

Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Sensitivity

Paula K Patterson

Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

One of the ways that students seek to prepare for the global job market is through studying abroad. Although little quantitative data has been collected to demonstrate the best way to develop intercultural sensitivity in students, the number of students participating in study abroad programs continues to increase. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect study abroad has on the development of intercultural learning and sensitivity with students at a mid-sized state-supported university in the Midwest.

The research compared this intercultural development in students participating in study abroad and in students participating in on-campus courses. Statistical functions used for data analysis included paired samples *t*-test and independent sample *t*-test. Qualitative data was collected from interviews with study abroad students and email questionnaires sent to on-campus students at the end of the semester.

The qualitative data revealed voices of change in both groups. The data gathering tool for the quantitative data was the *Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)* (Hammer & Bennett, 2001). The results of the statistical analysis revealed that the groups progressed differently on several scales of the *Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)* (Bennett, 1986, 1993). Neither group revealed significant changes. However, the study abroad group revealed noticeable changes and a small to moderate effect size.