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Association Between Study Abroad Experiences and Ethnocultural Empathy

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Abstract

The ability to interact and interrelate with people from other cultures and ethnicities has great value in a world becoming increasingly more global in its orientation. Not only have institutions invested time and resources to this end, students have become increasingly interested in these opportunities as well. The purpose of this study was to determine whether participation in a study abroad program at a private, liberal arts university in Minnesota correlated to an overall higher level of ethnocultural empathy among participating students. The study investigated whether there was a correlation between higher levels of enthocultural empathy, as measured by the Empathic Feeling & Expression subscale, and duration of study or gender of the participant. A 2 (gender) X 5 (study abroad experience) ANCOVA was used to analyze the data. The independent variables were gender and study abroad experience, year in school was the covariate. Analyses of these data indicate that semester-long study abroad experiences may increase ethnocultural empathy (p=.076). There was no evidence that interim (3 week) study abroad experiences increased ethnocultural empathy.

Dedication

For Christian, Jonah and Elijah

My Champion, my Rock and my Tree.

I love my excellent men.

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I would like to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to my Heavenly Father for providing me not only this opportunity, but also the tremendous support system necessary to complete this work. I am humbled and grateful to be entrusted with so much and hope that the effort here will be of use to Him.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Living in an increasingly diverse and globally-minded world, the ease of travel and accessibility of technology bring people together with greater speed than ever before. Every year, western society is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse (Mlekov & Widell, 2003). An increasingly important aspect of being both well educated and globally competent is an appreciation of and sensitivity to other cultures. The ability to demonstrate intercultural agility and successfully interact with cultures around the globe has never been more important. Universities have rightly begun to recognize the role they play in developing these competencies in their graduates. Richard Wood (1991), president of Earlham College, stated, "…we must recognize that it is central to develop graduates who can cope creatively with the modern, independent world" (p. 10) and "see problems in a multidimensional framework and…empathize with people from other cultures" (p. 10). Both institutions and future employers increasingly look for students to have developed strong intercultural competencies (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006; Tarrant, 2010).

Background of the Study

The ability to interact and interrelate with people from other cultures and ethnicities has great value in a world becoming increasingly more global in its orientation. While this kind of cultural competency has clear educational and economic value, there is also important social value. Research has also indicated that a lack of empathy for others is linked to both intergroup aggression (Struch & Schwartz, 1989) and social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Pro-social actions and a justice-centered orientation are related to the presence of empathy

(Hoffman, 1994; Hoffman, 2008). Research has indicated empathy plays a key role in all types of social interactions, both professional and informal (Davis, 1994), and that the presence of empathy can improve relations between different ethnic groups and subcultures, counteracting hostile behaviors and attitudes (Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997).

Empathy implies an ability to step into the mind of another, and to understand experiences from that unique point of view (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). As Wood (1991) stated, in order to be competent in a global environment, one must be able to not only demonstrate awareness and appreciation for other cultures, but also demonstrate empathy. One must be open to accepting the value of other epistemologies, using those lenses to interpret experiences and cultural interactions.

Many colleges and universities have invested heavily in programming and travel opportunities to promote this type of intercultural competency in their students (Institute for International Education, 2016; American Council on Education Report, 2000). At the outset, study abroad programming was designed as a general education model focusing on language and cultural training designed primarily for women, but that has shifted dramatically in the last 50 years (Burn, 2003). Study abroad programs are now generally thought of as an effective means of offering experiential opportunities to develop empathy, ostensibly equipping learners to be effective members in their local communities and beyond. Not only have institutions invested time and resources to this end, students have become increasingly interested in these opportunities as well. In fact, between the 1994-1995 and 2014-2015 academic school years, there was an increased rate of participation in study abroad of about 300% (Institute of International Education,

2016). There has been increasing governmental attention as well. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. State Department began celebrating an International Education Week (Banks & Erbland, 2002), and the U.S. Department of State announced the creation of a study abroad office, signaling an increasing commitment to the number of students choosing to include study abroad as part of their educational endeavors (Strange & Gibson, 2017).

While these programs have become increasingly popular and purport to have great effect in developing cultural competency, there is need for more research to support the claim (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Questions remain regarding whether or not all study abroad programs deliver what they claim, and whether or not certain program models more effective at increasing empathy in participants than others.

Studies have been conducted with the intent of providing accountability, attempting to measure the effectiveness of such programs with regard to student outcomes. These previous studies have focused primarily on academic outcomes (Pedersen, 2010), data on participation and satisfaction (Engle & Engle, 2003; McLeod & Wainwright, 2009), motivation (Barbuto Jr., Beenen, & Tran, 2015), or global citizenry (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

More than ever, it is becoming a necessity for college graduates to demonstrate ethnocultural empathy in order to be effective and successful as global citizens (Hunter et al., 2006; Tarrant et al., 2014; Wood, 1991). Industry is looking to higher education to include this in their curriculum. While study abroad programs would seem a likely way

to develop such capacities, there is a need to build a body of research on such programs to measure their effect on cultural sensitivity or empathy (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013; Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013). The measure used most frequently in the current body of literature is qualitative student surveys, which rely heavily on anecdotal evidence and self-reported gains in empathy and awareness. Some have argued that these study abroad programs are often ill-defined, with no reliable, measureable results regarding intercultural goals (Ritz, 2011; Tarrant et al., 2014).

There is a clear lack of research using an instrument with proven psychometric measurement properties to determine if there is a relationship between study abroad programs and students developing an increased empathy towards other cultures (Ritz, 2011; Tarrant et al., 2014). While there is a common assumption that there is correlation between such travel programs and increased empathy, little is based on quantifiable data. Moreover, questions may remain as to whether one program type might be superior to another, specifically if we see evidence that indicates a relationship between duration of program and increased ethnocultural empathy among participants.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether participation in a study abroad program at Bethel University, a private, liberal arts university in Minnesota, correlated to an overall higher level of ethnocultural empathy among participating students. The study investigated whether there was a correlation between higher levels of enthocultural empathy and duration of study or gender of the participant.

Research Questions

During the course of this study, the following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What difference, if any, exists in the ethnocultural empathy score of students based on participation in a study abroad program?
2. What difference, if any, exists between the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on the duration of the abroad study experience (interim vs. semester-length)?
3. What difference, if any, exists in the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on gender?
4. What interactions, if any, in the ethnocultural empathy scores exist between study abroad experiences and gender?

Significance of the Study

Universities and students alike are committing valuable resources and time toward the creation and participation in international study opportunities in order to develop strong intercultural competencies among graduates of these programs (Hunter et al., 2006; Tarrant, 2010; Tarrant et al., 2014). Because study abroad programs come at substantial expense, requiring commitment from both institutions and students alike, it is necessary to understand exactly what relationship there might be between these types of programs and learner empathy (Hensley & Sell, 1979). While opportunities like this have increased in popularity, there is a call for a continuation of research to explore possible correlation (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Ritz, 2011; Sutton & Rubin, 2004; Tarrant et al., 2014). To this point, studies have lacked a quantitative component, relying almost entirely on student survey and anecdotal reporting (Ritz, 2011; Tarrant et al.,

2014). Adding to the body of research by using a quantitative instrument with adequate psychometric properties that might indicate a relationship between study abroad and ethnocultural empathy would contribute to the larger discussion within the field.

This study adds to the body of literature that is being developed around the actual versus perceived relationship between study abroad programs and empathy by adding quantitative data analysis. This study reviewed archival data collected during a student life survey given by Bethel University during the Fall of 2016. This survey included a subscale from the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy. The data set collected from the scale was analyzed alongside gender of respondents, as well as duration of participation in a study abroad program. The goal was to see if there is correlation between respondent empathy level and the duration of study abroad, and to see if gender appeared to be an influence.

It is clear that cultural empathy is a highly desirable, and necessary, skill in this increasingly globally-minded world (Bretag & van, 2017; Stebleton et al., 2013). Relationship between program components and individual empathy will be crucial as institutions and individuals justify the resources they will dedicate toward that end.

Rationale

Past studies on the effectiveness of study abroad programs have focused primarily on academic outcomes (Pedersen, 2010), data on participation and satisfaction (Engle & Engle, 2003; McLeod & Wainwright, 2009), motivation (Barbuto Jr. et al., 2015), global awareness (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), or global citizenry (Tarrant et al., 2014). More recently there have been examinations on the impact of study abroad programs on the increase in global mindset and empathy, but these have been more qualitative in nature

(Stebleton et al., 2013). This study would add to the body of quantitative data on this topic (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Ballestas & Roller, 2013).

The goal for this study was to determine whether participation in a study abroad program at Bethel University, a private, liberal arts university in Minnesota, appeared to be correlated with a higher level of ethnocultural empathy among participating students. The study also investigated whether there appeared to be a correlation between duration of study or gender of the participant.

Definition of Terms

Study Abroad Program. Since the 1950s, study abroad programs have become increasingly ubiquitous. Starting as a programming option that focused on language acquisition and cultural training mostly for females, study abroad has increasingly become a popular option for developing both a student's professional qualifications and cultural competence (Burn, 2003).

While there is no typical study abroad program, duration of travel is one way to distinguish between offerings. Most universities offer both semester length and one month interim length international programs, and some even offer full year experiences. In the earlier years, because language acquisition was seen as a primary driver, these programs were typically long-term, ranging from a semester to a year. Because of the shift in focus, short-term options have become much more popular, making up a large percentage of all student participants. This popularity can also be explained by cost-effectiveness as well as evidence in the literature that suggests learning still occurs (Hachtmann, 2012; Perry, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2012). The Institute for the International

Education of Students (IES) reported a sharp decline in full-year participants across the decades, from 72% in 1950s and 60s to only 20% in the 1990s (Dwyer, 2004).

