly fewer shared values with host country than pre-departure peers.***
- ***Returnees were more likely to say their understandings of key concepts were different than host country (689).***
- **Study abroad returnees trusted host country nationals significantly more in specific situations than pre-departure students.**



## Results: Hypotheses 2 & 3

Hypotheses 2 *and* 3 supported.

+ Returnees found host country *less threatening*.

*however...*

+ Returnees were *prouder* of America.

+ Returnees reported *higher levels of warmth* toward American culture.

+ Returnees *identified more closely* with the American nation.

+ Returnees *believed more* that Americans have a lot in common.



# Jones' Optimistic Conclusions

- “As predicted, growing cross-border contact may indeed encourage peace-promoting norms and a sense of community, just not through the generation of a shared identity. Rather, for Americans at least, it may do so by cultivating an enlightened form of nationalism” (693).

Ignasi Pérez, IES



## A few minutes to discuss

- What is **culture**?
- What is a **nation**?
- Are all **nationalisms** the same thing?
- What lessons can US students learn from some nationalisms?



-**Culture** is everything we humans have invented or created regarding our life in society, that we have learned from or taught to other humans

-In other words: everything else we haven't learned from our (human) nature, or the human DNA

-According to Professor Cavalli-Sforza "our DNA shows what we are, not who we are. What we are never changes. Who we are changes all the time".

-**Culture** is a holistic, symbolic universe existing within groups of humans



**Culture** therefore is a participative and dynamic process in constant change.

**Culture** is the basis of human societies which, consequently, are in continuous change.

One way to classify human societies (and their particular culture) is through **nations**.

It's necessary to distinguish between **cultural nations** and **political nations**.



-We do not have a universally accepted definition of what a **nation** is.

We have created a double definition, a distinction.

-On the one hand we have **cultural nations**, and on the other, **political nations**.

-A **cultural nation** is a group of people with shared heritage as in language, history, literature, religion, ideology, symbols, land or monuments.

**Cultural nationalists** emphasize heritage or culture, rather than race or ethnicity or institutions of statehood.



-A **political nation** is a group of people ruled by the same State that have decided to share their sovereignty on the basis of common goals and interests.

-**Nationalism** defends that the values existing in a specific group (ie. traditions or customs) should be the basis of life in the community and, therefore, the law and the State that protects and regulates them.

We find two kinds of nationalism: **ethnic** and **civic**.

-**Ethnic nationalism** considers only those with certain given characteristics (i.e. ethnicity, religion, language, family origins, etc.) as proper members of the community . As John Rawls would suggest: people judged for things they did not choose.



-**Civic Nationalism** is integrative as it considers a proper member of the community anyone with certain chosen values and goals that also respects the established and commonly decided rights and duties of the community.

-In other words: **civic nationalism** (similar to the one proposed by Hamilton and Madison) would suggest: it doesn't matter who you are (in terms of race, religion or origin) but what actually counts is that you are willing to respect members and the values of these groups of humans.

-**Civic nationalism** is based on ethical and cultural aspects, is dynamic and constantly evolves to adapt to the preferences of the members of the community.



US students can learn from both **civic** and **ethnic nationalism**.

How can they do that?

By simply integrating, participating in and enjoying the established values of the community they're living in while abroad.

Realizing also how **ethnical nationalistic** elements are negative for them (as they are not citizens of the country they are living in) and trying to learn and empathize more with other citizens once they are back home and faced with situations of discrimination for gender, class, ethnicity, religion or sexuality-related questions.



A few examples:

-Going to football games, local restaurants, visiting local exhibits, folk meetings (dance, traditional sports, ...) and discovering how local people enjoy and live on a daily basis, what things they dislike or scare them.

-Using situations in which they have been negatively discriminated against in order to understand how other people often feel in the USA when they suffer from discrimination.

Rosa Almoguera, Edualamo

Where will students confront their ideas about national identity and nationalism while abroad?

## Outside of Class

- With their homestay families
- With fellow students from US & host country
- On the streets (flags, demonstrations, graffiti, immigration, political campaigns, sports)
- When they travel (border controls, terrorist threats, elections)

# Flags on the streets of Catalonia (from Barcelona SAE)



# Jokes

¿Sientes el furor de la independencia corriendo por tus venas?  
¿Necesitas justificar tus miserias diciendo que otros te roban?  
¿Te gusta mentir y manipular para engañar a la gente?

NO SEAS DEMÓCRATA Y HAZ TU PROPIO...

## REFERENDUM!

MONTA TU PROPIO PARIPÉ  
INDEPENDENTISTA Y HAZ EL RIDÍCULO  
CON TU FAMILIA

INCLUYE CUBO DE  
BASURA PARA QUE  
PUEDES DEPOSITAR  
TU VOTO ILEGAL

¡¡¡QUÉ LOCURA!!!

