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Examining Predictors of U.S. Student Intent to Study Abroad from a Communication Perspective

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EXAMINING PREDICTORS OF U.S. STUDENT INTENT TO STUDY ABROAD
FROM A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

By

Jasmine R. Phillips

A DISSERTATION

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of the University of Miami
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Coral Gables, Florida

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EXAMINING PREDICTORS OF U.S. STUDENT INTENT TO STUDY ABROAD
FROM A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

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This study of American undergraduate students explored the communication factors that contribute to their decisions regarding participation in study abroad programs. The theoretical framework proposed that several communication constructs were related to intent to study abroad. Specifically, intercultural communication competence (ICC), and social influence via face-to-face and computer-mediated communication, were proposed to affect intent to study abroad. Hypotheses generated in this research were grounded in literature on the above constructs and guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Previous literature found that intercultural attitudes such as openness to other cultures and diversity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication apprehension, influenced study abroad participation (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011; Stroud, 2010). Given previous data, it was hypothesized that ICC would influence intent to study abroad. In addition, the impressionability of college-aged students and the widespread use of social networking sites (SNSs) led to the hypothesis that online activities by peers regarding study abroad would influence participant intent to study abroad. Results of this study indicated that participant level of intercultural communication competence was not a predictor of intent to study abroad ($r$...
= .02). This result signifies that students were interested in studying abroad regardless of their level of intercultural communication competence. On the other hand, face-to-face communication ($r = .39$) and computer-mediated communication ($r = .31$) were both predictors of intent to study abroad. This result means that students were influenced by online communication with peers and face-to-face communication people important to them, such as faculty, advisors, parents, and friends. Study implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The stakes involved in study abroad are simple, straightforward, and important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent. (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005, p. ii)

As New York Times journalist Thomas Friedman (2005) wrote, the world is “flat”: barriers that once divided cultures no longer exist. We live in a world that engenders routine intercultural interactions, from communicating with people abroad via social media, to participating in a globalized economic and political arena, to collaborating with diverse others within our communities. Global competencies are requisite skills for success in today’s multicultural and interconnected society. A globally competent person possesses substantive knowledge of other cultures, open-mindedness and resistance to stereotyping, as well as intercultural communication skills necessary to “engage effectively with others” (Olson & Kroeger, 2001, p. 118). These global competencies, particularly intercultural communication competence, are essential skills in an interconnected world.

Several mechanisms have given rise to globally connected societies: technological advances, economic globalization, population migration, and multiculturalism (Chen & Starosta, 1996). These four mechanisms underscore the prevalence of intercultural communication and implore the development of global competencies to successfully navigate contemporary society. The first mechanism, technological advances, was aptly described by Friedman (2005), who wrote that one of the great flatteners of our world is the internet. Advances in technology have erased geographical constraints on communication, commerce and employment. Ideas that were once limited to a small population now reach global audiences instantly through new media such as Twitter, You
Tube, Facebook and Instagram. Cultural sensitivity, an element of intercultural communication competence, is especially important in the age of social media; a comment on Twitter perceived as culturally offensive may spur unwanted viral attention. Thus, it is imperative that individuals understand how their attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors, the three elements of intercultural communication competence (e.g. Chen & Starosta, 2000; Fantini, 2009; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Kim, 1991; van de Vijver & Leung, 2009; Wiseman, 2001) contribute to the outcome of intercultural interactions.

According to Friedman (2005), offshoring is another of the flatteners. Offshoring is an example of the second mechanism of intercultural connectedness, economic globalization (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Offshoring opportunities abound as U.S.-based corporations seek employees overseas to reduce labor costs. For example, American corporations may train employees in India or the Philippines to staff call centers for U.S.-based customers. Both the cross-cultural training process and the call center communication between employees and customers in this illustration point to the need for intercultural communication skills (Walker & Hartley, 2012). The increasingly global nature of commerce has contributed to the urgency of U.S. citizens and future national leaders to gain an understanding of different cultures (Relyea, Cocchiara & Studdard, 2008).

Population migration and multiculturalism are the third and fourth mechanisms of intercultural connectedness. These mechanisms are evident in demographic shifts in the United States, as people of non-European descent and foreign-born citizens grow in number and percentage of the U.S. population. The U.S. is projected to become a majority-minority nation by 2043 (Passel & Cohn, 2008), whereby no ethnic group will make up a majority of the U.S. population. The foreign-born population will also
increase, accounting for 19% of the U.S. population by 2050 (a 7% increase from the current 12%). Immigrants and their descendants will account for 82% of the U.S. population growth between now and 2050 (Passel & Cohn). These projections point toward a more ethnically diverse and multicultural U.S. society, and emphasize the need for an interculturally competent populace.

In addition to the four mechanisms of intercultural connectedness (Chen & Starosta, 1996), global competencies are imperative for U.S. national security and foreign policy interests. The U.S. was jolted on September 11, 2001, when it was attacked by groups claiming hatred against Western cultures. In a post 9/11 world, Americans cannot afford to live in ignorance about countries and cultures that have been poorly understood in the past. Yet the U.S. lacks sufficient citizenry knowledgeable about diverse cultures. This problem is illustrated by the U.S. Government’s critical need for citizens to fill positions requiring proficiency in languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Turkic, Persian, Indic, Korean, Russian and Swahili (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2014) and cultural expertise in many non-Western nations. For example, the U.S. Department of State reported that 31% of Foreign Service officers in overseas language-designated positions failed the speaking and reading foreign language requirements of their posts (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2009). The problem is especially acute in the Middle East and Asia (GAO, 2009). These facts point to the shortage of qualified professionals to fulfill diplomatic governmental positions. U.S. national security and foreign policy interests are dependent on a globally competent public, yet the population is not meeting this need.
Technological advances, economic globalization, population migration, a multicultural society, national security, and foreign policy interests underscore the importance of global competencies such as intercultural communication and language skills, understanding of other cultures, cross-cultural sensitivities, diverse problem-solving skills and novel analytical processes. Living in a foreign culture can help build these competencies. One tool for young people to develop these competencies is participation in university study abroad programs. In general, study abroad programs include earning academic credit overseas through host country universities or home university courses. Diverse programs offer options to study alongside host nationals at universities abroad, with other American students taught by U.S. faculty, or in specialized courses with international students. Time in the foreign culture ranges from one week to a full academic year. The study abroad program experience helps U.S. students to develop intercultural communication competence, empathy, diverse problem-solving and analytical capabilities, a tolerance for ambiguity, and foreign language fluency (NAFSA, Issue Brief, 2012). University students who study abroad and immerse themselves in foreign cultures and languages will be better prepared to meet the above global challenges than those students lacking the experience of immersion in a foreign culture, according to Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, former chair and vice chair of the 9/11 Commission (Kean & Hamilton, 2008). The U.S. Senate bill Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Act of 2006 echoes this assertion. It states that studying abroad is a “very effective means of imparting international and foreign-language competency to students” (n.p.). Similarly, the College Consortium for International Studies (2012) states that a benefit of studying abroad is to “sharpen interpersonal and communication skills through
interacting with people from backgrounds different than your own” (n.p.). In addition, research shows that studying abroad can increase intercultural communication awareness, openness to diversity, critical thinking skills, and flexibility and openness in novel situations (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Clarke, Flaherty, Wright & McMillen, 2009; Jackson, 2008; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Williams, 2005). Study abroad is believed to help students gain skills necessary to be a citizen in a globalized world (“Preparing Globally”, 2007). By increasing participation in study abroad programs, U.S. universities may be able to prepare American students for the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Study abroad programs form a cornerstone of university internationalization plans. Internationalization refers to infusing an “international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Internationalization is not a new idea; it extends back to at least the twelfth century when university scholars, students and ideas traveled across national boundaries throughout Europe (NAFSA: Comprehensive Internationalization, n.d.). The last several decades have produced powerful new forces that have renewed the quest for international dimensions of universities (NAFSA: Comprehensive Internationalization, n.d.). These international dimensions include a student community that is globally competent. Study abroad participation is acknowledged as an effective means to produce globally competent college graduates. Recognizing its vital importance, Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, became the first U.S. university to feature study abroad participation as a graduation requirement in 2006 (“Goucher”, 2013).
In addition, the U.S. Government has deemed critical the benefits of study abroad participation. The Federal Government has committed to increasing the number of international exchanges to further young people’s knowledge of foreign cultures and languages. In the last decade, the U.S. Congress expressed its support for study abroad programs by developing several legislative acts and funding sources. In 2004 Congress established the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (“Commission”, 2005). The goal of the Commission is to send one million U.S. students abroad annually by 2016/2017. In 2005, the Senate passed a resolution declaring the year 2006 as the “Year of Study Abroad” (S. Res., 2005). The Congress subsequently introduced a bill to establish the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Program to greatly expand study abroad opportunities (“Abraham Lincoln”, 2006). This Program, if enacted, would create a path for study abroad to reflect the “demographics of the United States undergraduate population, including undergraduate students in technical and scientific fields of study” (“Abraham Lincoln”, 2006, n.p.). In 2009 President Barack Obama launched the first “100,000 Strong” initiative, designed to increase the number of U.S. students studying abroad in China (U.S. Dept of State, n.d.). Moreover, in 2011, President Obama announced the “100,000 Strong in the Americas” initiative, designed to encourage study abroad participation to Latin America and the Caribbean. In January 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry highlighted a major milestone of this initiative with the “100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund” (Kerry, 2014). The Fund has already raised $3.65 million to support the 100,000 Strong in the Americas. This Fund will support the expansion of the capacity of universities in Latin American and the Caribbean to receive students from the U.S. Further evidence of U.S. Governmental
support is the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs scholarships to increase the number of study abroad participants and diversity of study abroad destinations. These scholarships include the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and the Boren Award for International Study. The Boren Award is specifically designed to attract future professionals in the area of national security. These efforts to expand the number of students who study abroad demonstrate the U.S. Government’s strong interest in exposing young people to other cultures and languages. The U.S. Government recognizes the importance of study abroad participation and the need for developing intercultural skills as a requisite for our global society.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite the impressive, persistent need for intercultural communication skills, and the funding sources to assist with study abroad participation, many U.S. college students have not embraced the opportunity to gain an international perspective through a study abroad program. Only 9.4% of U.S. undergraduates study abroad before graduating (IIE, 2013). This means that 9 out of 10 undergraduates do not include studying abroad in their undergraduate education. The study abroad participation rate has hovered at about 9% for the past decade (IIE, 2013) despite the promotion of study abroad programs by educators and the U.S. Government. The stagnant participation rate suggests that for the vast majority of university students, such as males, ethnic minorities, science majors, and financially disadvantaged students, recruitment efforts are not making a difference in the decisions about studying abroad.
The low participation rate in study abroad programs highlights the looming problem of a generation that will be ill-prepared to handle the global challenges of a multicultural society. The benefits of studying abroad are fast becoming requisite skills for personal and professional success. Without an international experience, students may not gain the intercultural skills required for a global society and may be less competitive in business and government than those with study abroad experience. Ultimately, U.S. economic and political competitiveness depends on the ability of its citizens to adapt to a global environment. If the demand for global competencies outpaces the number of students who gain these competencies, we will face a shortage of citizens able to engage effectively in the international dimensions required in society. This shortage will likely have negative effects on the U.S. economic and political position in the world. As mentioned, current efforts are falling short in recruiting a higher percentage of students to participate in study abroad programs. This problem suggests underlying factors that influence student decisions about studying abroad that are not being addressed. There may be specific communication-based influences that can help illuminate would-be participant attitudes toward studying abroad and intention to participate in said programming. Research focusing on this issue can help us understand the influences on student decisions regarding study abroad participation. The goal of this dissertation research will address this problem.