Study abroad programs can also be categorized by the type of learning experiences offered. Longer term, faculty-led study tours, primarily focusing on content, while also offering students an opportunity to familiarize themselves in a general way with other cultures, were traditionally a popular option. However, given the desire to address cost and develop practical professional skills, it is now quite common for schools to offer shorter programs, comprised of practical work and immersive experiences in host countries. Some programs direct students to local universities or home stays in country, and are taught by local university faculty, while other immersive study abroad programs are led by faculty from the home university (Dwyer, 2004; Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017).

Culture. Culture is defined by Pedersen (1991) as learned perspectives that are unique to a particular community and shared across different groups within that larger community. Culture guides behaviors, beliefs, and one's personal and social meaning. These patterns are recognizable to other members of the culture and allow for seamless social interaction and integration among its members. When these patterns are taken out of context or misconstrued by an outsider to the culture, misunderstandings can arise. Weinberg (2003) described the concept of culture as an accumulated set of rituals, values, customs and traditions created by people to understand, interpret and give meaning to the world.

Empathy. Derived from the Greek term *empathia*, empathy means coming to an understanding of another by entering their world. The term empathy has been used

across multiple domains, including psychotherapy, neuroscience, medical education, social work, philosophy, developmental psychology, literary studies, and anthropology, without a single, agreed upon definition (Swan, Riley, & Australian Association for Research, in Education, 2012). Empathy appeared in German philosophy over 250 years ago as *einfühlung,* and was defined as using imagination to take another's perspective (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). Since then there have been a variety of definitions, and many have argued about the various degrees to which empathy is affective, cognitive, or multi-dimensional, but what is agreed upon is that the process of perspective-taking is involved (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). This ambiguity in definition also demonstrates that there is agreement that empathy is not a single process, but a complex series of interrelated sub-skills and systems (Swan & Riley, 2015). Duan and Hill (1996) identified several common definitions of empathy and theories that refer to empathy as a general ability or personality trait. Although they concluded that empathy could be both learned or innately part of one's personality, some people are naturally more empathetic than others (Duan & Hill, 1996).

Cultural Empathy. Empathy is a heavily researched topic in literature, but not in its relationship to culture and ethnicity (Dyche & Zayas, 2001; Green, 1995). The notion of cultural empathy is a relatively recent addition to the literature, and is often used interchangeably with other terminology to describe empathy in cross-cultural contexts (Ivey, Ivey, & Simek-Downing, 1987; Junn, Morton, & Yee, 1995; Ridley & Lingle, 1996). Ridley and Lingle (1996) were the first researchers to use and define the term "cultural empathy." They argued that true empathy must go beyond general, basic empathy, to also include understanding and acceptance of another's culture. Ridley and

Lingle identified three component aspects of what they termed cultural empathy in their research, which included cognitive, affective and communicative aspects. They defined the cognitive aspect as an intellectual process of both perspective taking and self-differentiation. The affective component included the emotional and expressive response to a situation or condition. Finally, the communicative aspect includes both seeking to further understand another's perspective and conveying accurate understanding, either verbally or through actions (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). This multifaceted definition lays part of the foundational, operational basis for what Wang et al. (2003) referred to as ethnocultural empathy.

Ethnocultural Empathy. According to Wang et al. (2003), ethnocultural empathy is both a learned ability and personal trait comprised of three dimensions: intellectual empathy, empathic emotions, and the communication between them. The researchers asserted that because ethnocultural empathy is both learned and a personal trait, it can be assessed. They operationalize ethnocultural empathy based on the theoretical discussions of general and culturally specific empathy (Wang et al., 2003).

Ethnocultural empathy is described as "the ability to understand a racially or ethnically different person's thinking and/or feeling" (Wang et al., 2003, p. 222). It can also be described as the ability to take on another person's ethnocultural perspective and share others' experiences and feelings of being discriminated against (Ridley & Lingle, 1996; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003).

There are three aspects to this type of empathy. First of all, the participant must engage intellectual empathy to begin to take on the perspective of another. Secondly, the participant must engage empathic emotions in order to feel something from the point of

view of that person's racial or ethnic identity. Finally, communicative empathy is how one expresses the ethnoculturally empathic thoughts and feelings toward members of that racial or ethnic group. Using these three components, Wang et al. (2003) developed a tool to measure empathy specifically related to ethnic and racial groups other than one's own.

Assumptions and Limitations

The survey was distributed via email to all students enrolled at Bethel University during the fall semester in 2016. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and therefore it can be assumed all questions were answered openly and honestly. Additionally, since subjects were not sensitized to the questions prior to seeing them for the first time in the survey itself, it can be hypothesized that the recorded responses were more genuine and honest as the subjects answered with no prior preparation to what the "correct" answer might be.

The survey was sent to 2,711 students, and of those surveyed 778 opted to answer the sections that will be considered in this study. The design of this study is not a pre/post test model, which is the most typical design for measuring impact of abroad study programs in order to determine growth. The data gathered only represents data at a single point in time.

Nature of the Study

To answer the proposed research questions, a quantitative, correlational study will be conducted to review data that was collected as part of a convenience sample. Because the data was part of an archival data set, this method was chosen in order to discern whether a possible link between the ethnocultural empathy and participation in study

abroad could be identified. Gender was also considered. If such a correlation is discovered, this study opens the door for further institutional investigation and program review of study abroad offerings in order to specify which programs might be most effective.

The data to be reviewed in this study were collected by the Office of Institutional Assessment at Bethel University. Permission was granted for data files to be shared and analyzed for this study. The omnibus survey was compiled by university researchers. The subscale of Empathic Feeling and Expression (Wang et al., 2003) was included in order to gather data on ethnocultural empathy. This subscale was used with permission from the scale author, although the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy is also permissible for use as an open source document.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters, a references section and appendices. Chapter Two presents a review of related literature regarding current research on study abroad programs and the measures of their effectiveness. Chapter Three delineates research design and methodology of the study: the instrument used to gather data, the procedures followed, and the sample information. Analysis of the data and a discussion is presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five contains summary, conclusions, and recommendations for areas of further study. The study concludes with a reference section and appendices.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the research literature regarding the current state of study abroad programs and their perceived outcomes. This chapter will also attempt to develop a robust definition of empathy, drawing a comparison between ethnocultural empathy and basic empathy, and its relationship to reduced ethnocentrism.

This chapter is divided into six sections: (1) current popularity of study abroad programs among college and university students, (2) perceived benefits and outcomes of these programs, (3) inverse relationship between ethnocentrism and empathy, (4) ethnocultural empathy as opposed to basic empathy, (5) Transformational Learning Theory and how program design and duration can enhance empathy building, and (6) the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE).

Study Abroad

Study abroad opportunities are a popular choice among undergraduates worldwide, and have continued to grow each year in overall participation. According to figures provided by the Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, 325,339 U.S. students studied abroad in the 2015-16 school year for academic credit (Institute of International Education, 2017). This number represents an increase of 3.8% from the prior year. Data indicate participation in study abroad programs by U.S. undergraduate students has more than tripled in the past two decades, and currently one in 10 undergraduates will study abroad as part of their college experience (Institute of International Education, 2017).

Although the rate of increase has slowed in recent years, overall growth remains on the upward trajectory. While the cost of such programs can be high, researchers suggest the continued interest may be a result of global current events, a desire to gain global and intercultural communication skills, or that participants may be specifically encouraged to study abroad by both institutions and employers in their field of study (Hunter et al., 2006; Tarrant, 2010). Some studies indicated student motivations include finishing coursework quickly, experiencing cultural immersion, the allure of challenge, and using the experience as a way to develop "soft skills" that might be appealing to employers in the future (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017). Colleges and universities across the United States have increasingly looked to their study abroad offerings as a key component for developing such intercultural competency (Stebleton et al., 2013).

Study abroad programs for educational credit can vary greatly. Given the range of options - including length of stay, program type, and program design - questions remain as to whether all abroad study programs of equal benefit. It might be possible that certain program configurations and durations yield greater value in the development of intercultural empathy than others.

One of the typical ways a study abroad program might be distinguished or evaluated for seeming impact is by program length. Traditionally, study abroad was conducted over a long-term (full-academic year) or mid-term (semester-long) length of stay. At its inception, longer duration was considered necessary in order for a richer language experience to emerge (Burn, 2003). It could be inferred that the longer one studied abroad, the more impactful the experience. However, trends are shifting. While there has been an overall increase in student study abroad participation, there has been a

decrease in the amount of time spent on these experiences. In 1985, 18% of U.S. college students spent more than a month abroad, but by 1995 only 10% spent more than a month (Burn, 2003). In fact, although the number of students studying abroad has increased dramatically (the greatest jump being a 232% increase from 1985-86 through 2001-2002) there has been a steady decline in the number of students studying abroad for a full academic year (Institute of International Education, 2017). Over the past two decades, there has been an increase in the popularity of short-term programs, which range between two and eight weeks in length. Of U.S. undergraduate students who studied abroad in the 2015-16 school year, 63% opted for short-term programs, 35% for mid-term length, and only 3% for the long-term (Institute of International Education, 2017).

Although there is evidence that any type of abroad experience (recreational, volunteer, service learning, work experience) can yield some beneficial improvement in terms of global and intercultural competencies, it appears that more formal, educationally driven programs yield a more significant increase in student development of such skills (Engle & Engle, 2003). This is especially true when such courses are well designed, including intense cultural involvement, opportunities for reflection, and guided conversations with skilled faculty (Stebleton et al., 2013). This review of literature will focus only on research regarding programs offered through educational institutions for academic credit.

Perceived Outcomes: Intercultural Skills and Reduced Ethnocentrism

Historically, language acquisition was cited as a primary reason for abroad study experiences. However, these programs are now promoted as a vehicle for teaching cultural competence and intercultural skills (Burn, 2003; Hachtmann, 2012). Unlike

language learning, which can be easily assessed for growing fluency, intercultural skills are more difficult to measure, and equally difficult to define. Study abroad experiences might well lead to increased intercultural skills, but it is unclear how to intentionally design programs to meet this end and how to measure intercultural skills outcomes.

