

**Study Abroad Length of Program Influence on Cross-Cultural Adaptability**

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## ABSTRACT

The literature available on study abroad addresses reasons students chose to study abroad, outcomes of participation in study abroad, and study abroad program characteristics. However, there is a lack of research linking outcomes of study abroad to program characteristics. The present study will add to the literature by providing information about study abroad program characteristics and their relationship to one possible outcome of study abroad, cross-cultural adaptability.

In this study, four factors were used to measure cross-cultural adaptability: (a) emotional resilience, (b) flexibility/openness, (c) perceptual acuity, and (d) personal autonomy. Data were collected using the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). The target sample for this study was undergraduate college students that have participated in study abroad programs of varying lengths.

The findings showed significant differences in all five areas: emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, personal autonomy, and total CCAI score. These findings suggest that researchers need to take a further look at study abroad program characteristics and their relationship to beneficial outcomes.

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## CHAPTER ONE

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is one of globalization. Globalization reduces trade barriers and opens up new international markets, growing the economy to a worldwide scale (Brown, 2003).

Globalization has led to the interconnectedness of countries around the world.

Among other things, the importance of globalization is the effect it has on the job market. People entering today's workforce find themselves in a constantly evolving global environment (Holland, 2003). Currently, one in six American jobs is tied to international trade and 25% of United States economy growth can be attributed to export trade (White House, n.d.).

Globalization has resulted in advancement in communication and technology (Brown, 2003). Changes in technology have made it simple to communicate instantly with someone half the world away. Not only has technology made globalization easier, it has also created a need for global standards in the workplace. For example, culturally offensive emails or comments may be the result of a lack of understanding of other cultures (Paskoff, 2006).

Many sectors of the global economy are centered on multilingual communication (Heller, 2003). Language has become a commodity and those who are multilingual have a competitive advantage in the workplace. Employees often work with colleagues from different countries on a daily basis, so in addition to a second language, they must also understand and be open to the customs and cultures of their colleagues.

Currently there are United States employment laws that help establish global standards for the workplace (Paskoff, 2006). Employers are not finding the laws to be effective at establishing culturally sensitive work environments. Instead, individual companies have to set policies and provide language and cultural competency training for their employees to maintain effective work environments (Paskoff, 2006). However, those entering the workforce who



already have an understanding of intercultural relationships have an advantage at securing these jobs (Progressive Policy Institute, 2005).

To keep up with the demands of the global workforce, a college education becomes a necessity (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). To remain competitive with their peer institutions, college and university faculty members and administrators across the United States are providing opportunities to their students that develop global perspectives (Institute of International Education, 2005). One way to gain global perspective is to participate in study abroad during college.

The definition for study abroad seems to be fairly universal throughout the literature. Study abroad programs are educational program that occur outside the country of a student's origin (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). The research on study abroad can be conceptualized in three main areas including (a) reasons for study abroad, (b) outcomes of participation in study abroad, and (c) study abroad program characteristics.

#### *Reasons for Studying Abroad*

The first area of study examines the reasons why students choose to study abroad. Recently, there has been increased popularity in study abroad (Davis, 2000). Historically, the standard reason to study abroad was the opportunity to increase second language proficiency (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). This gain in language skills was seen as a competitive edge upon entering the job market. Other benefits aside from acquisition of language skills also have been recognized. Many students choose to study abroad so that they may view the world from another perspective and use this insight to be more competitive in the global job market (Holland, 2003). Students also cite the desire to become more proficient in certain skill sets that are seen as more

developed in other countries, as well as the basic desire to socialize with other students (Kitsantas, 2004).

#### *Outcomes of Participation in Study Abroad*

The next area of research examines outcomes associated with study abroad. Study abroad positively influences the acquisition of language skills (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Wilkinson, 2002). Study abroad also has been shown to have a positive effect on academics, generally, including its influence on students' academic and career plans (Hadis, 2005; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Tseng & Newton, 2002).

International experience has positive benefits on development of cultural awareness, including advancement in areas of understanding one's own country, one's host country, and the world as a whole—all important for the development of world minded students ready to take part in the global economy (Dolby, 2005; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Talburt & Stewart, 1999).

Another positive outcome of study abroad has been various degrees of personal development, including increases in maturity levels, ability to define one's self, and deeper self-confidence (Hadis, 2005; Kitsantas, 2004).

#### *Study Abroad Program Characteristics*

The final area of study examines the characteristics associated with the various study abroad programs offered throughout the United States. There are countless study abroad programs available to students today. Each program varies in aspects of length, country, learning environment, and many other factors (Cooper & Grant, 1993; IIE, 2005; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005).

In summary, globalization is becoming an important facet in today's economy. Globalization has led to increased communications and technology, which have further promoted a worldwide workplace (Brown, 2003; Holland, 2003; White House, n.d.).

The worldwide workplace raises standards for employees who wish to remain at competitive levels (Paskoff, 2006). Employees must have increased language, technology, and cultural awareness skills to remain viable (Heller, 2003; Paskoff, 2006; PPI, 2005).

The need for globally prepared employees puts a demand on colleges and universities to provide various services and opportunities to promote global perspectives to their students to remain competitive (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Study abroad has been one such opportunity that colleges and universities throughout the United States are providing their students to promote global learning and understanding. There have been increased numbers of such programs lately (IIE, 2005).

It is important for researchers to examine the various aspects of the programs so that students can make informed decisions in regards to which program they choose. Participation in the right study abroad program can provide students with skills and views that will help them to be competitive in today's globalized environment throughout their life. Research has been completed on the reasons students study abroad (Holland, 2003; Kitsantas, 2004; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001), the outcomes of study abroad (Dolby, 2005; Hadis, Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; 2005; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Tseng & Newton, 2002; Wilkinson, 2002), and the various characteristics of study abroad programs (Cooper & Grant, 1993; IIE, 2005; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). However, no studies have correlated the levels of cultural awareness with the length of study abroad program.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between length of study abroad (no study abroad experience, short, medium, or long term) and levels of cross-cultural adaptability. Cross-cultural adaptability consists of four subgroups: emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). In particular I was interested in level of cross-cultural adaptability by length of the study abroad experience (no study abroad experience, short term, medium term and long term).

The sample in this study included students from a large public mid-Atlantic land grant research institution and students from two small private mid-Atlantic Baccalaureate institutions. The participants have completed study abroad at some point during their time in college. The sample was equally divided among students who studied abroad short term (under nine weeks), those who studied abroad medium term (nine to 16 weeks) and those who were abroad long term (longer than 16 weeks). There was also a group of students who had never participated in a study abroad experience.

Data was collected using quantitative survey methods, in particular the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). This instrument was designed to collect data about four different measures of cross-cultural adaptability including emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy.

## Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. Does level of emotional resilience differ by length of study abroad experience?
2. Does level of flexibility/openness differ by length of study abroad experience?
3. Does level of perceptual acuity differ by length of study abroad experience?

4. Does level of personal autonomy differ by length of study abroad experience?
5. Does level of cross-cultural adaptability differ by length of study abroad experience?

### Definitions

Since terminology in this study had very specific meanings, it was important to define those terms at the outset. Kelley and Meyers define the four concepts measured by the CCAI in the following manner:

1. Emotional Resilience: the ability to quickly recover when situations go badly. Level of emotional resilience depends upon how good you feel about yourself, which will then determine the ease with which you recover when situations go wrong.
2. Flexibility/Openness: the willingness to be receptive and enjoy the opportunity of being exposed to different ways of thinking and behavior of another culture.
3. Perceptual Acuity: the interpersonal sensitivity to accurately perceive, empathize with and respond properly to different cultural thoughts and feelings.
4. Personal Autonomy: the ability to maintain your personal identity and values and be respectful when exposed to different cultural values (Kelley & Meyers, 1995).

### Significance of the Study

This study provided data that were useful for several groups. Those who develop study abroad programs might be interested in the findings. Data from this study provided insights into the relationship of program length and cross-cultural adaptability. These data might be considered when determining optimal lengths for such programs.

Study abroad officers might benefit from the study in other ways, as well. The results provided insights into the relationship of program length and cross-cultural adaptability. Study

abroad officers could take these influences into consideration when deciding which programs to promote to their students.

A final group that benefited from this study was academic advisors. Academic advisors might use the findings to better recommend to their advisees what sorts of study abroad programs to consider based upon the goals students have in mind for their study abroad experiences.

