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A Comparative Study of International and American Study Abroad Students' Expectations and  
Experiences with Host Countries

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor in Education

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by

Evelyn Domville-Roach

May 2007

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Keywords: international students, study abroad, experience, expectation, culture, support  
services, host countries, and comparative study

## ABSTRACT

### A Comparative Study of International and American Study Abroad Students' Expectations and Experiences with Host Countries

by

Evelyn Domville-Roach

This was a comparative study of international and American study abroad students' experiences and expectations with the host countries. The rationale for this study was to acquire a deeper understanding of different experiences of students who study abroad and to understand whether their expectations of the host country have an impact on their experiences. An opportunity sample of American study abroad and international students was selected from the United States student population and their expectations and experiences of the host country compared. The study addressed 6 research questions, using a mixed-method approach. The principal instrument for the investigation was the *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire* conducted online. Associated hypotheses with the research questions were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and Paired samples t-tests at an alpha level of .05 and the results were described using descriptive statistics. The open-ended questions were analyzed according to established qualitative techniques.

The survey was completed by 421 respondents comprised of 155 international students, 252 American study abroad students, and 14 unknown labeled as others. The results of this study identified language fluency, building relationships with the host nationals, learning about a new culture, and personal change as significant expectations of the students. Overall, the students

reported being satisfied with the services provided. International students were slightly more satisfied with access to support services than the American study abroad students. American study abroad students had experiences that closer matched their expectations of study abroad than was the case for international students.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, without them I would not be here. I would like to thank my parents, Lance and Olive Domville, for their continuous support, faith and love. To my husband, Jeffrey, and children, Dana and Darien, I am extremely grateful for your patience and understanding.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to Open Doors, the annual report on international education published by the Institute of International Education (2005), there were approximately 572,509 international students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States and 191,321 American students studying abroad for the academic year 2003/2004 (Institute of International Education). Considering the vast number of students attending institutions outside their home countries, it is imperative that the higher educational experience be studied within the context of students' expectations. This is essential because students evaluate their experiences of education within the context of their expectations and use this evaluation to assess satisfaction of the institution.

For those students enrolled in study abroad programs, the transition from citizen to foreign national presents levels of personal development and maturity as well as stressful demands that were evident in the students' personal experiences. Such an experience, according to Neill (2005) "is to be judged by the effect that experience has on the individual's present, their future and the extent to which the individual is able to contribute to society" (para. 9).

For international administrators and recruiters, there is no lesson plan to follow when dealing with students studying abroad (Smith, 2005). Therefore, each student's experience ought to be examined within the confines of the specific circumstances and the available resources present in the institution. Smith suggested the lack of a curriculum or guiding plan forces educators to fall back on core values. In most instances, these values were used to reflect and formulate judgments that might best suit learners engaged in a common experience (Smith).

American institutions represented an opportunity for international students to learn about

a foreign culture while earning a degree (Hoffa, 1998). In the same way study abroad programs offered students the experience of broadening their knowledge of other cultures, living and understanding foreign cultural norms, and appreciation of worldly differences (Hoffa & Pearson, 1993). As a result of their unique experiences, international and American study abroad students present an opportunity for in-depth comparison of their cross-cultural experiences.

### Conceptual Framework

A theoretical framework for foreign students' experiences can be formulated using the experiences of international and American study abroad students along with the existing theory of Kolb's experiential learning model and Dewey's work on education and experience. It is also reasonable to apply Kurt Lewin's force field theory to study abroad programs, which reports that behavior is a function of both the individual and the environment (Owens, 2000). The environment the students are in will influence their learning experiences and provide opportunities for informal learning. The experiences of the learner are shaped both by the informal and formal learning processes. In a sense, study abroad can be classified as a mix of both informal and formal learning. Students enrolled in study abroad programs are afforded the opportunity to evaluate their total learning experiences in a formal and informal learning environment. Therefore, the experiences of international and American study abroad students are an opportunity for positive reflective observations for educators.

### Kolb's Experiential Learning

Kolb (1984) indicated that humans were unique in the sense that adaptation does not only occur in the physical but also in the learning process. Kolb stated, "We are thus the learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting

in the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds” (p.1). Kolb indicated that the focal point of learning should be immediate personal experience. He suggested that personal experience provided the texture, meaning, and life to abstract concepts. Kolb indicated that with personal experience one can test as well as question the validity of an idea discovered during the learning process. He stated, “Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (p.27).

### Overview of John Dewey’s Work on Experience and Education

Dewey (1938) contended that knowledge and skills gained in one situation are used to understand and deal with future situations. This synthesis is part of the learning process encountered throughout life. Dewey (1938) suggested that an experience is derived from the interaction of an individual and the immediate environment. The environment, according to Dewey, can be an event under discussion, a book being read, or toys that one interacts with.

Dewey theorized that from the interaction of the principles of continuity and interaction experiences arose (Neill, 2005). Dewey’s continuity principle was based on the idea that an individual’s future is influenced, for better or worse, by each experience, and the principle of interaction was based on a situation influencing the experience of an individual (Neill, 2005).

### Statement of the Problem

Although in recent years there has been research done on students’ experiences (e.g.: Barger, 2004; Hellsten, 2002; Zeszotarski, 2003), very few studies have focused on comparing the experiences and expectations of international and American study abroad students in host countries. Based on Hellsten’s research, international students and American study



abroad students viewed the study abroad experience as an investment in their personal, professional, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic development. The students expected socialization and cultural integration in the host environment, to bring about faster learning outcomes. In a sense, they were learning from experience and adapting to environmental change. As Neill (2004) suggested, learning from experiences often results in a direct participation in the events of life, in this case the study abroad experience. Thus, a void exists in the literature on international and American study abroad students experiences in host countries. Because the experiences of these students are not only important for student recruitment and retention but also for student affairs professionals, the international community, and school administrators, it is essential that colleges and universities use student data to better understand, improve, and change campus environment, thereby creating settings more conducive for student development.

The rationale for this study is to acquire a deeper understanding of different experiences of students who study abroad (international and American students) and to understand whether their expectations of the host country have an impact on their experiences. The study will further assess the similarities and differences of international and American study abroad students' experiences. In this sense, students' experiences and expectations are indicators of the institutions' responsiveness to students' needs and acts as a measure of institutional effectiveness, success, and vitality. Measuring students' experiences is important for maintaining and increasing enrollment and making better informed decisions in the areas of student recruitment and retention.

### Significance of the Study

Students attend institutions overseas for various reasons, the least of which is global educational experience (Hoffa, 1998). As part of the globalization initiative among institutions of higher education, research suggested that, American institutions were increasingly encouraging their students to study in other countries so they could obtain a broader perspective of the world (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Similarly, the literature reported professional development as one of the major reasons international students chose to experience study abroad in the United States (Hellsten, 2002). Additionally, according to Goodman and Kaufman (n.d.), students who studied in other countries had the opportunity to experience cultural differences, gain an understanding of how others view their country, and are better able to share their values with the host country.

This study is the first comprehensive study that compares the experiences and expectations of international and American study abroad students in their host countries. Significant investigation of existing literature was done to identify similar studies and none was found. This study is also significant because it is the first reported view of international and American study abroad students' expectations and experiences in a host country. This study can promote interest in organizing, formulating, and disseminating clear and revised policies to address student learning developmental goals as they relate to the expectations students desire in a study abroad setting and the experiences they encounter. This study can also bridge the gap in research regarding the experiences and expectations of international and American study abroad students in host institutions.

By conducting this study, feedback will be obtained from the students on the importance of experience in their personal and professional growth. From the study's findings, university

administrators may get a better understanding of international students' expectation of American higher education institutions and use this information to facilitate a more rewarding experience for study abroad students. In addition, feedback from study abroad students will help administrators better prepare students for prolonged stay in a foreign country.

Although expectations may differ considerably among individuals, there are standard expectations of what an institution should provide and what the student should expect. Unless their expectation can be made compatible with their experiences, students will find difficulty in achieving the developmental outcome of the learning experience.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a difference between expectations and experiences of international students study abroad?
2. Is there a difference between expectations and experiences of American study abroad students?
3. Do experiences of international students in America differ from those of American study abroad students?
4. Do expectations of international students in America differ from expectations of American study abroad students?
5. To what extent are international and American students' post-study abroad expectations similar or different?
6. What programs or interventions do international and American study abroad students say will make their experiences more meaningful?

### Definitions of Terms Used in the Study

*International Student* - A non-immigrant student admitted to the United States temporarily for a specific educational purpose. These students who come to the United States to pursue full-time academic or vocational studies are usually admitted in one of two non-immigrant categories namely F-1 and M-1 student category Code of Federal Regulations at 8 CFR 214.2, 212.7, and 22 CFR 514 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2006).

*Study Abroad Student* - refers to a student living and studying in a foreign country in order to develop cultural understanding and personal independence (International Studies Abroad, 2007). For the purpose of this study the term study abroad students will be used to mean any student studying in a country other than his or her own. This term will include American students studying overseas and international students studying in America.

*Expectation* - For the purpose of this study expectation is defined as the preconceived notion of looking forward to something, especially with eagerness (Answers.com).

*Experience* – Experience, by definition, is an event or act that results from continuous interaction with the environment that produces knowledge for future transaction (Dewey, 1958; Lark, n.d.).

*Language* – Language according to Bennett (1998) is a communicating tool using words tied together by rules to express thoughts and feelings. Spoken language is the most common communication tool in any society offering security in developing personal relationships (Tyler, 1987).

*Culture* - “The shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that knit a community together” (Owens, 2000, p.145).

*Culture shock* - Guanipa (1998) indicated that culture shock refers to not knowing how to act in a new environment or lacking direction in a new situation. Culture shock can also be defined as feelings of discomfort in the new environment (Lee, 1997).

*Cultural Capital*- According to Ridley (2004), cultural capital consists of all the values, languages, learning experiences, and norms associated with a particular culture.

### Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study was delimited to participants who were international students currently enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the United States and also to American students enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the United States who have embarked on a study abroad program within the last 5 years. The students were able only to describe their own experiences and expectations. The feedback from the students was limited to responses surrounding their experiences and expectations of higher education campuses.

Contact with the students was done through third parties (international\study abroad coordinators). For this purpose I was unable to control the distribution of the questionnaire and thus was not able to provide a return rate. Therefore, generalizations of the findings of this study may not be applied to all international and American study abroad students in higher education.

There exist limitations whereby true post expectations cannot be compared for both groups. The reason for this was because the international students were still having the experience of a study abroad program while the Americans students had completed their study abroad experience.

Finally, I am an international student who came with expectations and have had different experiences of a host institution and I may be biased in my findings; therefore, I chose to have an

auditor for my study to ensure reliability of my research.

### Assumptions

In this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The students had preconceived expectations before they left their home countries for the host institutions.
2. International students knew they had to adapt to a new culture of learning.
3. Students were willing participants in study abroad programs.

### Hypotheses

Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between international students' mean expectations score and their mean experiences score of their stay in the United States.

Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>2</sub>:- There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female international students.

Ho<sub>2</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with their host country.

Ho<sub>2</sub><sub>2</sub>:- There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female American study abroad students.

Ho<sub>3</sub><sub>1</sub>: There is no difference between mean experience scores for international students in America and mean experience score for American students in study abroad programs.

Ho<sub>4</sub><sub>1</sub> -: There is no difference between the expectations of international students in America and expectations of American students in study abroad programs.

### Organization of the Study

The research is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction, the problem, significance of the study, definitions of terms used in the study, limitations of the study, assumptions made, hypotheses, and organization of the study. In chapter 2, a review of relevant literature is presented. Chapter 3 contains the design of the study along with the methodology used. Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the data separated by methodology, i.e. quantitative and qualitative methods. Chapter 5 is the final chapter of the study. It provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

There is an abundance of literature describing the expectations, experiences, and adjustments of international and American study abroad students in their host countries. This literature review will examine some of these studies. The literature review is organized along major themes that include, an examination of John Dewey's work on education and experience, historical context of study abroad experience, an examination of the study abroad experience along with study abroad students, an examination of cross-cultural experiences and adjustment of international and American study abroad students in their host countries, factors that contribute to the expectations and beliefs of students doing study abroad in both groups, the relationship between adjustment and academic success in host countries, and, finally, the implication of international student support services in the preparation efforts related to study abroad initiatives.

ERIC and JSTOR database were the primary sources for my review of literature. Additionally, NAFSA Association of International Educator was also used as a secondary source. NAFSA publishes many books on international student exchange as well as hosting a website dedicated to international education.

#### John Dewey on Experience, Education, and Experiential Learning

In Dewey's (1938) work *Experience and Education*, he indicated that while experience was a large part of learning, not all genuine education came about through experience. Experience, by definition, is an event or act that results from continuous interaction with the



environment that produces knowledge for future transaction (Dewey, 1958; Lark, n.d.). Lark identified experience as consisting of content and condition. Content he suggested was the “what” of experience and condition was the “how” of experience. He also maintained that, “what” was experienced is often the interaction of our emotions, the situation and the environment. Lark compared experiences to chain reactions, whereby what was learned from one experience makes it possible to have further meaningful experiences.

Dewey (1938) documented several different types of experiences: experiences that were educative, experiences that were ‘mis-educative’ retarding further growth, experiences that result in lack of response and sensitivity, experiences that lands one in a rut, and experiences that were enjoyable but lack substance. Dewey (1938) stated that experience impacts the learning outcome of the student, and, thus, it is important that the types and impact of the experience be noted so that future development can occur. He indicated that many students, “were rendered callous to ideas... and lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them” (1938, p.26). He implied that educators were required to guide students to the kind of experiences that engage their attention and promote desirable future experiences. Dewey (1938) further indicated that while experience resides in a person it also “influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose” (p. 39). Dewey (1938) theorized that experience and education were related, and, thus, the primary goal of the experience was to promote growth in learning, positive future experiences, and changes in the students.

The essence of Dewey’s work can be interpreted to mean all experience is important; however, it is the quality of the experience and the significance of that experience in influencing future experiences along with the learning outcome that is most important.

While Dewey (1938) indicated that education based on experience must be selected in

such a way that the experience lives on and creates subsequent experiences, he also emphasized that not all experiences were educative. Cell (1984), on the other hand, contended that all experience led to learning. Reviews of Cell's work in *Learning to Learn from Experience*, revealed several significant issues. The most significant issue addressed changes in learning, whereby learning involved change in one or all of the following: behavior, emotion, ways of thinking, and response in shaping the direction of our lives (Cell). From the literature two types of changes were identified, change in behavior and change in how we interpret situations. According to Cell, we are able to take the responsibility of selecting and designing our own learning experiences when we can understand how learning occurs as a result of experience. Ultimately, this enables us to become better situational learners, having the choice in what the learning experience will mean to our personal growth. Understanding how learning from experience takes place and the changes involved in it enables us to help the process and to point the learning process in the right direction (Cell).

Kolb (1984) indicated that an individual's development potential was shaped by learning from experience. He also indicated that daily we have a sense of what to do about an issue, how others will react to situations, and what actions to take when dealing with a situation. However, he indicated that even though we have a preconceived notion of what will occur and what to do, life is not always predictable. There will always be unforeseen circumstances, unexpected issues and miscommunication that necessitate change in expectation (Kolb). Kolb acknowledged that if too much focus was placed on the expected and the certainty of an event, the learner will be unprepared for the unpredictability of a new experience. The learning process is, after all, about reflecting on experiences and applying what was learned to new situations.

Kolb (1984) indicated that learning was a process grounded in experience and requiring

transactions between the person and the environment. Kolb stated, “The experiential learning theory of development focuses on the transaction between internal characteristics and external circumstances, between personal knowledge and social knowledge” (p.133). From Kolb’s investigation of the learning process along with his investigation of the works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, a model of experiential learning was developed.

Kolb’s (1984) model of experiential learning indicated that new knowledge and attitudes were formulated from confrontation among four modes. The modes included concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities. Kolb indicated that the model represented total involvement in the experience, reflection on the experience, integrating of observation into theories, and using what was learned to solve problems and make decisions. Kolb suggested that more focus should be on the process of learning rather than the outcome of the learning. He also suggested that the outcome of learning was a representation of historical records not knowledge of the future.

Saddington (n.d) indicated that experiential learning can be classified as a field of practice, ranging from farming to conflict resolution, from personal growth to workplace training and development. In most cases experiential learning is considered cyclical whereby the learner experiences a situation or problem, followed by a reflective phase, then a testing phase for applying the new knowledge to future situations (Saddington).

Bennett (1988) suggested that a need existed for professionals to foster development in the total learning environment by teaching students how to learn experientially from the cultural setting in which they find themselves. Bennett (1988) indicated that conscious planning, facilitating, and evaluation be done in order to develop opportunities in the context of the international experience. Students can be taught to value differences that ultimately improve

their ability to learn from the international experience (Bennett, 1988).

### Historical Context of the Study Abroad Experience

Since the postwar period, there has been a steady growth of students venturing overseas to study (Light, 1993). Researchers have reported that students who study abroad have the opportunity to meet people with different beliefs, experience different lifestyles, and in most cases meet people who speak a language different from their own (e.g., Chen, 1996; Hoffa, 1998; Neff, 2001). The 1940s and 50s saw the expansion of educational programs and exchange on American campuses (Hoffa). The Fulbright program was one of the earliest advocates of scholarly exchange, with others such as the Title VI of the Higher Educational Act and the National Defense Education Act following (Hoffa). These programs facilitated student mobility and exchange.

Overall, American institutions have been the choice institutions for international students seeking education overseas since the early 1900s. However, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that significant number of American students began going abroad for study purposes (Hoffa & Pearson, 1993). American students enrolled in private colleges and universities were the ones most likely to engage in study abroad programs. Hoffa and Pearson indicated that 3 decades of changes have seen research institutions within the Carnegie categories, sending the most students on study abroad programs.

Between 1985 and 1995 American study abroad programs had increased by 75 %, moving from 48,000 participants to 84,400 participants (Hoffa & Pearson, 1993). In all, about one percent of all American students prior to graduation take part in a study abroad program (Hoffa & Pearson).

## The Study Abroad Experience

Study abroad as an informal education involves exploring and expanding experiences from resources in the environment (Conner, 2005). Research has shown that study abroad experiences benefit students and society in several ways (e.g., Hoffa, 1998; Hoffa & Pearson, 1993; Ridley, 2004). Study abroad helps to create global awareness, promote international security, enhance academic learning, develop leadership skills, and advance students' careers (Hoffa). Students also experience personal growth and have the opportunity to learn different languages (Goodman & Kaufman, n.d). According to Hoffa and Pearson, the goal of education abroad is to enable students:

Who have experienced living on the social and educational terms of a foreign culture to be broadened in ways impossible to achieve on the home campus that will benefit them academically and culturally, and help them to be better prepared to face the challenges of the globalized future than students who do not have these experience (p. 22).