A common educational target for such programs is reducing participant ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism can be defined as "the tendency to place one's own group (cultural, ethnic, or religious) in a position of centrality and worth and to create negative attitudes and behaviors toward other groups"(Neulip, 2006, p. 38). Ethnocentrism is not necessarily a sign of antipathy or disapproval of others, rather a descriptive state of being which can yield negative outcomes (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997).

Ethnocentrism is rooted in the idea that one's own cultural background is central to understanding all reality, whereas ethnorelativism is the ability to accept a variety of different standards and customs that then affect behavior in new interpersonal settings (Neulip, 2006). Neuliep (2006) believed that ethnocentrism is a universal phenomenon that can influence and even distort the perception of others. While it may positively influence an individual's attachment to their own group or lead to healthy patriotic feelings, it can also prevent them from seeking to understand other perspectives and cultures. This can lead to a definitive roadblock in intercultural communication (Neulip, 2006; Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997).

On a practical level, the reduction of ethnocentrism should lead to enhanced intercultural communication skills (Neulip, 2006). Neulip (2006) described these skills as the ability to exchange verbal and non-verbal messages with individuals from another culture. The development of intercultural communication skills appears to be inversely

related to ethnocentric attitudes (Capell, Dean, & Veenstra, 2008). The less ethnocentric the worldview, the better one relates to people of other cultures.

Using the framework of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, Bennett (1993) developed a cross-cultural communication model of assessment of such skills. Bennett's (1993) "Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity" postulates that people journey through a variety of responses to intercultural experiences, and that journey changes over time—it is evolutionary and dynamic. Individuals move through three ethnocentric states (stages of denial, defense, and minimization) and then through three ethnorelative states (acceptance, adaptation, and integration) (Bennett & Paige, 1993). Every experience moves a person along that continuum, either toward greater levels of integration or regressing towards more ethnocentric states.

These skills and adaptive abilities are becoming increasingly desirable in the workplace, and while there is evidence to suggest that study abroad programs can help expand the world views of their participants, have a positive effect on personal growth, and help achieve professional goals and inspire them to explore other cultures in the future, there is also research that indicates study abroad programs can negatively influence participant attitudes and level of ethnocentrism (Jackson, 2008; Kambutu & Nganga, 2008; Pedersen, 2010).

Social identity theory states that people use similarities and dissimilarities as a way to categorize and differentiate themselves from others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In-group members are evaluated in a more positive light than out-group members. In fact, the presence of an out-group is enough to foster attitudes of competition, and discrimination in members of the in-group, unless it is somehow counteracted (Tajfel &

Turner, 1986). However, in situations where participants become attuned to commonalities, thereby creating a common in-group identity, it is possible to develop positive feelings even in light of differences (Gaertner, Dovidio, & Bachman, 1996). Therefore, it is important these study abroad programs be well designed and offer enough dynamic, intercultural interaction.

Ethnocentrism and Empathy

Increasing empathy levels has been shown to be a powerful tool in the reduction of ethnocentrism, as well as improvement of interpersonal communication skills (Agroskin, 2010; Albiero & Matricardi, 2013; Chung & Bemak, 2002; Cundiff & Komarraju, 2008; Dejaeghere, Hooghe, & Claes, 2012; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Williams, 2005). While elevating empathy and reducing levels of ethnocentrism can lead to improved intercultural skills, in particular communication skills, merely traveling abroad will not automatically deliver those results. (Jackson, 2008; Kambutu & Nganga, 2008; Pedersen, 2010). Instructional design appears to play an important role in fostering this outcome. Therefore, designers must carefully consider the structure and experiences offered within their programs. When a course is effective, heightened empathy, which will result in lower ethnocentric attitudes, is more likely to occur (McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2012; Perry et al., 2012; Strange & Gibson, 2017; Walters et al., 2017).

Understanding what is meant by empathy can be dependent upon area of study. The term empathy has been used across multiple domains, including psychotherapy, neuroscience, medical education, social work, philosophy, developmental psychology, literary studies, and anthropology, without a single, agreed upon definition (Swan et al.,

2012). Empathy appeared in German philosophy over 250 years ago as *einfühlung,* and was defined as using imagination to take another's perspective (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). Since then there have been a variety of definitions, and many have argued about the various degrees to which empathy is affective, cognitive, or multi-dimensional, but what is agreed upon is that the process of perspective-taking is involved (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). This ambiguity in definition also demonstrates that there is agreement that empathy is not a single process, but a complex series of interrelated sub-skills and systems (Swan & Riley, 2015).

Interestingly, education, and specifically higher levels of education, can be associated with increased empathy (Alligood, 2007; Spencer, 2004). Studies have also found gender and age can be predictive of intrinsically higher empathy levels (DiLalla, Hull, & Dorsey, 2004; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Endresen & Olweus, 2001; Schieman & Van Gundy, 2000).

Empathy is taking the perspective of another, but as Byrne (1971) suggested, some people might be more comprehensible to some than others. The similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) suggested that similarities in attitudes, values, or demographic characteristics increase attraction. Differences in these areas may lead to decreased attraction, alternatively causing feelings of threat or anxiety, resulting in avoidance and negative response to those of differing backgrounds (Byrne, 1997; Plant & Devine, 2003; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). In other words, the more similar the two parties are, the more easily it might be to achieve empathy.

This assumption has led to a field of inquiry in the study of empathy directed specifically at cultural difference and how that extra measure of difference might impede

empathic response. Rasoal et al. (2011a) identified obstacles that hinder people from feeling empathy for people from another culture:

- General lack of knowledge about cultures other than one's own;
- General lack of practical experience of being in cultures other than one's own;
- Lack of knowledge specific to the other's culture;
- Lack of practical experience specific to the other's culture;
- Lack of ability to perceive similarities and differences between the other's culture and one's own

In fact, there are many different research designs that have been developed to investigate the question of "What are barriers to developing empathy for another culture?" resulting in a range of terminology attempting to describe empathy in cross-cultural contexts. Such terms include: active empathy (Yamamoto, Silva, Justice, Chang, & Leong, 1993); cultural empathy (Ivey et al., 1987; Ridley & Lingle, 1996); empathic multicultural awareness (Junn et al., 1995); cultural role taking (Scott & Borodovsky, 1990); and ethnotherapeutic empathy (Parson, 1993). There are only slight differences in how these terms are defined in the literature. For the sake of this study, ethnocultural empathy will be used as an umbrella to cover all these terms.

Ethnocultural Empathy

Ridley and Lingle's (1996) work served as a foundational basis for Wang et al. (2003) in the development of the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy. According to Ridely and Lingle (1996), ethnocultural empathy "involves a deepening of human empathic response to permit a sense of mutuality and understanding across great differences in values and expectations that cross-cultural exchange often involves" (p. 22). Ridley and

Lingle (1996) identified three essential elements for empathy within a cultural setting: cognitive, affective, and communicative. The study asserted that all three must be engaged simultaneously to effectively empathize in a culturally empathic manner.

Ethnocultural empathy is described as a particular type of empathy for people of an ethnocultural group different from one's own. (Wang et al., 2003) Wang et al. (2003) introduced the framework of ethnocultural empathy into psychology literature and hypothesized this type of empathy can be learned and therefore measured. Ethnocultural empathy implies something about the relationship between the empathizer, the receiver and the cultural context of the receiver (Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011). Rasoal et al. (2011) defined it as feeling, understanding, and caring about what someone from another culture feels, understands and cares about.

Wang et al. (2003) conducted several studies on the importance of including cultural and ethnic aspects into the study of empathy, coining the term ethnocultural empathy. They identified several aspects that set ethnocultural empathy apart from basic, general empathy. The first is the need to consider the other person's cultural context when seeking to understand the perspective of another. The second is the ability to identify and control one's own subjective perception that might create prejudice against those outside of one's own cultural and ethnic background. Third, there must be practical experience of another culture to inform theoretical knowledge. It can be difficult to fully empathize or understand the perspective of someone from a different cultural group if there has not been previous contact with others outside of one's own cultural background. This experience can be gained through living in other countries for extended periods of time, or being in similar situations with other ethnic groups. Eklund

et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between empathy and prior similar experience and found that similar experience may be an important situational antecedent for feeling empathy for another person. Therefore, having direct experience with a culture other than one's own could support the development of empathy for one outside of one's own culture (Eklund, Andersson-Straberg, & Hansen, 2009).

Green (1995) asserted that western understanding of empathy cannot be universally applied to multi-cultural settings. Rather, authentic empathy – understanding of thoughts and feelings of another—would require direct experience with cultural context where those thoughts and feelings would originate. Without such direct experience, empathic response may not be thought satisfying or fair (Green, 1995). The direct cultural experience offered in study abroad programs has the potential to foster the kind of environment that could cause students to develop ethnocultural empathy.

Ethnocultural empathy has been shown to counteract hostile behavior and attitudes toward members of cultural out-groups (Litvack-Miller et al., 1997; Wang et al., 2003), elevate positive attitudes toward justice-related change (Batson, 1997), and reduce tension and conflict among groups (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). It is also positively related to helping behaviors and seems to be predictive of higher levels intercultural relational ability, which would create more positive relationships in the workplace and elsewhere (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). Parson (1993) found elevated ethnocultural empathy could change attitudes about diversity and cut through attitudes of ethnocentrism and racism.

Program Design

Although there is evidence to suggest any type of travel experience can lead to a change in empathy and world view, program design is a key component in creating lasting, positive growth (Stebleton et al., 2013). It takes more than mere exposure for a change in attitudes. In fact, students who return home without an opportunity for meaningful interaction, having only been exposed to differences and insulated from discomfort, have been shown to demonstrate higher levels of ethnocentrism upon return which leads to greater in-group identification (Jackson, 2008). Effective study abroad experiences should draw students out of their comfort zones instead of merely creating these zones abroad, which may insulate them from deeper learning experiences. Adapting to cultural difference is the rewarding, difficult and essential challenge of study abroad experiences (Engle & Engle, 2003). Study abroad programs must be designed for meaningful interaction with people from different cultures for maximum change to occur.