Data from this study also provided information helpful to policy makers. The results of this study provided higher education curriculum committees with information on the relationship of certain elements of study abroad programs on students' levels of cross-cultural adaptability. With this information policy makers might assess policies that govern the length of study abroad programs and number of credits accepted from study abroad.

Financial aid policy makers might benefit from the results of this study. Data from the study provided information that examined the relationships of certain elements of study abroad programs and students' cross-cultural adaptability. Using this data, financial aid policy makers might assess current policies associated with study abroad programming funds for students.

The present study also had significance for future research. I examined the difference in cross-cultural adaptability levels based on study abroad length. Future studies could examine cross-cultural adaptability levels based on race and ethnicity of participants, adding to the information based on benefits of study abroad.

Cross-cultural adaptability levels in this study were examined after the students returned from participation in study abroad. A future study might gather data on cross-cultural adaptability levels before and after the study abroad experience. By obtaining pre and post data

sets, information on the influence of study abroad on the development of cross-cultural adaptability would be available.

Finally, this study did not examine affiliations of participants. Further studies might be done that examine the major field of study of participants and the possible influence of those majors on cross-cultural adaptability levels, adding more information about the relationships of study abroad to academic programs.

### Limitations

As with any study, there were a few initial delimitations to this study, including some related to the method. Cross-cultural adaptability only measures four constructs: emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy. These may have been insufficient to completely measure cross-cultural adaptability, and therefore might have influenced the results of the study.

A design limitation could have created a weakness in correlation. My design does not factor in other variables that differ between study abroad experiences outside of differences in length. These other variables could influence level of cross-cultural adaptability and are not accounted for with the present design, making it difficult to establish a direct correlation between length of study abroad and level of cross-cultural adaptability.

Another methodological limitation could also have influenced my results. Respondents did not complete the surveys in the same time frame. Some have been back in the United States longer than others when they completed the survey. This might have influenced how they responded to items on the instrument, hence skewed results.

Another limitation with this study is related to the sample. Responses by the participants may not have been candid. Some participants may have responded in what they perceived to be

desired ways. The level of candidness and truthfulness of the participants could have influenced my findings.

Despite these delimitations, this study provided data on the relationship of study abroad duration on students' levels of cross-cultural adaptability. These data are useful and needed in various areas of practice, policy, and research.

#### Organization of the Study

The present study is organized around five chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic of study, the research questions, the significance and the delimitations of the study. Chapter Two presents a literature review on the topic of study. The methodology used in the study is described in the third chapter, including the sampling techniques, the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory, and the methods used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter Four presents the results of the study. The final chapter goes on to discuss those results and their implications for future practice, policy, and research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

To fully explore the research relevant to my study, first I examined the literature on study abroad outcomes for students. Within this body of literature, two subcategories emerge: positive outcomes (language skills, academic, cultural awareness, and personal development) and negative outcomes (logistics, language skills, and culture shock).

I also examined the literature on study abroad program and participant characteristics. Within this body of literature, two subcategories emerge: program characteristics (length, locations, and academic situation) and participant characteristics (personal and academic). This literature review is organized around those two main categories and their respective subcategories.

#### Study Abroad Outcomes for Students

An examination of the literature led to the identification of positive and negative outcomes of study abroad. Positive outcomes include: increased language proficiency, academic gains, increased cultural awareness, and personal development. Negative outcomes include logistical issues, few language gains, and culture shock.

#### *Positive Outcomes*

Study abroad has been shown to provide a number of benefits to participating students. Increased language proficiency is the most frequently mentioned benefit of study abroad (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). Study abroad has been shown to lead to other positives, including help defining career paths and increasing cross-cultural skills. Student development is influenced by study abroad, including becoming more aware of their nationality and the world around them

(Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). Study abroad participation has also led to increased aspects of personal development (Hadis, 2005).

*Language Skills.* There are several reasons for the increased popularity in study abroad. Traditionally the standard reason to study abroad was the opportunity to increase second language proficiency (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). Many students study abroad to enhance language skills that will make them more competitive in the job market. When students are immersed in a culture where a second language is primarily spoken they make monumental gains in the acquisition of that language that could not take place inside a classroom. Study abroad participants exhibit positive increases in several aspects of language acquisition (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Wilkinson, 2002).

*Academic.* Benefits besides increased language skill proficiency have been noted recently. With the onset of the globalization, study abroad has become a popular choice with students who wish to experience another viewpoint of the world to increase their competitiveness in the global job market (Holland, 2003). Students view study abroad as a chance to improve cross-cultural skills, which will also provide a benefit in the job market (Kitsantas, 2004). Academic benefits, as well as the socialization benefits also encourage students to pursue study abroad. Many students return with clearly defined career plans after studying abroad (Hadis, 2005; Tseng & Newton, 2002). Some students end up changing majors upon returning to their home institutions and several more increase plans for attending graduate school programs in their areas of interest (Hadis, 2005; Ryan & Twibell, 2000).

*Cultural awareness.* One common experience for U.S. students studying abroad seems to be exposure to an outsider's perspective on what Americans and America are. Because the United States promotes a strong national identity that citizens tend to take on, Americans

sometimes find it difficult to consider a global affiliation (Dolby, 2005). Oftentimes when American students enter another country as part of a study abroad experience, they have no idea how the outside world views Americans. Students discover that people from their host country might actually know more about the U.S. than they themselves do. Also, the worldview of the U.S. is not always a positive one and students find themselves facing hostile remarks about their home country—much different than what some of them expected.

Students cope with this non-American perception in several different ways (Dolby, 2005). Some take a defensive stance when presented with negative views of the U.S. Students who follow in this path may purposefully isolate themselves from people and cultural aspects of the host country. This isolation leads to a negative outcome of their study abroad experience. Other students begin to question their American identity and think about American policies through the perspectives of the people with whom they are coming into contact. These students eventually set those outside views aside and begin working on developing their own idea of an American identity.

Comparing U.S. students studying abroad to Australian students studying abroad, Australians are much more likely to branch off from their national identity at the start of their time abroad, which makes them more open to the idea of complex global relationships (Dolby, 2005). Australians do not have the conflict over their national identity that is present with the Americans, so they do not have to take time to first establish that identity, like the American students do.

If Americans find a support network of other U.S. students studying abroad, they are able to more quickly establish an American identity and move on to examining the host country's culture (Talbert & Stewart, 1999). Students use these alliances as support when facing

uncomfortable situations involving cultural and language differences. Discussion among American students allows them to make meaning of their experiences and develop a sense of understanding about their host culture and the American position in the world. Students who are able to find support systems such as these and participate in such informal discussions are more likely to gain a better sense of culture than their counterparts who are not able to find such support while abroad (Talbert & Stewart, 1999).

Once students are able to define themselves in terms of what it is to be an American, they are able to explore cross cultural development that can place being an American within the larger context of the world. Successful adaptation to cultural change allows students to then move on to interaction with people from the host culture (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). These students then develop understanding and respect for the host culture that can lead to cultural empathy. Students who study abroad exhibit a solid knowledge of their host country's social and cultural customs (Hadis, 2005).

Knowledge of the host country social and cultural customs tends to enhance knowledge about other countries as well, leading to global cultural awareness (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Students who study abroad are significantly more likely than those who have not studied abroad to think of other national groups in ways that point out individual characteristics rather than stereotypical categories of food, historical events, and geography (Drews, Meyer, & Peregrine, 1996). Students who study abroad think of the national groups in much more personal ways based upon their experiences while abroad.

However, just because study abroad students perceive the national groups in personal ways does not mean they have a naïve liking for the members of the other national groups. They are able to equate the members of the national groups with both positive and negative

characteristics, exhibiting a genuine understanding of group members as human beings. It is important to note that the tendency for study abroad alumni to personalize national groups goes beyond the national group associated with the country in which they studied (Drews et al., 1996). Evidently, a cross cultural view extends beyond the host country and leads instead to a global view and understanding.

This global view includes the desire to stay abreast of current world events by an increased frequency of newspaper reading (Hadis, 2005). Study abroad participants are more interested in international affairs, including socioeconomic class conflicts between countries, than non-participants (Hadis, 2005). These activities are suggestive of higher global cultural awareness. Students who have studied abroad exhibit much higher levels of intercultural adjustment than students who have not had a study abroad experience (Savicki, Downing-Burnette, Heller, Binder, & Suntinger, 2004).