Cell (1984) maintained that we change as we learn and as students transition through the study abroad experience they are experiencing changes. He further suggested that when learning takes place our responses change, our behaviors change, and we behave in ways that makes us more conscious of events that shape our lives (Cell). Subsequently, an understanding of what experiences enhance learning will better enable educators to improve the learning process along by facilitating directing enrollment in more transformational experiences (Cell; Dewey, 1938).

Miller (1993) suggested that in order to understand the learning experiences of study abroad students, it is important to recognize that the learning experiences of students in study abroad programs differ from those of students enrolled in a traditional at home program. Learning for study abroad students is continuous, occurring 24 hours a day, with every

experience students have in the host nation an opportunity for learning. According to Miller, learning opportunities present themselves in the form of contact with the host family, walking down the streets of the host city, listening to the natives interact, and identifying cultural phenomena. As part of the learning experience, students in study abroad programs learn, “that much global activity has no single national base; that ownership, materials, labor, and distribution are truly international” (Hoffa, 1998, p. 20).

Annan (2001) maintained that the study abroad experience, while providing learning opportunities, can also promote international security by allowing students to experience the diversity of the world and forge a better understanding of humanity. These students experience personal growth in the form of self-reflection, learning about the uniqueness of other countries, and discovering differences in people and culture (Hoffa, 1998; Sanders, & Morgan, 2001). Students’ learning experiences allow them to, in the words of Hoffa, “distinguish those parts of themselves that are products of their time and place in American society from those that are universal” (p. 13).

#### International and American Study Abroad Students

According to Hoffa (1998), American institutions represent a unique opportunity for international students to learn about a foreign culture while earning a degree. Study abroad programs, according to Hoffa and Pearson (1993), offer students the experience of broadening their knowledge of other cultures, living and understanding foreign cultural norms, and appreciating cultural differences. As a result of their unique experiences, international students and American study abroad students are given an opportunity for in-depth comparison of their cross-cultural experiences. Hoffa and Pearson maintained that these students learn to appreciate

and understand challenges of globalization, cross-cultural adaptation, and self-identity crisis.

Agarwal and Winkler (1985) defined international students in the United States as, “a citizen of another country pursuing education in a United States school requiring a high-school diploma or its equivalent” (p. 510). According to Open Doors Report an estimated 572,509 international students studied in the United States in 2003-2004 originating from countries all over the world (Institute of International Education, 2005). These students play a vital role in the United States economy, contributing \$12.5 billion in 2004 (Institute of International Education). For the state of Tennessee, in 2003-04, a reported 5,846 international students contributed \$114,276,000 to the state economy (Institute of International Education).

International students provide financial and educational benefits to higher education institutions (Institute of International Education, 2005). Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) suggested that, international students benefit U.S. institutions by providing a wider recruiting pool of more qualified students as well as contributing to the financial security of American higher education institutions while enriching the campus culture. The literature further indicated that international students who return home take with them their experiences of the United States (Zhao et al.). Students with positive experiences provide the best marketing tool for American higher education institutions (Burrell & Kim, n.d; Goodman, 2002; Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, & Nelson, 1999; Walters, 2005). Postgraduate programs, primarily those involved in research, depend heavily on international students to keep them viable (Light, 1993). The literature indicated, only a reported 32 % of American students earn undergraduate degrees in science or technology as opposed to 66 % for Japan and 59 % for China (Yankelovich, 2005). For those programs (science and technology) with traditionally low enrollment, international students’ presence boost shortfall in student enrollment (Burrell & Kim). Research has shown that

international students provide a wealth of benefits for American institutions in the form of tuition, increased state government subvention, and as resources for cultural experiences (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985).

As international student enrollment in the United States decreases, American study abroad enrollment has continued to rise significantly (Institute of International Education, 2005). Aggressive recruiting by other nations, new visa restrictions (Walters, 2005), retooling of graduate program in the international students' home countries, shorter time to complete degrees, lower tuition costs, and less restrictive work requirements are a few of the reasons why international students' interest in American higher educational institution has diminished (Bollag, 2004; Mooney & Neelakantan, 2004). Even though American study abroad enrollment had increased 9.4 % over the academic year 2004-2005, and 46.6 % from 1996 to 2005, still only 1 % of American students participated in study abroad and an even smaller proportion of Americans were versed in a second language (Hoffa, 1998).

#### Factors Contributing to Expectations and Beliefs of Students Studying Abroad

The goal of education abroad, as stated by Hoffa and Pearson (1993) was so “that students who have experienced living on the social and educational terms of a foreign culture will be broadened in ways impossible to achieve on the home campus, will benefit academically and culturally, and will be better prepared to face the challenges of the globalized future than students who do not have these experience” (p. 22).

Hoffa (1998) indicated that study abroad enhances academic learning in the following ways:

1. Enriches and diversifies undergraduate education by offering courses, programs and academic learning of a sort not available on the home campus.



2. Provides U.S. students with a global outlook that emphasizes the ties among nations and cultures, the universality of human values, and the necessity of working together.
3. Enhances career preparations by teaching cross-cultural and workplace skills of value to today's employers, often through internships and other hands-on experiences.
4. Deepens intellectual and personal maturity, fosters independent thinking, and builds self-confidence (p. 13).

Research has shown that students study abroad for a variety of reasons. They study in countries with family roots, commonly known as heritage seeking (Neff, 2001). Some elect to study in destinations that were not too foreign, a place where they can identify culturally. The opportunity to discover their heritage, according to Neff, was a prime motivator for minority students to enroll in study abroad programs. Neff indicated that these students were trying to further develop their cultural identity. However, he noted that heritage seeking may not be what students expect. Although students may experience difficulty connecting with people from their cultural roots, they often realize that they have more in common with other Americans than their cultural ancestors.

Additionally, Chen (1996) indicated that students study abroad for personal reasons. Chen indicated that students from under-developed countries go to first-world countries to acquire knowledge and techniques for improving their home countries. Students from well-developed countries, study abroad in hopes of obtaining cross-cultural learning experiences, individual growth or to further develop international understanding.

In a study by Klieger (2005) of international students at Arcadia University, the experiences and expectations of these students were examined. The study documented factors influencing students' choice in studying in the U.S. These included location, size, safety,

financial package, and the opportunity to study abroad. The study also indicated that family expectations and concerns influenced the students' decision in selecting the institution in which to study. The study further went on to document adjustment issues of international students. The author indicated that students in the study expected America to be like what it was on television. Most students' exposure to another culture came as a result of the media, whether through books, television, or the internet. Food was documented to be one of the most difficult adjustment points for students. Students were often forced to adjust quickly or find alternative food to that served by the cafeteria. The participants indicated roommate struggles was another challenge they faced in the adjustment process. Cultural and religious conflict was cited as the major issue of contention when living with a roommate from the host country.

Additionally, Klieger (2005) indicated that while study abroad programs were popular in Arcadia, students elected to study only in a limited number of countries. Western Europe or countries that share similar Anglo-Saxon heritage with the United States were the popular choices for students. The study implied that students chose countries that shared religious, dietary and cultural similarities, thus, adjustment was expected to be easier.

Zeszotarski's (2003) study of international students' expectations and experience of American community colleges indicated that students identified their major motivations for study abroad as learning a foreign language, self-development, improvement of career prospects, desire for an academic experience in another country, and desire to enhance understanding of the host country. Other factors identified in Zeszotarski's study included: English language training, the status of an overseas degree, family tradition, interest in the global economy, study of management, commerce, and the desire for exposure to things foreign as a means of increasing one's competitiveness in the global labor market.

Barger's (2004) study of international students in the United States discovered that international students were motivated to study in the United States because the students rate the United States as their preferred study destination. The study also indicated that students valued the availability of science and technology-based programs, wide range of educational opportunities, high academic standards, and the increasing efforts to recruit international students to college campuses.

Table 1 highlights the 20 most popular destinations for American study abroad students. The leading places of origin for international students coming to America are also given. The United Kingdom, Germany, China, and Japan were the top 4 countries for cross-cultural exchange, with significant numbers of students coming from and going to these countries.

Table 1

*Leading Countries Hosting International and American Study Abroad Students*

*Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*

Leading Destinations of U.S. Students	2003/04	Leading Places of Origin of International Students	2004/05
United Kingdom	32,237	India	80,466
Italy	21,922	China	62,523
Spain	20,080	Korea, Republic of	53,358
France	13,718	Japan	42,215
Australia	11,418	Canada	28,140
Mexico	9,293	Taiwan	25,914
Germany	5,985	Mexico	13,063
Ireland	5,198	Turkey	12,474
China	4,737	Germany	8,640
Costa Rica	4,510	Thailand	8,637
Japan	3,707	United Kingdom	8,236
Austria	2,444	Indonesia	7,760
New Zealand	2,369	Colombia	7,334
Cuba	2,148	Brazil	7,244
Chile	2,135	Hong Kong, China	7,180
Greece	2,099	Kenya	6,728
Czech Republic	2,089	France	6,555
South Africa	2,009	Nigeria	6,335
Russia	1,797	Pakistan	6,296
Netherlands	1,686	Malaysia	6,142

Adapted from: Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange

Cross-Cultural Expectations and Experiences of Students Studying Abroad

Study abroad students measured their experiences using several variables according to research (e.g., Chen, 1996; Hellsten, 2002; Phillips, 2005; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). These

included cross-cultural interaction, language confidence, friendship, support network, and host community.

Students raised in different cultural environments found that their upbringing gave rise to different experiences. These experiences were often taken for granted. However, if their educational importance were recognized, educators can use these experiences to direct students in such a way as to maximize the learning process (Dewey, 1938). Dewey also indicated that educators should use the surrounding environment, both physical and social, and extract contributions that will build up experiences, enabling students to have more worthwhile experiences.

Research also indicated that study abroad students willingly gave up the comfort of their social network for personal investment and development. Consequently, they expected these sacrifices to be productive (Hellsten, 2002). In research on students' experiences, Hellsten discovered that students expected increased inter-cultural exchange for the benefit of improving professional and language skills. They also expected better career opportunities in their home countries, improved life opportunities, and environmental changes from living in a new place. Additionally, the research indicated that there were expectations from the student's family. The student's family expected the study abroad experience to result in the student obtaining a good job (Hellsten).

Other cross-cultural experiences students encountered dealt with language acquisition, cross-cultural interaction, culture, the classroom experience, and the support services provided by the host institution.

## Language Confidence

Because the study abroad experience is experiential learning at its best, it involves observation, interaction, and sharing with people in order to expand the learning process. Language is one of the tools students must use to bring about interaction and sharing with others. The literature indicated that for study abroad students language development was more than linguistic proficiency. According to Murphy-Lejeune (2003), language was a social practice and a personal stake that extends the identity of the student. Murphy-Lejeune indicated that students with insufficient intercultural language skills were left feeling like outsiders and were marginalized longer than students comfortable with their linguistic development. She stated that overcoming the language barrier may induce expanded identity and develop feelings of self-elation.

The foreign environment when first encountered by students is a disorienting experience that jolts students out of their comfort zones (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003). Students must adapt and transform as necessary in order to maximize the experience (Murphy-Lejeune). She stated, "Life abroad represents an extensive natural learning situation which stimulates many more aspects of learners' personalities than are usually catered for in educational institutions" (p.101).

Cell (1984) indicated that language allowed one to explore new possibilities, represent oneself, and respond to new experiences. Tyler (1987) also suggested that language offered the greatest security in developing personal relationships "because it is the most common tool in any society" (p.42). Not having access to the common communication tool can leave students feeling vulnerable, left-out, and isolated. Therefore, it can be implied that without the proper command of the dominant language it is hard for students studying abroad to display their true intelligence and personality (Tyler). When difficulty exists in communicating in the host language, much of

the essence of the conversation is lost. Conversation is an essential component of building communities that incorporate values and behaviors that enable democracy to flourish (Smith, 2005).

Students viewed their lack of command of the native language as a serious handicap when they have to interact on a daily basis in the native language (Phillips, 2005). The language handicap results in isolation and increased workload and hinders the adjustment of the student to the new environment (Phillips). These students who lack confidence in the dominant language are the ones less likely to build relationships with domestic students (Chen, 1996).

### Cross-Cultural Interaction

While the lack of command of the dominant language was viewed as a handicap in forming relationships that affect the socialization, learning, and confidence of the students (Chen, 1996), research has shown that building relationships with host nationals has a positive impact on students' experiences (e.g., Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Trice, 2004). Phillips (2005) indicated that students in host countries transition from dependence on a social network to experiencing independence from family and friends, assuming new roles. These new roles allow students the opportunity to form new and lasting cross-cultural relationships. The literature indicated that students expected relationships to form with host nationals that would aid in enhancing language skills thus bringing about language proficiency based intercultural contact (Hellsten, 2002). Friendship was perceived to be a key ingredient to the experiences of students studying overseas (Chen). Rajapaksa and Dundes reported that the establishment of defined friendships aided the adjustment process of students. Whether the friendship was between students from the same background or between host nationals and study abroad students was not

important to the adjustment process.

Chen's (1996) research indicated that students who build good relationships with the dominant culture experience positive influences on their relationships. The research also indicated that students who form relationships with individuals in the dominant culture, consider themselves to be insiders, while students who failed to make such connections, felt like outsiders. In order for students to transition from outsiders to insiders, Chen suggested that students needed to feel a sense of belonging and responsibility. This belonging and responsibility can come as a result of an assigned role in the institution such as a graduate assistantship.

While Trice (2004) recognized the positive influence on academic experience of host contact with study abroad student, she also indicated "limited social contact with host nationals is also related to student's perceptions of the extent to which they have been able to adjust or fit into their new environment culturally and academically" (p.671). Trice's research found that students with similar cultural backgrounds to host nationals interact more with the host nationals than those with different cultural backgrounds. Isolation of students and ultimately the development of an international 'ghetto' (Peterson et al., 1999) can be caused by barriers in establishing social networks with individuals in the dominant culture, leading to students missing out on significant experiences (Trice).

## Culture

Experience as an aspect of culture takes into account many variables the least of which is culture shock and cultural capital. Owens (2000) defined culture as a process that develops over time that consists of shared beliefs, expectations, and ideologies that knit a group of people together. As part of the overseas experience students encounter not only academic challenges but



they also deal with culture shock (Chen, 1996). According to Funaki (1995 as cited by Chen), there are three basic causes of culture shock. These were the loss of familiar cues, the breakdown of interpersonal communication, and identity crisis. Miller (1993) stated, “Those who face culture shock may experience symptoms as mild as feeling tired to severe reactions such as experiencing feelings of being victimized, paranoia, and possibly psycho-social problems, refusing most or even all components of the host culture” (p.4). Miller also indicated that at first encounter with a foreign culture there was a tendency to lose sight of what was normal for that culture. The greatest shock associated with culture shock lies in the discovery that your own culture has shaped what you have become (Tyler, 1987). Tyler also indicated that most people had difficulty in how their roles have changed in the new culture. You are no longer the native you are in fact, a foreigner.

Cultural capital is another dimension of the learning experience for study abroad students. Cultural capital consists of all the values, language, learning experiences, and norms associate with a particular culture (Ridley, 2004). The students of the host country are outfitted with the cultural capital needed to succeed in that country’s institution. Ridley maintained that students who lack similar language, literacy, and learning experience as their domestic partners lack the cultural capital necessary for academic success.

Tyler (1987) indicated that how one reacted to the people of the host nation would determine how attitudes and opinions towards the students and their country were formulated. Culture is a large part of one’s identity. There are certain aspects of a country’s culture that are held dear to an individual’s heart. It is only human to feel that one’s own way is the right way of doing things (Tyler). The literature maintained that it was helpful to recognize that people have a right to their own beliefs, world view, cultural pride, and dignity (Tyler).

## Classroom Experience

Apps (1981) stated, “Ultimately, our purpose as educators, is to assist returning students in such a way that they will become comfortable taking charge of their own learning, and that they will learn how to learn, so that they can continue the learning process without instructors or schools” (p.142). Much of the learning that occurs abroad is self-directed experiential learning.

Bennett (1988) maintained that U.S. classrooms relied heavily on discussion and inquiry, as opposed to self-directed learning, leaving students ill-equipped for the sort of everyday self-directed experiential learning faced abroad. She also indicated that learning to learn was a requirement of self-directed learning and this was important so that the learners were prepared to learn from whatever situations they were experiencing. As Bennett (1988) wrote, “Every context abroad is a potential teacher, every moment an opportunity” (p.112).

The literature (Rajapaksa, & Dundes, 2002) also revealed that students on study abroad programs find different classroom experiences from their home country. Lee (1997) attributed feelings of discomfort in the classroom to culture shock. Students may at times find difficulty in relating to classroom discussions, often caused by the inability to relate to the course content as well as comprehending the language. Chen (1996) stated, “When the issues are not relative to their experience, international students find that they have little background knowledge to involve themselves in the discussion” (p.11). Chen further indicated that lack of participation left international students feeling more like outsiders or observers than participants in the classroom. Additionally, Chisholm and Berry (2002) stated, “Students often overestimate their ability to manage classes and assignments in a foreign language” (p.22).

Lee (1997) commented on international students’ reaction to professors and their teaching methods. Lee indicated that some international students express shock when they

discover that faculty normally do not begin at chapter one nor progress sequentially through the text. Consequently, these students were unsure how to react in the classroom. Students who did not expect differences in the operations of the host institution from their home institution can easily make mistakes in their assumptions of the institution (Chisholm & Berry, 2002). Lee instructed faculty to be clear in outlining their expectations when instructing students on what constitutes good writing and what was acceptable writing. What may constitute good writing in one country may be poor writing in another country with a different academic culture (Lee).

In general, study abroad students expressed concern with the way faculty taught and the lack of clarity of the expectations of students. They also suggested that classroom procedure was sometimes different from their home country (Chisholm & Berry, 2002). Faculty on the other hand expressed concerns in getting students to adhere to the expected standards, behavior, and requirements (Chisholm & Berry). The faculty saw these problems as obstacles that hindered students from a successful academic experience (Chisholm & Berry).

#### Relationship Between Adjustment and Academic Success in Host Countries

While study abroad students and higher education institutions mutually benefit from each other, study abroad students also encounter challenges in adapting to their new environment (Phillips, 2005). Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002) documented several factors that influenced students' ability to adapt to a new environment. These included self-efficacy, host environment, and social support. The literature suggested that individuals who have high self-efficacy were often more open to learning new behaviors, adjust better to the environment, and interact with host nationals.

Weiss (1998) conducted a study on the adjustment of American student interns overseas. The study examined factors that influenced overseas adjustment and was conducted on 43

undergraduate American students in Sydney, Australia. Weiss indicated that study abroad programs provided both academic and emotional international experience. The emotional experience was developed as a result of living in a new culture or environment. Weiss suggested that students' academic success could be affected by their emotional adjustment to life in a host environment. The study indicated that realistic expectations facilitated adjustment.

