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The Influence of Summer Study Abroad Program Participation on the Development of Intercultural Competence

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Study abroad programs have become increasingly popular over the past decade. In 2010-2011, 273,966 United States college students studied abroad (Open Doors, 2012). Studying abroad benefits a student's education and has an impact on intercultural competence development. The development of intercultural competence will allow successful relationships with other cultures. Though there is no direct definition of intercultural competence, some researchers stress global knowledge, others emphasize sensitivity and some point towards a certain skill (Fantini, 2005). Kitstantas (2004) states study abroad programs significantly contribute to the preparation of students to function in a multicultural world and promote international understanding. These findings are consistent with those of McCabe (1994), Carlson and Widaman (1988), and Kitsantas and Meyers (2002) who found that significant differences in global perspective and cross-cultural cosmopolitanism emerged in the study abroad students. This study intends to investigate whether studying abroad has an impact on the development of intercultural competence, and if these skills can be developed over a period of four to six weeks.

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Open Doors (2012) reports that the overall number of United States students participating around the world in study abroad programs has increased steadily and, at times, impressively during the last two decades (Engle & Engle, 2004). Study abroad programs are taking on an increasing role in colleges and universities worldwide (Pedersen, 2010). Study abroad programs are defined as all educational programs that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin (Carlson, Bum, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1991; NAFSA, Association of International Educators). There are numerous types of study abroad programs that students participate in across the United States that include: semester-long programs, yearlong programs, short-term

programs of eight weeks or less, and summer programs of eight weeks or less.

Traditionally, study abroad programs have been thought of as an experience that requires significant interaction with a host culture often consisting of a semester or a year in length. In 2010-2011, 273,966 United States college students studied abroad, this was a 1.3% increase from the previous year (Open Doors, 2012). With the development of program sessions of eight weeks or less, participation in study abroad programs has increased (Kehl & Morris, 2007). In the 2010-2011 school year, 58.1% of United States students studied abroad in short-term programs that include programs of eight weeks or less, this was a 2% increase from the previous year (Open Doors, 2012). From the research conducted by Open Doors, the question of why students' participation in study abroad programs is increasing arises.

United States students are being encouraged by their universities to participate in study abroad programs for numerous reasons. Educators often assert that the goal

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of studying abroad is to train future global leaders to be more effective and respectful of other cultures (Dwyers & Peters, 2004), which is key in the job market today. Other universities are encouraging students to undertake part of their education abroad because this experience is likely to not only enhance students' employability but also to assist in developing important life skills (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004). Some educators have the desire to educate global citizens and fostering appreciation for the role of cultures in students' identities and it is thought studying abroad is the best way (Eby, 2005). Most educators feel that college students need an education that provides them with dexterity such as communication skills, which will allow them to compete in a global market with an increasingly educated population (Williams, 2005). With the knowledge of what educators expect from study abroad programs, what do the students participating expect?

U.S. students who participate in study abroad programs generally do so with expectations that the experience will cultivate cross-cultural skills and knowledge, enhance personal growth and self-confidence, and allow them to be more competitive in an increasingly diverse and globally oriented job force (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). American college students hope that study abroad programs will provide opportunities for learning that are critical to the education including...foreign language skills, cross-cultural understanding, and an appreciation of our diverse and interconnected world essential tools of citizenship and leadership in the 21st century (NASFA, 2008). Students go on study abroad programs to learn about a different culture, to broaden the mental horizon, to extend professional knowledge at a different university, or simply to improve language skills (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012). Those students that have studied abroad, after returning felt that the skills they developed during their experience abroad as essential to the advancement they made in their careers (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990).

College students expressed to the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) that they feel no matter where you study abroad or for how long, the impact of that experience will affect you for the rest of your life (McMillan & Opem, 2002, Gillespie & Slawson, 2002). IES has conducted surveys using study abroad alumni to examine the skills developed in study abroad experiences. The IES survey showed 97% of respondents reported that studying abroad served as a catalyst for increased maturity, 96% reported increased self-confidence, 89% said that it enabled them to tolerate ambiguity, and 95% stated that it has had a lasting impact on their world view (McMillan & Opem, 2002). This shows that studying abroad impacts an individual on many levels.

Study abroad programs significantly contribute to the preparation of students to function in a multicultural world and promote international understanding. Students with experiences abroad will contribute to the United States' ability to lead responsibly, collaborate abroad, and

compete effectively in the global arena (Kitstantas, 2004). In addition McCabe (1994), Carlson & Widaman (1988), and Kitsantas & Meyers (2002) found significant differences in global perspective and cross-cultural cosmopolitanism respectively emerged in study abroad students after their experiences.