Those who have studied abroad have enhanced global understanding and cross cultural skills, and experience an increase in their understanding of the value of diversity and the importance of cross cultural understanding (Kitsantas, 2004; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Ryan & Twibell, 2000). Eighty-two percent of study abroad participants surveyed by the Institute for the International Education of Students claim that “study abroad contributed to their developing a more sophisticated way of looking at the world,” which in turn influences their interactions with people from different countries (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

*Personal development.* Personal development often comes along with the development of an increased global view in study abroad students. Studying abroad places the students in an unfamiliar environment that fosters individualism (Holland, 2003). Many of these students have never been away from their families for such extended time periods, nor have they been away

from them in a culture that is so different from their own. Along with examining what it is to be an American in a global context, these students also look inward to define themselves.

U.S. educators notice a change in their students returning from study abroad (Hadis, 2005). Returning study abroad participants exhibit an increased concern of international affairs and have an increased level of cultural appreciation. Educators also notice that these students show signs of higher levels of maturity, self awareness, and self-sufficient behaviors than prior to studying abroad. Upon return, students note they feel more self assured, more friendly towards people from other countries, and more comfortable traveling to countries where English was not the first language than they did before they studied abroad (Hadis, 2005). Kitsantas (2004) also found cognitive changes in students returning from study abroad. These students reported higher levels of flexibility, openness, and independence upon returning to the U.S.. Hadis (2005) wondered if this increase in independence and acceptance could be attributed to studying abroad or if it was just a natural part of the students' maturation process. Hadis was unable to obtain a large enough sample of students that had not studied abroad, so instead compared students in different age brackets within the study abroad group. Positive changes occurred across the group, no matter the age range, so maturation process was not likely to be responsible for the changes.

During study abroad students encounter an unfamiliar environment that encourages personal changes as means of successful adaptation (Holland, 2003). Study abroad students encounter numerous situations and beliefs that counter norms to which students have been accustomed. To succeed students must use problem solving skills and maintain a sense of flexibility when they are confronted daily with challenging situations (Holland, 2003). Successful adjustment, while not an easy task, will develop students' personal resilience.

### *Negative Outcomes*

There are a few negative aspects of study abroad that contrast with the positive ones. There are often logistical problems that surround study abroad that prevent students from even ever seriously considering study abroad. The long-term associated linguistic gains are suspect. There are also several cultural differences that can impede students' experiences abroad as well as difficult adjustment periods to the host culture that can cause problems.

*Logistics.* Certain logistical aspects of study abroad dissuade students from even thinking about studying abroad. The American culture does not encourage study and exploration globally as much as European culture, and in turn does not place pressure on schools to change their philosophies about studying abroad (Dolby, 2005). Many colleges have strict transfer policies that cause worries in students that their abroad coursework will not transfer to their home institutions (Ryan & Twibell, 2000).

Curriculum changes needed to allow for smooth incorporation of study abroad programs have yet to be implemented in most higher education institutions (Bollag, 2003; Dolby, 2005; Ryan & Twibell, 2000). Without these adaptations, many students fear graduation setbacks due to disruption in their set study plans by study abroad. To avoid disruption, many students seek study abroad experiences that take place over semester breaks (Holland, 2003).

The high costs often associated with study abroad also contribute to more students seeking short-term programs, or not considering study abroad at all, to curb college expenses (Bollag, 2003). Around 50% of U.S. students that study abroad each year are gone for less than 8 weeks (Davis, 2000). The short stays abroad may be limiting student gains from the positive benefits associated with study abroad. Holland (2003) concluded that 3 to 6 months is the

minimum time needed for students to let go of the tourist perceptions and begin to actually experience and participate in the host culture.

*Language skills.* Many have begun to question claims of linguistic gains due to study abroad (Talbert & Stewart, 1999). Study abroad participants may be surrounded with native speakers and increased exposure to the languages outside the classroom, but all the exposure might be overpowering (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). In native countries delivery rates and sentence complexity surpass the usual levels presented in a U.S. classroom. Too intense and complex presentation may lead to students shutting down with an overload of information, leading to little or no gain when compared to their homebound classmates.

Living with a host family is a living situation long thought to be the most beneficial to language learning while studying abroad (Wilkinson, 2002). However, host family environments are often structured similarly to classroom teaching methods. Students are not asking for the similar environments in and out of the classroom, but instead these types of environments are just often the norm for host family set-ups. Host families will stop and correct students and ask them to say specific words to test their skills, just as the students would be asked to do in the classroom environment (Wilkinson, 2002). Such a similarity in the host family and classroom environments does not provide as much of an advantage as previously assumed.

*Culture shock.* The culture shock that is experienced by students moving to a foreign country for study is another negative associated with study abroad. All study abroad participants will experience culture shock to some degree as the new environment is socially, psychologically, and culturally different than what they are used to (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). Students often encounter feelings of isolation, confusion, and anxiety during their time abroad (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). These feelings limit the amount of activities and extent of



participation to which a student will be exposed. Because of the separation and isolation students experience, they are not able to fully immerse themselves into the new culture and obtain the benefits that come with exposure.

Another aspect of cultural shock is facing racist and sexist behavior that the student might not have been expecting. Talburt and Stewart (1999) interviewed a black female student that was studying abroad in Spain. She had not anticipated the racism and sexism that she faced, nor had any of the other American students with whom she was living. Having to deal with these situations limited her time that she was able to interact and participate in Spanish culture and led to her getting less out of her time abroad than she had hoped.

#### Study Abroad Program and Participant Characteristics

The various positive and negatives of study abroad are undoubtedly influenced by the program and participant characteristics. Programs vary by length, location, and academic situation. Participants come from a range of personal and academic backgrounds.

##### *Program Characteristics*

There are a wide variety of options available to students wishing to study abroad, but there are choices that are more popular than others for the students. Different lengths, locations, and academic situations are the basic choices students have when selecting to study abroad.

*Length.* In the 1940's-60's, the trend with study abroad was for students to study their entire junior year abroad (Cooper & Grant, 1993). Recently, students have moved away from the full year abroad experiences. Only 6% of students now study abroad a full academic year, which is down from 14% in 1993/94 (IIE, 2005). Thirty-eight percent of students study abroad for a semester and the majority, 56%, study abroad for shorter lengths. There are a few reasons that

explain the shift to shorter study abroad lengths, including cost, academic and curricular restraints, and the fear of social repercussions (Cooper & Grant, 1993).

*Location.* During the 2004/05 academic year, 61% of all students studied abroad in Europe (IIE, 2005). Forty-six percent of study abroad students went to one of four Western European countries: United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, or France. The ease of travel, the number of programs already established, and the relatively calm sociopolitical climates in these countries are some of the reasons that students keep choosing them as their study abroad destinations.

Even with the popularity of European countries, students are beginning to choose nontraditional settings with greater frequency. During the past year, there has been a 90% increase in numbers of study abroad students in China, making it ranked 9<sup>th</sup> overall in the world for number of students participating in study abroad (IIE, 2005). There has also been a 65% increase in students studying in India. However, the total percentage of students choosing to study abroad in Asian countries remains fairly low at 7%.

In the past, study abroad was largely used as an opportunity to practice another language. But, as more students choose to study abroad for other reasons, more and more are choosing to study in English speaking countries. In 2005, one-third of American students studied abroad in an English speaking country or in a location that offered English speaking programs (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). Some administrators in certain countries, such as South Korea, have noted this trend and are attempting to offer more English taught classes to increase numbers of students choosing to study abroad in non-English speaking countries (Brender, 2005).

*Academic situation.* There are a variety of academic situations available for students who choose to study abroad, regardless of the country they choose. Students may find themselves integrated into local academics and enrolled directly at the foreign country college or university,

or they may be attending seminars with other study abroad students that are being taught through an American institution (Cooper & Grant, 1993). The majority of study abroad students find themselves in the latter situation, where they are in programs sponsored and run by U.S. higher education institutions. A smaller percentage is enrolled directly into the foreign institutions.

### *Participant Characteristics*

A growing body of demographic descriptors of study abroad participants has recently been gathered. As institutional administrators look to increase study abroad programs, they first need to examine the types of students who are already participating, including their personal and academic backgrounds.