**Purpose of the Study**

Research has addressed low study abroad program participation rates, and identified several factors that contribute to this problem. One factor is that study abroad
program participation seems to be an option primarily chosen by students of certain demographics: Caucasians, females, and social sciences and humanities majors are groups that are overrepresented in study abroad programs (compared to the overall population of U.S. college students) (NAFSA: “Trends”, n.d.). Ethnic minorities (except Asian-Americans), males, students in certain majors (natural sciences and engineering), and students with limited financial means are underrepresented within the population of students who study abroad (IIE, 2013; NAFSA: “Trends”; NAFSA: “Represent”, n.d.). In other words, these groups do not study abroad in proportion to their percentage of the U.S. college student population. Some studies have focused on the factors influencing the decision to study abroad among underrepresented populations. Ramirez-Clemens (2002) and Kasravi (2009) examined factors among students of color; Surridge (2000) focused on the adult college population; Shirley (2009) focused on male students; and Salisbury et al. (2011) examined pre-existing data regarding factors that affect white and minority students’ intent to study abroad. Because of the critical need to increase the participation rate of study abroad among all demographic groups, legislators have enacted several diversification efforts, such as the Senator Paul Simon Act and the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Act of 2006. One goal of the Abraham Lincoln Act is to “democratize study abroad and make [it] accessible to all undergraduate students, regardless of their field of study, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or gender” (n.p). If more underrepresented groups study abroad, then the overall participation rate would hopefully increase. Thus, this study will report differences in intention to study abroad among gender, race/ethnicity, major, and socio-economic status. It is important to include this data to keep pace with the contemporary issues in study abroad participation.
Aside from demographic factors, scholars have identified personal, social, and institutional influences on student participation in study abroad programs. For example, Peterson (2003) looked at beliefs about study abroad; Stroud (2010) and Lozano (2008) conducted descriptive studies of personal factors that influenced study abroad participation. BaileyShea (2009) and Kasravi (2009) examined the effect of institutional factors such as classification, graduation rate, and faculty support on study abroad participation.

Some research of study abroad participation has examined the relationships between intercultural attitudes and interest in studying abroad. Goldstein and Kim (2006), and Van der Zee and van Oudenhoven (2001), focused on how intercultural attitudes—including ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, and intercultural effectiveness—correlated with study abroad participation. Stroud (2010) and Surridge (2000) investigated interest in other cultures as a predictor of study abroad participation. Finally, Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2011) measured openness to other cultures and racial diversity as a factor of study abroad participation. This study will extend the previous studies of intercultural attitudes by examining intercultural communication competence (ICC) as a predictor of intent to study abroad. Scholars have called for testing ICC as a predictor of intent to participate in a study abroad program (Relyea, Cocchiara, & Studdard, 2008). Based on the previous research examining constructs on different populations, this study hypothesizes that students with higher ICC will be more likely to plan to participate in a study abroad experience.

Other studies have looked at the role of social influence on study abroad participation. BaileyShea (2009), Booker (2001), and Peterson (2003) each explore the
role of faculty, academic advisor, parent and peer influence on study abroad participation. This research will also examine the social influence of these individuals. In addition to looking at the sources of messages received, this study will examine the contemporary communication mode of the internet. Specifically, this study will examine the influence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) via social networking sites (SNSs). It is important to include contemporary communication modes such as SNSs as a conduit of social influence, as college students report almost universal usage of SNSs such as Facebook (Aubrey & Rill, 2013). Social networking sites are an integral part of contemporary society and are an influential source of information. These sites expose young people to peer activities, indicating what friends consider to be important. For example, if a friend is traveling abroad, he or she might post photos or comments about the experience. Therefore, similar to face-to-face (FTF) communication, CMC can also indicate behavioral expectations and extends the influence of others to a wider social network online. A thorough investigation of literature on communication influences on student intent to study abroad revealed no previous research in the area of social media influence. Therefore, this research serves to fill an important gap in the literature.

In addition, previous studies have not investigated intercultural communication competence and social influence together as a part of the same study. Based on this gap in the literature, the present study will investigate the communication influences on student intent to study abroad. Specifically, this study will investigate the influence of intercultural communication competence, interpersonal (FTF) communication, and computer mediated communication (CMC) via social networking sites (SNSs) on U.S. student intent to study abroad during the undergraduate career.
In order to investigate the influence of the above communication constructs and modes on U.S. student intent to study abroad, this dissertation will be divided in five chapters. Chapter II, Review of Literature, outlines the conceptual framework utilized in the study and critically synthesizes the relevant literature on intercultural communication competence and communication via SNSs. It also situates the current study in the context of previous research on U.S. student intent to study abroad. Chapter III, Methodology, will detail the current empirical study and research approach to data collection and analysis. Chapter IV, Results, describes the participants, offers descriptive statistics, and presents the findings of this study’s research questions and hypotheses. Chapter V, Discussion, reviews the implications of the results, outlines the limitations of this current study, and suggests avenues for further investigations. This dissertation concludes with a list of references and relevant appendices.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the conceptual framework and reviews the relevant literature. It begins by outlining the conceptual framework utilized in the present study, which incorporates the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the Decision to Study Abroad Model (Peterson, 2003). The present study extends the TRA and the Decision to Study Abroad Model to include influences of communication via social networking sites (SNSs). Then, this chapter presents a critical synthesis of the relevant literature. It situates the current study in the context of previous research pertaining to study abroad programs, intercultural communication competence, social media influence. A brief overview of current trends in study abroad is described. The concept of intercultural communication competence is then discussed, providing a background of the construct and its relationship to study abroad participation. Next, communication via social networking sites (SNSs) is discussed. Finally, this study’s research questions and hypotheses are presented.

Conceptual Framework

This section will elucidate the conceptual framework developed to inform this study. Several studies examined study abroad precursors, but lack a comprehensive theoretical lens to frame the research (Clemens, 2002; Doyle, 2010; Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Loberg, 2012; Lozano, 2008; Stroud, 2010). Many studies have focused on exploratory research of variables thought to influence study abroad participation. The lack of a theoretical approach is one gap of previous research that will be addressed in the current study.
Theoretically-based examinations are found in some previous literature on study abroad participation. Researchers (Booker, 2001; BaileyShea, 2009; Kasravi, 2009; Peterson, 2003) utilized aspects of the TRA (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) to examine influences on study abroad participation. As mentioned, this study builds conceptually from the TRA. It also employs the Decision to Study Abroad Model (Peterson, 2003), which utilizes the TRA in a study abroad context. This model and theory together guide the conceptual framework through which to examine communication influences on U.S. student intent to participate in a study abroad program.

The Theory of Reasoned Action has been widely applied in the social sciences to areas as diverse as college students’ career choice (Strader & Katz, 1990), college students’ intent to drink alcohol (Dunleavy, 2008; Trafirmow, 1996), young consumers’ purchasing intent (Belleau et al., 2007) and young adults’ smoking cessation (Ajzen, Albarracin & Hornik, 2007). The Theory of Reasoned Action is appropriate for research on study abroad participation because it accounts for both pre-conceived attitudes toward study abroad programs and the social influences to which students are subject. The decision to study abroad is likely influenced by a combination of intercultural attitudes and beliefs, and the influences of family, friends, and other important people. The Theory of Reasoned Action focuses on these general attitudes and social influences rather than individual barriers such as lack of finances, fears of delaying graduation and issues of program availability (Peterson, 2003). The theory is also fitting to the examination of study abroad participation from a communication perspective. One of the theory’s predictors, the subjective norm, is the perceptions of others’ expectations. The study of
the subjective norm is “centrally important to [the communication] discipline because it is a communicative phenomenon that occurs via shared information about a norm” (Dunleavy, 2008, p. 469). The subjective norm shows the importance of messengers and the audiences of these messages (Peterson, 2003). In other words, the Theory of Reasoned action presumes that social influence can impact our decision-making. Important messengers, such as friends and family, can influence our subjective norm, and thus, our behavioral intentions. Studying subjective norm can shed light on how study abroad is communicated through social networks.

**Theory of reasoned action components.** The Theory of Reasoned Action aims to “predict and understand an individual’s behavior” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 5). This theory assumes that humans are rational actors; we make decisions in a rational way using available information. It also presupposes that individuals evaluate each of the outcomes before choosing a behavior. According to the TRA, behavioral intention is the immediate predictor of behavior. For example, if a person intends to purchase a video game, he or she will probably do so.