¡SIN REPRESIONES!  
¡SIN CARGAS POLICIALES!  
¡SIN EL GRADUADO ESCOLAR!  
¡A LA MIERDA LOS ESTUDIOS!

FICHA PUIGDEMONT  
EN EL INTERIOR

¡MIENTE,  
MANIPULA,  
INDEPENDÍZATE!



NO SE REQUIERE NINGÚN TIPO DE INTELIGENCIA PARA PODER JUGAR

# Jokes



## In the Program

- Does information equal preparation or is a personal reflection needed?
- Part of a course or extra-curricular? Compulsory or optional?
- Specific activities geared towards promoting reflection on identity, being a member of a culture(s), learning about other cultures.
- How do we create a space for discussing, sharing and receiving the students' questions and concerns about identity and nationalism?

# Courses on Nationalism

- ❖ Nationalism in Learning Abroad Courses was focused on
  - ❖ Africa
  - ❖ Asia (India and Malaysia)
  - ❖ Middle East (2)
  - ❖ Europe
    - ❖ Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France (4), Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Spain (3, Catalonia), Sweden, Switzerland and UK (6, Scotland 2)

# Courses on nationalism

- The field areas of these courses are mainly:
  - Political Science , Sociology, History, Anthropology, International Studies
- Students taking the courses come from other areas including Business and Economics, STEM, Education and Languages.
- The majority are taught in English

# A Proposal of Pre- and Post- Reflection on Nationalism

Importance of group dynamics

➤ The **pre-departure phase:**

➤ Work on **identity** with “Diagram of the Culturally Diverse You” (Maximizing Study Abroad)

➤ See how nationalism can be part of someone’s identity

➤ Draw from their own resources (how they deal with difference in their own country, how not to answer a question, what they do if they find themselves in an unsafe place).

# A Proposal of Pre- and Post- Reflection on Nationalism (continued)

- The **post-experience**:
  - What have they encountered?
  - How have they felt?

# Experimenting with Returnee Interviews



# Ursinus Returnee Interviews (2007 – present)

- Qualitative and interpretive analysis
- Interviews conducted fall 2017 and spring 2018 with 53 Ursinus students (studied in various locations around the world in *academic year 2016-17, spring 2017, or fall 2017*) (*86% participation rate*)
- **Method:** 30-40 minutes of one-on-one Q&A
- **Goal:** to understand how students make meaning of their experiences (not quantitative)

# Ursinus Returnee Interviews (Round 2)

- Introduced question about nationalism and national identity in fall 2018 (*studied abroad in spring 2018*)
- **21** interviewed to date
- **Goal:** to understand how students perceived issues of nationality in themselves and in host cultures



# Response Patterns Observed

- Emotional intensity
- Emphasis on relationships
- Impact of national and international politics
- Interviewer needs to understand developmental stages
- Lack of common knowledge, understanding, or vocabulary
- Dominant perception of shifting identities
- Some attachment to host culture issues and anxiety about taking the “right” position.

## Student Comments in Light of Dolby and Jones' findings

### • **Dolby's process:**

- Encounter an American self
- Begin (re)construction
- Respond:
  - Assert property rights or display infantile citizenship

OR

- Create a postnational identity

### • **Jones's findings:**

- Fewer shared values and understandings
- Stronger situational trust
- Warmth for America
- Less threat posed by host culture
- Increased (American) nationalism, national pride, and national identity



## Student Comments

“This was the first time for me leaving the country so I didn’t know anything about other cultures – and, frankly, I didn’t care – and then once you see that they are people, too, and America is not the only country that matters in the world, it’s pretty eye opening.”



## Student Comments

“...I think everyone is probably prideful of where they’re from, it might be a natural human thing, like ‘my country is better than yours,’ but people abroad when they know you’re American, they kind of scoff at you. I think the biggest thing is discovering that I was so prideful of being American, and appreciating it more.”



## Student Comments

“ I’ve always considered myself an immigrant in [America] despite my document status, and then going abroad that really changed because of the privileges that you have as an American... coming back [to the U.S.] I still considered myself an immigrant, but now it’s like I have some power to that...now it’s this urge and thirst to learn even more about my culture and my identity.”



## Student Comments

“When I was in Spain the whole thing in Barcelona was going on so that was interesting to see the whole perspective of my host family and what they thought and they would say ‘Oh those people are crazy; they’re part of Spain!’ It was interesting to try to have them explain it ... and then going to Barcelona and you just saw everyone walking around with yellow ribbons for [Catalonia]...I don’t know what side I would take.”

Q&A

Thank you!

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