*Personal.* Students that are choosing to study abroad are, and primarily always have been, female. Around two-thirds of study abroad participants are female (Cooper & Grant, 1993). The reason for the large number of female participants could be attributed to a number of reasons, but one of the most prominent reasons is that students that are studying abroad are often liberal arts and foreign language majors—majors that are female dominated.

Study abroad students are often thought to come from wealthier financial backgrounds, but the research does not support that conclusion. Students seem to come from a variety of financial backgrounds due to the higher amounts of financial aid available to study abroad students (Cooper & Grant, 1993). The only instances where students seem to come from wealthier backgrounds occur with students that are studying abroad for a full year.

While they may not be coming from wealthier backgrounds than students who do not study abroad, one-third of study abroad participants say that their parents are either proficient in a second language or have lived overseas (Cooper & Grant, 1993). Since students also cite parental influence in major decision during college years, the cultural level of the parents may be

an impact on which students decide to study abroad. More than half of study abroad students have also had prior overseas travel experiences, which could also influence their choice to study abroad.

*Academic.* Students who study abroad come from fairly similar academic backgrounds. As mentioned as a reason for more female study abroad students, study abroad participants are traditionally from liberal arts majors (Cooper & Grant, 1993). However, there has been a recent rise in the number of business students choosing to study abroad, as many students are opting to focus on international business to gain a competitive edge in the changing business front.

The majority of study abroad students are undergraduates, with only 6% of graduate participating in study abroad (Cooper & Grant, 1993). The low number of graduate students participating in study abroad may be explained by monetary and curricular restraints. Study abroad students usually exhibit above average academic performances. Small, private, liberal arts institutions send a disproportionate number of students abroad compared to their large, public counterparts (IIE, 2005).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a fair amount of research has been conducted on the outcomes for students who participate in study abroad programs. There have been studies that deal with the positive gains associated with study abroad including language skills (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Wilkinson, 2002), academics (Hadis, 2005; Holland 2003; Kitsantas, 2004; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Tseng & Newton, 2002), cultural awareness (Dolby, 2005; Drews, Meyer, & Peregrine, 1996; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Hadis, 2005; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Kitsantas, 2004; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Savicki et al., 2004;

Talbert & Stewart, 1999), and personal development (Hadis, 2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Holland, 2003).

Another group of literature contains information about the negative aspects of study abroad. Several studies are present on logistics (Bollag 2003; Davis, 2000; Dolby, 2005; Holland, 2003; Ryan & Twibell, 2000), language skills (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Talbert & Stewart, 1999; Wilkinson, 2002), and culture shock (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Talbert & Stewart, 1999 ).

There is also literature on study abroad program characteristics. There is literature of the length of study abroad programs (Cooper & Grant, 1993; IIE, 2005), location (Brender, 2005; IIE, 2005; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005), and academic situations (Cooper & Grant, 1993).

Literature can also be found on study abroad participant characteristics. There is literature on both the personal (Cooper & Grant, 1993) and the academic (Cooper & Grant, 1993; IIE, 2005) aspects of participants.

While there is literature on characteristics of study abroad programs, it is mainly descriptive and not research-based. Additionally, while three aspects of cultural awareness have been studied, there have not been studies that combine the cultural awareness aspects with program characteristics. This study adds to the literature by providing information about study abroad program characteristics and their relation to cross-cultural adaptability.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between length of study abroad (short, medium, or long term) and levels of four different aspects of cross-cultural awareness: emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy. Specifically, data were collected using the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) to answer the following research questions:

1. Does level of emotional resilience differ by length of study abroad experience?
2. Does level of flexibility/openness differ by length of study abroad experience?
3. Does level of perceptual acuity differ by length of study abroad experience?
4. Does level of personal autonomy differ by length of study abroad experience?
5. Does level of cross-cultural adaptability differ by length of study abroad experience?

In this chapter I discuss the methodology used in this study. Specifically I describe sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

### Sample Selection

For this study, a sample comprised of college students from a large public mid-Atlantic land grant research institution and students from two small private mid-Atlantic Baccalaureate women's institutions who had participated in study abroad in the time period between August 2005 and August 2006 was obtained. I assumed that the study abroad experience was still fresh in their minds and any influence the time abroad had on the student was still be present in those who had recently been on study abroad. Students were assigned to one of three groups depending on the length of their study abroad experience: short term, medium term, and long

term. I also obtained a sample of college students who were attending college in the United States between August 2005 and August 2006 who had never participated in study abroad.

I contacted the study abroad offices at the three institutions to obtain general data about students who had recently returned from studying abroad. More than 980 students had studied abroad at the study institutions during the 2005-06 academic year. These data included the number of students who had studied abroad during the specified time frame and the length of their study. I then verified that I had enough students for my sample by dividing them up into the three groups based on study length. I was aiming for 75 students in each group (i.e., short, medium, and long term), or a total of 225 students. Upon verification of enough available students that met the criteria of study length and time frame, I asked the study abroad offices to send the instrument to all students. I also obtained a randomly stratified sample of students at one of the colleges and sent out the survey to that sample in order to obtain a group of students who had not studied abroad.

#### Instrumentation

A quantitative approach was used to collect data from the sample. Specifically, a questionnaire consisting of 50 items was used to collect the data. The Cross-Cultural Adaptability (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995) was used in addition to a general demographic questionnaire.

The assessment consisted of five sections. The first section included eight demographic items that had both open ended responses and forced choice, depending on the item. For example, respondents were asked to report the dates of their study abroad experience and were be asked to report the country/countries in which their abroad experience took place.

The remaining four sections consisted of the CCAI and each measured one of the four aspects of cross-cultural adaptability. Items in these four sections consisted of statements and the respondents were asked the degree to which they agree with each statement on a scale ranging from 1 (Definitely Not True) to 6 (Definitely True). Nine of the total 50 items were reversed scored.

The 18 items that measure level of emotional resilience asked respondents how they responded in unfamiliar situations. For example, they were asked if they liked to try new things.

The 15 items that measured level of flexibility/openness asked respondents how they enjoyed interacting with people that were different from them. For example, they were asked if they liked to be with all kinds of people.

The 10 items that measured the level of perceptual acuity asked respondents if they paid attention to and accurately perceived various characteristics of the environment. For example, they were asked if they believed all cultures have something worthwhile to offer.

The seven items that measured the level of personal autonomy asked respondents if they had evolved a personal system of values and beliefs that made them feel comfortable acting in strange settings and also to what extent they were able to respect others' values and beliefs. For example, they were asked if they believed that all people, no matter race, are equally valuable. A copy of the demographic questionnaire can be found in Appendix A and a copy of the CCAI can be found in Appendix B.

### Validity and Reliability

The validity of an instrument refers to ability to obtain valuable and significant inferences from use of that instrument (Creswell, 2003). The CCAI was developed to be used in cross-cultural training to allow people to identify factors that are important when interacting with



people from other cultures as well as to identify personal qualities that will further the development of cross-cultural skills (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). The authors indicated the CCAI has three types of validity. They suggested the CCAI has been shown to have face validity through expert review. The content validity of the CCAI has been proven through review of literature and expert review. The CCAI is also suggested to have construct validity, through statistical tests conducted by the instrument authors and other researchers who have used the instrument in the past (Kelley & Meyers, 1995; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). However, a recent factor analysis of the CCAI, (Davis & Finney, 2006) suggested a less than optimal fit of the four scales and suggests additional statistical research be done on the instrument to confirm the validity of the instrument. No additional information on the validity of the CCAI was available at the time of the study.

The reliability of an instrument refers to the regularity, stability, and accuracy of scores over time and with different populations (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1996). Overall reliability for the CCAI was .90, demonstrating a high internal consistency (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). Intercorrelations of the four scales of the CCAI ranged from .27 to .59. These modest correlations indicate that the scales are measuring different constructs.

#### Data Collection

I obtained approval to conduct this study through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research Involving Human Subjects at the institutions where the study was conducted. Upon obtaining IRB approval, I proceed to upload my instrument onto an Internet survey site. I tested all the links of my survey to verify that all were in working order. Once I had the online survey in place, an email was sent out through the study abroad departments at the participating

institutions to all students meeting criteria for participation. This email contained a link to my survey (see Appendix C).

