

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Short term, big impact? Changes in self-efficacy and cultural intelligence, and the adjustment of multicultural and monocultural students abroad



Angela-MinhTu D. Nguyen*, Julián Jefferies, Blanca Rojas

California State University, Fullerton, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Study abroad
Self-efficacy
Cultural intelligence
Intercultural adjustment
Multiculturalism

ABSTRACT

Although most researchers agree that studying abroad is beneficial, it is uncertain whether studying abroad is related to positive outcomes for very short-term (e.g., 5-week) programs and for multicultural individuals (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants). Using a mixed methods design, we examined changes in multicultural and monocultural students' self-efficacy and cultural intelligence, and their adjustment during a short-term study abroad program. Using longitudinal data from 79 participants, we found that general self-efficacy and cultural intelligence were higher after studying abroad than before studying abroad for monocultural individuals, but not for multicultural individuals. Interestingly, multicultural individuals had higher cultural intelligence than monocultural individuals at both time points. Overall, general self-efficacy and cultural intelligence before studying abroad were related to intercultural adjustment after studying abroad for all participants. In addition, interviews with 15 participants revealed that multicultural and monocultural individuals had different trajectories of intercultural competence while abroad. Implications for study-abroad program duration and content, and research on cultural intelligence are discussed.

More students are going abroad to study than ever before ([Institute of International Education, 2016](#)), with the majority of students participating in short-term programs (8 weeks or less) instead of more traditional semester-long or year-long programs. With these short-term programs gaining in popularity, students, faculty, and program administrators may want to know whether the benefits associated with traditional semester-long or year-long study abroad programs also apply to short-term programs. Using a mixed methods design, we examined changes in multicultural and monocultural students' self-efficacy and cultural intelligence, and their adjustment during a 5-week study abroad program.

Benefits of traditional and short-term study abroad

A recent literature review reveals that students benefit tremendously from their experiences studying abroad, especially in the areas of personal growth, intercultural competence, and academic performance ([Stone & Petrick, 2013](#)). More specifically, students report higher self-confidence, increased autonomy, greater sense of initiative, better communication skills, more cultural openness and sensitivity, and greater success obtaining a job and achieving professional goals ([Marcotte, Desroches, & Pourpart, 2007](#)), and

* Corresponding author at: California State University, Fullerton Department of Psychology, 800N State College Boulevard, Fullerton, CA 92831, United States.

E-mail address: amnguyen@fullerton.edu (A.-M.D. Nguyen).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.08.001>

Received 29 September 2017; Received in revised form 20 July 2018; Accepted 7 August 2018
0147-1767/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

they attribute this personal growth to learning another culture and learning outside the classroom (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). Indeed, students have greater flexibility (e.g., higher tolerance for ambiguity) and better critical thinking skills (e.g., thinking outside of one's own cultural framework) after studying abroad compared to before studying abroad (Savicki, Downing-Burnette, Heller, Binder, & Suntinger, 2004). Further, those who studied abroad are more concerned about international politics, more interested in cross-cultural issues, more culturally cosmopolitan (Carlson & Widaman, 1998), less prejudicial, and less ethnocentric (Goldstein & Kim, 2006) compared to those who did not study abroad (Carlson & Widaman, 1998).

Despite the dearth of research on short-term study abroad programs, existing research suggests that the benefits associated with traditional study abroad programs may generalize to short-term programs, such that those in short-term study abroad programs also experience significant gains in personal awareness, intercultural competence, and academic progress (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Lumkes, Hallett, & Vallade, 2012; Mapp, 2012; Poole & Davis, 2006). Personal awareness includes growth in areas such as self-confidence, motivation, and personal identity (which may include global vs. national citizenship; Bell & Anscombe, 2013; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Poole & Davis, 2006), and a change in views about racial privilege (Lumkes et al., 2012). However, the most widely reported benefit of studying abroad is increased intercultural competence (Anderson et al., 2006; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Lumkes et al., 2012; Mapp, 2012). In addition, positive academic correlates of studying abroad include greater knowledge of the culture and history of students' host country, and a stronger commitment to their academic and career field (Bell & Anscombe, 2013; Mapp, 2012; Poole & Davis, 2006).

