

DU STUDENTS CONDUCT CULTURAL IDENTITY RESEARCH ACROSS THE GLOBE



Two DU students have used their past experiences and academic interests to develop a research project that has allowed them to study different cultures on multiple continents.

Sam Estenson, a senior majoring in intercultural communication and foreign languages, and Hannah Parkes, a junior studying international business with minors in art and leadership, have been conducting their research for over a year. The research is supported by a [Partners in Scholarship \(PinS\)](#) grant offered through the Undergraduate Research Center.

“Our study, ‘Cultural Identity through Geography and Language,’ is a research project focusing on the effects of geography and language on youth culture in our world today,” said Parkes. “It has been influenced by our experiences and interests with international languages and cultures.”

“We were excited with the concept of combining these interests into a project that would greatly expand our experience at the University of Denver and benefit other students with similar interests,” Estenson added. Their research interests were supported by their faculty advisors, Professor Kathy Mahnke and Associate Professor Gabi Kathöfer, allowing them to define the scope of their research and the effectiveness it may have.

The first part of their project--A Study of Contemporary German and Danish Youth Cultures-- was completed in Germany and Denmark in the summer of 2011 through interviews and surveys with youth ages 18-28. This aspect of the study looked into two countries with neighboring borders but different languages. They studied how these variables impacted the cultures of the individuals, their families and their communities.

This past summer, Parkes and Estenson traveled to Central America and interviewed people from both Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The research will be compared to additional research in Spain, so that two geographically different locations, Central America and Spain, with the same official language but vastly different cultures can be assessed. The final part of their study will conclude with similar research in Japan in the summer of 2013.

With their completed cultural research, they hope to further their own knowledge and experience of cultural identification, sharing their results with the Center for World Languages and Cultures and AHSS.

Parkes and Estenson believe their research findings will have an impact on them as well as others. “The research we have completed so far has given me deeper insights into the global atmosphere through the lenses of languages and the cultures of these countries, which are fascinating,” Parkes said. “The research will enable greater relationships abroad and more experience in the global interactions of cultures. I see this as an invaluable addition to my degree from the University of Denver considering I aim to engage in such connections abroad in my future career.”