Once participants clicked on the link, they were taken to a page containing consent information. At the end of the page the options “agree” or “disagree” were available. By clicking on “disagree,” the participants were thanked for their time and exited out of the survey. Clicking on “agree” took the participants to the page containing the demographic questions and the CCAI instrument. Once participants completed the instrument, they clicked on the “submit” option which took them to a page that thanked the participants for their time.

I sent out an email to students obtained from the randomly stratified sample in order to obtain participants who had not studied abroad (see Appendix D). That email contained the same survey link and same steps as the above email sent to study abroad participants.

A follow up email (see Appendix E) was sent out one week after the first invitation to participate in the study to the randomly stratified sample group. This follow up email once again asked for help with the study and contained the link to the instrument. One week after the follow up message was sent, the survey site was closed and the results were downloaded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then data were converted to SPSS.

### Data Analysis

One question on the instrument verified that participants met the selection criteria. The students were asked to report the dates that the study abroad had taken place through questions on the instrument. Only data from qualified participants was used for analysis.

The data were analyzed to answer the five research questions posed in this study. The first research question examined whether there were differences in level of emotional resilience by length of study abroad experiences. To address this question, I first assigned respondents to

one of two groups based on if they had or had not participated in study abroad. I then assigned respondents who had participated in study abroad to one of three groups based on length of study abroad experience: short, medium, or long term. The short term group includes people who had studied abroad for less than nine weeks. The medium term group includes people who had studied abroad for nine to 16 weeks. The long term group includes people who had studied abroad for longer than 16 weeks. I then calculated the mean scores for the total of the 18 items in the emotional resilience section of the CCAI for each of the four groups. Finally, I compared the group mean scores for ER using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ( $p < .05$ ). Post-hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were run to determine where significance occurred.

The second research question examined whether there were differences in level of flexibility/openness by participation and length of study abroad experiences. The same groupings of respondents by participation and length of study abroad experience used in the first research question were used for this question. I then calculated the mean scores for the total of the 15 items in the flexibility/openness section of the CCAI for each of the four groups. Finally, I compared the group mean scores for FO using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ( $p < .05$ ). Post-hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were run to determine where significance occurred.

The third research question examined whether there were differences in level of perceptual acuity by participation and length of study abroad experiences. The same grouping of respondents by participation and length of study abroad experience used in the first and second research question were used again for this question. I then calculated the mean scores for the total of the 10 items in the perceptual acuity section of the CCAI for each of the four groups. Finally, I compared the group mean scores for PAC using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ( $p < .05$ ). Post-hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were run to determine where significance occurred.

The fourth research question examined whether there were differences in level of personal autonomy by participation and length of study abroad experiences. I repeated the steps used in the first three research questions, but used the score from the seven items in the personal autonomy section of the CCAI for each of the four groups.

The fifth and final research question examined whether there were differences in total level of cross-cultural adaptability by participation and length of study abroad experiences. The steps used in the first four research question were used, but the total score from all 50 items from the four subgroups of the CCAI was used in analysis.

In conclusion, the study was designed to measure levels of four different aspects of cross-cultural adaptability. The results from the data collection provided sufficient data to examine the relationships between study length and the levels of cross-cultural adaptability.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of the data analyses. The chapter is organized into two sections. The first section provides a description of the demographic characteristics of the sample population. The second section describes the data analyses, which is organized around the order of the five research questions posed in the study.

#### Characteristics of the Sample

A total of 207 surveys were completed by participants, representing 18.3% of the potential sample population. The demographic characteristics of the sample population are described below and summarized in Table 1.

The majority of respondents (72.5%) were female, the other 27.5% were male. Most respondents were white (89.1%). There were also small numbers of respondents who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander (4.9%), Black (1.5%), or other (4.5%). Five respondents (2.4%) failed to indicate race on the survey.

Ages of the respondent group ranged from 18 to 26 years old. The majority of participants fell in the middle of that age range, with 20 (21.9%), 21 (40.1%), and 22 years of age (21.4%). Fifteen respondents (7.2%) failed to indicate age on the survey.

Details about the study abroad experiences of the participants are described below and summarized in Table 2. The majority of the sample population had some study abroad experience; 29.9% had studied abroad for under nine weeks, 33.3% had studied abroad for nine to sixteen weeks, and 24.2% had studied abroad for longer than sixteen weeks. Twenty-six respondents (12.6%) had no prior study abroad experience.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Sample Population (N=207)*

| Characteristics           | <i>n</i> | %N   |
|---------------------------|----------|------|
| Sex                       |          |      |
| Male                      | 57       | 27.5 |
| Female                    | 150      | 72.5 |
| Race*                     |          |      |
| White                     | 180      | 89.1 |
| Black                     | 3        | 1.5  |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 10       | 4.9  |
| Other                     | 9        | 4.5  |
| Age**                     |          |      |
| 18                        | 1        | 0.5  |
| 19                        | 16       | 8.3  |
| 20                        | 42       | 21.9 |
| 21                        | 77       | 40.1 |
| 22                        | 41       | 21.4 |
| 23                        | 12       | 6.3  |
| Over 24                   | 3        | 1.6  |

\* = data from 202 participants

\*\* = data from 192 participants

Table 2

*Details of Abroad Experiences (N=207)*

| Characteristics  | <i>n</i> | %N   |
|--|----------|------|
| Participation in Study Abroad                                      |          |      |
| Never Studied Abroad   | 26       | 12.6 |
| Less than Nine Weeks Abroad  | 62       | 29.9 |
| Nine to Sixteen Weeks Abroad                                       | 69       | 33.3 |
| More than Sixteen Weeks Abroad                                     | 50       | 24.2 |
| Class Standing During Year Abroad*                                 |          |      |
| First Year   | 1        | 0.6  |
| Sophomore  | 24       | 13.6 |
| Junior   | 103      | 58.2 |
| Senior   | 49       | 27.7 |
| Area of Abroad Experience**  |          |      |
| Asia   | 5        | 2.0  |
| Australia  | 18       | 7.3  |
| European Union   | 147      | 59.5 |
| Russia   | 1        | 0.4  |
| South Africa   | 6        | 2.4  |
| South America  | 13       | 5.3  |
| Switzerland  | 25       | 10.1 |
| United Kingdom   | 32       | 13.0 |
| Type of Coursework Abroad***                                       |          |      |
| Enrolled Directly in Foreign Institution                           | 55       | 30.4 |
| Enrolled in U.S. Institution,<br>Coursework with U.S. Students     | 73       | 40.3 |
| Enrolled in U.S. Institution,<br>Coursework at Foreign Institution | 35       | 19.3 |
| Other  | 18       | 9.9  |

\* = data from 177 participants

\*\* =  $n=247$ , as participants were allowed to indicate more than one area

\*\*\* = data from 181 participants

The majority of respondents (58.2%) studied abroad during the junior year of undergraduate programs. One respondent (0.6%) studied during the first year, 13.6% during the sophomore year, and 27.7% studied during the senior year. Four students that had studied abroad did not indicate the year of study and the respondents who had not studied abroad were not asked to respond to this question.

Most respondents (59.5%) had studied abroad in the European Union. Thirteen percent had studied abroad in the United Kingdom and 10.1% had studied in Switzerland. The remaining 17.4% of respondents had studied abroad in Asia, Australia, Russia, South Africa, and South America. Respondents were allowed to indicate if they had studied in multiple countries and the numbers for this question ( $n=247$ ) indicated that there were indeed participants that studied in more than one country.

Thirty percent of respondents who had studied abroad were directly enrolled at a foreign institutions and completed coursework through that institution. Forty percent were enrolled in a study abroad program through a U.S. institution and completed coursework abroad with fellow U.S. students. Nineteen percent of respondents were enrolled in a study abroad program through a U.S. institution but completed coursework at a foreign institution. The remaining 9.9% selected “other” as the response.

### Results of the Data Analyses

The first research question examined whether there were differences in the scores of emotional resilience (ER) between participants of different lengths of study abroad. Mean scores for ER ranged from 79.5 (no study abroad) to 87.6 (long term) and can be seen in Table 3. To address this question, an ANOVA was conducted, comparing the mean scores of the four different participant groups (no study abroad, short, medium, and long term).