The Theory of Reasoned Action is parsimonious, positing that only two primary factors determine behavioral intention. These two factors are (1) *attitude toward the behavior* and (2) the *subjective norm*; whether a person believes important others feel he or she should perform the behavior. In other words, how a person feels toward a behavior, and whether he or she believes that important people in his or her life feel this behavior should be performed, determine the likelihood a person will perform a behavior. If a person believes a certain behavior is positive, *and* that person also believes that important people in his life hold that certain behavior as positive, then the likelihood that
this person will engage in this behavior increases. The reverse is also true, if a person holds that a certain behavior is negative, and believes that important individuals in his life also hold that behavior as negative, then that person will not likely engage in that behavior. For example, if a person has a positive attitude toward recycling, and believes that his roommate feels he should recycle, then it is very likely that he will engage in recycling. In this theory, the two components work together synergistically to predict behavioral intent: attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm.

The Theory of Reasoned Action is based on the premise that behaviors originate from beliefs. According to TRA, behavioral beliefs and outcome evaluations predict attitude toward the behavior. Normative beliefs and motivation to comply predict the subjective norm. The attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm predict behavioral intent, which determines behavior. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1

*Theory of Reasoned Action*

As shown, the Theory of Reasoned Action is parsimonious, containing two
determinants of behavioral intent: attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm.
Each of these determinants is comprised of two predictors, which will be discussed
below.

**Attitude toward the behavior.** The first factor of the TRA states that attitude
toward the behavior is a determinant of behavioral intent. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980)
define an attitude as “a person’s general feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness” (p.
54) toward a concept. There are two determinants of attitude toward the behavior. The
first determinant is behavioral beliefs. This determinant is comprised of the underlying
beliefs about the behavior. Studies show that intercultural attitudes and beliefs impact
student choice regarding study abroad participation. In particular, students indicating
lower ethnocentrism and prejudice were more likely to participate in study abroad
(Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Kim & Goldstein, 2005). Other studies found similar results:
students indicating greater interest in other cultures, cultural empathy, diversity and
challenge were more likely to intend to study abroad (Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella,
2011; Surridge, 2000; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). Since intercultural
communication competencies have been found to indicate interest in study abroad, level
of intercultural communication competence should be a predictor of attitude toward
participating in a study abroad program. It stands to reason, students with higher
intercultural communication competence will be more likely to have a favorable attitude
toward studying abroad, and be more likely to intend to study abroad.

The second component of attitude toward a behavior is *beliefs about the* 
**behavioral outcomes.** In this study, beliefs about the behavioral outcomes is defined as
the beliefs about the outcomes of study abroad participation, such as possibly gaining intercultural skills and greater knowledge about oneself. Other (negative) beliefs about the outcomes of study abroad participation include fears that it will delay graduation and will not fit into an academic program. Students with more positive beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes will be more likely to have a favorable attitude toward studying abroad, and be more likely to intend to study abroad.

**Subjective norm.** The second factor in the Theory of Reasoned Action is the subjective norm, or social influence. The subjective norm is the perception of the “social pressures” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 6) put on an individual to perform a particular behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1978) refer to this perception as subjective norm because it relays the perceived (subjective) social norms regarding a particular behavior. Social norms, in general, refer to “what is acceptable or permissible behavior in a group or society” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The subjective norm is a belief of what others in general think a person should do. The subjective norm is determined by normative beliefs. Normative beliefs are the beliefs a person has about what certain people or groups think he or she should do regarding a behavior. The greater the belief that important people or groups (peers, parents, etc.) think the behavior should be performed, the more likely a person will intend to perform the behavior.

The subjective norm presumes that people are influenced by others to perform a behavior such as studying abroad. Research in the area of persuasion indicates that traditional college age students (18 - 22 years old) may be particularly influenced by persuasive messages (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Sears, 1981) from people important to them. This suggests that in a context of deciding whether to go abroad, students may be
influenced by the messengers and the importance they give to these messages, such as those from professors, academic advisors, parents, and friends. For example, Peterson (2003) found that study abroad participants cited program faculty leaders and past participants as the most influential people in their decision to study abroad. Similarly, Booker (2001) found that influence of professors, advisors, family and friends directly influenced the decision to study abroad. In terms of the Theory of Reasoned Action, beliefs about these messengers form the normative beliefs, which is a component of the subjective norm.

The TRA includes two types of normative beliefs (Ajzen, 2012). The first type was described above, and is labeled *injunctive normative beliefs*. These are beliefs based on inferring what important others think we should do. This is the normative belief as originally conceived by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) in their earlier versions of the TRA. Later developments of the TRA support a second type of normative belief, based on one’s perceptions of important others’ behavior. This type is labeled *descriptive normative beliefs*, or observed actions of important social referents. In other words, “if most ‘people like me’ or if most of the people who are important to me’ are performing a behavior, I will also feel social pressure to engage in that behavior” (Fishbein, 2007, p. 291). This second type of normative belief distinguishes between what others think a person should do (the injunctive norm) and what a person thinks others are doing.

In this current study, reports of communication with influential groups (professors, academic advisors, parents, and friends) about the referent’s potential study abroad participation will serve as indicators of injunctive normative beliefs about study abroad. Descriptive normative beliefs will be analyzed via reports of computer mediated
communication (CMC) on social networking sites (SNSs). Both Peterson (2003) and Booker (2001) analyzed the influence of FTF communication reports with significant others. However, an exhaustive literature review revealed no studies on the CMC influence on study abroad participation. Therefore, this study will include descriptive normative beliefs via this mode of communication. It is important to include reports of contemporary communication modes such as social networking sites (SNSs) as conduits of descriptive normative beliefs. As mentioned, college students report almost universal usage of SNSs such as Facebook (Aubrey & Rill, 2013). These sites are an integral part of contemporary society and are an influential source of information. Because SNSs expose students to peer activities in real time, these mediated communication channels are another mode to indicate what friends consider to be important. For example, if a friend is traveling abroad, he or she might post photos or comments about the experience. Therefore, like FTF communication, CMC can also indicate behavioral expectations and extends the influence of others to a wider social network online. Computer mediated communication can have an even greater impact than FTF communication because the user is exposed to many more individuals simultaneously than in offline interactions. Status updates may be more frequent, thus exposing the user to more influences than FTF communication.

**Motivation to comply.** Knowing important referents’ normative beliefs is not sufficient for determining one’s subjective norm about a behavior. A person’s motivation to comply with the beliefs of others must also be considered (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Therefore, the normative beliefs of others is moderated by the person’s motivation to comply with these referents (Ajzen, 2012). For example, a student’s parents may tell
their son or daughter to study abroad, and the student may be highly motivated to comply with the parents’ wishes. The large weight of the student’s motivation to comply with the parents makes them a highly influential referent. In the TRA model, the normative beliefs are multiplied by the motivation to comply and summed to determine the weighted normative beliefs. This is shown in Figure 2.2, where SN is the subjective norm, $n_i$ is the injunctive normative belief, $m_i$ is the motivation to comply with the referent, and the sum is the total number of referents (Ajzen, 2012; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Figure 2.2

Equation of Subjective Norm

$$SN \propto \sum n_i m_i$$

This equation implies that more salient referents will have more influence over a student’s decision to study abroad. By taking into account the motivation to comply, one can ensure that important referents are given proportionately more weight (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

**Perceived behavioral control.** Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) identified a weakness of the TRA in later developments of the theory: it is confined to behavior over which people have volitional control. In the TRA, only attitudes and subjective norm are the predictors of intentions. Ajzen and Fishbein subsequently extended the TRA to include behaviors over which people have limited behavioral control, known as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Behavioral control refers to some internal and external factors that can impede or assist carrying out a behavior (Ajzen, 2012). Accord to Ajzen, one
can carry out intentions if he or she is able to “overcome any external obstacles that may interfere with behavioral performance” (p. 446). When the degree of control varies among individuals, intentions and control interact to affect behavior. In the present study, lack of finances represent an external factor that some participants may need to overcome in order to carry out the action of studying abroad.

In the Theory of Planned Behavior, perceived behavioral control is added as a third determinant of behavioral intent. Perceived behavioral control acts as a proxy for actual control, which is harder to measure (Ajzen, 2012). Perceived behavioral control originates from “readily accessible beliefs about resources and obstacles that can facilitate or interfere with performance of a given behavior” (p. 447). The more positive a person’s attitude and higher the subjective norm, and the more that person believes that he or she is able to perform the behavior, then the stronger should be their behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 2012). In the present study, participants may be concerned about finances, which will affect their perceived behavioral control. When the degree of perceived behavioral control varies among the participants, it may affect their intent to study abroad. While the present study does not employ a full TPB model, it will account for the concerns about finances by considering this external factor in the declaration of intent to study abroad in order to account for this potential confounding variable. In other words, there are two dependent variables in the present study: (1) intent to study abroad and (2) intent to study abroad regardless of finances.

Decision to study abroad model. Peterson (2003) adapted the TRA to a study abroad context and named it the Decision to Study Abroad Model (see Figure 2.3). Peterson’s model of the Decision to Study Abroad is similar to the TRA model; she
relates each component of the theory to study abroad. For example, *attitude* is named *attitude toward study abroad*; *evaluation of outcomes* is named *evaluation of outcomes about study abroad*; *intention to behave* is specified as *intention to study abroad* in her model. The current research builds on Peterson’s model focusing specifically on study abroad.

Figure 2.3

*Decision to Study Abroad Model*

Present conceptual model: intent to study abroad model. This dissertation proposes a conceptual model named the Intent to Study Abroad Model, which adapts the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and the Decision to Study Abroad Model (Peterson, 2003) to examine student intent to study abroad. The predictors of the dependent variables in the present model are: (1) intercultural communication competence, (2) evaluation of study abroad outcomes, (3) social influence of others via
face-to-face (FTF) communication, (4) social influence of others via computer-mediated communication (CMC), (5) subjective norm, and (6) attitude toward study abroad.