Trice (2004) suggested that international students who expressed frustration about their isolation from host nationals had greater adjustment problems. According to Trice, students viewed the formation of relationships as a valuable asset. The literature suggested that relationships with host nationals allowed the study abroad students access to information about cultural norms, insight into how organization units operate, and knowledge of the country's labor market. Trice also indicated that interaction with host nationals can provide assistance in working with the institutions' gatekeepers as well as emotional and moral support. Trice's research found that international students adjust better to the experience abroad and were most satisfied with the experience when they socialized with host nationals.

Additionally, Trice (2004) found that language played a role in international students' adjustment. Trice indicated that weak English language skills were related to negative outcomes and that the poorer the students' English the less adapted the students were to the host culture. Furthermore students from Asia, Africa, and South America encountered more difficulties in their adjustments to the host country than students from Europe (Trice). This was often because Europeans have more in common with the host culture.

### Support Services and Adjustment of Study Abroad Students

Our environment defines our experiences and the study abroad experience takes place in such a way that unlimited learning is possible. Students gain additional learning experiences by associating with others from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. Enrichment of the learning process occurs when international students share their experiences, communications styles, distinct learning styles, and cultures with American students (Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001). However, in order for this process to occur successfully, adequate infrastructure must be put in place.

Most institutions in the United States, who take part in international exchange, have an office dedicated to servicing these scholars. Although the name may vary from institution to institution, the departments perform the same basic functions. For the purpose of this research I will use the Office of International Programs in reference to all offices that perform the functions discussed below.

The main goal of the Office of International Programs at East Tennessee State University is to assist students and faculty in maximizing the learning experience. The Office of International Programs provides an orientation program for new students, and serves as liaison between new scholars and the university, the community, and international sponsoring offices. Additionally, the staff advises on immigration and other governmental regulations. The office may also provide advice on health insurance coverage and cultural and personal matters.

Additionally, the literature implied that British universities offered “door-to-door service” to students and had offices in recruiting countries with personnel at hand to advise students (Mooney & Neelakantan, 2004). Other English-speaking countries that have largely public university systems use umbrella organizations to promote and recruit students via university fairs

and advertisement (Mooney & Neelakantan). Thus, students can preview the services these universities offer before enrolling in the institution.

Klieger's (2005) study on international students suggested that often students were not furnished with adequate services. This was often because of the small ratio of international students to the campus population. The study further indicated that lack of a voice results in specific needs of international students not being met or identified. It was easier for staff and faculty to address issues concerning the majority of the student population. Additionally, Klieger indicated that without recognition or significant representation it was difficult to justify funds for international students when resources were scarce. The study also maintained that limited funds made it difficult to provide better services for international students.

In a study of 12 Asian graduate students, Yeh and Yang (2003) documented the adaptation issues of these students. The study found that there was a need for better supporting structure to deal with international students when they first arrived in the host country. One student documented feeling scared at the prospect of finding housing, furniture, and services after only being given 2 days of temporary housing. The study suggested that students felt they were not provided with adequate help in finding housing and registering for classes. The students also expressed their concerns about American classrooms and the expectations of participation. The Asian students indicated that classroom participation was an alien and uncomfortable experience because they appeared confrontational. The students came from a culture that valued being polite, being moderate, and being humble. These cultural differences hampered their adaptation to classroom discussions. The Asian students in the study recommended prospective students learn to drive before coming to the U.S. as well as break their stereotypes about American culture. The most important recommendation the students made was that internationals

students not expect too much (Yeh & Yang). In this way they are not disappointed when their expectations are unmet or fall short.

Additionally, Gaw (n.d.) indicated during the adjustment process students struggle to become culturally competent in the new environment. He documented several kinds of support that will help ease the adjustment process. These supports included: basic listening, journaling, field trips, talking circle, mentors, and cultural mediators. Gaw also suggested individuals be aware of their identity in the new environment. Gaw's list of support systems were all geared toward assisting the students understanding the culture through reflections and discussions. Gaw maintained that the faster students adjust to the new culture, the quicker they were able to realize that they were stronger more competent intercultural individuals who were able to deal with the daily stresses of living in a different culture.

Hellsten's (2002) research of study abroad students in Australia indicated that students' evaluation of negative experiences was "substantiated on the basis of failed provision of resources and services by the host institution" (p.8). Hellsten observed that students evaluated the host institutions in terms of what the institution offered 'in value for money'. In her research students indicated that the host institutions did not provide services that met their expectations. The students indicated that they did not receive the expected value for their substantial investment. The students also expressed concerned about the availability of staff, services provided, and the institution having less than adequate facilities. Issues such as the lack of air conditioning in the classroom and distances between toilet facilities impacted their experiences of the institutions.

Hellsten (2002) suggested that students expected the same support services to be available in the host environment much as it was in their home institutions. When the support

services were lacking or not equivalent, the students were left dissatisfied with the experience.

Peterson et al. (1999) indicated that the primary role of the international students' office was to provide orientation, visa advising, crisis intervention, and programs for international students. It is up to administrators to ensure that excellence in these areas are maintained before embarking on additional intercultural learning programs.

### Implication for Study Abroad

Higher educational institutions recruit international students for educational, financial, and cultural reasons and, thus, have an obligation to serve, retain, and involve them (Peterson et al., 1999). Peterson et al. suggested that support for international programs and services must be nurtured. According to Peterson et al., administrators need to be sensitive to the needs, concerns, experiences, and expectations of students. The authors suggested that administrators pay attention to issues such as the students' English language abilities, previous academic work, and orientation programs, both continuing and initial, for the students. Also, there was the need to establish widespread cooperation across the campus to ensure that students' classroom and campus experiences were the best possible (Peterson et al.).

Furthermore, Peterson et al. (1999) commented on the need for Student Affairs personnel to experience first hand the learning, disorientation, and excitement that study abroad students encounter. He suggested that personnel who experienced study abroad first hand were better able to provide improved services to international students as well as develop empathy for the students.

Preparation is a key component in providing better service for the study abroad experience. In visiting a foreign country, there is always a feeling of anticipation and of experiencing the unknown. However, there is a vast difference between visiting a country and living in a foreign



country for a prolonged period of time. Students who intend to study overseas should research the country and the culture as much as possible. Movies, newspapers, and novels are important sources of information; they can aid students in identifying cultural norms that might be unsettling to them (Hoffa & Pearson, 1993). With advance knowledge of the culture, students are better able to adjust and derive maximum benefit from their experiences.

Students, faculty, and support staff in the host institution must be prepared to deal with students coming from different cultures and countries (Peterson et al., 1999). Additionally, students taking part in the study abroad program must also be adequately prepared for the host country. This preparation is needed to equip the students mentally so that they can be ready to make changes in behavior to facilitate adjustment in development and cultural awareness. Yeh and Yang (2003) recommended students keep their expectations of the host culture realistic and that the “as seen on TV” image of other cultures may not be what students encounter.

It is also important for future growth that both students and host institutions acknowledge the specifics of their expectations, i.e. students should make their expectations known before engaging in a study abroad program. For international students, the literature revealed that professional development was the number one reason for engaging in study abroad (Barger, 2004; Zeszotarski, 2003). For American study abroad students, cultural development and awareness was rated as the number one reasons for engaging in study abroad (Chen, 1996). If the students’ goal is to develop in cultural awareness, than activities should be geared to producing that outcome. In order for a meeting of the minds to occur the goals of the students must be communicated with the policy makers or administrators. This meeting of the minds enables adequate planning and preparation that meets the needs of both the institutions and the students.

Additionally, if the support services provided the necessary infrastructure to facilitate

systematic training and preparation, then the marketplace will be enriched by competent globally prepared citizens or employees. As Annan (2001) wrote:

Globalization, migration, economic integration, communication and travel are bringing different races, culture and ethnicities into ever closer contact with each other. More than ever before, people understand that they are being shaped by many cultures and influences, and that combining the familiar with the foreign can be a source of powerful knowledge and insight (The Center for Global Education).

The prosperity of international education depends heavily on an increase in the support of international skills and education of students by a governing body along with partnerships with the private sector to advance international education (NAFSA, 2003). As Goodman (2002) stated, “We must remember that much of hatred is born of ignorance and repression, and there is no surer way to break down such barriers than to live, study and build relationships in a culture beyond one’s own” (para. 12).

### Summary

For the study abroad process to be satisfactory, students must immerse themselves in the study abroad experience, learning from the negative as well as the positive. The literature indicated that study abroad students willingly gave up a lot for the chance to experience education in another country and, thus, expect their investments to be fruitful. These students bring with them expectations of personal change and professional and personal development, while experiencing, culture shock, communication difficulties, and cultural isolation. The correlation between student experiences and expectations from the literature appears negative. However, learning in a language that was not the students’ native tongue, adapting to a culture that they were unfamiliar with, and facing isolation (Hoffa, 1998) were some of the common experiences of students studying in host countries.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This was a comparative study of international and American study abroad students' experiences and expectations with host countries. The purpose of the study was to investigate international students in America and American study abroad students in an attempt to compare both groups' experiences and expectations as they relate to studying in a host country.

According to Babbie (1989), we live in a world that consists of two realities, experiential reality and agreement reality. Experiential reality is knowledge from a direct experience while agreement reality is knowledge that is generally believed to be real by the majority. For scientific purposes, accepted reality (experiential or agreement) must have "both logical and empirical support" (Babbie). To observe or analyze reality, researchers normally employ quantitative and/or qualitative methods. For this study of students in host countries, the type of reality I was seeking to determine was experiential and thus I used both quantitative and qualitative methods of research to observe and analyze the students' reality. Quantitative methods generally consider external reality; things that can be measured and seen. Qualitative methods consider internal reality; feelings, and perceptions of individuals. In this study I attempted to capture both the internal and external reality of students' experiences and expectations about the host countries and thus it was appropriate to use both methods to analyze the information.

Hoffa (1998) indicated that in the changing world traveling for education was a necessity, not a privilege, for students wanting to be globally competent. Students who explore education in

foreign countries experience all aspects of learning. They experience change in behavior and personal and intellectual development. In order for students to have a meaningful educational experience, the entire learning environment of the students must be investigated.

Students gain additional learning experience by associating with others from different cultural backgrounds. Study abroad students experience personal growth, professional development, and the uniqueness of other countries, and they discover differences in people and culture (Hoffa, 1998; Sanders & Morgan, 2001). In discussing study abroad students' learning experiences, Hoffa stated, "Perhaps for the first time, they become able to distinguish those parts of themselves that are products of their time and place in American society from those that are universal (p.13)."

Phillips (2005) contended that as research population international students were more different than alike; however, they shared a common purpose of leaving their homes to study in a foreign country. American study abroad students also share commonalities with international students; they both elect to study in host countries.

### Research Design

As stated previously, my research used a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative methods of research). The quantitative tests enabled measurement and comparison of students' responses to questions posed in the survey instrument, whereas the qualitative method enabled me to gather insights into what students were actually experiencing. Creswell (2003) defined a quantitative study as a study to test a theory using strategies of inquiry in order to determine whether predictive generalization holds true by using statistical procedures. In contrast, he defined a qualitative study as understanding a human or social problem using

strategies of inquiry such as narratives to build a holistic picture from the individual's perspective.

### Population and Sampling Procedures

The population for this study was comprised of international students currently enrolled in selected higher education institutions located in the United States and American students enrolled in selected higher education institutions located in the United States who have been on study abroad programs within the last 5 years. Eight institutions for this research were chosen based on enrollment of international and study abroad students as well as willingness to participate. These institutions were University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Appalachian State University, University of Maryland (UMBC), Minnesota State University Moorhead, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, Georgia State University; Duke University, and Old Dominion University. The target sample size was 500 respondents. The number 500 was chosen because the study used a mixed methods approach and for manageability purpose 500 was deemed the cutoff point.

It was not realistic to survey all study abroad students (international and American) in the United States, so a sample was taken. The study was intended to used a purposeful sample of study abroad students and international students from the United States. However, some of the institutions selected were reluctant to participate, so I had to amend my methods to do an opportunity sampling. The opportunity sample represented the targeted population of institutions willing to take part in the study.

All appropriate approvals have been obtained from the East Tennessee State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Appalachian State University; University of

Maryland (UMBC), Minnesota State University Moorhead, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, Georgia State University, Duke University, and Old Dominion University Institutional Review Boards for research with human subjects.

Because of the nature of the study, confidentiality had to be maintained to ensure students were comfortable responding to the survey. The researcher initiated contact with the study abroad coordinators. They were reluctant to give access to students' information. A compromise was reached whereby initial contact with students would be done by the coordinators. The coordinators also agreed to forward the link to the online survey to students on their campuses.

### Instrumentation and Data Collection

The principal method chosen to conduct the survey was an online questionnaire, entitled *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire* (see Appendix C). The questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The survey instrument was developed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. It was designed to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1 of this study. The questions included information pertaining to students' expectations, changes in expectations, and the experiences with the host institutions as well as the overall support.

The survey consisted of 48 items organized as follows: 3 demographic items and 45 questions. Items 1 to 3 asked the participants to identify their student group (international, American study abroad, or other), gender, student status (graduate or undergraduate), country of origin, and study destination. Questions 1 to 10 asked the participants about their expectations of study abroad. Questions 11 to 20 asked the participants about their experiences of study abroad. Questions 21 to 26 asked the participants about their language and communication interaction with the host country. Questions 27 to 30 asked the participants about access to support services;

questions 32 to 41 asked the participants to rate their overall experience with the host institution. Questions 31 and 42 to 45 were open-ended questions about expectations, changes in expectations, services provided, and recommendations for improvements. Responses were coded on a five point Likert scale, with (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

The *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire* was designed to assess students' expectations and experiences of host countries while on study abroad programs. The questionnaire was piloted at ETSU with international and American students who were currently embarking on study abroad programs. The questionnaire was refined based on my doctoral committee members' input, students' responses, and item analysis. The questionnaire was designed to maintain confidentiality of the students' responses by excluding all identifying information. In order to maintain reliability, I had to ensure that the instrument created reliable measures; therefore, I only asked questions to which the respondents would likely know the answers (McMillan, 1996).

The *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire* was conducted online with the dual purpose of collecting quantitative as well as qualitative data. The survey was accessed by a link (<http://www.etsu.edu/coe/UltimateSurvey/takeSurvey.asp?surveyID=41>) sent to the students through their coordinators in an email with the introduction letter to the study. The coordinators were reluctant to pass on students' email information to an outside person, so I compromised by agreeing to have the coordinators send the survey information to the students.

Validity was established by administering the survey in two separate pilot studies. In the first study conducted in April 2006, the original instrument was a paper based study given to three international students and two American students (Appendix A). The students had

recommendations for improving spacing to answer the open-ended questions, changing the scale from 0 to 4 to one that ranged from 1 to 5, and clarification of statements. The document was also shown to a panel of experts that included members of my committee, international program director at East Tennessee State University, and a research expert. The members of the panel made suggestions on the order of statements, ensuring that questions on expectations matched questions on experiences and suggested I make the instrument into an online survey tool. After implementing the suggestions of the pilot group and the panel, the instrument was again pilot tested in July 2006 to a group of 14 purposefully selected students at East Tennessee State University. Of the 14 students surveyed only 3 responded.

Based on the methodology used I had a cutoff number of 500 respondents. This number was selected as a good representation for the quantitative analysis of the data and also as a limit to the amount of open-ended response I had to sort through.

There are various types of validity including content, predictive, face, and construct validity (Gay, 1996). The main types of validity that the research instrument was concerned with were construct validity, to measure the nature of human behavior, in this case experience, and face validity to determine how closely the test appears to measure the expectations and experiences of the students in study abroad programs. In terms of the qualitative portion reliability was ensured by employing an auditor whose role it was to ensure that bias was minimized because of the researcher's role as an international student.

### Quantitative Analyses

Information from the *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire* was used to analyze the students' responses in this study. The data were first exported to Microsoft Excel from the



Ultimate Survey tool, where the data were organized. The data were later imported into the Statistical Package for Research Software Program (SPSS) for statistical analyses. Independent t-tests and paired sample t-tests were used to analyze differences and relationships of the data. The data were reported with the assistance of tables. The gaps between experiences and expectations were also calculated. The research project addressed six research questions. The research was conducted using an alpha level of .05 and the results were described using descriptive statistic and frequency counts. The primary variables studied were students' experiences and expectations. The following null hypotheses were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and Paired sample t-tests.

Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between international students' mean expectations scores and their mean experiences scores of their stay in the United States.

Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>2</sub> -: There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female international students.

Ho<sub>2</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with their host country.

Ho<sub>2</sub><sub>2</sub>:- There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female American study abroad students.

Ho<sub>3</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between mean experience scores for international students in America and mean experience scores for American students in study abroad programs.

Ho<sub>4</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between the expectations of international students in America and expectations of American students in study abroad programs.

All analyses and mathematical computations were completed using Version 11.5 of SPSS (SPSS, 2003) and Microsoft Excel.

### Qualitative Analyses

The research questions were also analyzed with the aid of qualitative methodology. The study involved analyzing students' responses from the online survey to capture the students' perception of their expectations and experiences of the host country. Data for the study were collected from August 2006 to October 2006 via the online survey tool. The responses from the survey were analyzed to gather information on pre- and post-study abroad expectations as well as deeper insight into students' experiences. The following questions from the survey were analyzed manually and sorted into themes:

- Question 31. What programs or services were the most meaningful or helpful on the host campus?
- Question 42. What were your initial expectations for the study abroad experience?
- Question 43. How have your expectations changed? Explain new expectations, if any.
- Question 44. Please describe your experiences with the host institution?
- Question 45. What programs or interventions do you think would have made your experience more meaningful?

The students were asked to describe their initial expectations, changes in expectations, experiences with the host institutions, and recommendations for program improvements. From each student's response, patterns were identified and from these patterns emerged themes consistent with existing literature (Hellsten, 2002). The students had expectations and experiences that fell into one or all of the following categories: building relationship, culture and language, support structure, professional and personal development, and experience with the host institution. Supporting data in the students' own words were provided to enhance the accuracy of

the study.

As the researcher, I took the following actions to organize and report the data. I separated the responses by student groups: American study abroad and international students. The first step in analyzing the data was to place the 407 students' responses from the open ended questions into a manageable format. In order to organize the volume of data I exported the responses to an Excel document. By using a spreadsheet I was able to navigate and highlight certain responses as supporting evidence to include in the study.

In order to further analyze the data I first looked at the responses by student group (international and American study abroad students). Next, I read the students' responses to the open-ended questions, looking for themes or patterns. I tabulated responses that were similar in content and from the responses categories have been identified. The students had expectations and experiences that fell into one or all of the following categories: building relationship, culture and language, support structure, and professional and personal development. The data from the open-ended questions were used to add substance to quantitative theories developed earlier in the study.

The analytic techniques used in the study can be described as a mix of descriptive account and category construction. Descriptive account according to Merriam (1998) is the process whereby "Data are compressed and linked together in a narrative that conveys the meaning the researcher has derived from studying the phenomenon" (p.178). Merriam indicated that category construction involved the constant comparison of respondents' remarks and data with similarities placed in groupings.