Table 3

*Mean Scores of Cross-Cultural Adaptability of Groups based on Study Abroad Length*

| Group* |      | ER       | FO      | PAC     | PA      | Total    |
|--------|------|----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| No SA  | Mean | 79.4615  | 66.8846 | 46.6154 | 32.8077 | 225.7692 |
|        | N    | 26       | 26      | 26      | 26      | 26       |
|        | SD   | 10.26150 | 8.30097 | 5.18519 | 3.09863 | 21.67452 |
| Short  | Mean | 83.5968  | 69.6290 | 48.2742 | 33.8226 | 235.3226 |
|        | N    | 62       | 62      | 62      | 62      | 62       |
|        | SD   | 7.88537  | 6.73925 | 4.84233 | 2.73726 | 17.99706 |
| Medium | Mean | 86.1159  | 70.7536 | 50.3188 | 34.9275 | 242.1159 |
|        | N    | 69       | 69      | 69      | 69      | 69       |
|        | SD   | 9.29664  | 6.01323 | 4.15329 | 2.59138 | 18.65360 |
| Long   | Mean | 87.6400  | 72.0400 | 50.3200 | 34.6000 | 244.6000 |
|        | N    | 50       | 50      | 50      | 50      | 50       |
|        | SD   | 6.40395  | 6.55887 | 4.80408 | 2.64189 | 16.14223 |

\* No SA = No Study Abroad Experience, Short =under 9 weeks, Medium = 9-16 weeks, and Long = over 16 weeks

Note: ER = Emotional Resilience  
 FO = Flexibility/Openness  
 PAC = Perceptual Acuity  
 PA = Personal Autonomy  
 Total = Total Score on Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory

Results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 4. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between groups for level of ER.

A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) was run to find out which groups were significantly different from one another. Results of the post hoc test can be seen in Table 5. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between the no study abroad group and both the medium and long term groups. In both cases the no study abroad group had significantly lower mean ER scores than the medium and long term groups.

The second research question examined whether there were differences in the scores of flexibility/openness (FO) between participants of different lengths of study abroad. Mean scores for FO ranged from 66.9 (no study abroad) to 72.0 (long term) and can be seen in Table 3. To address this question, an ANOVA was conducted, comparing the mean scores of the four different participant groups (no study abroad, short, medium, and long term). Results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 4. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between groups for level of FO.

A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) was run to determine which groups were significantly different from one another. Results of the post hoc test are reported in Table 5. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between the no study abroad group and the long term group. Respondents in the no study abroad group had significantly lower FO scores than respondents in the long term group.

The third research question examined whether there were differences in the scores of perceptual acuity (PAC) between participants of different lengths of study abroad. Mean scores for PAC ranged from 46.6 (no study abroad) to 50.3 (long term) and are reported in Table 3.

Table 4

*Results of ANOVA on Interaction between Study Abroad Lengths on Cross-Cultural Adaptability*

*Scores (N=207)*

|       |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig.  |
|-------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| ER    | Between Groups | 1351.688       | 3   | 450.563     | 6.391 | .000* |
|       | Within Groups  | 14311.973      | 203 | 70.502      |       |       |
|       | Total          | 15663.662      | 206 |             |       |       |
| FO    | Between Groups | 496.070        | 3   | 165.357     | 3.705 | .013* |
|       | Within Groups  | 9059.853       | 203 | 44.630      |       |       |
|       | Total          | 9555.923       | 206 |             |       |       |
| PAC   | Between Groups | 375.565        | 3   | 125.188     | 5.767 | .001* |
|       | Within Groups  | 4406.358       | 203 | 21.706      |       |       |
|       | Total          | 4781.923       | 206 |             |       |       |
| PA    | Between Groups | 103.213        | 3   | 34.404      | 4.669 | .004* |
|       | Within Groups  | 1495.725       | 203 | 7.368       |       |       |
|       | Total          | 1598.937       | 206 |             |       |       |
| Total | Between Groups | 7599.121       | 3   | 2533.040    | 7.570 | .000* |
|       | Within Groups  | 67931.236      | 203 | 334.637     |       |       |
|       | Total          | 75530.357      | 206 |             |       |       |

\*p<.05

Note: ER = Emotional Resilience

FO = Flexibility/Openness

PAC = Perceptual Acuity

PA = Personal Autonomy

Total = Total Score on Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory

Table 5

*Tukey HSD Post Hoc Analysis on Interaction between Study Abroad Lengths on Cross-Cultural Adaptability Scores (N=207)*

| Dependent Variable   | (I) Group** | (J) Group | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig.  |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|-------|
| Emotional Resilience | No SA       | Short     | -4.13524              | 1.96183    | .154  |
|                      |             | Medium    | -6.65440              | 1.93220    | .004* |
|                      |             | Long      | -8.17846              | 2.03019    | .000* |
|                      | Short       | No SA     | 4.13524               | 1.96183    | .154  |
|                      |             | Medium    | -2.51917              | 1.46932    | .319  |
|                      |             | Long      | -4.04323              | 1.59599    | .058  |
|                      | Medium      | No SA     | 6.65440               | 1.93220    | .004* |
|                      |             | Short     | 2.51917               | 1.46932    | .319  |
|                      |             | Long      | -1.52406              | 1.55943    | .763  |
|                      | Long        | No SA     | 8.17846               | 2.03019    | .000* |
|                      |             | Short     | 4.04322               | 1.59599    | .58   |
|                      |             | Medium    | 1.52406               | 1.55943    | .763  |
| Flexibility/Openness | No SA       | Short     | -2.74442              | 1.56089    | .297  |
|                      |             | Medium    | -3.86901              | 1.53732    | .060  |
|                      |             | Long      | -5.15538              | 1.61528    | .009* |
|                      | Short       | No SA     | 2.74442               | 1.56089    | .297  |
|                      |             | Medium    | -1.12459              | 1.16904    | .771  |
|                      |             | Long      | -2.41097              | 1.26982    | .232  |
|                      | Medium      | No SA     | 3.86901               | 1.53732    | .060  |
|                      |             | Short     | 1.12459               | 1.16904    | .771  |
|                      |             | Long      | -1.28638              | 1.24073    | .728  |
|                      | Long        | No SA     | 5.15538               | 1.61528    | .009* |
|                      |             | Short     | 2.41097               | 1.26982    | .232  |
|                      |             | Medium    | 1.28638               | 1.24073    | .728  |
| Perceptual Acuity    | No SA       | Short     | -1.65881              | 1.08856    | .425  |
|                      |             | Medium    | -3.70346              | 1.07212    | .004* |
|                      |             | Long      | -3.70462              | 1.12649    | .006* |
|                      | Short       | No SA     | 1.65881               | 1.08856    | .425  |
|                      |             | Medium    | -2.04465              | .81528     | .062  |
|                      |             | Long      | -2.04581              | .88556     | .099  |
|                      | Medium      | No SA     | 3.70346               | 1.07212    | .004* |
|                      |             | Short     | 2.04465               | .81528     | .062  |
|                      |             | Long      | -.00116               | .86528     | 1.000 |
|                      | Long        | No SA     | 3.70462               | 1.12649    | .006* |
|                      |             | Short     | 2.04581               | .88556     | .099  |
|                      |             | Medium    | .00116                | .86528     | 1.000 |

Table 5 Continued

*Tukey HSD Post Hoc Analysis on Interaction between Study Abroad Lengths on Cross-Cultural Adaptability Scores (N=207)*

| Dependent Variable | (I) Group | (J) Group | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig.  |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|-------|
| Personal Autonomy  | No SA     | Short     | -1.01489              | .63422     | .381  |
|                    |           | Medium    | -2.11984              | .62464     | .005* |
|                    |           | Long      | -1.79231              | .65632     | .034* |
|                    | Short     | No SA     | 1.01489               | .63422     | .381  |
|                    |           | Medium    | -1.10496              | .47500     | .095  |
|                    |           | Long      | -.77742               | .51595     | .435  |
|                    | Medium    | No SA     | 2.11984               | .62464     | .005* |
|                    |           | Short     | 1.10496               | .47500     | .095  |
|                    |           | Long      | .32754                | .50413     | .916  |
|                    | Long      | No SA     | 1.79231               | .65632     | .034* |
|                    |           | Short     | .77742                | .51595     | .435  |
|                    |           | Medium    | -.32754               | .50413     | .916  |
| Total              | No SA     | Short     | -9.55335              | 4.27411    | .117  |
|                    |           | Medium    | -16.34671             | 4.20957    | .001* |
|                    |           | Long      | -18.83077             | 4.42305    | .000* |
|                    | Short     | No SA     | 9.55335               | 4.27411    | .117  |
|                    |           | Medium    | -6.79336              | 3.20112    | .150  |
|                    |           | Long      | -9.27742              | 3.47708    | .041* |
|                    | Medium    | No SA     | 16.34671              | 4.20957    | .001* |
|                    |           | Short     | 6.79336               | 3.20112    | .150  |
|                    |           | Long      | -2.48406              | 3.39743    | .884  |
|                    | Long      | No SA     | 18.83077              | 4.42305    | .000* |
|                    |           | Short     | 9.27742               | 3.47708    | .041* |
|                    |           | Medium    | 2.48406               | 3.39743    | .884  |

\*p<.05

\*\* No SA = No Study Abroad Experience, Short =under 9 weeks, Medium = 9-16 weeks, and Long = over 16 weeks

To address this question, an ANOVA was conducted, comparing the mean scores of the four different participant groups (no study abroad, short, medium, and long term). Results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 4. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between groups for level of PAC.