Conversely, some studies found that the benefits associated with studying abroad are attenuated for short-term programs. For example, those who studied abroad for at least six months had greater intercultural competence than those who studied abroad for less than six months (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012). Further, those who studied abroad for a semester had greater intercultural sensitivity, higher global mindedness, and a deeper understanding of the host culture and international issues than those who studied abroad for eight weeks or less (Kehl & Morris, 2007-2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004). Nevertheless, the potential benefits of very short study-abroad programs (1–5 weeks) are still uncertain (Dwyer, 2004).

Intercultural adjustment, self-efficacy, and cultural intelligence

For our study, we focused on the intercultural adjustment, general self-efficacy, and cultural intelligence of multicultural and monocultural students in a 5-week study-abroad program. Intercultural adjustment, also known as international or cross-cultural adjustment, concerns the degree to which individuals are comfortable with and proficient in the behaviors and values of a new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Searle & Ward, 1990). It consists of three facets: work adjustment, interaction adjustment, and general adjustment (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). Expatriates, including study-abroad students, are considered well-adjusted if they can adapt to the new work environment, locals or natives in the host country, and the new culture and its living conditions. Individual factors (e.g., self-efficacy, personality, cultural flexibility; Black et al., 1991; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006; Ward, Leong, & Low, 2004), along with organizational, job, and non-work factors, are predictive of better intercultural adjustment. The individual factors that we examined are general self-efficacy and cultural intelligence.

General self-efficacy is the belief in one's own agency and competence (Scholz, Doña, Sud, & Schwarzer, 2002), and it is predictive of greater intercultural adjustment among international students (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & van Horn, 2002). Higher self-efficacy allows students to perform newly learned behaviors in foreign situations, and consequently receive feedback on those behaviors. In turn, this feedback reduces students' uncertainty of expectations, allowing them to perform culturally appropriate behaviors, which then leads to greater intercultural adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Outside of the study abroad context, individuals with higher general self-efficacy tend to have better self-regulation, better well-being, better health behaviors, and better coping strategies (Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005). One reason why students who study abroad receive more job offers (Maddux, Bivolaru, Hafenbrack, Tadmor, & Galinsky, 2014) may be because studying abroad is associated with greater empathy, patience, self-confidence, and other positive personal characteristics, including self-efficacy (Milstein, 2005; Willard-Holt, 2001).

Cultural intelligence includes the knowledge, skills, and awareness to transcend cultural differences and function effectively in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003; Thomas et al., 2008), and it can be referred to more broadly as intercultural or cross-cultural competence (Chiu, Lonner, Matsumoto, & Ward, 2013; Leung, Ang, & Tan, 2014). Like general self-efficacy, cultural intelligence has been found to predict greater intercultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007; Leung et al., 2014; Mol, Born, Willemsen, & van der Molen, 2005). Relatedly, it is also associated with a more successful study abroad experience (Barbuto, Beenen, & Tran, 2015), including increased efforts to seek out cultural experiences while abroad, and greater interest in going abroad for future work or school (Raciocot & Ferry, 2016). More importantly, an increase in this intercultural competence is a desired outcome of international experience, namely study abroad (Anderson et al., 2006; Carlson & Widaman, 1998; Jackson, 2008).

In summary, desired benefits of study abroad include the development of positive personal characteristics, such as general self-efficacy, and development in terms of cross-cultural issues, such as cultural intelligence. Indeed, study abroad is associated with increased general self-efficacy [Milstein, 2005; Willard-Holt, 2001; or more generally, greater personal growth (Marcotte et al., 2007; Poole & Davis, 2006; Ryan & Twibell, 2000)] and cultural intelligence [or related constructs under the umbrella of intercultural competence (Anderson et al., 2006; Carlson & Widaman, 1998; Jackson, 2008; Marcotte et al., 2007)]. In turn, these two variables have been found to improve the study abroad experience in the form of greater intercultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Mol et al., 2005). Therefore, in our study, we focused on both variations in general self-efficacy and cultural intelligence during the study abroad experience, and general self-efficacy and cultural intelligence as predictors of intercultural adjustment.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11004708>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11004708>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)