Numerous studies have verified that studying abroad benefits intercultural growth (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010; Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009). Carlson & Widaman (1988) found that junior year students showed higher levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest and cultural cosmopolitanism development over a yearlong study after participation in study abroad programs. Williams (2005) found that those students who study abroad showed a greater increase in intercultural communication skills than students who did not study abroad. Eby (2005) found that the degree of cultural immersion and previous history of time abroad appear to have an effect on personality change for study-abroad participants. Individuals who have personalities characterized by receptivity to diversity and change are more likely to participate in an exchange program compared to students who do not participate (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004). The skills developed over study abroad programs have helped students become aware of the global world, which is important in society today.

With the increase in globalization in the United States work force, it is important students become globalized and develop skills of intercultural competence. The development of intercultural competence will allow successful relationships with other cultures. Though there is no direct definition of intercultural competence, some researchers stress global knowledge, others emphasize sensitivity and some point towards a certain skill (Fantini, 2005). Intercultural competence allows successful communication with people of other cultures. Barrett (2008) lists the following as the skills of intercultural competence:

- The understanding of one's attitudes towards other cultures including respect, curiosity, willingness to learn and experience.
- To tolerate and suspend judgment
- The openness to people of other cultures and to the value of cultural diversity.
- The ability to listen, interact and adapt to the ways of other cultures and the people of that culture
- The willingness to discover, to communicate, to interpret and to evaluate other cultures while being empathetic.
- The capability to acknowledge the differences in linguistics, communication, cultural perspectives, practices, products, groups and societal interactions.

- The understanding of cultural behaviors while behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately during encounters.
- The ability to be flexible to fit in with that culture.

Because intercultural competence is a fairly recent notion, the term is sometimes used with varying meanings, and is also known as: global competence, international competence, and multicultural competence (Fantini, 2009).

Through interactions of its varied components, studying abroad helps students recognize and respect cultural differences and develop skills and a willingness to adapt to those differences (Engle & Engle, 2004). In this study, I examine two questions:

- 1) What effect does studying abroad have on the development of intercultural competence?
- 2) Can intercultural competence develop over a summer study abroad program of four to six weeks?

I hypothesize that individuals who study abroad for a summer program of four to six-weeks will develop intercultural skills that differ from those developed during summer classes of four to six-weeks in the United States. The students who study abroad will have a stronger development of intercultural competence, than those students who do not study abroad.

PROPOSED METHOD

Study Design

This is a quasi-experimental study to compare students who study abroad in summer programs of four to six weeks with students who participate in summer classes at their college or university. The participants will be compared to see what the effect of studying abroad has on the development of intercultural competence.

Participants

Two groups of junior year college students from an accredited college or university in the United States will be recruited. One group will be students who intend to study abroad in summer programs of four to six weeks. The second group will be students who choose to participate in summer classes at their home university in the United States. Students participating in the summer study abroad programs will be matched up with students studying at home who have a similar major and who are taking similar classes.

Procedure

All participants will be administered the Cross Cultural Adaptability Index (CCAI), the Intercultural

sensitivity Index (ISI) (See Appendix) and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) one-month prior to starting their summer classes and or study abroad programs. As a post measure, the participants will be administered the CCAI, ISI, IDI measures one month prior to returning or finishing classes.

The Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), assessment is designed to examine an individual's cross culture adaptability. It helps individuals to identify their current strengths and weaknesses, within four critical skills important to the development of cross-cultural skills. Emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, perceptual acuity and personal autonomy are tested. This 50 item six point Likert scale questionnaire takes 15-30 minutes to complete (Kelly & Meyers, 1999). The Intercultural Sensitivity Index (ISI) (See Appendix), measures substantive knowledge, including knowledge of cultures, languages and world issues understanding measures include: open-mindedness, flexibility, resistance and resistance to stereotyping, and intercultural communication skills such as adaptability, empathy and cultural mediation (Olsen & Kroeger 2001). The ISI is a 48-question survey with a Likert scale, and should take 15 minutes to a half hour to complete. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assesses the development of intercultural competence (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). This 50-question theory based instrument should not take more than 15 minutes to a half hour to complete.

The CCAI, ISI and IDI results from the pre-measure will be compared with the CCAI, ISI and IDI results from the post measure to see if students developed intercultural competence skills. Each student will be analyzed individually. The results from students who studied abroad will then be compared to students who studied in the U.S. who have a similar major and with a similar course load. The results from group one as a whole and group two as a whole will then be compared to see which group had a stronger development of intercultural competence.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Limitations

Limitations for this study include that it will only look at one college or university comparing their study abroad programs to their summer classes in the United States. Additionally, although this study uses a comparison of students studying at home versus abroad, the students are not randomly assigned to their experience. Students may not have the finances to study abroad due to the expense so they may choose summer classes at their home university or college instead—this could create a confound of wealthier students studying abroad while less wealthy students stay on campus; and it is possible that the wealth itself (not the abroad experience) is somehow contributing to the development of intercultural competence. Students

may be interested in studying abroad but because of prior commitment are limited to summer classes in the United States. These students may develop strong intercultural competence skills at home. When it comes to choosing to study abroad or not, those who chose to study abroad may be more adapt to improve their intercultural competence skills to begin with. The students who want to study abroad perceive their experience differently than students who were required to study abroad or did not want to study abroad. For example, if the student perceives their study abroad experience as outstanding, the level of intercultural competence skill development may be higher than a student who did not enjoy their experience. This will alter the validity of the results.