A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) was run to determine between where significant group differences occurred. Results of the post hoc test are reported in Table 5. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between the no study abroad group and the medium and long term groups. Respondents in the no study abroad group had significantly lower PAC scores than respondents in the medium and long term groups.

The fourth research question examined whether there were differences in the scores of personal autonomy (PA) between participants of different lengths of study abroad. Mean scores for PA ranged from 32.8 (no study abroad) to 34.9 (medium term) and are reported in Table 3. To address this question, an ANOVA was conducted, comparing the mean scores of the four different participant groups (no study abroad, short, medium, and long term). Results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 4. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between groups for level of PA.

A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) was run to determine where significant group differences occurred. Results of the post hoc test are reported in Table 5. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between the no study abroad group and the medium and long term groups. Respondents in the non study abroad group had significantly lower PA scores than respondents in the medium and long term groups.

The fifth and final research question examined whether there were differences in overall combined scores (combining all four subcategories) on the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory

(CCAI) between participants of different lengths of study abroad. Mean scores for the total ranged from 225.8 (no study abroad) to 244.6 (long term) and are reported in Table 3. An ANOVA was conducted, comparing the mean scores of the four different participant groups (no study abroad, short, medium, and long term). Results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 4. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between groups for overall total score on the CCAI.

A post hoc test (Tukey HSD) was run to determine where the significant difference occurred. Results of the post hoc test are reported in Table 5. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found between the no study abroad group and the medium and long term groups. The no study abroad group had significantly lower scores than either the medium or long term groups. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was also found between the short term and the long term groups. The short term group participants had significantly lower overall CCAI scores than the long term group.

In summary, the researcher conducted an ANOVA and several pos hoc comparisons to analyze the data of this study. The significant differences and their implications for future practice, policy, and research are discussed in the final chapter of this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine levels of cross-cultural adaptability among study abroad participants. In particular, different lengths of study abroad participation (no study abroad experience, short, medium, and long term) were examined to see if there was any sort of relationship between length of study abroad and level of cross-cultural adaptability. Cross-cultural adaptability was measured using the four measures of cross-cultural adaptability outlined in the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995), including emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy.

This chapter contains a discussion of the results. It is organized into five sections. The first section is a discussion of the study and the results. The second section describes the relationship of the results to prior research. The next section summarizes implications for future practice, research, and policy. Following is a section on the discussion of the limitations of the study. Finally, the conclusions resulting from the study are presented.

#### Discussion of the Results

The first research question posed in this study sought to determine if there were any differences in level of emotional resilience depending on time a participant had spent studying abroad. Eighteen questions on the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1995) were used to determine emotional resilience scores. Emotional resilience is the ability to react appropriately in unfamiliar situations. The higher the score on the section, the higher the level of emotional resilience the participant exhibited. Participants in the study who had never studied abroad had statistically significantly lower mean scores for emotional



resilience than did participants who had studied abroad nine weeks or longer (both the medium and long term groups).

Longer times abroad may expose students to a variety of challenging and unfamiliar situations to which they eventually learn how to cope. Students who have never studied abroad may not experience as many unfamiliar situations and therefore may not easily handle the prospect of challenging or unfamiliar situations.

The second research question posed in the study explored the levels of flexibility/openness participants had depending on the time they had spent studying abroad. Fifteen items on the CCAI measured level of flexibility/openness, with a higher score indicating a higher level of flexibility/openness. Flexibility/openness occurs when it is easy for one to interact positively with people who are different or in different situations. Participants who had never studied abroad scored significantly lower in the area of flexibility/openness than those who had studied abroad longer than 16 weeks (long term).

A possible explanation for the FO differences between the no study abroad and long term study abroad groups may stem from the belief that the chance to live in a culture vastly different from your own for long periods of time may increase your flexibility/openness. Another explanation for the FO differences between those who have never studied abroad and those who did so long term could be that students who choose to study abroad for long lengths in the first place could already have higher levels of flexibility/openness that leads them to make the decision to study abroad at length.

The third research question in the study examined levels of perceptual acuity that participants had depending on the time that they had studied abroad. Ten items from the CCAI measured level of perceptual acuity. Perceptual acuity happens when one pays attention to and

accurately perceives various environmental characteristics. The higher the score, the higher the level of perceptual acuity a respondent had. A significant difference was found between respondents who had never studied abroad and those that did so for medium to long term lengths, with those studying abroad for nine weeks or longer having higher perceptual acuity scores.

Perceptual acuity may be heightened by spending time in cultures and with people different from oneself. Students who studied abroad nine weeks or more may have had a chance to further develop their levels of perceptual acuity as they were exposed to different people and places during their time abroad compared to the steady environment of students who did not study abroad.

The fourth research question posed in this study sought to determine if there were any differences in level of personal autonomy depending on length of time a participant had spent studying abroad. Seven items on the CCAI were used to measure personal autonomy. Personal autonomy occurs when one develops and follows a personal set of values and beliefs no matter the situation. The higher the score on the CCAI for those seven items, the higher the level of personal autonomy. Respondents who studied abroad for nine weeks or longer (medium and long term groups) had significantly higher personal autonomy scores than those who had never studied abroad.

Entering a strange setting, oftentimes alone, may cause students to develop and reaffirm their personal autonomy. Studying abroad at longer lengths of time may provide the right environmental stimulus to encourage this growth of personal autonomy. Those who never study abroad are less likely to have to step outside their comfort zone, so they may be less likely to be presented with situations that help increase their personal autonomy.

The fifth and final research question presented in this study set out to examine if there was any differences in overall level of cross-cultural adaptability among students who study abroad for different lengths of time. The total combined scores of all 50 items on the CCAI were used to determine overall cross-cultural adaptability levels of respondents. The higher the overall score on the CCAI, the higher the level of cross-cultural adaptability was exhibited by a respondent. There were a few statistically significant differences found in regards to overall CCAI score. The first difference was between respondents who had no study abroad experience and those who had studied abroad nine or more weeks (medium and long term groups). Those who had studied abroad nine or more weeks had higher overall scores on the CCAI compared to those who had never studied abroad. The second difference was between respondents who had studied abroad short term (up to nine weeks) and those who had studied abroad long term (longer than 16 weeks). Those who had studied abroad long term had higher overall scores on the CCAI than those who had only studied abroad short term.

The longer one is exposed to unfamiliar settings, people, and activities, the more adaptable they may become to other ideas and cultures. Longer term study abroad may provide the levels of exposure needed to develop higher levels cross-cultural adaptability, while shorter experiences may not be enough to broaden the horizons of students. Another idea to consider when explaining the differences in scores on the CCAI between the different groups may be that people who already have high levels of cross-cultural adaptability may be more open to the idea of studying abroad and doing so for longer time frames than those who have lower levels of cross-cultural adaptability.

## Relationship of the Findings to Prior Research

Prior research in the area of study abroad and cross-cultural awareness has failed to connect characteristics of different study abroad programs to differences in student development. As a result, this study does not link together prior research as a way of support or contradiction. Despite this lack of connection, it is important to examine the results of this study in relation to individual aspects of prior research on study abroad. While studies do not examine different time frames of study abroad and different levels of cultural development, they do examine the differences between study abroad participants and those who never study abroad.