The conceptual model (see Figure 2.4) shows the hypothesized relationships between the variables. Intercultural communication competence is believed to have a direct and indirect relationship to intent to study abroad. Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes is also believed to have a direct and indirect relationship with intent to study abroad. Face-to-face social influence is the injunctive norm. This is comprised of the sum of injunctive beliefs weighted by the motivation to comply with those beliefs. The injunctive norm believed to have a direct relationship with intent to study abroad. The descriptive norm, comprised of descriptive beliefs weighted by the motivation to comply, is also believed to have a direct relationship with intent to study abroad. Both injunctive and descriptive norm predict the overall subjective norm. The subjective norm is hypothesized to predict intent to study abroad. Demographics, although external to the TRA model may have some relationship to intent to study abroad. The treatment of demographic variables will be discussed extensively in this chapter.
In summary, the TRA is a parsimonious theory comprised of two primary factors: attitudes and subjective norm. The current research will incorporate elements of the model in the present analysis of communication influences on intent to study abroad. Unlike previous studies, and congruent with current research on the significance of CMC.
in today’s society, this current study will include reports of communication via Facebook as a contemporary mode of influence on student perceptions of the subjective norm.

**Review of Literature**

This section discussed the previous literature related to the current study. First, a brief portrait of U.S. students studying abroad is outlined. Second, this section discusses the development of the construct of intercultural communication competence. Third, the impact of study abroad participation on intercultural communication competence will be reviewed. Fourth, computer mediated communication via social networking sites is discussed. Finally, this section will include the literature on the relationship between demographics and study abroad participation.

**Current context: U.S. students studying abroad.** Nine percent of U.S. undergraduates study abroad before graduating (IIE, 2013c). The number of students who participate in study abroad programs has increased steadily. During the academic year 2011/2012 (the most recent year that statistics are available), 283,332 students studied abroad, compared to 2001/2 when 160,920 students went overseas (IIE, 2013b). Over the past two decades, annual study abroad participation has tripled, from 70,000 in 1991/92. During the academic year 2011/2012, participants were 65% female, 35% male; 76% Caucasian/White, 8% Asian, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Black/African-American, 3% Multiracial, and 0.5% American Indian/Alaska Native (IIE, 2013c). Just over half (53%) of students elect to study in Europe; the UK, Spain, and Italy are the top choices of study abroad students, hosting 32% of U.S. students combined (IIE, 2013c). Sixteen percent of participants study in Latin American/Caribbean, 12% study in Asia,
5% study in Africa, 5% study in Oceania, 3% study in the Middle East, and 1% elect Canada (IIE, 2013c). Six percent of students traveled to multiple destinations during their program.

Each year, a greater percentage of students study abroad for a short-term program, while comparatively fewer elect to study for an academic year. In 2001/2, 7.8% of students studied abroad for an academic year, compared to 3.2% in 2011/12 (IIE, 2013a). The majority, 59%, studied abroad for a short term of eight weeks or less, while 38% studied abroad for a quarter or a semester (IIE, 2013a). The top field of study among study abroad students was social sciences (22.4%) followed by business and management (20.5%) (IIE, 2013b). These have remained the leading fields of study for the past decade. Education, engineering, math, computer science, and health science majors are underrepresented in study abroad; students in these majors do not study abroad in proportion to their U.S. postsecondary enrollment (NAFSA, n.d.). This brief overview of U.S. study abroad leads to one of the desired outcomes, and possible antecedent of foreign study: intercultural communication competence.

**Intercultural communication competence.** This section will provide a historical overview of intercultural communication competence, one of the predictors of study abroad participation. Intercultural communication competence (ICC) has captivated scholars since the 1950s. It earned attention during a special issue of the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (1989), was the subject of the *SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (2009), and has been the focus of numerous books, articles, and studies, including a special commemorative edition of the *International Journal of*
Intercultural Relations (2015) which will again focus on intercultural communication competence. Intercultural communication competence research emerged from the field of intercultural communication as a construct that interested scholars and practitioners alike. Intercultural communication competence has its foundations in practical application, aimed at educating U.S. sojourners, diplomats, and field workers during overseas assignments after World War II.

Intercultural communication competence generally encompasses attitudes and skills such as cultural empathy, lack of ethnocentrism, accommodation of cross-cultural differences, flexibility in dealing with new cultural situations, communication effectiveness, and language competence. Chen (1990) defines ICC as “the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors to elicit a desired response in a specific environment” (p. 247). Later, Chen and Starosta (1996) define ICC as “the effective means whereby individuals can understand cultural commonalities and move beyond cultural differences in order to reach the ideal goals advocated by cultural dialogists and cultural critics.” (p. 356). According to Chen and Starosta (1996), effectiveness is “an individual’s ability to produce intended effects through interaction with the environment” (p. 356). Appropriateness, on the other hand, indicates three types of abilities: the ability to be cognizant of the social constraints of a given situation, the ability to contain inappropriate responses, and the ability to manage communication interactions through sharing feelings, informing and receiving messages (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Thus, communication competence is effective and appropriate interaction. Intercultural competence extends this definition to emphasize the surrounding context. Chen and Starosta (1996) describe ICC as “the ability to negotiate
cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants’ multiple identities in a specific environment” (p. 358-9).

Spitzberg (2000) conceptualizes ICC as “an impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context” (p. 379). Competence is not just the behavior, but is a “social evaluation of behavior” (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 380), implying that it is relationship oriented and involves judgment by others. Spitzberg (2000) defines appropriate behavior as “the valued rules, norms and expectancies of the relationship are not violated significantly” while effectiveness is “the accomplishment of valued goals…relative to costs and alternatives” (p. 380). Spitzberg (1988) offers a widely accepted definition of general communication competence, which extends to intercultural settings: “Competent communication is interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs” (p. 68). People should be able to achieve their goals while being appropriate, given the cultural context.

Fantini (2009) also uses the words affective and appropriate in his definition of ICC. According to Fantini (2009), intercultural competence is “complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 458). This definition considers the etic and emic point of view. Effectiveness refers to one’s own view as a cultural outsider (the sojourner; an etic view) while appropriateness refers to the view of the cultural insider (the host; an emic view). Fantini (2000) suggests three domains of ability of ICC, which integrate prior research: the ability to “develop and maintain relationships” (p. 27), the ability to obtain collaboration with others, and “the ability to communicate
effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion” (p. 27). Congruent with other research, the key terms effective and appropriate constitute Fantini’s conceptualization.

Intercultural communication competence has also been defined in other ways. For example, Ting-Toomey (1993) proposes an identity negotiation perspective of ICC. In this perspective, ICC means “the effective identity negotiation process between two or more interactants in a novel communication episode” (p. 73). Weaver (2013) also proposes a definition of ICC. According to Weaver, intercultural (communication) competence involves an understanding of “the process and dynamics of cross-cultural communication, adaptation, and conflict as well as the development of strategies to overcome barriers to effective interaction between people of different backgrounds” (p. 78). Intercultural communication competence helps an individual to anticipate when and where conflicts and misunderstandings are most likely to occur (Weaver, 2013). Intercultural competence allows one to “interpret and analyze the interactions of people from different cultures on various levels, interpersonal, social, political, or economic” (p. 78). Both of these definitions are logical; however, most scholars reference effectiveness and appropriateness in their definitions of ICC.

Similar to other scholars, Deardorff (2011) defines intercultural competence as “effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations” (p. 66). Deardorff (2004b) conducted a study that provides a base from which to proceed in ICC research, as she garnered consensus among a group of intercultural experts on the definition of intercultural competence and the best methods of measurement. Results of her study showed that most of the administrators leaned toward a more general definition
of the construct that acknowledges the role of language proficiency in ICC (Deardorff, 2006). The participants acknowledged the variety of terms used: cross-cultural competence, global competence, intercultural competence, global citizenship. The top rated definition among the scholars was “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2004, p. 194). The conceptualization in Deardorff’s (2004) research will be used in the present study since it was agreed upon by a consensus of scholars and demonstrated that intercultural competence is a multidimensional construct consisting of knowledge, skills, and attitudes used to achieve the goal of effectively and appropriately communicating with others.

**Dimensions of intercultural communication competence.** As mentioned, many articles focus on conceptualizations of ICC (e.g., Chen 1990; Collier, 1989; Ruben, 1989; Spitzberg, 1989; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Wiseman, 2001). In addition to the myriad of definitions noted above, researchers have proposed varied dimensions of ICC and related constructs such as intercultural sensitivity, some of which are complimentary and others which overlap. The next section will discuss some of the dimensions and how they intersect.

Ruben (1976) proposed one of the earliest set of ICC dimensions that describes behaviorally-oriented traits. He focused on the behavioral component of ICC in a study of an assessment of communication competency as an outcome of intercultural training programs. The main concern of ICC during that era was ensuring overseas success of U.S. expatriates; thus he sought to predict behavior patterns of would-be overseas personnel. Ruben identified seven dimensions of ICC: display of respect, interaction
posture, orientation to knowledge, empathy, self-oriented role behavior, interaction management, and tolerance for ambiguity. These dimensions reflect a variety of traits that might make someone a successful intercultural communicator. Ruben had observers rate participants on the seven dimensions listed above. A factor analysis revealed three participant types. Type I individuals were rated highly on orientation to knowledge and tolerance for ambiguity. Type II individuals were rated highly on display of respect and tolerance for ambiguity. Type III individuals were rated highly on self-oriented role behavior. Type I individuals were deemed to be most successful in their intercultural interactions; Type III individuals were the least successful. Ruben’s (1976) study is often cited as a classic example of a behavioral approach to ICC. However, Lustig and Koester (2013) call the focus on traits or characteristics “erroneous” (p. 63) because intercultural competence is highly contextual and involves multiple factors. Competence in intercultural situations is not guaranteed by a certain set of characteristics. Nevertheless, van de Vijver and Leung (2009) point out that studies focusing on personality dimensions have contributed to most of the advancement of ICC conceptualization.