While duration of stay has traditionally been one way to distinguish among programs and assign educational value to a study abroad experience, it cannot be assumed that duration of stay will lead to reduced ethnocentrism and enhanced empathy. Engle and Engle (2003) attempted to identify five classification levels to describe fundamental differences of design and quality found in study abroad programs. They designed a system that took a step toward representing each type of program opportunity more honestly and responsibly than the historical assumption that length of stay alone resulted in higher impact. While the levels presented indicate duration can be an important component, contributing to the overall program experience, the researchers were interested in developing richer dialogue about overall program design – one that

draws students out of their comfort zone (Engle & Engle, 2003). They laid out these program types along a continuum, following Bennett's lead (Bennett & Paige, 1993), with the intention of creating intentional experiences for students in order to move them as far as possible in the development of cultural skills. Engle and Engle's (2003) model began with the traditional measure of travel duration and suggests that heightened in-country experiences, including language training, work/volunteering and intercultural experiences will more deeply impact student outcomes.

In Engle and Engle's model (1993), they considered seven components as they located various program types on their classification system. These components comprise an important starting point for classification:

- Length of student travel
- Entry target-language competence
- Language used in course work
- Context of course work
- Types of student housing
- Provisions for guided/structured cultural interaction and experiential learning
- Guided reflection on cultural experience

The five levels, as defined by Engle and Engle (1993), are Study Tour, Short-Term Study, Cross-Cultural Contact Program, Cross-Cultural Encounter Program, and Cross-Cultural Immersion Program.

Level one: Study tour.

The study tour classification indicates a program that is primarily focused on content or aesthetic experience of a foreign country, not cultural encounters that might

lead to adaptation. Language acquisition is a not considered a primary component, and students would typically travel as a group. This type of experience might be the first international experience for many students. These experiences might last a few days to a few weeks.

Level two: Short-term study.

Within this classification system, Short-Term Study might last for a summer term or 3-8 weeks within a school year at an on-site location. Subject matter would be taught in English, but beginner level language would be offered as well. Housing might be in-home or with other students. There might be some cultural context offered, as well as an orientation program, however there might be no real provision for cultural interaction.

Level three: Cross-cultural contact program.

Moving through the levels, the duration of program extends. At this level, students might spend up to a semester in country, living with other students or other international students. Primary coursework would be taught in English, but the target language would be taught as well. In many ways, this level is similar to the Short-Term model, except for the extended length of stay.

Level four: Cross-cultural encounter program.

At level four, student stays last for a semester to a full academic year, and the expectation is that most of their coursework would be taught in the target language. This would obviously require more extensive language skills prior to travel. Students might live in homes, and participate in occasional integration activities. These would be coupled with some reflective opportunities, as well.

Level five: Cross-cultural immersion program.

At level five, expected to yield the most extensive results in terms of cultural adaptation, students stay for a semester to a year. It requires advanced language skill, and all activities, including extra-curricular, would be in the target language. Students would have home stays and participate regularly in cultural integration program. There might even be work internships or service learning opportunities. This level would also have many opportunities for reflection, mentoring, and research.

Although there are an unlimited ways a program may be designed, and no one program will fit perfectly into the classification system Engle and Engle (2003) put forth, it does provide a step forward in being able to define and communicate fairly what the experience of each program might yield and perhaps be predictive of how effective such a course might be in developing heightened cultural competence. It also places the focus on the importance of overall experiential design of a program, rather than just duration alone.

Duration.

While Engle and Engle (2003) broadened the categories, lengths of stay still factored in strongly to their scale system. Duration has been considered a key ingredient to meaningful learning in a study abroad context (Akande & Slawson, 2000; Billigmeier & Forman, 1975; Dwyer, 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004) yet this need not be the case. In 2004, Dwyer conducted a longitudinal study to examine whether this common wisdom was correct and if the effect of study abroad experiences had long-term impacts on participants. The study was designed to correlate student outcomes to program features. The study was conducted through the Institute for the International Education of

Students, which had over 50 years of data to draw upon, and a larger pool of survey participants than previous studies (Dwyer, 2004).

The findings indicated that in some cases studying abroad for a full year had a more significant impact than programs of lesser durations, which supports the prevailing wisdom. Not only was there a clear impact in the areas of language use, personal and intercultural development, career choice, and academic benefit, the data also demonstrated that the impact extended up to 50 years later, in some cases (Dwyer, 2004).

However, while the study supported the numerous benefits of a year-long program, it also found lasting benefits in certain areas with those who attended a much shorter summer study abroad option. Dwyer (2004) concluded that a well-designed program of six weeks could yield significant results, but that such a program would need to be carefully planned, expertly implemented, and require significant resources.

A 2012 study aiming to explore the effectiveness of a short-term study abroad program with advertising students also confirmed that a well-designed, shorter experience could have meaningful impact. Hachtmann (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study looking at levels of ethnocentrism on students studying abroad for only two weeks. The study focused on two travel experiences: one group which had a week of intensive preparation for their trip, followed by two weeks of travel in Germany led by an instructor from their home university, and the other which had eight weeks of training prior to travel, followed by two weeks of travel in Japan. This course was taught by an interdisciplinary team from the home university. Both groups were assessed pre- and post-travel using the Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) Scale (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). They were also required to complete a set of open-ended response questions.

Even after only two weeks, both groups demonstrated lower levels of ethnocentrism, and reported a greater awareness of in-group versus out-group cultures. Students also reported a greater appreciation and awareness of the importance of communication. Although the pre-travel assessments indicated the groups had a relatively low level of ethnocentrism prior to travel, the mean scores for both groups decreased significantly post-travel (Hachtmann, 2012). This suggests that even short-term study abroad programs can impact levels of ethnocentrism, contributing to increased intercultural communication skills and cultural competence (Capell et al., 2008), provided there is meaningful contact with the host culture and its people.

The higher levels of Engle and Engle's (2003) scale included experiences where students would have meaningful relational contact with cultural counterparts. This harkens back to Allport's et al. (1954) theory of intergroup contact, which proposed a set of factors necessary to reduce prejudice. He postulated four primary factors necessary for non-prejudicial encounters between those in the in-group and those in the out-group: 1) Equal status in the situation, 2) Common goals among participants, 3) Intergroup cooperation on goals, and 4) Support from authority, law or custom (Allport, Clark, & Pettigrew, 1954). Pettigrew (1998) extended this theory to include a fifth factor that must be in evidence—friendship potential. In order for there to truly be a reduction in negative attitudes, participants must have an opportunity for new learning about the other, shared emotional experiences and ongoing encounters that lead to changes in behaviors. Participants must build a relationship, friendship, or affinity in order for long-term change to occur (Pettigrew, 1998).

Transformational and experiential learning.

Evidence suggests one must encounter a change of environment, not just a change of scenery. *Scenery* implies a mere backdrop that remains separate from the individual, while *environment* involves an interaction and interplay that is dynamic in nature (Engle & Engle, 2003), or as Pettigrew (1998) termed it, friendship potential. However, coming face to face with cultural differences can lead to challenging feelings and unexpected emotional responses. When that rich, sometimes unsettling, interaction takes place, opportunity to reflect on the experience is essential. The combination of these two elements creates a space for deep transformation (Mezirow, 1990, 1997).

Transformational Learning Theory suggests that through the process of active learning, reflection and placing ourselves in uncomfortable situations, participants are able to develop new and more nuanced perspectives and frames of reference (Mezirow, 1990, 1991). Transformative Learning has occurred when participants experience a change to their frame of reference as a result of an event or experience (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow (1997) also suggested a four stage process to this work: 1) Elaborate an existing point of view, 2) Establish a new point of view, 3) Transform a point of view, 4) Become aware of the surrounding world and become critically reflective of one's environment and actions. The ability to change points of reference is what helps build global understanding, communication skills, analytical problem solving, and teamwork (Mezirow, 1997).

Transformative Learning, with the added element of discomfort, is an extension of Experiential Learning, which occurs when knowledge and meaning are enhanced by actual lived experience (Perry et al., 2012). Kolb (1984) asserted that learning occurs

with concrete experiences, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation and active experimentation. When all these elements are present, knowledge is constructed and learning occurs (Kolb, 1984). However, even when participants are steeped in active learning, it does not guarantee Experiential Learning has occurred. If a program does not allow enough time for interaction and reflection, then the results show less growth (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). If a program is designed with time for reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis, there is a much greater chance it will reach its intended potential (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). Even short-term study abroad programs have a high likelihood of students broadening their cultural perspective if a program is designed with these principles of Experiential Learning in mind (Tarrant, 2010).

Experiential Learning is often found in study abroad programs, but the added element of discomfort suggested by Mezirow (1990, 1991) is not necessarily included. By designing programs that require students to deeply engage with elements of a different culture and reflect upon discomfort and new learning, study abroad can offer students opportunities to interact with the people, culture and tradition of a country, arguably increasing student growth on Bennett's scale (Bennett & Paige, 1993; Strange & Gibson, 2017). Transformative Learning and Experiential Learning during study abroad experiences can potentially move students from perspectives of ethnocentrism and dualistic epistemologies to a new frame of reference that allows for cultural pluralism (Berwick & Whalley, 2000).

A possible example of this type of Transformative Learning growth can be found in a study of pre-service teachers who took part in a short-term study abroad experience

in Mexico (Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012). Researchers were looking to better understand how students might develop intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes, and increase empathy. Without intending to, their study created similar conditions to what Mezirow (1990) described in situations of Transformative Learning. Participants were embedded in community by living with host families, visiting local schools and participating in other local events, as well as intensive language study. They became active members of their respective communities. Several participants reported this to be their first experience outside of their home state of Texas, so this level of intensity was challenging. Students were given tools and opportunities to build relationships within their host culture, and were also afforded opportunities to reflect on the challenges and discoveries they faced through dialogue journals. Researchers found that, while this experience was not comfortable or even positive for all the students, students' levels of self-reported empathy increased. Evidence suggested that the most profound results occurred when participants were placed in a situation where the limits of their own sense of empathy was tested, which then led them into a process of self-examination and critical awareness (Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012).