To ensure validity of the data and to clarify my role in the research process, I employed a peer examiner and an external auditor. Peer examination was done by a doctoral student who was

an international student in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. The external auditor was an American doctoral student who has never been on study abroad. The auditor was chosen to reduce the occurrence of bias.

As the researcher, I felt it necessary to clarify my role in the research process. From June 1999 to December 2000 I was enrolled at East Tennessee State University as an international student. After returning to my home country upon completion of my master's degree, I was not comfortable with the limitations of my degree for career advancement in Jamaica. I returned to East Tennessee State University to pursue a doctorate in Education Leadership. I strongly believe living as an international student enhanced my understanding of student's expectations and experiences of a host country. Because of my experience as an international student, I bring certain biases to this study. Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity by employment of an auditor, my biases may shape the way I view and present the data collected. I approached this study with the expectation that international and American students shared similar experiences. The results are reported in Chapter 4.

### Summary

This section summarized the methodology used to conduct the study. This section also provided analyses of the data including a description of the sample, study procedures, and how the subjects relate to study abroad students. Additionally, a full description of the research design, population and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analyses were included.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

In this study I sought to answer six research questions related to the expectation and experiences of the host country of international and American study abroad students. Students from the target groups were asked to complete an online survey of their expectations and experiences. This chapter examines those expectations and experiences that international and American study abroad students had with the host country. The chapter also documents similarities and differences of international and American study abroad students as told in their own words. Some of the shared experiences include various elements of personal development, support services, challenges in the classroom, and financial concerns. The study used a mixed method approach to analyze the data. The research questions were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative method. The results are documented in this chapter.

Eight institutions of higher education enrolling both international and study abroad students took part in this research. The institutions were University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Appalachian State University, University of Maryland – Baltimore County, Minnesota State University Moorhead, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, Georgia State University, Duke University, and Old Dominion University. These institutions represented the following states; North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Minnesota, and Maryland.

#### Data Analysis

The data for this study were compiled from the results of an online survey instrument (Appendix C). Responses were separated based on student groups so that the group scores could

be compared. Independent t-tests and paired samples t-tests were used to analyze the data. The open-ended questions were analyzed according to established qualitative techniques. The qualitative techniques used in the study were a mix of descriptive account and category construction. By analyzing the data, themes were identified and developed.

### Quantitative Approach

Descriptive statistics and frequency counts were employed to describe the expectations and experiences of study abroad students. A five point scale measuring to what degree the respondent believed that the items matched his or her experiences and expectations was used with (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The expectations and experiences were assigned a score based on items on the survey instrument. The expectation score was created by summing 10 items on expectations from the *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire*. The 10 items on expectation from the questionnaire were socialization and cultural integration, experience increase global awareness, leadership skills & career advancement, increase cultural knowledge, differences in people and culture, form friendships with the host nationals, host language confidence, support network in the host community, better career opportunities at home, and personal changes. Likewise the experience score was created by summing the responses of the students' experiences of the 10 experience items. The experience items were identical to the 10 expectation items identified earlier.

As part of the analysis of the data, gap scores were calculated for specific items in the questionnaire. The gap score was the difference between expectation scores and experience scores. Gap scores provide institutions with an easy method of identifying areas where significant differences between expectations and experiences lie. These gaps allow

administrators and policy makers to identify specific areas for change or improvement. Paired samples t-tests and independent t-tests were used to evaluate differences in mean. The data were evaluated with an alpha level of .05.

The survey, completed by 421 respondents, was broken down as follows, 155 international students, 252 American study abroad students, and 14 others. The 'other' category was students who were unsure of how to identify students status. Some were international students enrolled in United States institutions on study abroad programs in other countries, others were American students no longer enrolled in school and some just chose to identify themselves as 'other.' Only the responses of the international and American students were used for the study. The international students who responded represented 54 countries and the American students studied in 34 countries. The responses from the 'other' category were discarded.

The largest response to the survey came from American study abroad students with 59.9% of the responses; international students represented 36.8% and other represented 3.3%. The exact number of graduate, undergraduate, and gender profile of the students could not be recorded because not all the students reported their student status and gender. A breakdown of the demographic details that were obtained from the questionnaire can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

*Demographic Information of International and American Students*

	International Students		American Study Abroad Students	
	N	%	N	%
Gender	155		252	
Male	70	45.2	70	27.8
Female	84	54.2	181	71.8
No Response	1	0.6	1	0.4
Status				
Undergrad	23	14.8	170	67.5
Graduate	88	56.8	29	11.5
No Response	44	28.4	53	21.0

Of the students who responded to the questionnaire, 343 responded to survey items on their language proficiency, 219 American study abroad students and 133 international students. The majority of the respondents reported that they spoke the host language. Overall, only 7% of the respondents reported not speaking the host language at all. Less than 1% of the international students reported not speaking the host language and 9% of the American study abroad students reported not speaking the host language. Table 3 provides students' responses by student group.



Table 3

*Host Language Proficiency of the Students*

<i>Group</i>	<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>		<i>International Students</i>	
	N =252	%	N = 155	%
Not at all	22	9	1	<1
Somewhat	49	19	14	9
Proficiently	65	26	30	19
Fluently	28	11	49	32
Very Fluently	53	21	39	25
No Response	35	14	22	14

Several items on the survey were used to calculate the expectation scores of the students as well as their experience scores. The list of factors that comprised the mean expectation and experience scores are included in Table 4 along with the results of the respondents' average expectation and experience score based on the five-point scale of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. Additional tables detailing the overall students' responses can be found in appendix D (Table 23, Table 24, Table 25 and Table 26).

Table 4

*Items Used for Measuring Students Experiences and Expectations*

<i>Number of Participants = 421 International = 155, American = 252, Other = 14</i>	<i>Mean Expectation Score</i>	<i>Mean Experience Score</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	4.11	3.81
Experience increase global awareness	4.48	4.36
Leadership skills & career advancement	3.89	3.60
Increase cultural knowledge	4.33	4.37
Differences in people and culture	4.38	4.43
Form friendship with the host nationals	3.84	3.54
Host language confidence	3.63	3.60
Support network in the host community	3.43	3.38
Better career opportunities at home	3.91	3.78
Personal change	4.38	4.46

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between the expectations and experiences of international students studying in the United States? From research question one, two null hypotheses were developed.

Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>1</sub>:- There is no difference between international students' mean expectations scores and their mean experiences scores of their stay in the United States.

Ho<sub>1</sub><sub>2</sub> -: There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female international students.

Ten questions on the questionnaire were specifically designed to address students' expectations and experiences. These 10 items were used to generate the mean experience and mean expectation scores. International students were asked to report their expectations of study abroad based on 10 different factors and also report their experience of study abroad using the same factors. A gap score was calculated to identify differences between the expected items and the experienced items. The gap score was derived from the difference between the expectation items and experience items.

The analysis revealed that the expectation items on the questionnaire strongly matched what the students actually expected of their study abroad experience. Based on the five-point Likert scale, the mean expectation score for the 10 items ranged from 3.59 to 4.37. The data revealed that international students had significant gaps between expected items and experienced items on the majority of the items evaluated. The largest gap was found between expectation and experience of leadership skills & career advancement (.66). The study revealed international students had higher expectations of developing leadership skills and career advancement than they experienced. Differences in people and culture (-.23), personal change (-.14), and increase cultural knowledge (-.06) were the only three items the students had higher mean experience scores than mean expectation scores. The details on the gaps for the other items are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

*International Students' Expectation and Experience Gap Scores*

<i>Number of Participants = 155</i>	<i>Average Expectation</i>	<i>Average Experience</i>	<i>Gap Score</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	4.01	3.68	0.34
Experience increase global awareness	4.37	4.14	0.23
Leadership skills & career advancement	4.26	3.61	0.66
Increase cultural knowledge	4.06	4.12	-0.06
Differences in people and culture	4.15	4.39	-0.23
Form friendship with the host nationals	3.97	3.55	0.42
Host language confidence	4.04	3.83	0.21
Support network in the host community	3.59	3.36	0.23
Better career opportunities at home	4.28	3.95	0.33
Personal change	4.20	4.34	-0.14

The percentage of agreement on the 10 expectation and experience items were analyzed to understand whether the items represented the students' true expectations. Of the 155 international students who responded to the survey, more than 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they had expectations and experiences toward the items listed in Table 6. The report indicated that 83% of the students expected development of leadership skills and career advancement and only 55% reported experiencing any development. Additionally 59% expected to find a support network and an even smaller percentage 50% reported experience with a support network. The study found higher percentages of students experienced increase cultural

knowledge, differences in people and culture, and personal change than the percentage of students who expected them.

Table 6

*Percentage of International Students Agreement on Expectation and Experience Items*

<i>International students</i>	<i>Expectation</i>		<i>Experience</i>	
	N	% Agreement	N	% Agreement
Socialization and cultural integration	115	74	101	65
Experience increase global awareness	131	85	122	79
Leadership skills & career advancement	128	83	85	55
Increase cultural knowledge	114	74	120	77
Differences in people and culture	120	77	138	89
Form friendship with the host nationals	113	73	91	59
Host language confidence	113	73	106	68
Support network in the host community.	91	59	77	50
Better career opportunities at home	126	81	107	69
Personal change	121	78	133	86

Analysis of Expectation and Experience: Ho1<sub>1</sub>: There is no difference between international students' mean expectations score and their mean experiences score of their stay in the United States. A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether international students' expectation scores differ from their experiences scores. The result indicated that the

mean score for expectation ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) was significantly greater than the mean score for experience ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = .59$ ),  $t(154) = 3.82$ ,  $p < .001$ . The standardized effect size index was .31 as calculated by Cohen's  $d$ . The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from .095 to .299. The result indicated that there was a significant difference between expectation and experience of international students. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results are displayed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

*Paired Samples t-test of International Students' Mean Expectation and Mean Experience Score*

<i>International Students</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Mean Expectation Score	155	4.09	.61	3.82	<.001
Mean Experience Score		3.89	.59		

\* $p < .05$

A comparison of the 10 expectation items with the 10 experienced items was conducted to pinpoint significant differences between experience and expectation. A paired samples t-test was used to perform the analysis. Significant difference was found between 6 of the 10 pairs controlling for familywise error rate across the 10 tests at the .05 level using Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedure. There was a significant difference between international students' expectations and experiences of social and cultural interaction with the host nationals at alpha level  $.05/10 = .005$ . Significance was also found between the expectation and experiences of global awareness at the alpha level  $.05/9 = .005$ , leadership skills and career advancement (alpha level  $.05/8 = .006$ ), people and culture (alpha level  $.05/6 = .008$ ), friendship with host (alpha level  $.05/5 = .01$ ), and better career opportunities (alpha level  $.05/2 = .025$ ). The other comparisons

were not significant. The results are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

*Paired Samples Comparison of Expectation and Experience for International Students*

<i>International = 155</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	.34	1.12	3.72	<.001
Experience increase global awareness	.23	.97	2.99	.003
Leadership skills & career advancement	.66	1.02	8.02	<.001
Increase cultural knowledge	-.07	1.04	.78	.439
Differences in people and culture	-.23	.81	3.56	<.001
Form friendship with the host nationals	.42	1.33	3.92	<.001
Host language confidence	.21	1.07	2.39	.018
Support network in the host community.	.23	1.39	2.02	.045
Better career opportunities at home	.33	.89	4.60	<.001
Personal change	-.14	.92	1.92	.057

\*p <.05/10

Analysis of Experience Based on Gender: Ho<sub>12</sub>: There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female international students. An independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether students' mean expectation scores differ based on their gender. The test was not significant  $t(152) = 1.37, p = .172$ . The female students had a mean score of ( $M = 3.96, SD = .58$ ) while the male students mean score was ( $M = 3.82, SD = .62$ ). The standardized effect size index was .11, indicating a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from -.059 to .326. Levene's test for equality of variance was used to

test for equal variance. Equal variance was assumed. The results indicated that gender did not play a significant role in the experiences of the student. The test revealed that there was no significant difference in experiences of male and female students. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are documented in Table 9.

Table 9

*Independent Sample t-test of Mean Experience Scores Based on Gender for International Students*

<i>International Students</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M-Diff</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Gender:	154						
Male	70	3.82	.62	.13	1.37	.172	.11
Female	84	3.96	.58				

\* $p < .05$

Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between expectations and experiences of American study abroad students? From research question two, two null hypotheses were developed.

Ho<sub>2-1</sub>:- There is no difference between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with their host country.

Ho<sub>2-2</sub>:- There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female American study abroad students.

Gap scores were calculated to identify if significant gaps existed between expectations and experiences. The data revealed that students had on average, higher experiences of host language confidence, support network in the host community, and personal change from living in



a new place than expected. The largest gaps were found between expectation and experience of socialization and cultural integration (.31) as well as between expectation and experience of forming friendship with the host nationals (.22). Students had identical scores for expectation of increasing cultural knowledge and experiencing increased cultural knowledge. The gaps for the other items were relatively small, details can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

*American Study Abroad Students' Expectation and Experience Gap Scores*

<i>Number of Participants = 252</i>	<i>Average Expectation</i>	<i>Average Experience</i>	<i>Gap Score</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	4.21	3.90	0.31
Experience increase global awareness	4.57	4.50	0.07
Leadership skills & career advancement	3.69	3.60	0.09
Increase cultural knowledge	4.54	4.54	0.00
Differences in people and culture	4.54	4.51	0.03
Form friendship with the host nationals	3.84	3.62	0.22
Host language confidence	3.42	3.49	-0.07
Support network in the host community	3.40	3.48	-0.08
Better career opportunities at home	3.68	3.67	0.01
Personal change	4.52	4.57	-0.05

Of the 252 American study abroad students who responded to the survey, the percentages of agreement varied across the items used to evaluate the students' expectations and experiences. Only 4 out of the 10 items had percentages of agreement that were 90% or greater on expectation

and experience. These were experience of increased global awareness, increased cultural knowledge, differences in people and culture, and personal change. There were slightly smaller percentages of agreement 60% or less on expectation and experience of host language confidence, support network in the host community, and leadership skills and career advancement. A summary of the percentages on agreement of expectation and experience are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

*Percentage of American Study Abroad Students' Agreement on Expectation and Experience Items*

<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>	<i>Expectation</i>		<i>Experience</i>	
	N	% Agreement	N	% Agreement
Socialization and cultural integration	212	84	181	72
Experience increase global awareness	243	96	235	93
Leadership skills & career advancement	151	60	151	60
Increase cultural knowledge	235	93	240	95
Differences in people and culture	232	92	235	93
Form friendship with the host nationals	169	67	148	59
Host language confidence	140	56	150	60
Support network in the host community	126	50	138	55
Better career opportunities at home	156	62	145	58
Personal change	229	91	231	92

Analysis of Expectation and Experience: Ho2<sub>1</sub>: There is no difference between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with their host country. A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether American students' expectation scores differ from their experience scores. The result indicated that the mean score for expectation ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .54$ ) was not significantly greater than the mean score for experience ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = .64$ ),  $t(251) = 1.502$ ,  $p = .134$ . The standardized effect size index was .09 as calculated by Cohen's  $d$ . The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from -.016 to .117. The results indicated that American study abroad students' expectations closely matched their experiences. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

*Paired Samples t-test of American Study Abroad Students' Mean Expectation Score and Mean Experience Score*

<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Expectation	252	4.04	.54	1.502	.134
Experience		3.99	.64		

\* $p < .05$

A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether any significance existed between any of the pairs. Significant difference was found between 2 of the 10 pairs controlling for familywise error rate across the 10 tests at the .05 level using Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedure. There was significant difference between American students' expectations and

experiences of social and cultural interaction with the host nationals at alpha level  $.05/10 = .005$ . Significance was also found between expectations and experiences of friendships with individuals of the host culture at alpha level  $.05/5 = .01$ . The other eight comparisons were not significant. The results are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

*Paired Samples Comparison of Expectation and Experience for American Study Abroad Students*

<i>American study abroad students</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	.31	1.00	4.87	.000
Experience increase global awareness	.06	.72	1.40	.164
Leadership skills & career advancement	.08	.98	1.35	.178
Increase cultural knowledge	-.01	.62	.20	.839
Differences in people and culture	.03	.80	.63	.528
Form friendship with the host nationals	.21	1.29	2.64	.009
Host language confidence	-.07	1.00	1.14	.256
Support network in the host community.	-.07	1.28	.89	.375
Better career opportunities at home	.02	.96	.26	.793
Personal change	-.06	.71	1.25	.213

Analysis of Experience Based on Gender.  $H_{02}$ : There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female American study abroad students. An independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether American study abroad students' mean experience scores differed based on their gender. The test was not significant  $t(249) = .748, p = .46$ . The

female students had mean score of ( $M = 3.97, SD = .63$ ) while the male students' mean score was ( $M = 4.03, SD = .66$ ). The effect size index of .05, as calculated by Cohen's  $d$ . The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from  $-.244$  to  $.109$ . The result indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean score for students' experiences based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Levene's test for equality of variance was used to test for equal variance. Equal variance was assumed. Additional information can be found in Table 14.

Table 14  
*Independent Sample t-test of Mean Experience Score Based on Gender for American Study Abroad Students*

<i>Group (American)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M-Diff</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Gender:	251						
Male	70	4.04	.66	-.067	.748	.464	.05
Female	181	3.97	.63				

### Research Question 3

Do experiences of international Students differ from those of American study abroad students? From research question three, one null hypothesis was developed.

The participants were asked to evaluate their experiences in different areas of the study abroad experience. Five questions on the survey instrument were used to evaluate students' comfort with speaking the host and their home language on the study abroad experience. Of the 155 international students who responded to the survey, 88% agreed or strongly agreed that they

were comfortable speaking the host language. When the students were asked to respond to the statement, 'I speak my native language outside the classroom' 68% were in agreement that they spoke their native language outside the classroom. While 85% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they spoke the host language outside the classroom. Additionally, 88% indicated they were comfortable communicating with the host national and 90% reported being comfortable communicating with the faculty.

Of the 252 American study abroad students who responded to the survey, 62% agreed or strongly agreed that they were comfortable speaking the host language. When the students were asked to respond to the statement, 'I speak my native language outside the classroom' 83% agreed or strongly agreed. While 60% agreed or strongly agreed that they spoke the host language outside the classroom. Additionally, 66% of the students indicated they were comfortable communicating with the host national and 75% reported being comfortable communicating with the faculty. The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the survey items concerning language is included in Table 15.

Table 15

*Percentage of International Students' Agreement to the Language Questions*

	<i>International Students</i>		<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>	
	N	% Agreement	N	% Agreement
Comfortable speaking the host language	128	83	155	62
Speak native language outside class	93	60	208	83
Speak host language outside classroom	124	80	151	60
Comfortable communicating with host	127	82	167	66
Comfortable communicating with host faculty	129	83	190	75

Questions 27 through 30 were used to gather information on the students' satisfaction with access to support services. Of the 155 international students who responded to the survey 78% reported satisfaction with access to instructors/faculty. In addition 66% reported satisfaction with access to student support services, 47% were satisfied or very satisfied with access to help with language skills, and 52% expressed satisfaction with access to help with writing skills.