Intercultural communication competence is framed in many other ways. Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978) offer three factors of ICC: the ability to deal with psychological stress, the ability to communicate effectively and the ability to establish interpersonal relationships. Kim (1986) notes scholars should consider the heterogeneity of one’s network when evaluating a person’s level of intercultural communication. According to Kim, an individual with a more heterogeneous network is more likely to be competent when communicating with unlike others. Fantini (2009) outlines a structure to complement the previous conceptualizations of ICC. In this
structure, intercultural abilities are described as a conglomeration of traits such as empathy, respect, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, and tolerance for ambiguity.

Collier (1989) mentions four approaches to the study of ICC: ethnography of speaking approach, behavioral skills approach, cross-cultural attitudes approach, and cultural identity approach. The ethnography of speaking approach seeks to describe and understand the members of a particular culture. The behavioral approach is taken by Ruben (1976) and Hammer (1984) and is empirically tested through self-report or observer reports. This approach seeks out knowledge of skills that influence ICC. The cross-cultural attitudes approach is favored by Abe and Wiseman (1983); Gudykunst, Wiseman and Hammer (1977); Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978); and Wiseman, Hammer and Nishida (1987). Key to this approach is grasping specific information about the culture, having a positive attitude toward the host culture, and possessing culture-general information. The cultural identity approach incorporates ethnic identity and communication competence. Culture is seen as emergent and changing in this interpretive approach to studying ICC (Collier, 1989).

Lustig and Koester (1993) also identified four approaches in ICC research: trait, perceptual, behavioral, and culture-specific (cited in Bradford, Allen & Beisser, 2000). The trait approach identifies individual characteristics like world-mindedness, empathy, and self esteem as central to ICC. The early ICC research described effective intercultural communicators as possessing certain characteristics. However, the trait approach ignores the influence of context on intercultural situations. A person may be competent in one scenario but not another (Lustig & Koester, 2013). The perceptual
approach involves attitudes and perceptions such as the ability to manage stress and create relationships (Lustig & Koester, 1993). The behavioral approach involves self or other reports of behavior in intercultural situations, such as Ruben’s (1976) study. Researchers have identified some behaviors like attentiveness and nodding that are associated with competence. The culture-specific approach demands culturally-specific knowledge such the behaviors of the host culture. This approach stands out as being categorically different from the first three. Importantly, these categorizations include at least two dimensions often cited in the literature: affective and behavioral.

Language is included in some conceptualizations of ICC. According to Deardorff (2006), the role and importance of language in intercultural competence is controversial. Fantini (2000) describes language as an important element of ICC that is often overlooked by interculturalists. “Language, in fact, both reflects and affects one’s world view, serving as a sort of road map to how one perceives, interprets, thinks about, and expresses one’s view of the world” (p. 27). Specifically, proficiency in the host language is needed to express oneself and be understood in a culture where the language is different from one’s native tongue (Fantini, 2009). The process of language learning also creates insights: The struggle of encoding thoughts in a foreign code help to understand one’s position in another culture (Fantini, 2009). However, most intercultural communication scholars exclude language proficiency from their main discussions of ICC.

The disjointed efforts have been moving together to form a “growing consensus” that ICC involves the “knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures” (Wiseman, 2002, p. 2). Spitzberg and
Cupach (1984) are among the earliest scholars to succinctly describe the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of ICC. Chen and Starosta (1996) provide one of the most comprehensive synopses of ICC grounded in these three dimensions, relabeled as knowledge/awareness (cognition), motivation/attitude (affect), and skills (behavior). Many scholars embrace these three dimensions in their conceptualization of ICC (e.g. Chen & Starosta, 2000; Fantini, 2009; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Kim, 1991; van de Vijver & Leung, 2009; Wiseman, 2001). For example, Cui and Van den Berg (1991) found three dimensions of ICC using confirmatory factor analysis: communication competence (cognitive), cultural empathy (affect) and communication behavior. Researchers use slightly different conceptualizations and terms, but the general theme has persisted. All three dimensions are important for successful intercultural communication (Wiseman, 2001), thus the following section offers an in-depth examination of each dimension.

Affect. The first dimension is the affective process, or intercultural sensitivity (Chen & Starosta, 1996). This component encompasses the “emotional and aesthetic tendencies of an individual’s internal system” (Kim, 1991, p. 269) and includes four attributes: self concept, open mindedness, being nonjudgmental, and social relaxation (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Chen and Starosta (1997) subsequently compose the elements slightly differently, including self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and suspending judgment. The affective component is known to include related concepts such as ethnocentrism, intergroup anxiety, empathy, readiness, attitudinal disposition (Kim, 1991). Wiseman (2001) labels this dimension “motivation” and describes it as the feelings when anticipating engaging in intercultural
communication. For example, anxiety, perceived social distance, attraction, ethnocentrism, and prejudice affect the communication outcome. A person may not be motivated if he or she is fearful or anxious, or has a negative attitude toward the other culture, even if she or he has the knowledge and skills to engage. Bradford, Allen, and Beisser (2000) note that the affect has been frequently overlooked by researchers who have concentrated on the knowledge (cognitive) and skills (behavior) dimensions of ICC.

Cognition. The second dimension is cognition: intercultural awareness or knowledge, which involves the “‘sense making’ activities for ascertaining the meaning of the various verbal and nonverbal codes one receives” (Kim, 1991, p. 269). Chen and Starosta (1997) propose two attributes of this dimension: self-awareness and cultural awareness. Self-awareness is understanding one’s own identity and culture. Cultural awareness is the knowledge of the cultural differences that can affect behavior and communication (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Alternatively, Fantini (2000) implies that all awareness is self awareness, as it refers to oneself in relation to other people. Awareness is pivotal to intercultural communication (Fantini, 2000); to be successful in intercultural encounters, one needs to understand how cultures vary. According to Chen and Starosta (1997), one must understand some principal components of culture to develop ICC; these include social values, customs, and norms. Stereotypes are also included in this cognitive dimension (Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989). A stereotype is “an exaggerated belief associated with a category” (Wiseman et al., p. 187). Knowledge of the culture, the rules of interaction, and context of the interaction is necessary to make correct attributions and choose appropriate communication strategies (Wiseman, 2001). In addition to knowledge, a person must have the ‘cognitive schemata’ to incorporate that knowledge.
into his or her actions (Wiseman, 2001). In other words, an individual must integrate the knowledge into his or her behavior, discussed next.

**Behavior.** The behavioral dimension is the “ability to get the job done” (Chen & Starosta, 1996, p. 367) during intercultural interactions. Kim (1991) describes this dimension as a person “actually carrying out what he or she is capable of in the cognitive and affective dimensions” (p. 270). Reaching one’s goals is a part of this process, which includes behaviors that allow a person to achieve these goals. The behaviors needed to achieve interaction goals include social skills, interaction management, behavioral flexibility, message skills, and appropriate self-disclosure (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Wiseman et al., (1989) classify social distance under this dimension because it can influence behavior during intercultural interactions. As social distance increases so does the likelihood of misunderstandings. Spitzberg (2000) recommends that behaviors be deliberate to be considered desirable. Accidental behavior is not sufficient because the person cannot repeat the same behavior on another occasion. Accordingly, the behavior must also be goal-oriented to be considered part of a skill set (Spitzberg).

Table 2.1 shows a summary of the features of each ICC dimension (Williams, 2009). With the dimensions of ICC largely agreed upon, the next step is to determine how they relate to each other. Chen and Starosta (1997) specify that intercultural sensitivity (affect), intercultural awareness (cognition) and intercultural competence (behavior) are related in a directional manner. Awareness leads to sensitivity, which begets intercultural competence. In other words, intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity are needed to demonstrate competent behavior in intercultural interactions.
Table 2.1

*Dimensions of Intercultural Communication Competence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Dimension</th>
<th>Affective Dimension</th>
<th>Behavioral Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of cultural norms</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of values</td>
<td>Open-mindedness toward new values</td>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of behaviors</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Culturally-appropriate interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of cultural issues</td>
<td>Ability to deal with stress</td>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to learning new information</td>
<td>Ability to deal with ambiguity</td>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-cultural empathy</td>
<td>Behavioral adaptability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Williams (2009).

Fantini (2000) emphasizes the importance of awareness as a fourth dimension of ICC, in addition to attitudes, knowledge and skills. Awareness and attitude are no longer part of the same dimension in his view. Awareness is “reflective and introspective” (p. 29), influencing—and enhanced by—the development of affect, knowledge, and behavior. These dimensions are arranged visually below, showing awareness in the center, while the other three dimensions radiate outward. Awareness is indicated by the A+ sign, while A indicates attitudes, S indicates skills, and K indicates knowledge. Figure 2.5 illustrates the centrality of awareness in ICC. In this figure, Fantini shows the awareness in the center, surrounded by attitudes, knowledge and behavior (skill).
Conceptually, ICC has evolved over the last few decades, as highlighted by the changes since Chen and Starosta’s (1996) synthesis. First, Chen and Starosta (1996) discuss the confusion between the terms effectiveness and competence. During the 1980s, intercultural effectiveness was often used in place of intercultural competence or ICC (see Hammer, 1987). Chen and Starosta (1996) prefer the word competence, since effectiveness is only one of the two elements (appropriateness is the other) that constitutes competence. Since that article was published, the literature has shifted almost exclusively to the term competence. Second, the culture-general versus culture-specific dilemma that dotted the literature during the 1990s has nearly been resolved. Chen and Starosta (1996) advocate for culture-specific approaches; however, today most research
focuses on culture-general approaches. Third, the research focused on ICC during the sojourn to a new culture, but Chen and Starosta called for research to expand to other types of interaction. Research has become more inclusive of interactions involving diverse scenarios and interactants.