Borden (2007) investigated whether a particular type of in-country experience, service learning, would reduce ethnocentrism among students in a study abroad program. Participants were given the Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) scale (McCroskey, 2015; Neuliep, 2002) prior to a semester of service learning in a culture different from their own. They conducted a post-test at the conclusion of the program experience. Researchers found a significant decrease in levels of ethnocentrism among program participants at the end of the semester. Additional examination of students' reflective

journals appeared to indicate the service-learning format of the course was instrumental in their growth, providing them with deep, consistent, meaningful experiences that developed a deeper sense of empathy (Borden, 2007).

Research suggests that it is possible for students to have Transformative Learning occur on short-term study abroad experiences if such programs are designed with strong academic content as well as opportunities for students to live outside of their comfort zones (Bell, Gibson, Tarrant, Perry III, & Stoner, 2016). Strange and Gibson (2017) looked at whether or not Transformative Learning really does occur during study abroad programs, and to what extent length of program might impact that learning. The researchers used an online survey to collect data from approximately 950 students. Students were surveyed post-trip to measure the nature of their learning experience, and to determine whether Transformative Learning occurred. They found evidence that almost all the students experienced some level of transformative learning, and that they were aware of the experiential nature of their learning and deemed it an important part of their program. Researchers also found that, when a program was fewer than 18 days in length, there were significantly fewer indicators of transformative growth. This evidence supports the idea that even short-term study abroad experiences have the potential for meaningful impact if designed correctly (Strange & Gibson, 2017).

Measuring Ethnocultural Empathy and Basic Empathy

There is ongoing debate about how to measure empathy in multicultural settings. There is also debate about whether there is adequate evidence that ethnocultural empathy and basic empathy are distinct constructs. This section examines two instruments

commonly used to measure empathy and ethnocultural empathy, and the validity of their design.

One of the tools commonly used to measure basic empathic response has been the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1983). Prior to the work of Davis (1983), empathy measures had been unidimensional in design. The IRI is comprised of four subscales, which measure social functioning, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity toward others. Evidence in the findings supported a multidimensional approach to empathy (Davis, 1980; Davis, 1983).

Wang et al. (2003) asserted that more work was needed to expand the study of empathy to include culture. The construct of the subsequent work, the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE) (Wang et al., 2003), was multidimensional, composed of intellectual empathy, empathic emotions and the combination of two. This is much like Ridley and Lingle's (1996) multidimensional model of empathy, which is composed of cognitive, affective and communicative processes. Wang (2003) found ethnocultural empathy to be a distinct type of empathy that is directed toward people from a racial and ethnic cultural group different from one's own. Correlational analysis was used to compare the SEE with IRI (Davis, 1983) in order to determine whether there was a distinction between the two measures. While the SEE was moderately correlated with basic empathy, it was concluded basic empathy and ethnocultural empathy were indeed two distinctly unique constructs (Wang et al., 2003).

In 2011, another study was conducted to again explore whether there was a difference between ethnocultural empathy and basic empathy and whether the two constructs were distinct (Rasoal, Jungert, Hau, & Andersson, 2011b). Rasoal, et al.

(2012) investigated the association between the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1993) and the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003) to explore distinctions between the two constructs. Researchers investigated whether there were background variables that would predict the two kinds of empathy. They found that both types of empathy were correlated and highly interdependent. They also found that they shared similar predictors for each type (Rasoal et al., 2011b).

The study concluded that ethnocultural empathy did not appear to be a unique type of empathy and the IRI and SEE were measuring the same things. However, two limitations of the study were that the sample was relatively homogeneous (most participants were ethnic Swedes), and the instrument was translated from English into Swedish. The researchers allowed that language used to measure empathy and ethnocultural empathy might not easily translate and could have impacted the findings (Rasoal, Jungert, Hau, & Andersson, 2011a; Rasoal et al., 2011b).

Although there may yet be debate over the overlap found between basic empathy and ethnocultural empathy, both the IRI and SEE have demonstrated their validity in measuring empathy levels.

The Scale of Ethnocultual Empathy.

There are few instruments currently available for evaluating cultural and ethnocultural empathy (Albiero & Matricardi, 2013). There are an increasing number of studies confirming the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy as having good psychometric properties, validity across cultures, as well as support for its factorial structure, which seems to represent a promising instrument in the field of research (Brouwer & Boros, 2010; Rasoal et al., 2011a).

Wang et al. (2003) borrowed heavily from the conceptualization of cultural empathy found in Ridley and Lingle (1996) in the construction of their instrument. In their construct of ethnocultural empathy, they operationalized their work around the components of intellectual empathy, empathic emotions and the communication between those two aspects. In discussing these three dimensions, Wang et al. (2003) described intellectual empathy as the ability to understand the thinking and/or feeling of a person racially or ethnically different from oneself. The empathic emotion component entails the ability to take on the feelings of another person from another culture or race, or to have an emotional response to the emotions displayed by a person or persons from another ethnocultural group. Finally, the communicative empathy aspect is the expression of intellectual and empathic emotions toward members of an ethnic or cultural group different from one's own. This can be expressed in either words or actions (Wang et al., 2003).

Wang et al. (2003) developed the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy as a quantitative instrument to measure awareness, acceptance and attitudes toward people from other cultures or other ethnicities. The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003) is a 31-item, 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Individuals who score higher on this measure are thought to have greater empathy for cultures and ethnicities different from their own. Ethnocultural empathy is a multidimensional construct and can be broken down into four substrands: Empathic Feeling and Expression (EFE) with 15 items; Empathic Perspective Taking (EP) with seven items; Acceptance of Cultural Differences (AC) with five items; and Empathic Awareness (EA) with four items.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Philosophy and Justification

The ability to interact and interrelate with people from other cultures and ethnicities has great value in a world becoming increasingly more global in its orientation (Stebleton et al., 2013). While it has clear educational and economic value, there is also important social value. Research has also indicated that a lack of empathy for others is linked to ethnocentrism (Neulip, 2006), intergroup aggression (Struch & Schwartz, 1989) and social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994). Indeed, pro-social actions and a justice orientation are related to the presence of empathy (Hoffman, 1994, 2008). Opportunities for students to develop empathy for other groups has led to positive outcomes (Albiero & Matricardi, 2013; Dejaeghere et al., 2012; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012)

Research Design Strategy

While the literature suggests a positive correlation between the development of ethnocultural empathy among students who participate in study abroad programs, few of these studies used quantitative data (Ritz, 2011; Tarrant, 2010; Tarrant et al., 2014). The pre- and post-test nature of many studies sensitize students to expected outcomes prior to their experience abroad and could possibly impact the resulting post-test responses. This study proposed analyzing the responses of students who have not been previously exposed to the items on the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy, which may provide a more candid and unbiased response.

This research was designed as a survey, structured to examine the responses and attitudes of a single group of participants enrolled at university at a point in time (Babbie,

1990). The data were collected as part of an annual large-scale survey sent to all enrolled students at Bethel University, a private, Christian, liberal arts college in the Midwest. The survey was in the form of an online, self-administered questionnaire, which was created using Web-based tools and was administered online. The data for this research were drawn from the 2016 survey, sent to all undergraduate students enrolled at Bethel University in the College of Art and Sciences at that time, and data were gathered anonymously. The advantage of this methodology is that a vast amount of data could be collected at once, very cost effectively, and comparisons can be efficiently drawn using multiple variables. Although participation was voluntary and only a percentage of students participated, the annual sample was large enough to be able to identify attributes of the larger population from a small group of individual participants (Babbie, 1990; Fowler Jr., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Students who participate in study abroad opportunities are assumed to gain greater intercultural competencies as a result of this experience (Burn, 2003; Hachtmann, 2012; Perry et al., 2012). These kinds of skills are highly desired by employers, and are regarded as increasingly necessary in a diverse global society (Hunter et al., 2006; Tarrant, 2010). Both students and institutions are investing a great deal of time and money into these global experiences, however there is a need for further research into whether or not these programs deliver the outcomes they purport (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Institute of International Education, 2016; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Questions remain whether these experiences offer more than just a superficial exposure to other cultures, which might actually result in a more ethnocentric worldview, or instead

develop enhanced empathy for other cultures and diverse points of view (Jackson, 2008; Kambutu & Nganga, 2008; Pedersen, 2010).

The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy offers a tool that has high internal validity within a short form questionnaire (Wang et al., 2003). Including this subscale within a larger omnibus survey allowed for comparison of empathic responses between students who traveled abroad and those who did not. It also allowed the ability to cross-reference empathy responses with responses about program duration, as well as gender of participants.

This study adds to the body of literature that is being developed around the relationship between empathy and studying abroad.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study included the following research questions. Each research questions is listed with its corresponding null hypothesis.

RQ1. What difference, if any, exists in the ethnocultural empathy score of students based on participation in a study abroad program?

H1o. There will not be a difference in the ethnocultural empathy score of students who participate in a study abroad program.

RQ2. What difference, if any, exists between the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on the duration of the abroad study experience (interim vs. semester-length)?

H2o. There will not be a difference in the ethnocultural empathy score of those who study abroad based on the duration of their experience.

RQ3. What difference, if any, exists in the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on gender?

H3o. There will be no significant difference in the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on gender.

RQ4. Controlling for the year in school, what interactions in ethnocultural empathy scores exist between study abroad experiences and gender?

H4o. There will be no significant difference in interactions in ethnocultural empathy scores between study abroad experiences and gender.

Variables

The independent variables in this study were the student study abroad experience and the gender of the participant. The dependent variable was the student scores on the Empathic Feeling & Expression subscale of the Ethnocultural Empathy Scale. The covariant, meant to control for maturation, was year in school.