Of the 262 American study abroad students who participated in the survey, 67% reported satisfaction with access to instructors-faculty. In addition, 49% were satisfied very satisfied with access to student support services, 53% expressed satisfaction with access to help with language skills, and 41% reported satisfaction with access to help with writing skills. Table 16 has the side-by-side comparison of the international and American study abroad students' experiences with support services.

Table 16

*Students' Experiences with Access to Support Services*

	<i>International Students</i>		<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>	
	N	% of Satisfaction	N	% of Satisfaction
Access to instructors\faculty	121	78	168	67
Access to student support services	102	66	123	49
Access to help with languages skills	73	47	134	53
Access to help with writing skills	80	52	103	41

Questions 32 to 41 asked the students to indicate their satisfaction with the overall experience. Of the international students who responded, 81% indicated satisfaction with the overall experience, while 94% of the American study abroad students reported being significantly satisfied or very satisfied with the overall experience in the host country. The percentage of responses for students who were satisfied or very satisfied with interaction with the host national were international students 75% and American study abroad students 68%. In addition 75% of the international students and 81% of the American study abroad students expressed satisfaction with the friendships made with other international\study abroad students. Based on the percentage of responses to the survey items, 64% of the international students and 71% of the American study abroad students were satisfied or very satisfied with their participation in classroom discussions. International students reported higher percentages of satisfaction than American students on the following items, communication with faculty from the host country (75% versus 66%), classroom environment (74% versus 59%), support services provided by the institution (74% versus 50%), and interaction with faculty and support staff



(77% versus 64%).

The lowest percentages on satisfaction were among friendships made on campus with host-domestic students and interaction with students from the dominant culture. With 56% of the international and 60% of the American study abroad students expressing satisfaction with the friendships made with host students and 57% of the international students and 59% of the American study abroad students indicating satisfaction with their interaction with the host students. Table 17 displays the percentages along with other data.

Table 17

*Percentage of Students' Satisfaction with the Overall Experience*

<i>Cross-Cultural Participants Questionnaire items 32 to 41</i>	<i>International Students</i>		<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>	
	N	% of Satisfaction	N	% of Satisfaction
Overall experience	126	81	236	94
Interaction with host nationals	106	68	186	74
Friendship with host students	87	56	152	60
Friendship with other students	117	75	204	81
Interaction with host students	89	57	148	59
Communication with host faculty	116	75	166	66
Classroom environment	115	74	149	59
Participation in class	99	64	179	71
Support services	115	74	126	50
Interaction with faculty/staff	119	77	162	64

Difference Between Student Group: Ho3<sub>1</sub>: There is no difference between mean experience scores for international students in America and mean experience scores for American students in study abroad programs. An Independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether American study abroad students' mean experience scores differ from international students' mean experience scores. The result indicated that the mean experience score for international students ( $M = 3.89, SD = .59$ ) was not significantly greater than the mean experience score for American study abroad students ( $M = 3.98, SD = .63$ ),  $t(405) = 1.45, p = .148$ . The effect size index of .07, as calculated by Cohen's  $d$ . The 95% confidence interval for the difference in mean ranged from -.033 to .217. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Additional information can be found in Table 18.

Table 18

*Mean Experience Score Based on Student Group*

	<i>International Students</i>			<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>					
	N	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	d	
Experience	407	3.89	.59	3.98	.63	1.45	.148	.07	

\* $p < .05$

#### Research Question 4

Do expectations of international students differ from expectations of American study abroad students? From research question four, one null hypothesis was developed.

Ho4<sub>1</sub> ∴ There is no difference between the expectations of international students in America and expectations of American students in study abroad programs.

Difference Between Student Group Ho4<sub>1</sub>: There is no difference between the expectations of international students in America and expectations of American students in study abroad programs. An independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether American study abroad students' mean expectation scores differ from international students' mean expectation score. The result indicated that the mean expectation score for international students ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) was not significantly greater than the mean expectation score for American study abroad students ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = .54$ ),  $t(405) = .926$ ,  $p = .355$ . The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from  $-.168$  to  $.060$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Additional information can be found in Table 19.

Table 19

*Mean Expectation Score Based on Student Group*

	<i>International Students</i>			<i>American Study Abroad Students</i>			
	N	M	SD	M	SD	t	p
Expectation	407	4.09	.61	4.03	.54	.926	.355

\* $p < .05$

Gap scores were calculated to identify significant gaps between each of the expectation items of international students and American study abroad students' expectations. The data revealed that international students had higher expectations of host language confidence (4.04) than American study abroad students (3.42) with a gap score of .62. Additionally the gap score revealed that international students had on average, higher expectations of leadership skills &

career advancement (.57), forming friendship with the host nationals (.13), better career opportunities at home (.60), and support network in the host community (.19) than the American students.

Based on the gap scores American students had higher expectations of increased cultural knowledge with a gap of .48, finding differences in people and culture (.39), experiencing personal change (.32), socialization and cultural integration (.20), and experiencing increase global awareness (.20). Details are displayed in Table 20.

Table 20

*Expectation Gap Scores for International and American Study Abroad Students*

<i>Expectation Items</i>	<i>International Students</i>	<i>American Students</i>	<i>Gap Score</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	4.01	4.21	-0.20
Experience increase global awareness	4.37	4.57	-0.20
Leadership skills & career advancement	4.26	3.69	0.57
Increase cultural knowledge	4.06	4.54	-0.48
Differences in people and culture	4.15	4.54	-0.39
Form friendship with the host nationals	3.97	3.84	0.13
Host language confidence	4.04	3.42	0.62
Support network in the host community	3.59	3.40	0.19
Better career opportunities at home	4.28	3.68	0.60
Personal change	4.20	4.52	-0.32

In analyzing the 10 expectation items the results of the study revealed that both the

international (85%) and American students (96%) had high percentages of agreement on expectations of experiencing increased global awareness. International students had higher percentages of agreement on expectations of leadership skills & career advancement, form friendship with the host nationals, host language confidence, support network in the host community, and better career opportunities at home than the American study abroad students. Both international students and the American students had low percentages of agreement on expectation of support network in the host community. Results are displayed in Table 21.

Table 21

*Percentage of Students' Agreement on Expectation Items*

<i>Expectation Items</i>	<i>International Students</i>		<i>American Study Abroad Student</i>	
	N	% Agreement	N	% Agreement
Socialization and cultural integration	115	74	212	84
Experience increase global awareness	131	85	243	96
Leadership skills & career advancement	128	83	151	60
Increase cultural knowledge	114	74	235	93
Differences in people and culture	120	77	232	92
Form friendship with the host nationals	113	73	169	67
Host language confidence	113	73	140	56
Support network in the host community	91	59	126	50
Better career opportunities at home	126	81	156	62
Personal change	121	78	229	91

### Qualitative Approach

Data for the qualitative part of the study were collected through the open-ended questions in the online *Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire*. Participants were contacted via their study abroad-international program coordinators through email. A request was sent to the coordinators of eight institutions requesting volunteers for the study. Students were provided with written explanation (via email, see appendix B) about the research, their role in the study, and the link to the questionnaire. Students volunteering for the study indicated so by clicking on the URL to the survey and actually taking the survey. Students who took part in the survey were considered willing participants. Participants were not required to give informed written consent because this would create a link between the student and the study resulting in a breach of confidentiality. Students were not asked to provide identifying information on the survey to ensure the students felt comfortable giving responses to the question without the fear of being identified. Copies of the contact information can be found in Appendix B.

The responses from the survey were analyzed to gather information on pre- and post-study expectations as well as deeper insight into the students' experiences. Questions 31, 42, 43, 44, and 45 were analyzed manually and sorted into themes. The students were asked to describe their initial expectations, changes in expectations, experiences with the host institution, and recommendations for program improvement. From reading each student's response, patterns were identified in the students' responses and from these patterns emerged certain themes that were consistent with existing literature (Hellsten, 2002). The students had expectation and experiences that fell into one or all of the following categories: building relationship, culture and language, support structure, professional and personal development, and experience with the host institutions. To enhance the accuracy of the study, supporting data in the students' own words

were provided.

Validity was established by the clarification of my personal bias as well as the employment of an external auditor and peer examiner. Although every effort was made to ensure objectivity by the employing of an auditor, my biases may shape the way I view and present the data collected. The open-ended questions on the survey instrument along with the percentage of respondents are documented in Table 22.

Table 22

*Percentage of Students Who Responded to the Open-ended Questions on Their Expectations and Experiences*

<i>Open-ended Questions from Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire</i>	<i>International Students</i>		<i>American Students</i>	
	N	%	N	%
What programs or services were the most meaningful or helpful on the host campus?	106	68	95	61
What were your initial expectations for the study abroad experience?	93	60	110	71
How have your expectations changed? Explain new expectations, if any.	89	57	93	60
Please describe your experiences with the host institution?	95	61	107	69
What programs or interventions do you think would have made your experience more meaningful?	82	53	101	65

## Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between the expectations and experiences of international students studying in the United States?

When asked to describe their initial expectations of the study experience international students reported mainly having expectations that were geared towards professional development. Some international students expected the experience to be difficult because of language barriers; others expected an excellent learning environment. The following section represents a summary of the international students' answers. The students' responses were broken down into topics namely, building relationship, culture and language, support structure, professional and personal development, and experiences with host institutions.

Building Relationship: International students reported expectations of making friends and obtaining connections in the host country. The students had expectations of the United States providing a welcoming community with friends for emotional support and a professional work environment. Some international students expected American students to be friendly and to have the opportunity to interact with American students. The students reported experiencing difficulty connecting and making friends with American students, and they had less interaction with Americans than they had hoped. One student indicated that he was "always an outsider who was welcome to stick around". Other international students reported the following:

None of American students wants to talk to international students. I guess it's because they are shy and don't really need any trouble making non-English speaking friends. Anyway, they are not interested in other culture or friends from outside countries at all. They even used to leave when I sit the another table just in front of their table in the library. I don't think it is a coincident. It happened a lot. I could experience this unhappy events almost everyday. American don't want us near them. (International Student from Korea)



It takes a lot of personal effort to integrate, and nationals of the host country are not as open and welcoming as I expected. It has been difficult to find resources (funding) to continue my education. (International Student from Democratic Republic of Congo)

The international students discovered friendship dynamics were different between cultures and it took some effort to form friendships. A student wrote the following:

I no longer expect interaction with students from the host country. My friends are all international students, and I think I have made lifelong relationships with them. (International Student from Trinidad & Tobago)

The international students reported that they gave up on the expectation of making friends with American students and instead found support from other international students. A few students reported forming friendships with American students although these friendships were slower in developing. In general, international students indicated that it was easier making friends with other international students than with the host.

Culture and Language: The main expectation of most international students was to become fluent in English or speak the language like a native speaker. One student reported that,

It was way hard to communicate in English, especially speaking and listening. I just learned how to read and write (English education back to my home country emphasises [*sic*] on grammar[*sic*], mostly), so I found out it was too difficult to communicate with classmates and faculties. (International Student from Japan)

Students who found that their language fluency did not improve blamed this on their lack of social contact with American students as well as their frequent socialization with students from their home country. One student found that after being in the United States for 4 years, his reading and writing of English had improved, but there still existed insecurity about speaking in the classroom.

While having language expectations, international students also had cultural expectations. For some international students, America was seen as a country with lots of diversity and as a place where people from different countries can exist together. As one student from India stated, “I thought that my differences would not work against me and that I would be made to feel comfortable by taking my differences into account.”

International students expressed their discouragement and surprise at the lack of geographic knowledge of American students. Initially the international students expected Americans to know where their countries were located and to have some basic knowledge of other countries and cultures. One student from Latvia reported the following, “Now I don't expect people to know where my country is. I don't expect them to know the conflicts in other parts of the world or even be interested. I don't expect an interest in my culture.”

Support Structure and Services: The international students expected a productive study environment with help and support from university faculty and the International Office. One student, while expressing his enjoyment of the lab facilities and libraries, commented on his displeasure of the medical services and public transportation offered in the United States. The student indicated that without insurance getting medical treatment was difficult and that even with insurance the service was extremely expensive.

While the host university offered support in the form of the International Student Office, some international students still indicated more needed to be done at the departmental level. One student identified the gap that he felt existed between departmental support and institutional support. The student indicated that the international program office provided overall support; however, in the classroom faculty were unable to understand that international students bring a

different cultural background that in itself means different student-teacher relationships. The student indicated that the faculty did not understand that the student had to make adjustments on the student-teacher relationship. The student also indicated that no one at the department level took into account the student's needs and that international students might be expecting some welcome and engagement from the faculty not just the International Program Office. One student wrote,

I believe that nobody in my department was aware of the difficulties an international student could have. I have never experienced any kind of discrimination and/or hostility in my department due to my foreign background. Being treated as a native person is great, but sometimes you simply need to be perceived as a foreigner so that your specific needs/difficulties could be recognized. (International Student from Serbia)

Another student wrote,

Don't care much. We are just good money for them. One of staff even say so. School in United States are just bussines [*sic*], that's all. That's what she told us. The American think people are dumb and they are better than foreigners if they don't speak English just like native speakers. (International Student from Korea)

Professional and Personal Development: Some of the international students expressed expectations towards learning to be more independent and towards experiencing hardships for personal growth. One student indicated that he expected to be an influential scholar in his field while establishing collaborative relationships with other professionals. The international student has since lowered his expectation to be more realistic, focusing more on graduation rather than professional collaboration. One student from Spain wrote, "Onces [*sic*] I was accepted into the program then I started to get enthusiastic and ready to do my best... now that I am almost done I start to get worried about my future and the real benefits for my prospective professional career...I don't know if it will benefit in my home country."

Additionally, some of the international students who had not expected to develop people

skills have indicated that they are now focusing on developing leadership skills that will in turn aid in their professional development. One student from Serbia wrote, “I have experienced much more profound personal changes than I expected. My expectation now is to achieve a kind of identity-balance again and to recover my self-esteem.”

The students found living in the United States more financially burdensome than they had anticipated. Other students learned to adjust to living away from home.

I initially had problems but over time have grown accustomed. Also, I realized that getting along with people or making friends is not limited by country or culture. It just depends on individual nature. I did not think much about personal skills in the beginning but now I can think of developing leadership skills and my professional expectations have totally changed. (International Student from India)

One international student found that when his expectation of a welcoming, diverse country with highly intelligent people fell short, the best thing to do was refocus on expectations of self and education. Even though students reported mixed experiences, some had indicated that the experience left them wanting to explore other countries before returning to their home countries.

Experience with the Host Institution: When international students were asked to describe their experiences of the host institutions, their reactions were primarily positive. Knowledge acquisition was a high expectation of international students. The students stated that they expected to learn more advanced knowledge in a better educational environment where they could have easier access to journals, academic associations, or professionals in the field. Additionally, students expected to learn up-to-date information about their field of study while learning about the diverse culture of the United States. Most international students found the institutions to be well organized and supportive. A student from South Korea indicated that the

institution was “not overly challenging academically but socially isolating (unless I make a conscious effort, which I don't always manage to do for various reasons).”

International students indicated that their experiences with faculty were mixed. Some international students found the faculty members to be kind and helpful, some indicated there was some discrimination or indifference on the part of the faculty. Students also indicated experiences of isolation in some classes where faculty assumed the syllabus was self-explanatory. The students also indicated that support was lacking when it came to identifying and locating certain learning material. Below are the some of the students' responses.

They (Americans) are good people, very kind and nice but they don't really care about others; especially about foreigners. Some people include faculties, looked down on foreigners in classroom even though most of the faculties were wonderful. I have a very bad experience with the mean faculty who discriminated foreigners in her class.  
(International Student from Korea)

Overall the experience was good. But I did face problem with some faculties, which I have analyzed later had to do with cultural differences. I will give an example. In India the students always have to show obedience/respect towards elders/professors. After coming here that habit naturally flowed and I must say kind of prevented me from being independent. This obedience/compliance I felt was looked upon as lack of confidence on my part. Even among my colleagues I used to be agreeing [*sic*] all the time thinking as they are the host I should be courteous to them but honestly I got trodden over. But things immediately changed from the moment I started acting as though I belonged here.  
(International Student from India)

An international student indicated that adjusting to the culture was difficult but the institution provided support to help students adjust. Another student felt completely lost. The student indicated that Americans' knowledge and effort to understand other cultures seemed superficial. The student indicated that it was difficult finding his significance and place in the United States.

One international student indicated that as an undergraduate he was hardly noticed but as a graduate student he felt more important and a part of a bigger community. Other students

indicated that being graduate students allowed them to form closer relationships with American students; the students felt that there were stronger ties between graduate students than undergraduate students. Some students indicated they were more academically solid than the American students.

## Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between expectations and experiences of American study abroad students?

Students were asked to state their initial expectations of study abroad as well as any changes in their expectations. Additionally, the students were also asked to describe their experiences with the host institutions. The students' answers were analyzed and reported below.

When American students were asked to describe their initial expectations of the study abroad experience, a variety of responses were given. The responses were varied, ranging from the expected to the unexpected. Below is a summary of the responses listed by topics. The responses were sorted and summarized under the following themes building relationship, culture and language, support structure, professional and personal development, and experience with the host institutions.

Building Relationship: American study abroad students expressed expectations of building relationships with the host nationals and forming friendships and language partners with the native students. The students also expected to spend less time with other Americans and more with the students of the host countries. A majority of the students reported that they expected to be fluent in the host language by the end of the experience. Additionally, American students expected the host nationals to help them become more fluent in the host language by interacting

with them on a social level. One student reported,

I expected to overcome my timidity with speaking the foreign language and to at least have frequent contact with the nationals, if not to develop real friendships. I expected to encounter a new way of thinking about international politics and an outsider's perspective on the U.S. (American Student who studied in France)

When asked how their expectations of study abroad have changed, some students reported that they had changes in their expectations that made them more realistic, while others reported that they remained the same. The students noted that building relationships across cultures took lots of effort and time. Some American study abroad students indicated it was much easier to form friendships with other international students. As one student discovered, building relationships was not something you can depend upon the institution to facilitate, one had to make the effort to get to know people and build relationships.

I learned that if I wanted interactions with people from Spain, I would have to seek those opportunities on my own. Once I stopped relying on my institution to provide me with an exchange student, I went out on my own and found a few Spanish students that I got very close to. (American Student who studied in Spain)

Another American student had this to say of her experience in France,

I soon realized that French students were not very interested in interactions with foreign students in the classroom. I think this has more to do with the fact that their university system is very different from ours. We're used to having our university and our campus be such a close community. For them, school is just something on the side outside [*sic*] of their regular family and friends. So after a while I guess I just expected to have very few French friends. I did, however, make friends with international students, and two French students in my host family situation. (American Student who studied in France)

The American students reported experiencing different measures of social isolation. Students who made friends with the host nationals did so through social clubs, church, and concentrated effort on their part. One student indicated that by joining the soccer team and through her involvement was able to make lasting friendships with host students. The students discovered that the host students were not always receptive of Americans, thus building

friendships was a challenge. Overall students articulated how difficult it was to make friends with the host nationals.