**Cultural Intelligence.** Recently, scholars have investigated intercultural communication competence under a contemporary term, *cultural intelligence*, referred to as “CQ” (Ang, et al., 2007). Cultural intelligence is the ability to “function and manage effectively” (p. 336) in multicultural settings. It is a multidimensional construct that targets situations involving “cross-cultural interactions arising from differences in race, ethnicity and nationality” (p. 336).

This term defines intercultural communication competence as a type of intelligence that is clearly conceptualized and measureable (Ang et al., 2007). The construct of cultural intelligence was specifically formulated to address the gaps in the confounding array of research on intercultural competencies (Ang et al., 2007). A person with high cultural intelligence will be able to adjust behavior to be culturally appropriate, such as using words, tone, gestures, and facial expressions. Although this construct was named “cultural intelligence,” it consists of the same three components as the term ICC: cognition, motivation, and behavior. Its novel contribution to the ICC construct is a fourth component called metacognition (Blasco, Feldt & Jakobsen, 2012). Other than this, Blasco et al. argue, it is only semantically different from ICC, not conceptually distinct. As Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) note, the conceptualizations of intercultural competence often vary more in terminology than in substance. The conceptualizations of
CQ and ICC are parallel – containing the same components, with the exception of metacognition—that the present study will use the term CQ and ICC interchangeably.

Cultural intelligence’s three components (cognition, motivation, and behavior) will be described below. The cognitive component is knowledge of “norms, practices, and conventions in different cultures” (Ang et al., 2007, p. 338). The motivational component is the ability to “direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences” (p. 338). This component captures an individual’s “intrinsic interest in intercultural situations” (p. 338). The behavioral component is the ability to demonstrate “appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures” (p. 338). This component is based on Hall’s (1959) idea that in addition to the cognitive and motivational capabilities of cultural understanding, one also must demonstrate nonverbal and verbal communication appropriate to the cultural values of the specific context. Hall posits that one should have a “flexible repertoire” (Ang et al., 2007, p. 338) of behaviors.

**Language interest.** Some scholars acknowledge language competence as an important part of intercultural communication competence (Fantini, 2000; 2009; Goldstein & Kim, 2006) that is often overlooked by interculturalists. “Language, in fact, both reflects and affects one’s world view, serving as a sort of road map to how one perceives, interprets, thinks about, and expresses one’s view of the world” (Fantini, 2000, p. 27). Specifically, proficiency in the host language is needed to be understood in a culture where the language is different from one’s native tongue, according to Dr. Alvino Fantini, an educator in intercultural communication and professor emeritus at the School for International Training (Fantini, 2009). The process of learning a language also
creates important insights when interacting with other cultures. For example, the struggle of encoding thoughts into a foreign code helps increase one’s sensitivity to another culture (Fantini, 2009). Students who display more interest in foreign languages are more likely to have favorable expectations of study abroad (Goldstein & Kim, 2005) and more likely to participate (Kim & Goldstein, 2006). The current study will measure participant interest in foreign languages.

**Influence of intercultural competence on study abroad participation.**

Attitudes and openness toward other cultures, in general, may have an effect on student intention to study abroad (Peterson, 2003; Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2011; Surridge, 2000; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). Previous research indicates that “personal beliefs and attitudes significantly influence participation in study abroad” (BaileyShea, 2009, p. 44). Stroud (2010) found a significant correlation between students who thought it was important to understand other countries and cultures and intent to study abroad. These students were twice as likely to indicate they planned to study abroad than those who did not indicate concern for understanding other countries and cultures. Goldstein and Kim (2006) found that variables measuring intercultural attitudes (rather than academic or career goals) predicted study abroad participation. In their study, first year students who indicated less ethnocentrism and less prejudice, as well as more interest in foreign languages, were more likely to study abroad. As mentioned earlier, other researchers found similar results: students more interested in other cultures, cultural empathy, diversity and challenge were more likely to indicate intent to study abroad (Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2011; Surridge, 2000; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). Although previous studies have examined intercultural variables,
they have not investigated ICC, nor have they studied ICC in conjunction with social influence.

**Social influence.** Social influence on college-age students has been shown to impact decisions about diverse areas such as high-risk sexual relationships (Holman & Sillars, 2012), retention and persistence at research universities (Kelly, LaVergne, Boone, Jr., & Boone, 2012), smoking cigarettes (Staten et al., 2007), drinking alcoholic beverages (Hussong, 2003), credit card use (Bittiker, 2011), intention to vote (Glynn, Huge, & Lunner, 2008), and use of Macintosh computers (Firmin, Wood, Muhlenkamp & Wood, 2010). It is reasonable to presume that social influence would also impact student intention to study abroad. This section will review the social influence of face-to-face and computer-mediated communication.

**Social influence: Face-to-face communication.** It is believed that professors, academic advisors, parents and friends can play a major role in encouraging students to study abroad (BaileyShea, 2009; Booker, 2001; Peterson, 2003). The literature suggests that support by these individuals in the form of persuasive communication may be a key factor in student decision making. Examples of positive communication are a faculty announcement about study abroad, advisor encouragement about taking courses abroad, parent expectations, and peer stories from overseas. Professors, advisors, parents and friends might discourage students from studying abroad if it is perceived as disruptive on academic studies, too expensive, or not seen as a positive experience. The effectiveness of persuasive communication depends on the source’s degree of credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Jain & Posavac, 2001). Thus it is important to examine the perceptions that students have regarding the messages they are receiving from those important to them.
and how influential these significant people are to the students. This research will also investigate motivation, or willingness, to comply with the messages received from significant sources. In other words, how motivated are people to do what others think they should do?

**Social influence: Computer mediated communication.**

*Usage of social networking sites.* Social media usage has grown rapidly in both the types of sites and the number of users in the past ten years. Users can select among Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, MySpace, Linked In, YouTube, and other popular sites. Nearly 90% of young adults report usage of social media (Brenner & Smith, 2013). Another survey reports that 89% of college students use Facebook (Aubrey & Rill, 2013), spending an average of 28 minutes per day (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Social media, specifically Facebook, is primarily used for peer-to-peer interaction with pre-existing offline friends (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Users spend the majority of their time “lurking” or reviewing friends’ posts: 67% often or sometimes read their newsfeed to find out what their friends are doing on Facebook and 70% often spend time reading other peoples’ profiles (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Additionally, 81% of college student Facebook users often or sometimes look at friends’ photographs. That the overwhelming majority of college student users pursue photos signifies the importance that photos have. Photos represent the development of identity (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009) and can impact others. The statistics show that users spend a consider amount of time simply observing others. Furthermore, these results show that Facebook is fully integrated into college students’ lives and that the
effects of their time spend on social networking sites must be considered in any discussion of social norms, influence, and behavior.

Social influence of social networking sites. The nearly ubiquitous use among the college-age population points to the importance of examining the influences of their online communication and interaction on normative beliefs. One study suggests that social media sites influence developmental outcomes (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Several studies found a strong positive relationship between Facebook use and the social capital gained through social interactions (Aubrey & Rill, 2013; Ellison et al., 2007). Another survey about the influence of Facebook found that among Dutch young adults, self-esteem was related to feedback received about the information posted on their user profile (Valkenburg, Peter & Schouten, 2006). Not many studies have examined the link between portrayals of behavior on social media and initiation of behaviors in the emerging adult (18-25 years old; Arnett, 2000) population (Moreno et al., 2013). However, it is important to consider Facebook “as a source of influence” (Moreno et al., 2013, p. 504), especially since studies have shown that references to risky behaviors abound on Facebook (Moreno et al., 2013). Moreno et al. (2013) studies the influence of Facebook and found that Facebook established social norms among its users. One study participant commented that a “byproduct” (p. 507) of uploading photos to Facebook was to establish social norms. Considering this, it is important to examine the potential influences of photos and status updates on the behavior examined in this study, participation in study abroad programs.

Demographics. Demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status are external to the TRA model, considered background factors (Ajzen,
Demographic variables are not directly related to behavior but instead are mediated by attitude and subjective norm (Ajzen, n.d., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In other words, they influence behavioral or normative beliefs, which in turn influence intentions. Therefore, demographic variables are important possible precursors of behavioral and normative beliefs (Ajzen, n.d.). For example, whereas a student of high socio-economic means may perceive study abroad as beneficial to his overall “rounding out”, a student from a lower socio-economic background may perceive study abroad outcomes as less beneficial than a semester spent on campus taking necessary courses. Thus, the lower socio-economic student’s attitude toward the behavior, studying abroad, is different in this example. This example shows that the relationship between socio-economic status and study abroad participation (the behavior) might be mediated by the determinants of the attitudinal component.

Similarly, students of different ethnicities may also evaluate the study abroad outcomes differently. For example, one study abroad outcome is that it exposes a student to a different culture. If an African American student has grown up constantly adjusting to a majority culture, she may not rank this outcome as important. Thus, her attitude toward studying abroad may be different than a Caucasian American who has not had to adjust to another culture. This example shows that the relationship between ethnicity and study abroad participation (the behavior) might be mediated by the determinants of the attitudinal component.

The effect of demographic variables on the behavior may also be mediated by the determinants of the normative component. The effect of ethnicity on study abroad participation might be mediated by social influences and the motivation to comply with
these social influences. For example, African American students may have more salient persons in their lives who believe that study abroad is not something they should do. Thus, the subjective norm might be different from a Caucasian American who has many people telling her to study abroad. This example shows that the relationship between ethnicity and study abroad participation (the behavior) might be mediated by the subjective norm. The African American student may also be more willing to comply (than the Caucasian student) with the wishes of the salient persons in her lives who are telling her that she should not study abroad. Thus, the motivation to comply may be different. This example also shows that the relationship between ethnicity and study abroad participation (the behavior) might be mediated by the subjective norm.

In addition, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) point out that the effect of demographic variables fluctuates. What could relate to intent to study abroad today, may not relate to intent to study abroad tomorrow. For example, gender is a big predictor of study abroad participation today. However, in ten years, the gap could narrow such that there gender is not a significant predictor. Therefore, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) consider the demographic variables as external, yet important, considerations in studying behavioral intent.