Instrumentation and Protocols

This study used archival data from a "home-grown" Bethel University survey of traditional undergraduate students. There were many items on the survey, but the focus of this study was on the questions related to study abroad experience and student scores on the Empathic Feeling & Expression subscale of the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy. The university accessed the appropriate permission from the authors to use this scale. However, because the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy is in the public domain, its use was requested as a formality rather than a necessity.

The omnibus survey was distributed to all enrolled undergraduates in the Bethel University School of Arts and Sciences in May of 2016. The instrument was designed to

cross reference a large number of variables with one another in order to develop a deeper understanding of the student body. Within the larger survey, the Empathic Feeling and Expression subscale of the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003) was used to measure student attitudes regarding other cultures.

Wang et al. (2003) developed the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy as a quantitative instrument to measure awareness, acceptance and attitudes toward people from other cultures or other ethnicities. The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003) is a 31-item, 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Individuals who score higher on this measure reflect having less empathy for those of different cultures and ethnicities. Wang et al. (2003) broke down ethnocultural empathy into four substrands: Empathic Feeling and Expression (EFE) with 15 items; Empathic Perspective Taking (EP) with seven items; Acceptance of Cultural Differences (AC) with five items; and Empathic Awareness (EA) with four items. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .80 for the entire scale. The subscale of Empathic Feeling and Expression consists of 15 items, and the Cronbach coefficient was .76

Students were asked "Have you studied outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents your experience. If you had both a semester and interim study abroad experience, choose 'Yes, during a semester.'" Students had five options to choose from:

- Yes, during a semester
- Yes, during an interim
- No, but I am planning to for a semester
- No, but I am planning to for an interim

- No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.

The students who choose "No, but I am planning to for a semester (or interim)" are an important control group in this analysis. For example, if there are significant differences between those who study abroad for a semester and those who have no plans to study abroad, it cannot be automatically assumed that the study abroad experience was the most prominent contributor to the result. The "No, but I plan to study abroad" group acts as an important control for preexisting higher empathy. If there is a significant difference between those who have studied abroad and those who plan to study abroad, then there is good evidence that the study abroad experience increased empathy scores. However, given that students who already study abroad will be older than students who have plans but have not had the experience yet, it is important to control for year of school in the analysis. Doing so helps control for maturation as a variable contributing to a higher score.

Sampling Design

A quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design was used on survey data. The sample for this study was a non-probability convenience sample drawn from undergraduates enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at Bethel University, a private, Christian, liberal arts, university in Minnesota in the Fall of 2016. The site of this study is a small, religious, relatively conservative, coeducational, liberal arts university in a Midwestern city. The school heavily promotes study abroad experiences for undergraduates. At the time of the survey, student enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences was 2,711. Data provided by the Colleges Office of Institutional Data and Research indicates that 60.9% (1,650) of enrolled CAS students were female, and 39.1%

(1,061) were male. Of the total population, 86.1% identified as White, 4.4% Latino, 3.3% Asian, 3.1% African American, .2% Pacific Islander, and 3% multiracial.

Of the 2,711 students surveyed, 778 students completed both the questions related to study abroad programs and the subscale questions on ethnocultural empathy. Responses from the 778 who completed both items will be included in the analysis of data.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected by means of a comprehensive survey to students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). The Campus Life Survey, as it is known, is used to provide data for a variety of areas at the university. Fundamentally, it is used for institutional assessment. Departments within the university receive results on student satisfaction with instruction, faith integration, advising, and other relevant topics. The Office of Christian Formation & Church Relations receives data related to their area, as does the Student Life Office.

The majority of questions on the survey, including the subscale of Ethnocultural Empathy, were Likert-type items based on a scale from "a very small extent" to "a very great extent." Other questions asked for factual information, such as year in school, gender, and program participation. All information that was used in this analysis were derived from questionnaire data. Within the larger survey, the Empathic Feeling and Expression subscale of the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003) was used to measure student attitudes regarding other cultures.

The survey was distributed via university email accounts, and participation was entirely voluntary in nature. The university recorded the email addresses of students who

elected to participate. Those participating students were added to a random drawing for gift cards as an incentive to participate. However, once a student began the survey, no identifying data were collected that would link them to specific responses and all responses were tabulated anonymously.

With the express permission from the Bethel Office of Institutional Assessment, the data were made available for analysis for this research project.

Data Analysis

A 2 X 5 ANCOVA was used to analyze the data. The independent variables are the study abroad experience and the gender of the participants, the dependent variable is the student scores on the Empathic Feeling & Expression subscale of the Ethnocultural Empathy Scale, and the covariate is the year in school.

Limitations of Methodology

This methodology presents several limitations in its design. The first limitation was that the data were collected from a non-probability convenience sample, which makes the results difficult to generalize. Participation in this survey was entirely voluntary. Students self-selected to participate, which means there was a limited cross section of the student body for this time period. Additionally, of those who took the survey, there may have been participants who opted out of that particular battery of questions. Analysis was conducted based only on those students who opted in to the survey, and opted in to answering that subscale of questions.

The design of this study was not a pre/post test model, which is the most typical design for measuring impact of abroad study programs in order to determine growth. Therefore conclusions can be drawn from the data, but growth following an experience

cannot be measured. The lack of pre/post comparison could obscure the root source of a correlation between participation in study abroad and empathy. In other words, this study does not address why empathy may be elevated for some individuals. It cannot be determined definitively whether or not student empathy was a result of the study abroad experience, or whether those predisposed to participate in such an intercultural experience are naturally inclined toward greater ethnocultural empathy, as suggested by Duan and Hill (1996).

Another limitation of the analyzed data set was that there was no indication of the nature of the programs the students might have participated in, other than duration. If there were such information, it might help assess quality of programming or relationship of the program to subsequent reported levels of empathy. Although duration can be correlated to overall effect of study abroad on cultural competence (Akande & Slawson, 2000; Billigmeier & Forman, 1975; Dwyer, 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004), there is evidence to suggest even a short term program can have significant impact, provided the experience is well designed (Bell et al., 2016).

According to Matsumoto (2013), adding a qualitative interview component to contextualize quantitative data can help improve overall analytical understanding. Because of the anonymous nature of the data collection, there is no way to follow up and seek such qualitative information.

Ethical Considerations

The archival data used in this study required no subject interaction on the part of the researcher. The data were collected as part of a larger survey distributed online, designed by the university to be distributed and collected without researcher contact. Per

Belmont Report guidelines, the university researchers did not collect names or other identifying characteristics of any of the participants and therefore protected the anonymity of all previous participants involved during the data collection stage. The information was also tabulated anonymously. The survey did not use language or words that are biased against persons because of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2005).

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a relationship between study abroad experience and enhanced ethnocultural empathy among participants. Data for this study were collected in Fall of 2016 using a campus wide, omnibus survey of all undergraduate students enrolled in Bethel University's College of Arts and Sciences. The survey was distributed via email. The data for this study were limited to items regarding study abroad, gender, year in school, and a subscale from the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang, et al., 2003). All collected data were quantitative.

The researcher gained access to the data, limited to the items related to the study, through Bethel University's Office of Institutional Assessment. A 2 (gender) X 5 (study abroad experience) ANCOVA was used to analyze the data. The independent variables were gender and study abroad experience. The covariate was year in school (Freshman to Senior), and the dependent variable was the student scores on the Empathic Feeling & Expression subscale of the Ethnocultural Empathy Scale (Wang, et al., 2003).

Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from undergraduates enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at Bethel University, a private, Christian, liberal arts, university in Minnesota in the Fall of 2016. The site of this study is a small, religious, relatively conservative, coeducational, liberal arts university in a Midwestern city. Two thousand, seven hundred eleven students were sent surveys via campus email accounts. Participation in the survey, or any part of the survey, was strictly voluntary. Data provided by the Colleges Office of Institutional Data and Research indicated that at the

time of the survey the population demographics were as follows: 60.9% (1,650) of enrolled CAS students were female, and 39.1% (1,061) were male. Of the total population, 86.1% identified as White, 4.4% Latino, 3.3% Asian, 3.1% African American, .2% Pacific Islander, and 3% multiracial.

Of the 2,711 students surveyed, 778 students completed all the items pertaining to this study. Only responses from the 778 who completed both items were included in the analysis of data.

Scale Reliability

The Cronbach alpha for the 15 item Empathic Expression & Feeling subscale for the sample in this study was $\alpha = .92$. This indicates that the internal reliability of this subscale for this sample was quite robust and similar to what Wang, et al. (2003) found ($\alpha = .91$) in their original study.

Correlations

Hypothesis one and hypothesis two.

The first hypothesis had to do with whether there was a significant difference between students who had participated in study abroad programs compared to those who planned to participate but had not yet and those who had no plans to participate in study abroad. The null hypothesis (H1o.) was that there would not be a difference in the ethnocultural empathy score compared to those with no study abroad experience. There was a significant main effect for study abroad experience, $F(4,763) = 3.88$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .02$. This indicates that at least one of the means was significantly different from one of the other means. LSD post hoc tests revealed that students who have a semester study abroad experience had significantly higher ethnocultural empathy scores compared to the

following: a) those who had an interim abroad experience (p =.001), b) those who planned to study abroad for interim (p = .004), and c) those with no plans to study abroad (p < .001). The mean difference between those who had a semester abroad experience and those who planned to study abroad for a semester approached significance (p=.076) but did not quite meet the .05 alpha level threshold. There was no significant difference between students who had an interim study abroad experience and those who planned to study abroad for an interim (see Table 1 for means and Table 2 for post hoc comparisons).

Given that the two groups with study abroad experiences (semester or interim) did not have significantly higher ethnocultural means compared to their respective control groups (those who plan to study abroad for a semester or those who plan to study abroad for an interim), this first null hypothesis is retained. However, it should be noted that the difference in ethnocultural empathy scores between those who had a semester study abroad experience and its direct control group, those who plan to study abroad but have not yet, was only marginally significant.