Culture and Language: When commenting on their cultural and language expectations, American students reported expectations of being more immersed in a foreign culture and getting a closer examination of their own cultural biases and habits. Most of the students expected to have difficulty adapting to the new culture and to a new institution. Additionally, some of the students indicated the experience would help them become as much of a 'local' as possible. A few students also expected growth and independence from living in a new culture. Others expected to feel disoriented for a few days because of lack of knowledge about the language and the culture, yet still expected to fit into the new environment.

American students who expected language improvements found that their grasp of the host language did not improve as much as they would have liked. One student reported that, in order to increase fluency in the host language efforts had to be made to socialize and interact with the native speakers. Other students gave up on learning language fluency to focus more on personal growth.

I have changed now, because I know what it feels like to be the ignorant [sic] one in a country that doesn't know how to speak a language, it defiantly [sic] makes you less judgemental [sic]. Life there also stripped my [sic] of simple everyday luxuries of America, such as air conditioning and my car. Not having those key things will make me less superficial somehow. (American Student who studied in Italy)

Some American study abroad students also reported that the experience taught them to appreciate cultural differences and similarities, to be more open-minded and well-rounded.

I, through my travels abroad, have understood that there exist differences between different countries [sic]. Prior to my trip to Italy, I didn't understand how different our cultures were; I thought that since our two countries are from the "western world" that we would live in similar ways. The great part of what I saw is that the two cultures are



different, but neither way is better. To understand another culture is to develop awareness; this awareness helps you to become a better person. (American Student who studied in Italy)

It is very difficult to be apart of a Chinese community; this seemed to be especially difficult for locals because the physical differences, as well as language, and cultural differences were a big barrier for many host country nationals. My expectations changed because I realized I needed to be apart of shaping cultural understanding for host nationals, instead of what I initially expected, interaction. This role was often as small as being polite and educational towards those that had little previous exposure to "foreigners", to actual formal cultural exchanges. (American Student who studied in China)

In Japan it is my feeling that the burden of gaining a meaningful experience is on the international student, and their efforts to embrace the culture and forgive it for being inaccessible in some ways to any non-Japanese. (American Student who studied in Japan)

The study found American study abroad students reporting learning to appreciate the cultural interaction of the people while developing a better understanding of global views of current issues. One student indicated that while the professor was rude and made the student feel stupid for messing up with French, the experience was still meaningful. The student used the experience to learn about different parts of the world from other international students and found a support network in classmates.

Support Structure and Services: A few American study abroad students expressed disappointment about the support they received from both the host institutions and their home institutions. The students expected that either the hosts or their home institutions would look out for them, ensuring safety measures were put in place. Students often reported finding little or no support from either host or home institution. Students reported:

I now know that studying abroad is a lot of hard work, not just in school and speaking the language, but psychologically and emotionally. There was a lot of loneliness and frustration to cope with. (American Student who studied in Spain)

Dealing with issues like housing, insurance, and registration were extraordinarily

challenging, especially since none of our group spoke the host country language.  
(American Student who studied in France)

The students reported feeling frustrated with support services and with the lack of computer facilities and air conditioning and lecture based classrooms. Some students reported having difficulty accessing computer labs, books, and papers for research. One student described his experience as “feeling like a second class citizen.” Below are some of the students’ responses,

I was tossed to the sharks with very little preparation and no support structure; I had to create all these for myself. It was very difficult first several weeks. (American Student who studied in England)

After the experience I learned that the program wasn't run very well. I've also learned not to expect too much of anything from European countries. They're very different from America. The host university was a complete joke. The facilities were disgusting, the teachers obviously did not want to be there, and they didn't care about their jobs. The students at the university were known as the worst their country. (American Student who studied in France)

Some American study abroad students who were placed with host families found living with the host family difficult and expressed their disappointment that they were not placed with other college students. On the other hand, students who were placed with only study abroad students wished they had been placed with host families so that they could better experience the culture. Living with a host family as reported by one student allowed better understanding of the host language.

Professional and Personal Development: On the professional and personal development side, American students’ expectations were to gain professional experience, get a new perspective, learn about another political system, and advance their careers by building better résumés. A few students reported that they expected the worst in terms of personal comfort and

housing location.

One student actually indicated that she expected the unexpected. While another student said the following of her experience in Sweden

I somehow expected to feel akin to the host nationals, but found this was fairly untrue. I also expected the class structure to be more organized and scheduled. I also expected that everyone would feel comfortable using English, and that I would find people like me. If I were to travel abroad again, I would go to someplace where I spoke the native language. I would also know that I would meet people who were different from myself and have to know that sometimes I would not make very close friends. (American Student who studied in Sweden)

Experience with the Host Institution: The American study abroad students had mixed reviews of the host institutions, some students found them kind and accommodating, going out of their way to ensure students were comfortable and safe. Others complained that enough was not done to integrate the American students with the host students. Some students expressed surprise about the formality of the classes and professors. Students found that certain classes were more hands on than they were used to.

School was an absolute disaster. I felt completely unprepared for the French school system, both the teaching style and monolithic bureaucracy. (American Student who studied in France)

School was a bit different but students and teachers weren't as receptive to exchange students as I had hoped. Also there's a bit of anti-American sentiment that I was not expecting in England (of course there are many exceptions where people saw past this)...it was humbling. America is a bit of a joke over there. (American Student who studied in England)

In some locations, American study abroad students found the atmosphere at the host institution more laid back, with the faculty frequently missing classes without informing students. Additionally, certain students found their host institution less organized than American institutions.

Some American study abroad students had classes with teachers who only spoke the host language and did not speak English. Other students had classes only in English that hindered their learning the host language. Depending on the host nation, some students found it easy to integrate into the academic system and received different reactions from the institutions. One student reported getting excellent support from the institution; however, the student felt that the host students did not receive the same level of support. In another case a student indicated that the university treated the American students just like the host nationals with no special treatment. The student implied that American students should be given some additional support as foreigners in a foreign country. One student wrote:

I would say that the school portion of my study abroad experience was the least enjoyable. The host institution was not up to par with my current university. The professors were not helpful and neither were the student support services. The most meaningful times came from traveling with my friends that I met abroad and teaching myself about the culture, history and politics of every city I traveled to in Europe.  
(American Student who studied in England)

A selected group of American study abroad students recognized the limitations of studying in countries that were not considered first world, and that it was not feasible to provide the same services as their home institution. Others commented on the difficulty maneuvering the system, having a paper and pencil system instead of a computerized system. Some of the students indicated that information about location of classes and access to professors was sometimes difficult to obtain. Unfamiliarity with the university system led to frustration for the students working out class schedules and registration issues.

One student expressed concern about the heavy workload and not having the opportunity to explore different places as much as the student wanted to. Another student had this to say of her experience,

Learning proved to be extremely difficult because the professor did not have a single

book to follow and all learning depended on the set of notes that the student took. As my comprehension in the beginning was very poor, it was difficult to even obtain the information that I needed to study. I didn't realize just how difficult it would be to learn at the foreign university. (American Student who studied in Spain)

The students reported experiencing classroom environments that were different from what they were used to. One student described the classroom environment of a European school as very formal, unlike the American system. The student also reported that there was no room for feedback, disagreement, and comments contrary to what the professor was saying. Another student wrote of his study in Japan, "Thry [*sic*] were mean, the teachers and the staff, the expectations of me were too high." Another student had this to say about the experience, "School was an absolute disaster. I felt completely unprepared for the French school system, both the teaching style and monolithic bureaucracy."

American students found it difficult to immerse themselves into the host culture and make friends. Some American students wanted recognition as either an American or an American with cultural heritage tied to the host nation. The students were disappointed when they did not receive the recognition sought. The experience found some American students expressing the desire to further travel and spend more time overseas. Other students realized the limitation that existed in certain countries. As one student stated, "I also now know that the nature of the location lends itself to a lack of updated, science textbooks."

#### Research Question 5

To what extent are international students and American students' post-study abroad expectations similar or different? There exist limitations whereby true post expectations cannot be compared for both groups. The reason for this was the international students were still having the experience of a study abroad program while the Americans students had completed their

study abroad experience.

The students came into the program with expectations of host language fluency, forming friendships with host nationals, and personal and professional development. The students reported expecting the experience would result in their expectations remaining true.

International students reported expecting career advancement and improved language fluency to be the outcome of the study abroad process. One student from Korea who had expectations of career opportunity discovered that it is possible to have quality family time and career. The student indicated that, “I can spend much time with my family even though I’m also working hard, which was not the case in South Korea. My future career is very important to my family, but the time that I can spend with my family is also very precious.”

International students reported wanting to get as much experiences in their professional fields as possible. Other international students expected the outcome of the experience to lead to a degree. Students who experienced profound personal changes now expected to achieve some kind of identity balance. One student indicated that the expectation now was to recover her self-esteem.

International students reported concerns about the future and the benefits their experience might have for prospective professional careers. Some international students reported expectations of fitting into the host culture and being able to stay on a permanent basis. Other international students expect to gain practical experience by finding a job in the United States.

I will find a job at US, this will help me know about the country, then I will (go) back to my own country and bring some innovcate [sic] ideas to setup my own company.  
(International Student from China)

I would consider going somewhere else for a 2 or 3 years before going back home...my experience the institution is good, but not so satisfied with the program itself.  
(International Student from Ecuador/Costa Rica)

One international student reported wanting to discover his potential and develop additional skills. The international students whose main expectations were to get academic and professional development had reported expecting to finish their degrees and perhaps move on to graduate school. One student reported that, “new challenges are now being pursued...graduate school ahead of me...now looking into a career in the research area.” Another international student stated that she will graduate at any cost.

Finally, one international student reported that the experience provided lot of benefits that included gaining a lot of experiences, developing good work ethics, getting to know people from different cultural backgrounds, making new friends, and gaining new insights into a career field.

American study abroad students reported experiencing changes in themselves and their views of the world. One student reported enjoying the experience so much that she had extended her initial experience to become a full time student in Norway. Some American students reported that their next travel experience would be to someplace where they spoke the native language.

American study abroad students who wanted the study experience to increase their language fluency realized that they needed more time in the country to achieve the desired results. One student reported, “The next time I am in China I can work more on becoming a proficient speaker. I eventually would like to be able to take non-lanugage [*sic*] academic courses in Chinese.”

American study abroad students reported changes in their outlook of people and places. One student reported, “My expectations have changed very much! I now know to think more about the people I'll meet, and how I'll interact with them. The Irish locals made my experience with their generous hospitality.” Another student reported still not knowing what to expect of a study abroad experience. While another student stated that, “I came out of the experience with

better communication skills and an amazing group of friends, as well as a new perspective on lifestyles in foreign countries. I'd like to experience more." One student wrote the following;

I expect next time to be able to communicate more efficiently. Also, I expect to experience more places and things since I am familiar with getting around in a foreign country. Also, I am more eager to make friends with natives of the country I visit.  
(American Student)

American students indicated that each experience was unique, ultimately resulting in some personal change.

Well, now I realize that studying abroad is truly that life-changing experience that all those rising seniors told me about. It broke me into another culture, a culture much alike the United States' culture, but much different as well. Pondering the similarities and differences between the two countries and cultures provided hours of interesting conversation, thought, and discussion -- shaping me into a more well-rounded, open-minded, and caring person than before I left for Guadalajara thirteen months ago.  
(American Student who studied in Mexico)

Some American students stated that they came out of the experience with better communication skills and better able to handle living in a foreign country.

Well, I didn't do so well academically, but I made all kinds of friends within the program and friends at my internship and friends with my intercambio and I did find shampoo (though for more than half my time there I mistakenly used fabric softener instead of detergent), and I had better access to better and cheaper meds there than I have in the US, so I didn't end up in the back of beyond and was very, very sorry to leave. I expected to find a job right when I got home, and that didn't happen, but the study abroad experience has made me look a lot more interesting to prospective employers. (American Student who studied in Spain)

I felt more confident going into it than I did once I got there. I hoped to learn more Spanish than I did, but upon returning I realize that I really did learn a lot. It is hard to see the change while you are there, but when you get back, they are apparent. (American Student who studied in Spain)

Some of the American students expressed the desire to return to their host country to experience more of the culture. These students indicated they did not have enough time to experience as much of the country as they wanted to. Both the American and international



students expressed plans to do more traveling to experience other cultures. In expressing her overall experience one student had this to say,

I expected everything to be wonderful and I thought I would make so many friends from the host country and travel all over Mexico and go out a lot....I think a lot more than what I had expected depends on my own motivation and making things happen as far as friendships, traveling, and going out. (American Student who studied in Mexico)

Finally, the majority of the respondents (international and American) wanted to achieve their expectations. Those students who came prepared for the experience and had expectations that were realistic found their expectations were met. Other students who were under-prepared for living in a foreign country found they had to re-evaluate their expectations. Some students with unrealistic expectations discovered that they had to put some effort into the experience to achieve their expectations. Other students gave up on their initial expectations after being in the host country and formulated new expectations that were more in line with what they could control.

#### Research Question 6

What programs or interventions international and American study abroad students say will make their experiences more meaningful? Students were asked what programs or services they think would make their experience more meaningful. The findings for research question six included the programs available at the host institutions as well as the recommended programs.

#### American Study Abroad Students

During the study abroad experience American study abroad students reported having several programs available to help with the study abroad experience. The American students found support from other students in the form of international student group, language partners,

host and international students, and students who had studied abroad in the U.S. The students also indicated that workshops on what to bring and what to expect and meetings with former students to get a better perspective were also extremely helpful.

The support services the students had available included American academic director or in-country program coordinator, staff from home universities, Student Services Offices, housing coordinators, medical services, individual tutoring, International Study Abroad Offices, host families, and the instructors.

American study abroad students also indicated that language classes, language intensive program with international students, weekly guest talks on cultural integration, academic direction, and professional goals were useful in enhancing the experience. One student indicated that ‘new encounters’, a program that united host students learning English with foreign students learning the host language, was extremely useful in increasing the student’s language fluency. Another student indicated that the accommodation office provided services that were useful in finding updated housing information. The student described the service provided by the office and indicated that daily updated copies of housing locations and prices were provided by the office.

One student indicated that the lack of any program was actually the most beneficial part of the experience. The student stated “the lack of programs gave us more time to discover the uniqueness of other cultures and to really immerse ourselves in daily life.”

While the above programs were helpful, the American students reported that the addition of more programs would improve the experience. The recommended programs by the students were broken down into four categories language and culture, student support, support services, and facilities.

### Language and Culture

American students expressed achieving fluency in the host language and cultural appreciation as two of their expectations of the study abroad program. American study abroad students indicated that certain programs would have made their language and cultural experience more meaningful. The students indicated that earlier access to language partners, language partnership with natives, and forced language immersion should be implemented. One student indicated that forced language immersion, i.e. having to speak the host language on a daily basis, would have improved the student's host language fluency and fluidity. The students also recommended programs for learning the language, classes that teach about the host culture, and knowledge about the host language should be mandatory prerequisites.

### Student Support

The students indicated that increasing interaction with host students would improve the experience. The American students recommended attaining this goal through increased social gatherings, more mixed classes, less classroom time with fellow Americans, and living with other college students. Additionally, the students indicated that having more opportunities to converse with the native speakers would increase fluidity and fluency of the host language as well as home-stay or being assigned a host family.

### Support Services

American students were accustomed to having a significant level of support at the home institution and, therefore, support services were key components to making the experience

enjoyable. While the host institutions offered varied forms of support, the students had additional recommendations. American students recommended stronger support network, grounded support for ensuring safety, more organized and rigorous class schedule, as well as help with class selection. The students indicated that at times there was a lack of organization and planning, and that more advance planning would have helped with class selections and schedules.

I would have greatly appreciated some form of academic support for foreign students - arranging a student tutor that has passed the class before would be ideal. Foreign students obviously have more questions and problems and the availability of the professor was not enough. (American Student who studied in Spain)

Additionally, the students wanted better communication between home institution and host institution on expectations in order to be prepared for the study experience. The student felt that guidance or literature from the home institution preparing them for the experience was needed. They recommended that support start prior to departure with a pre-orientation session or workshops on what to expect.

I would like to have been allowed to participate in programs at the town's university, and I would have appreciated being given an orientation session prior to departure so that I knew what I'd be doing upon arriving in my host school. (American Student who studied in Sweden)

Finally, American students recommended more meaningful international student welcome that included resources about visa and immigration and a financial planning program to help them manage their money. The American students expressed concern about lack of funds and the expenses; additionally they did not have the means to explore the country like they wanted to.

## Facilities

American students were accustomed to the amenities of a developed country and some had trouble adjusting to the difference in amenities, or lack thereof, in their host country. One of the major recommendations was for better computer labs with internet access. Additional recommendations to improve the facilities included air filters in rooms, better libraries, and improved sanitary conditions.

## International Students

While the international students were less detailed in their responses, they identified programs and services that were useful to their stay. The writing center and International Student Office were the services most frequently identified as being helpful to the students. International students found university facilities such as the gym, health center, library, and university housing added to their enjoyment of the experience. The students also identified specific services such as résumé workshops, personal counseling, tutors, cross-cultural discussion groups, and teaching assistantships.

International students found services such as ESL programs, classes to improve language, writing, and presentation skills very helpful in increasing their language skills. Academic advisors, financial advisors, visa services, Office of Student Activities, student support services, mental health services, and career services were reported as services the students found useful. Some students found host parents to be beneficial to the study.

While having the above services available, the international students reported that the addition of more programs would make their experience more meaningful. The recommended programs by the international students were, likewise, broken down into the same categories,

language and culture, student support, support services, and facilities, as the American students.

### Language and Culture

One of the primary concerns of international students was their language skills. The students wanted programs that assisted with language implemented, specifically English classes that teach how to communicate in everyday situations and discussion groups. Forced immersion into the host language left the students with fewer demands for language programs.

### Student Support

Some of the international students expressed the desire to play a larger role at the host institution and thus recommended programs whereby they would be facilitators, have the opportunity to introduce culture to the local community, and have the opportunity to teach their native language to students.

In terms of building relationships and increasing cultural awareness, the international students recommended more international-domestic student interaction and more opportunities to interact informally with faculty, staff, and students of the host country. Additionally, students wanted student retreats, more social activities, and the opportunity to meet other international students from different parts of the world. The international students would also like to find more people from their home countries or countries close to theirs. The students indicated programs that teach others to be respectful of people from different cultures would also be helpful.