First, Kitsantas & Meyers (2001) found that students who had studied abroad had increased levels of cross-cultural skills compared to students who had never studied abroad. Another study also found that study abroad participants exhibit higher levels of intercultural adjustment than non-study abroad participants (Savicki et al., 2004). The results of the present study corroborate those findings as the results showed that students who had studied abroad for nine weeks or longer showed significantly higher levels of cross-cultural awareness than did students who had never studied abroad.

Drews et al. (1996) discovered that study abroad participants were more likely to think of members of other national groups in personal, non-stereotypical ways compared to those who had never studied abroad. The present study found that those who had studied abroad long term had higher levels of perceptual acuity compared to those who had never studied abroad. High levels of perceptual acuity may be needed to think of members from other cultures in such ways as presented in the Drews et al. research.

Prior research by Hadis (2005) indicated increased aspects of personal development in study abroad participants, including higher levels of self awareness and flexibility and openness.

The present study also found that longer term study abroad participants had higher levels of personal autonomy and flexibility/openness compared to students who had never studied abroad.

#### Implications for Future Practice, Research, and Policy

While the connections to prior research are limited, the implications for future practice, research, and policy that stem from the current study are not. The findings of the current study have implications that can be used by those who develop study abroad programs. Seeing the differences between those who studied abroad and those who did not in relation to cross-cultural adaptability, study abroad coordinators may think of better ways to ensure current programs are meeting the needs and interests of students, thereby encouraging more students to take advantage of study abroad programming.

Another implication from the present study is for financial aid administrators. Financial aid administrators can use results to assess current financial aid opportunities available for students for various study abroad program and ensure that appropriate funding is being given to programs that are promoting cross-cultural advancement and growth to make study abroad more accessible to all students.

Student affairs practitioners may also be able to use the results of the study to implement more culturally expanding experiences to those students who cannot go abroad for various reasons. Capitalizing on the diverse cultural backgrounds of current students and implementing various programming activities exposing students to new cultural traditions might be one way for student affairs practitioners to spread cultural awareness on campus.

The current study also provides implications for future research. In a future study, researchers may wish to examine the home U.S. institution type and size in addition to the study

abroad program characteristics to see if students coming from different kinds of institutions experience different outcomes.

Instead of looking at length of study abroad programs, future researchers may wish to examine other program characteristics in relationship to outcomes of study abroad. Researchers might choose to focus on the living situation while abroad or the academic environment the students experience while abroad.

In addition to length of study abroad, future researchers might compare the location of the study abroad experiences to level of cross-cultural awareness. In particular, researchers should pay attention to language of the host country to see if a non-English speaking country versus an English speaking country has any impact on student outcomes.

There are also a couple implications for future policy stemming from the current study. With confirmation of the potential benefits of study abroad, curriculum policy makers should investigate ways to make study abroad more prevalent within the students' plans of study during their undergraduate experiences. Perhaps integrating a study abroad aspect into the general institution-wide core curriculum so that a study abroad experience would be mandatory for graduation might be a policy worth looking into.

Institution administrators and accreditors should look at current policy governing the different study abroad programs and consider implementation of some sort of quality control policy for study abroad programs. Policymakers could use the current research to determine certain aspects of study abroad that need to be met by a program in order to make the experience beneficial to participants and establish a broad set of standards that must be reached in order to have institutional approval.

## Limitations

As with all research, there were some limitations with the present study. The first limitation was with the sample size. There was a low response rate (18.3%) with the survey and also an unequal distribution between the four groups. Those who chose to participate in the study may have differed from those who did not, influencing the final results of the study.

An additional limitation deals with the shortcomings of using convenience sampling. For example, only students from one of the three institutions used in the study were sampled for the group had not studied abroad. Because of the use of this sampling type the results of the current study are less generalizable to a wider population.

Another limitation surrounded the respondent characteristics. The sample was comprised of a majority of female (72.5%) and white (89.1%) respondents. Respondents coming from these backgrounds may respond differently than those coming from other backgrounds. One thing to keep in mind with the respondent characteristics might be the characteristics of those who study abroad in the first place. Around two-thirds of study abroad participants are female to begin with (Cooper & Grant, 1993).

A final limitation has to do with the candidness of the responses. The respondents may have rushed through the online survey format or chosen not to be as candid as possible when answering the questions. The degree of actual candidness may have had an influence on the results.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal there may be some links between study abroad program lengths and levels of cross-cultural awareness. In particular, participants in programs nine weeks and longer showed higher levels of cross-cultural awareness.

Past research has proven several potential benefits of study abroad exist. This study added to the prior study abroad research by linking program characteristics with potential outcomes. More research needs to be conducted to determine the study abroad program characteristics that are the most effective in maximizing student development outcomes in both academic and nonacademic areas. With additional knowledge we can then develop study abroad programs that standardize and maximize the potential benefits of study abroad. It may not be a matter of only providing study abroad opportunities to the most students possible, but making sure that the programs that are provided are of a quality that will be a beneficial addition to a well rounded higher education.



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## Appendix A

### Demographic Questionnaire

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Year of Birth

3. Race

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian or Pacific Islander

Black

White

Other

4. Current Year in College

First Year

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Other

If you have not participated in a study abroad experience during college, please skip the following four questions and begin with question nine.

5. Year in College During Study Abroad Experience (if summer, please select the year you were entering into)

First Year

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Other

6. What country (countries) did you study in?

7. Please list departure and return dates for your study abroad experience (month/year) and list how many weeks you were abroad.

## Appendix A

### Demographic Questionnaire Continued

8. Please select the type of coursework you were enrolled in while abroad.

Enrolled directly in foreign institution

Enrolled in U.S. institution but coursework at foreign institution

Enrolled in U.S. institution but coursework with fellow U.S. students

Other

## Appendix B

### Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory

The author did not grant permission to reprint the questionnaire. Please contact Vangent, Inc. for further information on the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley & Meyers, 1995).

## Appendix C

### Email Sent Through the Study Abroad Offices

Dear Students,

I am a current master's student conducting research on study abroad. I am working on my thesis and am in need of data from students who have recently participated in study abroad programs. I need participants from short term (summer, spring or winter break), semester long, and year long study abroad programs. I also need participants who studied abroad in a wide variety of countries.

I would appreciate your help with my thesis. By clicking on the following link, you will be taken to the survey that I am using for data collection. The survey should take around 30 minutes for you to complete.

If prompted for a login name and password, please just hit cancel. Your responses will remain completely anonymous

I am offering a chance to win one of four \$50 Target gift cards to all those who take the survey.

I thank you for your help with my thesis. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns about my research.

<http://filebox.vt.edu/users/bazie/Study%20ABroad/First%20Page.htm>

Thanks,

Beth Zielinski

[bazie@vt.edu](mailto:bazie@vt.edu)



## Appendix D

### First Email Sent to Non-Study Abroad Students

Dear Students,

I am a current master's student conducting research on study abroad. I am working on my thesis and am in need of data from students who have NOT studied abroad during their college experience. I know this week is busy due to the upcoming Spring Break, but if you could please take a few minutes to complete the survey I would be grateful.

I am offering a chance to win one of four \$50 Target gift cards to all those who take the survey.

I would appreciate your help with my thesis. By clicking on the following link, you will be taken to the survey that I am using for data collection. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes for you to complete. If prompted for a login name and password, please just hit cancel. Your responses will remain completely anonymous.

I thank you for your help with my thesis. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns about my research.

<http://filebox.vt.edu/users/bazie/Study%20ABroad/First%20Page.htm>

Thanks,

Beth Zielinski

bazie@vt.edu

## Appendix E

### Reminder Email Sent to Non-Study Abroad Students

Dear Students,

Thank you to those who have already completed the survey and entered into the drawing. If you haven't yet taken the survey, there is still time to complete the survey and enter to win one of four \$50 Target Gift Cards.

<http://filebox.vt.edu/users/bazie/Study%20ABroad/First%20Page.htm>

I would appreciate your help with my thesis. By clicking on the following link, you will be taken to the survey that I am using for data collection. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes for you to complete.

If prompted for a login name and password, please just hit cancel. Your responses will remain completely anonymous.

I thank you for your help with my thesis. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns about my research.

<http://filebox.vt.edu/users/bazie/Study%20ABroad/First%20Page.htm>

Thanks,

Beth Zielinski

bazie@vt.edu