The second hypothesis was whether or not duration of study abroad experience would impact ethnocultural empathy. The null hypothesis (H2o.) stated there will not be a difference in the ethnocultural empathy scores of those who study abroad based on the duration of their experience. There were mixed results for this hypothesis. On the one hand, post hoc tests revealed that students with a semester abroad experience had significantly higher ethnocultural empathy scores compared to those who studied abroad for an interim (see Table 1 for means and Table 2 for post hoc comparisons). On the other hand, as mentioned in hypothesis 1, the difference between those with a semester

study abroad experience and those who plan to do a semester abroad experience was only marginally significant. Again, it may just be that those who want a semester abroad experience already have higher ethnocultural empathy compared to those who only want an interim abroad experience. Post hoc tests revealed that students who had a semester long study abroad experience (adjusted $M = 4.52$, $SE = .143$) scored significantly higher than the following groups:

- students who only had an interim (3-week) study abroad experience (adjusted $M = 3.96$, $SE = .106$, $p = .001$),
- students who had not yet had a study abroad experience but planned to go for an interim (adjusted $M = 4.03$, $SE = .074$, $p = .004$),
- students who had no plans to study abroad (adjusted $M = 3.96$, $SE = .061$, $p < .001$).

These results indicate that the students who studied abroad for a semester had significantly higher empathic feeling and expression scores compared to those who studied abroad for a three-week interim. The marginally significant difference in empathic feeling & expression between those who had a semester abroad experience and those students who had not yet studied abroad but planned to study for a semester in the future complicates matters a bit (adjusted $M = 4.18$, $SE = .117$, $p = .076$). This means that one must be tentative in concluding that the semester abroad experience increased students' ethnocultural empathy over a three-week interim abroad experience. It may have done that. However, it may also be the case that those students who choose to study abroad for a semester already had higher ethnocultural empathy. There was no significant difference on empathic feeling and expression

between those who had a semester abroad experience and those students who had not yet studied abroad but planned to study for a semester in the future (adjusted M = 4.18, SE = .117, p = .076). This means that we cannot conclude that the study abroad experience increased students' ethnocultural empathy, but can infer those with a predisposition to attend a long-term study abroad program already possess higher levels of ethnocultural empathy than other respondents.

Table 1

Means by Study Abroad Experience, Adjusted for Year in School

Estimates

Dependent Variable: Ethnocultural Empathy Scale: Emphathic Feeling & Expression

Have you studied outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents yo...	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Yes, during a semester	4.516[a]	.143	4.236	4.796
Yes, during an interim	3.964[a]	.106	3.756	4.173
No, but I am planning to for a semester	4.179[a]	.117	3.950	4.408
No, but I am planning to for an interim	4.033[a]	.074	3.888	4.177
No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	3.961[a]	.061	3.842	4.081

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: YearinSchool4 = 2.6537.

Table 2

LSD Post Hoc Comparisons of Ethnocultural Empathy by Study Abroad Experience

Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Ethnocultural Empathy Scale: Emphathic Feeling & Expression

(I) Have you studied	(J) Have you studied	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.[b]

outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents yo...	outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents yo...	Difference (I-J)		
Yes, during a semester	Yes, during an interim	.552*	.171	.001
	No, but I am planning to for a semester	.337	.190	.076
	No, but I am planning to for an interim	.483*	.165	.004
	No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	.555*	.154	.000
Yes, during an interim	Yes, during a semester	-.552*	.171	.001
	No, but I am planning to for a semester	-.215	.165	.193
	No, but I am planning to for an interim	-.069	.135	.613
	No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	.003	.121	.981
No, but I am planning to for a semester	Yes, during a semester	-.337	.190	.076
	Yes, during an interim	.215	.165	.193
	No, but I am planning to for an interim	.146	.132	.270
	No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	.217	.132	.101
No, but I am planning to for an interim	Yes, during a semester	-.483*	.165	.004
	Yes, during an interim	.069	.135	.613
	No, but I am planning to for a semester	-.146	.132	.270
	No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	.071	.096	.460
No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	Yes, during a semester	-.555*	.154	.000
	Yes, during an interim	-.003	.121	.981
	No, but I am planning to for a semester	-.217	.132	.101

No, but I am planning to for an interim	-.071	.096	.460

Hypothesis three.

The third hypothesis investigated whether gender might play a role in ethnocultural empathy. The null hypothesis (H3o.) states that there here will be no significant difference in the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on gender.

The relationship between empathy and gender revealed there was a significant main effect for gender, $F(1,763) = 24.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .032$. Female respondents demonstrated significantly higher levels of ethnocultural empathy compared to males.

Table 3

Ethnocultural Empathy Means by Gender, Adjusted for Year in School

Estimates

Dependent Variable: Ethnocultural Empathy Scale: Emphathic Feeling & Expression

			95% Confidence Interval	
Demographics: Gender	Mean	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female	4.355[a]	.041	4.274	4.436
Male	3.906[a]	.080	3.749	4.063

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: YearinSchool4 = 2.6537.

Hypothesis four.

The null hypothesis (H4o.) states that, controlling for year in school, there will be no significant difference in interactions in ethnocultural empathy scores between study abroad experiences and gender. The covariate (year in school) was not statistically

significant, $F(1,763) = 1.81$, $p = .178$, $\eta^2 = .002$. That is, there was no significant difference between first-year, sophomore, juniors, and seniors on the empathic feeling & expression subscale.

Additionally, there was no significant interaction between gender and study abroad experience, $F(4,763) = 1.33$, $p = .256$, $\eta^2 = .007$. The effect of study abroad experience did not depend on the gender of the student. Looking at the means in Table 4 men who studied abroad for a semester did have much higher ethnocultural empathy scores compared to men in the other study abroad categories. However, the sample size of men who studied abroad for a semester was too small to impact the interaction between the two variables. Therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Table 4

Ethnocultural Empathy Means by Gender and Study Abroad Experience, Adjusted for Year in School

Dependent Variable: Ethnocultural Empathy Scale: Emphathic Feeling & Expression

Demographics: Gender	Have you studied outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents yo...	Mean	Std. Error
Female	Yes, during a semester	4.558[a]	.119
	Yes, during an interim	4.336[a]	.099
	No, but I am planning to for a semester	4.507[a]	.109
	No, but I am planning to for an interim	4.208[a]	.078
	No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	4.167[a]	.067
Male	Yes, during a semester	4.474[a]	.255

Yes, during an interim	3.592[a]	.182
No, but I am planning to for a semester	3.851[a]	.201
No, but I am planning to for an interim	3.858[a]	.120
No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel.	3.756[a]	.101

Table 5

2 (Gender) X 5 (Study Abroad Experience) ANCOVA Table with Year in School as Covariate

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Ethnocultural Empathy Scale: Emphathic Feeling & Expression

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	57.260[a]	10	5.726	6.889	.000
YearinSchool	1.508	1	1.508	1.814	.178
Gender	20.708	1	20.708	24.914	.000
StudyAbroad	12.890	4	3.222	3.877	.004
Gender * StudyAbroad5	4.434	4	1.109	1.334	.256
Error	634.202	763	.831		
Corrected Total	691.462	773			

Chapter 5: Overview of Study

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between the development of student ethnocultural empathy and participation in a study abroad program. A 2 (gender) X 5 (study abroad experience) ANCOVA was used to analyze the data. The independent variables were gender and study abroad experience. The covariate was year in school (Freshman to Senior), and the dependent variable was the student scores on the Empathic Feeling & Expression subscale of the Ethnocultural Empathy Scale (Wang, et al., 2003). The data were collected as part of a larger, omnibus student survey in the Fall of 2016. Four hypotheses and their alternatives were proposed. Chapter Five reviews this study and addresses future implications.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Four main questions were addressed within this study. Each research questions is listed with its corresponding null hypothesis.

RQ1. What difference, if any, exists in the ethnocultural empathy score of students based on participation in a study abroad program?

H1o. There will not be a difference in the ethnocultural empathy score of students who participate in a study abroad program.

RQ2. What difference, if any, exists between the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on the duration of the abroad study experience (interim vs. semester-length)?

H2o. There will not be a difference in the ethnocultural empathy score of those who study abroad based on the duration of their experience.

RQ3. What difference, if any, exists in the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on gender?

H3o. There will be no significant difference in the ethnocultural empathy of participating students based on gender.

RQ4. Controlling for the year in school, what interactions in ethnocultural empathy scores exist between study abroad experiences and gender?

H4o. There will be no significant difference in interactions in ethnocultural empathy scores between study abroad experiences and gender.

Conclusions

There were four hypotheses proposed in this study. Using a strict alpha of .05 would mean that hypothesis one would not be rejected. However, the probability value ($p = .076$) was close to the .05 threshold. For hypothesis 2, there was a significant difference between students who studied abroad for a semester and students who studied abroad for only an interim. So technically with that result we would reject the null hypothesis for number 2. However, that result is tempered by the fact that there was only a marginally significant difference between those who studied abroad for a semester and those who planned to study abroad for a semester. Did the semester study abroad experience create the higher ethnocultural empathy score or were students already high on ethnocultural empathy before the study abroad experience? The results for hypotheses 3 and 4 are more straightforward. Null hypothesis 3 was rejected; women did score significantly higher than men on ethnocutlural empathy. Finally, we retained the null hypothesis for number 4. There was no interaction between gender and study abroad experience.

The first research question was a broad based, general question, examining whether any difference existed in ethnocultural empathy scores for those who participated in a study abroad program. The second research question was essentially the same, but looked specifically at whether a difference in ethnocultural empathy scores, if any, was related to program length. In both instances there was no significant difference found. However, the difference between those students who had a study abroad experience for a semester and those who planned to study abroad for a semester did approach significance. Potentially with a little larger sample size a significant difference between the groups would have likely been found.