### Support Services

International students wanted additional support services such as counseling services,

programs to integrate the students into groups of U.S. students, and programs for international students with families. The students also wanted to have more writing and reading support services especially for non-native speakers.

International students also had specific recommendations at the departmental level of the institution. The students recommended that departments be better informed of immigration regulations. The students recommended programs be implemented that teach faculty about international culture and also have a faculty member assigned to work with international students within the different academic departments. One student recommended the following;

Having some kind of international component (e.g. a course) in my college/department/program. Having a mentor (student in the same program), some type of curricular and extracurricular activities jointly organized by nationals and internationals, visits in professional environments, promoting true cultural exchange between internationals and nationals through workshops, speakers series, etc. (International Student from Democratic Republic of Congo)

The international students would like to have more knowledge about legal issues such as work permits and applying for prolonged stay in the United States. Finally the students wanted to have increased and better open communication channels with the universities.

One international student found the one day orientation adequate preparation for the experience. The student stated, “I think the one day orientation was an outstanding [*sic*] preparation for the ‘cultural shock’ ahead... (By cultural shock I mean small cultural differences, such as eating with a fork alone or touching the food with the hands, or saying ‘let’s do this’ or ‘let’s go there ‘ without really meaning it)” (International Student from Portugal).

### Facilities

Additionally, the students had financial concerns and, therefore, wanted lower tuition, cheaper housing, better salaries, and merit based scholarships for foreign students. The students

would like to see more reliable public transportation, good medical care, and easier access to stores. One student especially stated that:

Maybe having mentors during the first years of study would have been a good way to better see and understand cultural differences. Or, maybe having the chance to interact with other international graduate students from other departments would be more enriching. However, the most important thing is to have a good academic program with faculty who cares about their graduate students. (International Student from Peru)

### Summary

Chapter 4 summarized the results of the study. This section was divided into two parts, a quantitative and a qualitative section. The quantitative section provided statistical analysis of the data and the qualitative section provided descriptive account of the students' experiences. Supporting documentation in the students' own words was also included.



## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter concludes the research, provides an overview of the findings, indicates conclusions, and makes recommendations for student affairs practitioners dealing with study abroad programs. The purpose of the study was to explore international students and American study abroad students' expectations of and experiences in host countries. The study explored international students' expectations of and experiences in select institutions in the United States and American students' expectations of and experiences in host countries. The results from the survey were analyzed for descriptive statistics. The open-ended questions were coded for common themes.

#### Summary of Findings

The review of the literature revealed that study abroad students measured their experiences using several variables according to research (e.g., Chen, 1996; Hellsten, 2002; Phillips, 2005; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). These included cross-cultural interaction, language confidence, friendship, support network, and host community. Additionally, students gain added learning experiences by associating with others from different cultural backgrounds and of different ethnicities.

The results of this study identified language fluency, building relationship with the host nationals, learning about a new culture, and personal change as significant expectations of the students. The findings of the study confirmed earlier research of Chen (1996) and Hellsten

(2002). In Chen's research students had various reasons for studying abroad including individual growth, cross-cultural learning experience, and international understanding. Hellsten documented the experiences of international students in Australia and reported that these students wanted their expectations to match their experiences.

The study found that students frequently bonded with other international students or non-native students. Both American and international students reported having trouble establishing friendships with the host nationals and the students reported establishing closer connections with students in similar situations. The results of the study were consistent with the studies by Chen (1996), Hellsten (2002), and Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002). These researchers identified the importance of friendship in helping students adjust to a new environment.

While concern over language fluency was an issue for most of the students, the students did not indicate whether lack of fluency in the host language led to social isolation and adjustment issues as indicated in a previous study by Phillips (2005).

The research of Trice (2004) and Peterson et al. (1999) emphasized the importance of social interaction with the host nationals. Trice's research found that students with similar cultural background to host nationals interact more with the host nationals than those with different cultural backgrounds, while Peterson et al. identified the development of international 'ghetto' when visiting students are isolated from host nationals. My research confirmed the issues laid out by Peterson et al. and Trice. The students (American and international) reported bonding more with other international students because of shared experiences and difficulty establishing friendships with the host nationals.

The study found international and American study abroad students had to make adjustments to the host institution. International students indicated that their experiences with

faculty were mixed, while American students expressed surprise about the formality of the classes and professors. Unfamiliarity with the university system led to frustration for the students working out class schedules and registration issues. Both international and American students indicated that support was lacking when it came to identifying and locating certain resources on campus. The results from the research confirmed the studies of Bennett (1988), Chisholm and Berry (2002), Lee (1997), and Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002). Bennett (1988) indicated that American classrooms relied heavily on discussion and inquiry, as opposed to self-directed learning, leaving students ill-equipped for the sort of everyday self-directed experiential learning faced abroad. Rajapaksa and Dundes also revealed that students on study abroad programs found different classroom experiences from their home country. Lee attributed feelings of discomfort in the classroom to culture shock.

Overall, the students learned to adapt and make the most of their learning experiences. This confirmed Murphy-Lejeune's (2003) research that affirmed that students must adapt and transform as necessary in order to maximize the experience.

### Findings Related to Research Questions

The following sections summarize the findings related to each of the research questions.

#### Research Question 1

Is there a difference between expectations and experiences of international students? The findings for this research question included the findings from two hypotheses.

The report found students had high expectation scores on each of the 10 expectation items. At least 83% of the international students expected to increase their leadership skills and

advance their career, and only 55% of the students experienced development of leadership skills and advance of careers. The gap scores revealed that the real experiences of the students fell short of expectancies on 7 of the 10 experienced items. The items the students had higher expectations of than experiences of were socialization and cultural integration, experience increase global awareness, leadership skills and career advancement, form friendship with the host nationals, host language confidence, support network in the host community, and better career opportunities at home. The students' experiences of differences in people and culture, personal change and increased cultural knowledge surpassed their expectations. The students had the lowest expectations and experiences of support network

Ho<sub>1</sub> stated there was no difference between international students' expectations and their experiences with their host institutions. The paired samples t-test was significant so the hypothesis was rejected. The study showed that there was significant difference between international students' expectations and their experiences. The results of the paired sample t-test revealed that 6 of the 10 pairs had significant differences between expectations and experiences.

Based on the evaluation of all the results, gap scores, percentage of agreement, and pair samples t-test, the most significant differences were found with the expectations and experiences of leadership skills and career development, social and cultural integration in the host culture, and friendships formed with the host nationals.

Ho<sub>2</sub> stated there was no difference between mean experience scores for male and female international students. The independent sample t-test was not significant, so the hypothesis was retained. The experiences of students did not differ based on their gender.

Summary of the Qualitative Findings: The international students expected the United

States to provide a warm community with friends for emotional support and professionalism in the work environment. What they found were difficulty connecting and making friends with American students and less interaction than they had hoped. While having language expectations, the international students expected to learn about the culture, to think about their own cultural identity, and understand how a first world country operates.

Some students reported dissatisfaction with the Americans' knowledge and efforts to understand other cultures. Those international students who found that their expectations were unmet refocused on expectations of self and education. International students' experiences of the host institutions were primarily positive. The students indicated that their experiences with faculty were mixed. The international students expected a productive study environment with help and support from university faculty and the International Office. While the host university offered support in the form of the International Student Office, some international students still felt more needed to be done at the departmental level.

### Research Question 2

Is there a difference between expectations and experiences of American study abroad students? The findings for this research question included the findings from two hypotheses

The report found the American students reported high expectation of personal change (91%) and high experience of personal change (92%). The gap scores revealed that the real experiences of the students fell significantly short on 2 of the 10 expectations. The items students had higher expectations of than experiences were socialization and cultural integration and form friendship with the host nationals. The gap between expectation of socialization and cultural integration and experience of socialization and cultural integration was .31. While the

gap between expectation and experience of forming friendships with the host nationals was .22. The gaps between expectation and experiences for the rest of the items were relatively small ranging from .09 to -.08. The students had the lowest expectations and experiences of support network in the host community.

Ho<sub>21</sub> stated there was no difference between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with their host institutions. The paired sample t-test was not significant, so the hypothesis was retained. The study showed that there was no significant difference between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences.

Ho<sub>22</sub> stated there was no difference between mean experience scores for male and female American study abroad students. The independent sample t-test was not significant, so the hypothesis was retained. The experiences of students did not differ based on their gender.

Summary of the Qualitative Findings: American study abroad students expressed expectations of building relationships with the host nationals, forming friendships and language partnership with the native students. A majority of the students reported that they expected to be fluent in the host language by the end of the experiences. American study abroad students who expected language improvements found that their grasp of the host language did not improve as much as they would have liked.

American students reported experiencing different measures of social isolation. The students discovered that the host students were not always receptive to Americans, thus building friendships were challenges not easily overcome. Some students felt it was much easier to form friendships with other international students. The students also reported that the experience had taught them to appreciate cultural differences and similarities and to be more open-minded and

well-rounded. Additionally, some students learned to appreciate the cultural interaction of the people and developed a better understanding of global views of current issues.

Heritage seeking was one of the reasons students cited for going on study abroad according to the literature (Neff, 2001). One student who went to Africa had this to say of her experience “My only other expectation was that as an African American I would find some kind of acceptance and recognition as an African American in Ghana.” The student reported being disappointed as being treated as just a regular American and not as a person with African heritage. American study abroad students also reported having mixed reviews of the host institutions, some students found them kind and accommodating, going out of their way to ensure students were comfortable and safe. Others found them to be less organized and more laid back than they were accustomed.

Depending on the study abroad destination, students received different reactions from the institutions. A selected group of American study abroad students recognized the limitation of studying in countries that were not considered first world, and that it was not feasible to provide the same services as their home institution. Others commented on the difficulty of maneuvering the system, having a paper and pencil system instead of a computerized system. Unfamiliarity with the university system led to dissatisfaction for the students working out class schedules and registration issues. While some students expected the work load to be easier, others quickly discovered that study abroad was just as challenging at their home institution.

American students found that the expectation of cultural learning occurred more outside the classroom than in the institution. These students valued the informal learning over the formal learning. Informal learning gave the students the opportunity to experience a new culture, which can only occur with direct interaction with the host nationals. One student expressed loving

experiential learning and that the experience taught her to take charge of her own education. The student's family also noticed the change in her and indicated that the student sounded more mature academically.

Below is the account of an American student's study abroad experience in Israel. The account is one where the student experienced living in a foreign country and accepting the culture and settling in to some form of normalcy.

I did not expect to become so desensitized to the military, to security searches, and to stories about friends and family dying in attacks or wars. I absolutely did not expect to become so familiar with the Russian immigrant population- I hardly knew there was one and I spent the second semester living with a family. I didn't expect so many of my American friends to so strongly identify with Israel and want to make aliyah (immigrate to Israel) and I did not expect there to be such a gulf between European students, who tended to be older, non-Jewish and more focused on research and American students who tended to be interested in 'seeing the homeland' and having a good time while learning Hebrew. I did not expect to realize that my view truly was limited to the American perspective, that I assumed things written in English came out of America, or that I have a much stronger tendency to defend America while abroad than I do while living here. (American Student who studied in Israel)

### Research Question 3

Do experiences of international students in America differ from those of American study abroad students? The findings for this research question included the findings from one hypothesis.

Ho<sub>31</sub> stated there is no difference between mean experience scores for international students in America and mean experience score for American students in study abroad programs. The independent sample t-test was not significant; therefore, the hypothesis was retained. The study revealed that the experiences of international students were not significantly different from



experiences of American study abroad students in the host country.

Further analysis of the survey found that international students (88%) were more comfortable speaking the host language than the American study abroad students. The study also found international students were more comfortable communicating with faculty and host nationals than the American students. International students were more satisfied with their experiences of access to support services than the American students.

American students showed higher percentage of satisfaction with the overall experience (94%) than international students (81%). Additionally, the results of the study revealed international students were slightly more satisfied with communications with faculty, classroom environment, interaction with faculty, and support services than American study abroad students. On the other hand, American study abroad students were more satisfied with participation in class and friendship with other students than the international students.

Summary of the Qualitative Findings: Loneliness, lack of support structure, unfamiliar registration procedures, language fluency, and difficulty making friends with the host nationals were some of the shared similarities between American study abroad students and international students. Other observed similarities included financial problems, classroom and faculty issues, culture shock, and personal change.

Both the American study abroad students and international students found support from the host institution international student office; however, the students indicated that support from faculty and staff was often lacking. While American students had language partners, international students did not. Tours of the host country were available for American students, but they were not offered to international students studying in America. The American study

abroad students reported having more cultural support; international students reported having very little. The international students felt that very little was done to expose students to American culture.

The majority of the respondents enjoyed the experience and felt some form of change occurring. Those students who came prepared for the experience and had expectations that were realistic found their expectations were met. Other students who were under prepared for living in a foreign country found they had to re-evaluate their expectations. Some students with unrealistic expectations discovered that they had to put some effort into the experience to achieve their expectations. Other students gave up on their initial expectations after being in the host countries and formulated new expectations that were more in line with what they could control.

Finally, the experience left international and American study abroad students wanting to explore other countries before they returned to their home county.

#### Research Question 4

Do expectations of international students in America differ from expectations of American study abroad students? The findings for this research question included the findings from one hypothesis.

Ho<sub>4</sub><sub>1</sub> stated there is no difference between the expectations of international students in America and expectations of American students in study abroad programs. The independent sample t-test was not significant; therefore, the hypothesis was retained. The study revealed that the expectations of international students were not significantly different from expectations of American study abroad students of the host country.

Further analysis of the gap scores between international students' expectations and

American students' expectations along with the percentage of agreement on expectations revealed some differences. The findings of the study revealed that international students had higher expectations of host language confidence, leadership skills and career advancement, forming friendship with the host nationals, and support network in the host community than the American students. Additionally, American students had higher expectations of increase cultural knowledge, differences in people and culture, and personal change than the international students. The study also revealed that 96% of the American study abroad students expected to experience increased global awareness versus 85% of the international students. A higher percentage of international students agreed that they expected leadership skills and career advancement, to form friendship with the host nationals, host language confidence, support network in the host community, and better career opportunities at home than the American study abroad students. Neither set of students had high expectations of a support network in the host community.

Summary of the Qualitative Findings: The results of the study documented American students' expectations of cultural integration and understanding more about their own culture as a result of living in a host country. International students had expectations of learning about a new culture and to have the opportunity to teach others about their own culture.

The study indicated that American students expected the host institution to provide support services similar to their home institutions. The international students expected service akin to that of a first world country. The study found that the level of support the students received impacted their level of satisfaction with the experience.

When asked to describe their initial expectations of the study experience, international

students were less verbal than the American students. International students felt they were visiting a first world country and had expectations of certain levels of professionalism, wealth, and services. Study abroad students had varied expectations depending on the country they visited, some expected the worst and others expected the same support and comfort as their home institutions.

Overall, the main expectations of the students were to be fluent in the host language and form friendships with host nationals. Most of these expectations proved to be unrealistic because of time constraint, structure of the program, and the students' inability to form friendships. Students in general enjoyed the experience and had reported experiencing personal change. Generally the students expressed the desire to experience more.

Towards the 2nd half of my stay, or the last 6 months, I finally did realize what I had always envisioned. Once past the initial feelings of loneliness [*sic*] and culture shock, I adapted to my host country more than I could have ever envisioned. Given how much I enjoyed the people I came to know, the culture, the idiomatic expressions, the food and fashion, I expect to return to the country possibly permanently. (American student who studied in the UK)

#### Research Question 5

To what extent are international students and American students' post-study abroad expectations similar or different?

International and American students post-study abroad expectations were similar in the sense that the students had expectations of the experience resulting in different views of their culture, other cultures, personal change, and career advancement.

The American study abroad students' post-study abroad expectations were to be more globally rounded, more culturally aware, and more fluent in the host language. For the international students their primary concerns were to acquire a degree and advance their careers.

For them the United States represented an opportunity to get valuable education and practical experience. The impression that the American students gave of the study abroad experience was that of an opportunity to travel and encounter different cultures. The students did not report having significant expectations for the end results of the study abroad experience.

Overall, the study found that the international and American study abroad students had different priorities for their experiences. The international students expected the experience to be a stepping stone to professional and career development. American students had expectations that were more personal than professional in nature.

#### Research Question 6

What programs or interventions do international and American study abroad students say will make their experiences more meaningful?

Overall, the American study abroad students wanted more pre-departure preparation, better organization and planning. The students (American and international) wanted more connection with the natives or host nationals and more understanding of faculty expectations and classroom differences. Additionally, the American students wanted partnerships with students of the host countries, while the international students wanted recognition of their culture and difficulties.

The support services the students had available included American academic directors or in-country program coordinators, staff from home universities, Student Services Office, housing coordinators, medical services, individual tutoring, International Study Abroad Offices, host families, and instructors.

American students recommended stronger support networks, grounded support for ensuring safety, more organized and rigorous class schedules, as well as help with class

selection. The students felt that at times there was a lack of organization and planning, and that more advance planning would have helped with class selections and schedules.

International students recommended English classes that teach how to communicate in everyday situations and discussion groups, the opportunity to introduce their culture and teach their native language to students, more opportunities to interact informally with faculty, and program to integrate the students into groups of U.S. students. Additionally, the international students recommended that departments be better informed of immigration regulations, programs that teach faculty about international culture, and a faculty member assigned to work with international students within the different academic departments.

### Conclusion

The study found international students had high expectations on what to expect while on the study abroad experience. Their experiences were noticeably lower than their expectations and in some cases accounted for their dissatisfaction with their host country. American students on the other hand had standard expectations of their experiences. They reported experiences that were close to their expectations. One could argue that international students expected too much or that their expectations were unrealistic. An argument could also be made that American students expected too little or they were unsure of what to expect. However, given the results of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. International students overall had positive expectations and experiences of the study abroad experiences. However, international students had higher expectations of the host countries than experienced.
2. International and American students shared similar experiences of their host countries.

3. There were no significant differences between the expectations of International students and American study abroad students. However, international students had slightly higher expectations for their stay in the host country than American students.
4. Gender did not play a significant role in the expectations and experiences of international and American study abroad students in their host countries.
5. Both the international and American students felt there was significant room for improving the study abroad experience.
6. International students have different post-study abroad expectations than American students. International students' post-study expectations were more professional in nature while the American students had post-study expectations that were more personal in nature.
7. Irrespective of the expectations of the students, the experience was one that changed the students.

Finally, the study abroad experience requires students and institutions to establish clear goals and expectations. Part of the process of quantifying goals and expectations involves differentiating between desires and expectations. Desires are the wish list, the things the students want in a study abroad experience. Expectation on the other hand represents the standard requirement of a study abroad program. Institutions should then safeguard themselves by linking expectations directly to the mission of the institution. With this safeguard students are better able to distinguish between what they desire from the experience and what they expect the experience to provide. To become better providers of service institutions should recognize that it is not enough to settle for managing expectations; they must maintain the types of services that allow students to maximize their experience.

### Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

The following recommendations for practice were given based on the study's findings and personal opinion.