Significance

Study abroad programs have become increasingly popular and may influence the development of intercultural competence (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012). The majority of previous research looks at yearlong and semester-long study abroad programs, but not short-term programs. Furthermore, studies have not compared students abroad to students at home to better isolate the effects of studying abroad (as opposed to simply college student development).

APPENDIX

Intercultural Sensitivity Index

(Olson, & Kroeger, 2001)

Please answer all the following questions about yourself using a scale of 1 to 5. There are 48 items.

- 5 = "Describes Me Extremely Well"
4 = "Describes Me Well"
3 = "Describes Me Some of the Time"
2 = "Seldom Describes Me"
1 = "Never Describes Me"

1. I do not really notice cultural differences.
2. I think that cultural diversity really only exists in other places.
3. I feel most comfortable living and working in a community where people look and act like me.
4. I have intentionally sought to live in a racially or culturally distinct community.
5. I am surrounded by culturally diverse people, and feel like my cultural values are threatened.
6. I sometimes find myself thinking derogatory things

about people who look or act differently from me.

7. I believe that aid to developing countries should be targeted to those efforts that help these countries evolve toward the types of social, economic, and political systems that exist in the United States.
8. I believe that certain groups of people are very troublesome and do not deserve to be treated well.
9. I have lived for at least 2 years in another country and believe that American society should embrace the values of this culture in order to address the problems of contemporary American society.
10. I understand that difference exist but believe that we should focus on similarities. We are all human.
11. I think that most human behavior can be understood as manifestations of instinctual behavior like territoriality and sex.
12. I think that all human beings are subject to the same historical forces, economic and political laws, or psychological principles. These principles are invariable across cultures.
13. I believe that physical displays of human emotions are universally recognizable: A smile is a smile wherever you go.
14. I acknowledge and respect cultural difference. Cultural diversity is a preferable human condition.
15. I believe that verbal and nonverbal behavior varies across cultures and that all forms of such behavior are worthy of respect.
16. I think that cultural variations in behavior spring from different worldview assumptions.
17. I believe that my worldview is one of many equally valid worldviews.
18. I have added to my own cultural skills new verbal and nonverbal communication skills that are appropriate in another culture.
19. I believe that culture is a process. One does not have culture: one engages in culture.
20. I am able to temporarily give up my own worldview to participate in another worldview.
21. I have two or more cultural frames of reference, and I feel positive about cultural differences.

22. I feel culturally marginal or on the periphery of two or more cultures.
23. I am able to analyze and evaluate situations from one or more chosen cultural perspectives.
24. When faced with a choice about how I am going to respond to a given situation, I am able to shift between two or more cultural perspectives and consciously make a choice to act from one of these cultural contexts.
25. I believe the world has become economically, environmentally, and politically interdependent.
26. I have substantive knowledge about at least one other culture outside of the United States, and I apply this knowledge with confidence in my professional work.
27. I am linguistically and culturally competent in at least one language and culture other than my own.
28. I use a language other than my native language at least 25% of the time.
29. I am interested and spend considerable time working on global issues.
30. I have substantive competence in analyzing global issues and a working knowledge of concepts and methods that can describe, explain, and predict changes in global systems.
31. I think the choice one makes at home have relevance for other countries and vice versa.
32. I appreciate how people from other cultures are different from me.
33. I am conscious of my own perspectives and culture.
34. I want to continue to learn about the world's peoples, cultures, and issues.
35. I question my own prejudices as well as all national and cultural stereotypes.
36. I recognize that my worldview is not universal.
37. I find people from other places exotic and unusual.
38. I feel uncomfortable when I am with people who are speaking a language I do not know.
39. I try to learn about people from other cultures so that we can work and socialize together.
40. I incorporate the attractive aspects of other cultures into my own way of doing things.
41. I have learned how to produce work with people from other places in the globe.
42. I feel self-confident and comfortable socializing with people from other cultures.
43. I have lived abroad and experiences intense interaction with a variety of people from this other culture.
44. I have long-term friendships with several people from other cultures.
45. I am currently engaged in professional work with at least three people in other countries.
46. I have the ability to deal flexibly with and adjust to new people, places, and situations.
47. I have the ability to psychologically put myself into another person's shoes.
48. I can act as a cultural mediator and serve as a bridge between people of different cultures.

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