The following section will discuss the demographic variables included in this study. As highlighted, demographics fall outside of the TRA model. However, these variables form an important part of the external reality and thus are included in the analysis.

**Gender, ethnicity, and major.** The correlation between student demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity and academic major) and intent to study abroad has
been examined in previous research (Booker, 2001; Loberg, 2012; Lozano, 2008; Posey, 2003; Surridge, 2000; Torricelli, 2009). Several scholars reported gender as an important factor in study abroad interest, indicating that females were more than twice as likely as males to study abroad (Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Kim & Goldstein, 2005; Stroud, 2010). Trends from national data on study abroad indicate two-thirds of participants are female (IIE, 2013), prompting studies on this gender gap (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010; Shirley, 2006). These studies suggest that study abroad offices should include male staff and tailor print and online advertising to appeal to male students. Ethnicity is also a significant predictor of study abroad, indicating minorities are traditionally underrepresented (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011). Several marketing efforts and scholarships seek to attract more diverse students. For example, the Gilman Scholarship encourages non-Caucasian students to apply for study abroad. Finally, the majority of study abroad students come from the social sciences, humanities, and foreign languages, while majors such as engineering, mathematics, computer science and education are underrepresented (IIE, 2013). There is no easy solution for the imbalance of majors abroad. In order to examine these groups of underrepresented students, ethnicity, gender, and student major variables will be examined in this study. This study will compare study abroad participation intent among these groups.

**Socio-economic indicators.** NAFSA: Association of International Educators has identified students with limited financial means as an underrepresented group in study abroad (“Encouraging underrepresented students”, n. d.). Several socio-economic indicators may be influential in the decision to study abroad. These include student financial aid receipt (Torricelli, 2012), student employment status (Booker, 2001),
previous travel outside of the U.S. (Goldstein & Kim, 2006), as well as parents’ highest level of education (Clemens, 2002). Together these elements may indicate some of the major financial factors that influence student participation to study abroad.

Distance of college from home was found to be a significant predictor of intent to study abroad (BaileyShea, 2009). Students attending college more than 100 miles from home were more likely to study abroad (Stroud, 2010). This item also served as an indicator of socio-economic status, as previous literature linked higher socio-economic status with attending college farther from home (BaileyShea, 2009). Students who can afford to live outside their family home may already indicate being adventurous to “explore the world beyond their own community” (p. 191). This study will investigate the impact of living with family and attending college locally on intent to study abroad.

**Research Question and Hypotheses**

The following research question will be investigated to determine the relationship between demographic variables and the outcome variables.

**RQ1:** Among U.S. undergraduate students, what is the relationship of gender, ethnicity, major, place of residence, use of financial aid, parent level of education, length of previous travel, & interest in foreign languages and:

- intent to study abroad?
- intent to study abroad, regardless of finances?
Based on the previous discussion of the student decision making process regarding study abroad participation, and using the proposed conceptual model, the following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

**H1:** U.S. undergraduate students with higher intercultural communication competence will be more likely to have a favorable attitude toward study abroad.

**H2:** U.S. undergraduate students with higher intercultural communication competence will be more likely to intend to study abroad.

**H3:** U.S. undergraduate students with more positive beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes will have a more favorable attitude toward study abroad.

**H4:** U.S. undergraduate students with more positive beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes will be more likely to intend to study abroad.

**H5:** U.S. undergraduate students with a more favorable attitude toward study abroad will be more likely to intend to study abroad.

**H6:** U.S. undergraduate students with higher injunctive subjective norm will have a higher overall subjective norm.

**H7:** U.S. undergraduate students with higher descriptive subjective norm will have a higher overall subjective norm.

**H8:** U.S. undergraduate students with higher injunctive subjective norm will be more likely to intend to study abroad.

**H9:** U.S. undergraduate students with higher descriptive subjective norm will be more likely to intend to study abroad.

**H10:** U.S. undergraduate students with a higher overall subjective norm will be more likely to intend to study abroad.
The following hypotheses emerge from the conceptual model presented earlier in this chapter. According to Ajzen and Fishbein, there are two primary predictors of intent to behave, attitude toward the behavior and the subjective norm. Therefore, it is predicted that:

**H11a:** Subjective norm and attitude toward study abroad will predict intent to study abroad among U.S. undergraduate students.

**H11b:** Subjective norm and attitude toward study abroad will predict intent to study abroad, regardless of finances, among U.S. undergraduate students.

Furthermore, the theoretically relevant variables in the model should each emerge as a predictor of intent to study abroad. Therefore, it is posited that:

**H12a:** Intercultural communication competence, attitude toward study abroad, beliefs about study abroad outcomes, injunctive norm, descriptive norm and subjective norm will predict intent to study abroad among U.S. undergraduate students.

**H12b:** Intercultural communication competence, attitude toward study abroad, beliefs about study abroad outcomes, injunctive norm, descriptive norm and subjective norm will predict intent to study abroad, regardless of finances, among U.S. undergraduate students.

**Summary**

This chapter detailed the conceptual framework and situated the current study within the framework of the extant literature on intercultural communication competence,
social media influence, and study abroad program research. The present study is
grounded in the TRA and the Decision to Study Abroad Model. The construct
intercultural communication competence has been widely studied, and is the subject of
much interpretation among scholars. It is often a desired outcome of study abroad
participation, along with other favorable intercultural attitudes. Several studies have
address intercultural competence as an outcome of study abroad, but less studies is the
effect of ICC on the desire to study abroad. Also absent from the literature is the
influence of SNSs on intent to study abroad. This present study seeks to include these
communication influences in a model that will elucidate the study abroad decision-
making process. It will do so through a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire that
will assess student intent to study abroad and the above influences. In the next chapter,
the data collection procedure, participants, instruments and data analysis will be detailed.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation explores how intercultural communication competence, interpersonal communication with important others, and CMC via SNSs influence intent to study abroad among U.S. undergraduate students. By investigating the precursors of study abroad participation, this research highlights the effects of communication influences on interest in overseas study among college students. This chapter details the study design, including the participants, procedure, materials and data analysis. A quantitative method of data collection was selected, as previous research narrowed the set of factors that influence student intent to study abroad. This methodological approach was also determined to be optimal to test the hypotheses and research questions generated in Chapter II. Data collection for this study was approved by the University of Miami Institutional Review Board.

Participants

A convenience sample was used for this study. Five-hundred and four University of Miami undergraduate students who were U.S. citizens completed in the online or in-class questionnaire (see Table 3.1). The participants were from varied majors and class levels. Students who had previously participated in a study abroad program were excluded from the study. The final sample (n = 459) included U.S. citizen undergraduate students who had not previously participated in a study abroad program. Participants ranged in age from 19 – 41 years old (M = 20.81; SD = 2.096). Fifty-three percent (53.2%) of the participants were female (n = 244; 7 participants did not report sex). The participants identified as Caucasian or White (58.2%; n = 267), Hispanic or Latino
(14.8%; \(n = 68\)), Black or African American (7.2%; \(n = 33\)), Asian (5.2%; \(n = 24\)), Middle Eastern or Arab (.9%; \(n = 4\)), Native American or Pacific Islander (.7%; \(n = 3\)), American Indian or Alaska Native (.2%; \(n = 1\)), multiracial (10.5%; \(n = 48\)) or other (.9%; \(n = 4\)).

The participants included 141 (30.7%) freshmen, 156 (34.0%) sophomores, 107 (23.3%) juniors, and 48 (10.5%) seniors. Seven participants (1.5%) did not report year in college. Almost one – third (30.9%; \(n = 142\)) majored in communication; 23.5% (\(n = 108\)) majored in business. Other areas of study included social sciences (16.1%; \(n = 74\)), physical and life sciences (6.1%; \(n = 28\)), architecture (3.5%; \(n = 16\)), fine and applied arts (2.6%; \(n = 12\)), math and computer science (2.4%; \(n = 11\)), humanities (2.4%; \(n = 11\)), health professions (2.2%; \(n = 10\)), engineering (2.2%; \(n = 10\)). Eighteen participants (3.9%) were undeclared; 10 participants (2.2%) did not indicate area of study.

**Procedure**

Data collection occurred during March and April 2014. A questionnaire was administered to University of Miami undergraduate students. Data was collected using paper and online questionnaires; online data was gathered via the University of Miami Qualtrics platform. Studies support the equivalency of data collected via online and paper questionnaires (Deutskens, de Ruyter & Wetzels, 2006; Teo, 2013; Weigold, Weigold, & Russell, 2013), which validates the mixed-mode approach employed in this present research.

Data collection occurred in undergraduate courses during class time. The researcher approached course instructors to request 10 minutes of class time to administer the survey. Some professors granted extra credit for participation in the research study.
### Table 3.1

**Participant Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Females (n=244; 53.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males (n=208; 45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>$M=20.81$ years; $SD=2.09$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range: 19 – 41 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>White/Caucasian (n=267; 58.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino/Hispanic (n=68; 14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black/African American (n=33; 7.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander (n=24; 5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arab/Middle Eastern (n=4; .9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native American/Pacific Islander (n=3; .7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alaska Native (n=1; .2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial (n=48; 10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (n=4; .9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Standing</strong></td>
<td>Freshman (n=141; 30.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore (n=156; 34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior (n=107; 23.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior (n=48; 10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer (n=7; 1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residence</strong></td>
<td>On Campus (n=85; 28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (n=210; 69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer (n=10; 3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
<td>Communication (n=142; 30.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business (n=108; 23.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Sciences (n=74; 16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical and Life Sciences (n=28; 6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architecture (n=16; 3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fine and Applied Arts (n=12; 2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math and Computer Science (n=11; 2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humanities (n=11; 2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Professions (n=10; 2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering (n=10; 2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undeclared (n=18; 3.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer (n=10; 2.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were told that the study was designed to explore the student experience at University of Miami. They were informed that participation in this study was anonymous and voluntary. Participants read the informed consent, which preceded the questionnaire. They generally completed the survey in six to eight minutes. Participants were then given an oral debriefing and thanked for their time.