1. Address areas where significant gaps exist between experience and expectation.

Administrators should investigate where significant gaps exist between expectations and experiences. Areas where students had high expectations and these expectations fell short of the experiences are grounds for investigation by policy makers. Areas where expectations were lower than experienced provides another area of opportunity for investigation. By investigating the actual experiences administrators are better able to plan pre-departure orientations to better prepare the students on what to expect. By analyzing gaps between expectations and experiences administrators can provide better service to the student population.

2. More extensive pre-departure preparation and orientation.

Students should be given at least a 2-day course on living in and dealing with different cultures. Longer orientation sessions that provide realistic material on living in a foreign country will better prepare students to have realistic expectation and provide them with the right frame of mind to maximize the experience. Students who intend to go on study abroad programs should research the country and the culture as much as possible. Movies, newspaper, and novels are important source of information; they can aid the student in identifying cultural norms that they might find unsettling (Hoffa et al., 1993). Forearmed is forewarned, with advance knowledge of the culture, students are better able to adjust and derive maximum benefit from their experience.



3. Increased involvement of international students in campus events.

International students indicated wanting to be included and involved in campus events.

These students are willing resources, rich in knowledge about countries that host study abroad students. International students also enrich the campus environment and provide an understanding of how other societies view America and Americans. Administrators should make use of this available resource (international students), by having them take part in pre-departure workshops for students going on study abroad, as well as being available to help students understand different cultures.

4. Increased preparation and planning.

Lack of structural or systematic planning and preparation is often blamed for the failure or dissatisfaction of students with the host institutions. This failure or dissatisfaction results from the inadequate preparation on the part of the students, as well as the institution. The institutions, therefore, need to view data about students' experiences (e.g.; Chisholm & Berry, 2002; Hellsten, 2002; Trice, 2004; Zhao et al., 2005) to see if there are gaps between expectations and experiences. If gaps exist, then the institution should identify interventions that can be employed to minimize these gaps. Identifying the expectations and experiences of students is only the first step in the process. Institutions concerned with study abroad programs must go a step further by creating an orientation program for all involved and developing a knowledge base of different cultures and culture specific situations. Subsequently, gaps in training for personnel to match expectations with experiences can also be identified from students' analyses of their exposure to a host culture.

5. Make students feel welcome.

Institutions have an obligation to involve, serve, and retain the students they recruit. One of the ways of doing this is to make students feel welcome by providing services and support that help students better adapt to the host culture. Family friend programs and housing for families are areas that can be implemented to assist students better adjust to living in a foreign country. Administrators can also provide the students access to the host culture by directing them to historical sites, museums, cultural events, and traditions of the host country. Additionally, administrators can provide programs where the students are able to share about their culture and interest with the campus population or even the host community. Making students feel welcome is about ensuring students feel at home in the host culture.

The following recommendations for further research were also given based on the study's findings and personal opinion.

1. A qualitative study should be done with a small focus group of international and study abroad students to pinpoint areas of the study abroad experience that needs improving.
2. An evaluation of the support services available to students as well as the support services students want from host institutions should be done.
3. Further study should be done on preparing students on transitioning into a foreign institution.
4. A comparative study of students embarking on multiple study abroad initiatives to determine whether their expectations and experiences are similar.
5. A comparative study of study abroad undergraduates and graduates students should be done to determine differences in expectations and experiences.

6. A study should be done on the language ability of students embarking on study abroad. This may include investigation of the student's home language, relationship of the student's native language to the host language as well as what exposure to the host language students have.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Paper Based Cross Cultural Participant Questionnaire

**CROSS-CULTURAL PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE**

*Survey on your experiences and expectation of host institutions*

*Prepared by Evelyn Roach, Doctoral student, East Tennessee State University, P.O. Box 19317, Johnson City, TN 37614*

**DIRECTIONS**

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. Please respond to the following questions below. Your responses to this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The questionnaire has no identifying numbers or marks on it. Please do not indicate your name or put any identifiers that can be traced back to you. Place an “X” in the blank space to indicate the selected answer of your choice. Please select only **one response** to each question. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

**Please respond by selecting the appropriate boxes that apply to you.**

A) I am an international student enrolled in a U.S. higher education institution	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
B) I am an American student who has studied abroad in the last 5 years	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Undergrad <input type="checkbox"/>
Grad <input type="checkbox"/>	Please identify your country of origin _____	
Please identify your study abroad nation _____		

**Rate the statements on your expectation of study abroad.**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I expected socialization and cultural integration into the host environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I expected the Study abroad experience to increase my global awareness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I expected the Study abroad experience to develop my leadership skills and advance my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I expected to increase my knowledge about the uniqueness of other cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I expected to discover differences in people and culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I expected to form friendship readily with individuals of the host culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I expected language confidence when communicating with people( in the host language) in the host culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I expected to find a support network in the host community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I expected to benefit from increased intercultural exchange.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I expected better career opportunities in my home country as a result of my study abroad experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I expected personal change from living in a new place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent are the following statements true?

**Students (International\American) see the study abroad experience as an investment in...**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
12. Personal and professional development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Monetary\ economic development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Social development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Cultural and linguistic development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Academic learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Rate the statements on your experience with study abroad.**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
17. I experienced socialization and cultural integration into the host environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. The Study abroad experience created global awareness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. The experience developed leadership skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I increased my knowledge about the uniqueness of other cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I discovered differences in people and culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. I formed friendships readily with host nationals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I experienced language confidence when communicating with the host culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I found a support network in the host community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. I benefited from increased intercultural exchange.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. I will experience better career opportunities in my home country as a result of my study abroad experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. I experienced personal change from living in a new place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**To what extent are the following true?**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
28. I am comfortable speaking the host language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. I speak my native language outside the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. I speak the host language outside of the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. I am comfortable communicating with the host nationals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. I am comfortable communicating with faculty in the host country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**My experience of the following was satisfactory**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
33. Access to instructors\faculty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Access to student support services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Access to help with languages skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Access to help with writing skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**I am satisfied with the following..**

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
37. Overall experience in the host country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Interaction with host nationals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Friendship made on campus with host\domestic students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Friendship made with other international\study abroad students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Working in groups with international \study abroad students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Working in groups with host\domestic students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. Interaction with students from the dominant culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Communication with students from the host country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. Knowledge of the host culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. Classroom environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. Participation in classroom discussions (e.g. ask questions and have my say)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48. Interaction with the people in the host community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. Support services provided by the institution (e.g. computer lab, counseling service)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. Interaction with faculty and support staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Please help me to understand your personal expectation and experiences by answering the following questions. Use the back of the sheet if you require more space for your answers. Thank you.*

51. What were your initial expectations for the study abroad experience?


52. How have your expectations changed? Explain new expectations, if any.


53. Please describe your experiences with the host institution?


54. What would you change about your experience?


55. What programs or interventions do you think would have made your experience more meaningful?


56. What program or services were the most meaningful or helpful on the host campus?

57. How well did you speak the language of the country you visited?

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## Appendix B

### Contact Letters

(First email contact to the Coordinators)

To: International\Study abroad coordinators  
From: Evelyn roach [zend2@etsu.edu](mailto:zend2@etsu.edu)  
Subject: Requesting volunteers to complete a survey

My name is Evelyn Roach and I am a doctoral student of the Clemmer College of Education at East Tennessee State University. I am currently completing my doctoral dissertation, which is a comparative study of international students and American Study abroad students' experiences and expectations in host countries.

I am trying to find both international and study abroad students willing to share their experiences. I would be very grateful if you would assist me with my research by identifying international and study abroad students who would be willing to take part in my research. The students' involvement is to complete an online survey on their experiences and expectations of the host institutions/countries. If you chose to assist me in my research, your role as contact person would be to forward an email to students ask if they would mind completing a questionnaire on their experiences with study abroad. All information collected will be handled with strict confidentiality. Your cooperation is very important to this research and I would like to thank you in advance for your assistance and time.

Evelyn Roach  
Doctoral Fellow  
Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University  
Tel: 423- 926-3564 (Home)  
Or 423- 202-2985 (Cell)  
[Zend2@etsu.edu](mailto:Zend2@etsu.edu)

(Letter to Participants)

Dear Participant:

My name is Evelyn Roach and I am a doctoral student of the Clemmer College of Education at East Tennessee State University. I am currently completing my doctoral dissertation, which is a **comparative study of international students and American study abroad students' experiences and expectations in host countries.**

The purpose of this study is to acquire a deeper understanding of different experiences of students who study abroad (international and American students) and to understand whether their expectation of the host country differ from their experiences. I would like to give a brief survey questionnaire to international and American study abroad students. It should only take about 15 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about your experiences and expectations of the host country. Since this project deals with experiences, it might cause some minor stress. However, you may also feel better after you have had the opportunity to express yourselves about your experiences. This study may show that students share similar experiences.

To take the survey click on the link below

<http://www.etsu.edu/coe/UltimateSurvey/takeSurvey.asp?surveyID=41>

This method is completely anonymous and confidential. In other words, there will be no way to connect your name with your responses. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Approval for this research have being given by ETSU IRB and has been reviewed by the Appalachian State University IRB.

If you do not want to fill out the survey, it will not affect you in any way. Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. If you are under 18 years you cannot participate. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected.

If you have any research-related questions, you may contact me, Evelyn Roach, at [zend2@etsu.edu](mailto:zend2@etsu.edu) . I am working on this project together under the supervision of Dr. Jasmine Renner. You may reach him/her at **423-439-4430**. Also, the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University is available at (423) 439-6055 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

Sincerely,  
Evelyn Roach  
East Tennessee State University  
P.O Box 19317  
Johnson City TN 37614  
Tel: 423-926-3564  
Email: [zend2@etsu.edu](mailto:zend2@etsu.edu)

Appendix C

Online Questionnaire

# CROSS-CULTURAL PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Prepared by Evelyn Roach, Doctoral student, East Tennessee State University, P.O. Box 19317, Johnson City, TN 37614 Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. Your responses to this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

I am an \_\_\_\_\_ student enrolled in a U.S. higher education institution

- International
- American study abroad
- Other

Select all that applies

- Male
- Female
- Undergrad
- Graduate

Please identify your country of origin and study abroad destination

Rate your expectations of study abroad based on the following statements.

	* 1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree				
	strongly disagree				strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5

1. I expected socialization and cultural integration into the host environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I expected the Study abroad experience to increase my global awareness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I expected the Study abroad experience to develop my leadership skills and advance my career.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I expected to increase my knowledge about the uniqueness of other cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I expected to discover differences in people and culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I expected to form friendship readily with individuals of the host culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I expected language confidence when communicating with people( in the host language) in the host culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I expected to find a support network in the host community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I expected better career opportunities in my home country as a result of my study abroad experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I expected personal change from living in a new place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Rate the statements on your experience with study abroad.**

	* 1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree				
	strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	strongly agree 5
11. I experienced socialization and cultural integration into the host environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The study abroad experience created global awareness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The experience developed leadership skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I increased my knowledge about the uniqueness of other cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I discovered differences in people and culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I formed friendships readily with host nationals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I experienced language confidence when communicating with the host culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I found a support network in the host community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I will experience better career opportunities in my home country as a result of my study abroad experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I experienced personal change from living in a new place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. How well did you speak the language of the country you visited?

not at all  somewhat  Proficiently  Fluently  Very Fluently

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

	* 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree				
	strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	strongly agree 5
22. I am comfortable speaking the host language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I speak my native language outside the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I speak the host language outside of the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I am comfortable communicating with the host nationals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. I am comfortable communicating with faculty in the host country.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How would you rate your experiences with the following?

	* 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neutral; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied				
	very dissatisfied 1	2	3	4	very satisfied 5
27. Access to instructors/faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Access to student support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Access to help with languages skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Access to help with writing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. What programs or services were the most meaningful or helpful on the host campus?



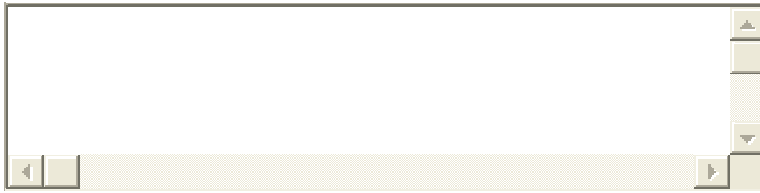
I am satisfied with the following...

	* 1 = strongly disagree; 2 =disagree; 3= neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree				
	strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	strongly agree 5
32. Overall experience in the host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Interaction with host nationals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Friendship made on campus with host\domestic students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Friendship made with other international\study abroad students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Interaction with students from the dominant culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. Communication with faculty from the host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. Classroom environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. Participation in classroom discussions (e.g. ask questions and have my say)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. Support services provided by the institution (e.g. computer lab, counseling service)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. Interaction with faculty and support staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

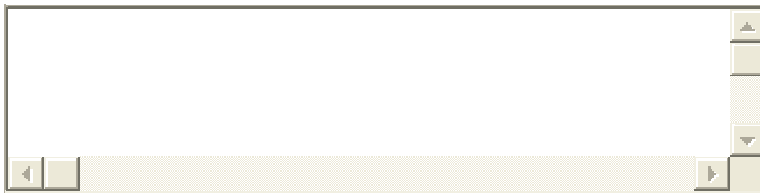
42. What were your initial expectations for the study abroad experience?

43. How have your expectations changed? Explain new expectations, if any.

44. Please describe your experiences with the host institution?



45. What programs or interventions do you think would have made your experience more meaningful?



## Appendix D

### Additional Tables

Table 23

*Overall International Students' Satisfaction with the Host Country*

<i>International Students</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>%</i>
Overall experience	10	6	19	12	126	81
Interaction with host nationals	20	13	29	19	106	68
Friendship with host students	26	17	42	27	87	56
Friendship with other students	10	6	28	18	117	75
Interaction with host students	23	15	43	28	89	57
Communication with host faculty	12	8	27	17	116	75
Classroom environment	7	5	33	21	115	74
Participation in class	16	10	40	26	99	64
Support services	11	7	29	19	115	74
Interaction with faculty\ staff	8	5	28	18	119	77

Table 24

*Overall American Study Abroad Students' Satisfaction with the Host Country*

<i>American Students</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>%</i>
Overall experience	7	3	9	4	236	94
Interaction with host nationals	30	12	36	14	186	74
Friendship with host students	49	19	51	20	152	60
Friendship with other students	20	8	28	11	204	81
Interaction with host students	48	19	56	22	148	59
Communication with host faculty	23	9	63	25	166	66
Classroom environment	37	15	66	26	149	59
Participation in class	35	14	38	15	179	71
Support services	52	21	74	29	126	50
Interaction with faculty\ staff	32	13	58	23	162	64

Table 25

*Overall International Students' Percentage of Agreement with Experience in the Host Country*

<i>Experience Items</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>%</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	20	13	34	22	101	65
Experience increase global awareness	9	6	24	15	122	79
leadership skills & career advancement	19	12	51	33	85	55
Increase cultural knowledge	6	4	29	19	120	77
Differences in people and culture	1	1	16	10	138	89
Form friendship with the host nationals	29	19	35	23	91	59
Host language confidence	17	11	32	21	106	68
Support network in the host community.	39	25	39	25	77	50
Better career opportunities at home	9	6	39	25	107	69
Personal change	6	4	16	10	133	86

Table 26

*Overall American Study Abroad Students' Percentage of Agreement with Experience in the Host Country*

<i>Experience Items</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>%</i>
Socialization and cultural integration	30	12	41	16	181	72
Experience increase global awareness	3	1	14	6	235	93
leadership skills & career advancement	43	17	58	23	151	60
Increase cultural knowledge	4	2	8	3	240	95
Differences in people and culture	8	3	9	4	235	93
Form friendship with the host nationals	61	24	43	17	148	59
Host language confidence	63	25	39	15	150	60
Support network in the host community.	63	25	51	20	138	55
Better career opportunities at home	32	13	75	30	145	58
Personal change	5	2	16	6	231	92

## VITA

### EVELYN DOMVILLE-ROACH

- Personal Data: Place of Birth: Clarendon, Jamaica  
Marital Status: Married
- Education: Data Processing Management, Knox Community  
College, Clarendon, Jamaica, Diploma, 1991  
B. Sc., Computing with Management Studies, University of  
Technology, Kingston, Jamaica, 1998  
General Business Administration, MBA. College of Business,  
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, 2000  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D., 2007, East  
Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
- Professional Experience: Assistant Lecturer, Knox Community College Clarendon, Jamaica,  
1992 –1994  
Application Specialist, ALCAN Jamaica Ltd. Manchester, Jamaica,  
1995  
Project Administrator, Land Valuation Department, 8 Ardenne Rd.,  
Jamaica, 1996 - 1998  
Part-time Lecturer, University of Technology, Jamaica, School of  
Computer and Information Technology, 1997 - 1998  
Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, College of  
Business, 2000  
Lecturer and Exam Coordinator, University of Technology, Jamaica,  
School of Computer and Information Technology, 2001-2002  
Doctoral Fellow, East Tennessee State University, Educational  
Leadership and Policy Analysis, 2003- 2007  
Human Resource Internship – EPIC Technologies, LLC, 2006
- Honors and Awards: Most Outstanding Major Project, University of Technology,  
Jamaica, 1998  
First Class Honors Award for Academic Excellence, University of  
Technology, Jamaica, 1998  
Phi Kappa Phi International Honors Society inducted member,  
East Tennessee State University, 2000  
Phi Kappa Phi Essay Competition Winner, East Tennessee State  
University, 2004  
Above and Beyond Distinction as a Student Leader, East  
Tennessee State University, 2006

## National Conference

### Papers and Presentations:

- Dixon, L., Roach, E. & Doctoral Fellows, (2004). Group decision-making. A workshop presented at the America's Promise Conference, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.
- Renner, J. & Roach, E. (2004). Creating effective learning environments for English as a second language students. A paper presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the *National Association for Developmental Education* (NADE) St. Louis: MO.
- Renner, J. & Roach E. (2005). Learning and teaching above and beyond: Success steps above and beyond for under represented faces in non-traditional places. A paper presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the *National Association for Developmental Education* (NADE). Albuquerque: NM.
- Roach E., Nyabando C., Williams V, & Naholi G. (2006). Cross-cultural communication: The art of listening. A paper presented at the 2006<sup>th</sup> *College Reading Learning Association* (CRLA) Conference. Austin: Texas.

## Community Participation

### And Professional Service:

- Member of Graduate Student Association, East Tennessee State University
- Member of President's Pride Organization, East Tennessee State University
- Member of National Association of Developmental Educators (NADE)
- Vice President of Educational Leadership Association, East Tennessee State University, 2004
- Volunteer at Cherokee Elementary School
- Member of the College of Education Diversity Committee, East Tennessee State University
- International Student Ambassador, East Tennessee State University
- President of Educational Leadership Association, East Tennessee State University 2005 - 2007