Students who had a semester long study abroad experience did have the highest adjusted mean ethnocultural empathy scores ($M = 4.52$). The next highest adjusted mean score was for the students who planned to study abroad for a semester ($M = 4.18$). It is likely the students who want to study abroad for a semester do already have high ethnocultural empathy. However, it may also be that the semester study abroad experience does help to increase ethnocultural empathy. The evidence from this data set is not quite strong enough to make that conclusion, though.

Research question three examined whether a difference existed in empathy of participating students based on gender. Question four examined whether there was an interaction between study abroad experience and gender of the student. In both cases, female respondents indicated significantly higher empathy levels than their male counterparts. However, the interaction between gender and type of study abroad experience was not significant. That is, the type of study abroad experience (or no experience) did not systematically vary with the gender of the student.

Analysis of the data in this study showed that students who had a semester abroad experience had the highest ethnocultural empathy mean. The difference between the mean of students who had a semester study abroad experience and students who planned to study abroad for a semester approached significance (p =.076). However, the difference was not quite large enough to reach statistical significance at the .05 level. Given previous research on the connection between empathy and study abroad (Engle & Engle, 2003; Eklund, Andersson-Straberg & Hansen, 2009; Green, 2995; Rasoal, et al., 2011a; Stebleton, et al., 2013; Strange & Gibson, 2017), a more significant relationship was expected.

There may be several reasons why the evidence did not quite reach traditional statistical significance. This study was a review of archival data collected in the Fall of 2016. Student participation was voluntary and no identifying information was collected. The data were a reflection of a single collection event. A pre-test/post-test method may have found a significant difference for the study abroad experience.

Additionally, there were no data gathered indicating which specific study abroad programs students had participated in. As a result, this study was also unable to review the specific course design of the various abroad study programs. Research has indicated that programs designed with elements of experiential or transformative learning would likely result in greater empathy (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Mezirow, 1990, 1997; Perry, et al., 2012), and has even been shown to yield significant results in a short-term programs (Bell, Gibson, Tarrant, Perry, & Stoner, 2016; Borden, 2007; Capell, et al., 2008; Dwyer, 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Hachtmann, 2012; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Tarrant, 2010). It is likely that some students who participated in

semester study abroad programs had some elements of experiential or transformative learning in their program whereas others did not. The heterogeneity of the program experiences likely increased the variability of ethnocultural empathy scores within this group.

This study reviewed quantitative archival data only. Because of the lack of research studies dealing only with quantitative data in this subject area, it was believed it would add to the body of research in this field. However, in previous studies that combined both a quantitative and qualitative approach, greater relationship was found (Borden, 2007; Hachtmann, 2012).

In this study there was a significant relationship between ethnocultural empathy and those who planned to, or who did, participate in semester long study abroad programs. However, since the elevated empathy levels were also found among those planning to spend a longer time abroad, not just those who had, this might be an indication of pre-existing levels of empathy rather than a result of a study abroad experience. While the findings in this study indicate students who selected a semester long option might have a predisposition toward ethnocultural empathy, research does support the idea that longer duration experiences can lead to higher levels of cross cultural empathy in participants as a result of actual time spent abroad (Akande & Slawson, 2000; Billigmeier & Foreman, 1975; Dwyer, 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2003). Because the data for this study were a single data point, and not a pre-test/post-test model, it cannot be determined whether those who actually spent time abroad demonstrated an even higher level of empathy than their pre-test might have indicated.

Implications and Recommendations

There continue to be a lack of quantitative studies exploring the relationship between study abroad participation and ethnocultural empathy. Most current literature focuses on qualitative data and open-ended surveys. Industries and universities alike advocate for the development of interpersonal and intercultural relational skills, and study abroad programs seem a likely method for achieving that end. However, there is a still a gap in the literature that definitively demonstrates how these programs can reliably and consistently deliver such results. Institutions and individuals alike continue to dedicate significant resources toward these programs with the hope of developing increasingly important skills. The need for further research is evident.

One area that university researchers could explore would be whether their current institutional study abroad programs have been designed with either Experiential or Transformational Learning experiences in mind, and whether such experiences resulted in increased student empathy measures. These programs should include authentic cultural interactions, with an opportunity for relationship building, and ample opportunity for reflection and processing. Identifying which institutional programs offer the most powerful effects, and then analyzing what powerful course design looks like in practical terms, could help elevate the entirety of their study abroad offerings.

In future studies, a pre/post test research design is recommended. Such design could provide helpful comparative information and might determine a causal relationship. Establishing a baseline ethnocultural empathy level for students at the outset would allow measurement of the impact of abroad study. Of course, the drawback of pre/post designs is that it sensitizes the student to the measures in the study.

Future studies should also be designed to include both quantitative and qualitative measures. While this study intentionally used a quantitative instrument alone to measure empathy levels in order to add to the body of research, previous studies using a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments have yielded significant findings (Borden, 2007; Hachtmann, 2012). Gathering of such qualitative data could be simplified if reflective questions were included as part of the instructional design of study abroad programs. In both an experiential and transformational learning model, these type of questions used for processing opportunities could be embedded within a course and gathered in real time.

Concluding Comments

As we see greater representation of diversity in our societies and cultural differences come more into focus, the demand for higher levels of cultural competence and ethnocultural empathy become increasingly necessary. There is not only a clear need, there is also a deep interest on the part of students and educators alike to have opportunities to develop these skills within a higher education setting. Developing top caliber programs, designed to encourage empathy building and authentic relationships within a course of study, is in the best interest of all involved. When universities can offer clear evidence of program effectiveness, ensuring this important intercultural facet is being addressed and developed, the investment of time and money into these experiences will truly be justified.

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Appendices

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

BETHEL
UNIVERSITY

Joel D. Frederickson, Ph.D.
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December 22, 2018

Dear IRB Committee-

This letter serves as permission for Julia Winn, Ed.D. student in Bethel University's graduate program, to have access to specific data from the 2016 CAS Campus Life Survey for her dissertation. The data file which Ms. Winn will access to includes no identifying information in it. That is, **NO CAS student can be identified in the data file (no ID numbers, names, email addresses, etc)**. Additionally, the file that Ms. Winn will have access to will only have the following variables in it from the survey:

1) Student self-reported gender;
2) Student self-reported year in school;
3) Student self-reported study abroad experience and/or plans; and
4) Responses to the *Empathic Feeling & Expression scale* items and the total scale score from these items.

All other survey items will be eliminated from this file.

My supervisor, Provost Dr. Deb Harless, has agreed to this arrangement.

Please feel to contact me with any questions about this agreement.

Sincerely,

Joel D. Frederickson, Ph.D.
Associate Dean of Institutional Assessment & Accreditation
Professor, Department of Psychology

Appendix B

Campus Life Survey 2016

Campus Life Survey 2016

Start of Block: Core Values & Spiritual Life

Bethel University - Campus Life Survey

Please respond to the set of items in this Campus Life Survey. There are items pertaining to Core Values, Student Life, Campus Ministries & Spiritual Life, Political & Social Attitudes, and Academics. Administrators, faculty, and staff take your responses to these items seriously and have made changes in the past based on student responses.

In pre-testing this survey, we found it took students between 10-20 minutes to complete.

Your responses to this survey are **ANONYMOUS**. At the end of the survey there will be a link to a separate survey where you can enter your name for a drawing for one of twenty $20 Target Gift Cards. This will ensure that you name or email address will be NOT be connected to your responses to the survey items.

Thank you!

Do you wish to participate in this survey?

- ○ yes (1)
- ○ no (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Bethel University - Campus Life Survey Please respond to the set of items in this Campus Life Sur... = no

Page Break

Items about Academics at Bethel

Have you studied outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents your experience. If you have studied overseas for both a semester and an interim, choose the answer "Yes, during a semester".

- ○ Yes, during a semester (1)
- ○ Yes, during an interim (2)
- ○ No, but I am planning to for a semester (3)
- ○ No, but I am planning to for an interim (4)
- ○ No, I have not and/or will not study outside of the U.S. while at Bethel. (5)

Display This Question:

If Have you studied outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents yo... = Yes, during a semester

Or Have you studied outside of the U.S. while at Bethel? Choose the response that best represents yo... = Yes, during an interim

What is your current class standing at Bethel?

- ○ Freshman (1)
- ○ Sophomore (2)
- ○ Junior (3)
- ○ Senior, not graduating in May 2016 (4)
- ○ Graduating Senior (5)

Demographics:

Gender

- ○ Female (1)
- ○ Male (2)

Please rate the degree to which each of the following items describe you. Please be honest and candid.

	1=Strongly disagree that it describes me (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6=Strongly agree that it describes me (6)
When I hear people make racist jokes, I tell them I am offended even though they are not referring to my racial or ethnic group. (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○
When other people struggle with racial or ethnic oppression, I share their frustration (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel supportive of people of other racial and ethnic groups, if I think they are being taken advantage of. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○

I share the anger of people who are victims of hate crimes (e.g., intentional violence because of race or ethnicity). (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am touched by movies or books about discrimination issues faced by racial or ethnic groups other than my own. (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't care if people make racist statements against other racial or ethnic groups. (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share the anger of those who face injustice because of their racial and ethnic backgrounds (16)	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I know my friends are treated unfairly because of their racial or ethnic backgrounds, I speak up for them. (21)	○	○	○	○	○	○

I get disturbed when other people experience misfortunes due to their racial or ethnic backgrounds. (18)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I rarely think about the impact of a racist or ethnic joke on the feelings of people who are targeted. (17)	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I see people who come from a different racial or ethnic background succeed in the public arena, I share their pride. (22)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am not likely to participate in events that promote equal rights for people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I seek opportunities to speak with individuals of other racial or ethnic backgrounds	○	○	○	○	○	○

about their experiences. (4)						
When I interact with people from other racial or ethnic backgrounds, I show my appreciation of their cultural norms. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I express my concern about discrimination to people from other racial or ethnic groups. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: SEE: Empathic Feeling & Expression