Participants who completed the online questionnaire were sent a survey link from their course instructor to introduce the survey. They were informed that the survey was anonymous and voluntary. They completed the questionnaire outside of class time. Upon completion of the online questionnaire, each participant received a unique identifier to present to his or her professor for extra credit.

**Materials**

The *Intent to Study Abroad at University of Miami* (ISA-UM) questionnaire was constructed for this study (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contained 71 items divided into five sections. Section One assessed intercultural communication competence. Section Two assessed student intent to study abroad. Section Three assessed behavioral beliefs about study abroad participation. Section Four assessed interpersonal and social media influence on study abroad intent. Section Five requested demographic information. The five sections are discussed below.

**Section One.**

*Intercultural communication competence.* Intercultural communication competence was measured using the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Scale (Ang et al., 2007), a 20-item scale (4 items = metacognitive, 6 items = cognitive, 5 items = motivational, and
5 items = behavioral). The current study employed three of the four subscales since they are congruent with the dimension discussed in the intercultural communication competence literature. The three subscales were cognitive, motivational, and behavioral competence. Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Sample items included “I know the arts of at least one other culture” (Item 5) and “I usually adjust my verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) when a cross-cultural situation requires it” (Item 13). Reliabilities for subscales previously tested with Singaporean students were: cognitive = .86, motivational = .76, and behavioral = .83. Reliabilities for subscales previously tested with U.S. undergraduate students were: cognitive = .80, motivational = .79, and behavioral = .82.

The scale indicated satisfactory reliability in the current study (α = .89, M = 5.02, SD = 1.04). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the scale and yielded adequate model fit. Chi square value for the overall model fit was significant, $\chi^2(101) = 343.077, p < .001$, which initially suggests a lack of fit between the hypothesized model and the data. However, due to the sensitivity of the chi square, small differences can result in a significant fit statistic, especially in larger sample sizes (Kline, 2011). Therefore, other fit indices were examined. The cutoffs for the fit indices vary considerably, and there is no consensus regarding the standard that should be applied. A model is considered acceptable, generally, if the comparative fit index (CFI) exceeds .93 (Byrne, 1994), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is less than .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993) (or, closer to .06, according to Hu and Bentler [1999]), and the standard root mean square residual (SRMR) is less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The indices showed adequate model fit: CFI= 0.93, RMSEA= 0.07, SRMR= 0.05.
The CQ scale demonstrates construct and predictive validity. Results from Ang et al., (2007) research indicated convergent and discriminant validity were also supported, as well as predictive validity for cultural judgment and decision making defined as “quality of decisions regarding intercultural interactions” (pp. 340-341). Ang et al. tested the CQ with two non-student populations: international managers and a diverse set of professionals providing evidence of its validity and reliability across ages and nationalities. The CQ scale was endorsed by Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) in a rigorous evaluation of available instruments to measure the concept of cross-cultural competence (conceptually synonymous with intercultural communication competence). For these reasons, the CQ scale was selected to measure intercultural communication competence.

Section Two.

Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes. This variable was measured with ten items focusing on beliefs about study abroad participation ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.68$). Participants indicated extent of agreement with statements such as “Study abroad would make me more marketable to employers” and “Study abroad would enhance my ability to deal with different people”. Responses were on a 7-point scale, with “strongly disagree” being 1 and “strongly agree” being a 7. The statements were adapted from Patterson’s (2003) study and pilot tested with a group of 20 participants. Reliability is not reported, as according to Ajzen, “internal consistency is not a requirement of behavioral…belief composites because different accessible beliefs may well be inconsistent with each other” (Ajzen, n.d., para. 10).

Attitude toward study abroad. The Generalized Attitude Measure (McCroskey, 1966; McCroskey & Richmond, 1989) assessed attitude toward studying abroad. This
semantic differential scale consists of six items to evaluate a person’s attitude toward a topic. Responses were on a 7-point bipolar adjective scale. The items were Good/Bad, Wrong/Right, Fair/Unfair, Wise/Foolish, Harmful/Beneficial, Negative/Positive. Items 2, 5, and 6 were reverse coded. Previous reliabilities ranged from .85 to .95 (McCroskey, 1966; McCroskey & Richmond, 1989). Reliability in the current study was satisfactory: \( \alpha = .88, M = 6.02, SD =1.03 \). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the scale and yielded adequate model fit: \( \chi^2 (9) = 43.09, p < .01; \) CFI= 0.98, RMSEA= 0.09, SRMR= 0.03.

Section Three.

Subjective norm. Subjective norm was assessed using the following statement:

“In general, most people important to me think I should study abroad.”

Injunctive normative beliefs. Injunctive normative beliefs, the interpersonal communication with important people, were assessed with four statements about communication with important others: professors, academic advisors, parents, and peers. Statements included: “Some professors have said I should study abroad” and “My parents think I should study abroad”. Responses were on a 5-point scale, with “strongly disagree” being 1 and “strongly agree” being a 5. The statements were adapted from Patterson’s (2003) study, based on the operationalization of the Theory of Reasoned Action. This set of items was not subject to internal consistency analysis because the influence of various people may be inconsistent with each other. This approach is supported by Ajzen, who commented that “internal consistency is not a requirement of
….normative…belief composites because different accessible beliefs may well be inconsistent with each other” (Ajzen, n.d., para. 10).

**Motivation to comply with injunctive normative beliefs.** Motivation to comply with injunctive normative beliefs was assessed with four questions about compliance with important others: professors, academic advisors, parents and peers. Items included, “In general, when it comes to participating in a study abroad program, how much do you want to do what your (professors) say you should do?” Responses were on a 5-point scale, with “Not at all” being 1 and “Very much” being a 5. The statements were adapted from Patterson’s (2003), based on the operationalization of the Theory of Reasoned Action.

**Descriptive normative beliefs.** Descriptive normative beliefs were assessed with two statements about participants’ reports of friends’ activity on social media. Statements were “My online friends often post photos about studying abroad” and “My online friends often post status updates about studying abroad”. Responses were on a 5-point scale, with “strongly disagree” being 1 and “strongly agree” being a 5. These statements were developed for the present research and pilot tested with 20 participants.

**Motivation to comply with descriptive normative beliefs.** Motivation to comply with the descriptive normative beliefs was assessed with two statements about compliance with the observance of photos and status updates on SNSs: “When I see my online friends’ photos about study abroad, I feel encouraged to study abroad” and “When I see my online friends’ status updates about study abroad, I feel encouraged to study abroad”. Responses were on a 5-point scale, with “strongly disagree” being 1 and
“strongly agree” being a 5. These statements were developed for the present research and pilot tested with 20 participants.

**Section Four.**

*Intent to study abroad.* Intent to study abroad was assessed with two questions. The first question asked, “How likely are you to study abroad as an undergraduate student?” The second question asked, “If money were not a factor, how likely would you be to study abroad as an undergraduate student?” Responses were on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “No chance” to “Extremely likely.” The second question is to control for concern about finances.

**Section Five.**

*Demographics.* Demographic variables were included to describe and compare the characteristics of participants. The variables contained in this section were derived from previous research as well as an analysis of the data reported by the Institute of International Education’s (2013) *Open Doors* report on study abroad participants. Study participants were asked to report the following information: year of birth, gender, citizenship, racial/ethnic background, year in college, and major.

*Socio-economic background.* Study participants were asked to report the following information as indicators of student socio-economic background: father’s educational level, mother’s educational level, and amount of financial aid received.
Living arrangements. Living arrangements was measured by the question “where do you live while attending UM?”. Response choices were: on-campus, off-campus, not with family, and off-campus, with family.

Language interest. Interest in learning foreign languages was measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Not at all interested” to “Very interested.”

Previous overseas travel. Previous overseas travel was indicated by one item measuring length of travel (“less than one week” to “more than one year”).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, where descriptive, correlational, t-tests, ANOVA, and simple and multiple regression procedures were implemented.

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were determined for the independent and dependent variables in the conceptual model, as well as the study participants. These statistics provide an overall characterization and distribution of the data. These statistics include frequencies, means, standard deviations and ranges for the data.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient. Pearson’s correlation coefficient (correlation) is a measure of the linear relationship between two variables. Correlations were calculated to present information on the relationships between the continuous variables in the model. The correlations that are significant (p < 0.05) are marked.

ANOVA. Independent samples t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to determine relationships between the categorical variables with respect to the
dependent variable, intent to study abroad. The dependent variable, intent to study abroad, was regressed against each of the demographic variables.

**Linear regression.** Linear regression was used to determine the predictors of the dependent variables. Simultaneous multiple regression was used to analyze hypotheses 11 and 12. The simultaneous multiple regression results were then compared to a stepwise regression analysis.

**Analysis of normative beliefs.** According to the TRA model, the normative beliefs must be weighted by the motivation to comply with each belief to attain an index (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, n.d.; Ajzen, 2012). Each belief was multiplied by the motivation to comply. These products were then summed to achieve the index of normative beliefs. This computation is illustrated in Figure 3.1, where SN is the subjective norm, $n_i$ is the normative belief, $m_i$ is the motivation to comply, and the sum is the total number of referents (Ajzen, 2012; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Figure 3.1

*Equation of Subjective Norm*

$$SN \propto \sum n_i m_i$$

In the present study, the injunctive norms were multiplied by the motivation to comply for each one, and then the products summed to attain the injunctive normative beliefs index. Similarly, the descriptive norms were each multiplied by the motivation to comply, then the products summed to attain the descriptive normative beliefs index.
Subjective norm. According to Ajzen (2012), when testing the subjective norm, one correlates the summed products of the normative beliefs and the motivation to comply with a direct measure of the subjective norm. A meta-analysis found a mean correlation between normative beliefs and subjective norm of 0.50 (Ajzen, 2012). Question #53 on the survey is a general, direct measure of the subjective norm.

Summary

This chapter described the project design, including the participants, procedure, materials and data analysis. The study included a quantitative survey of undergraduate students to answer the research question and hypotheses. The next chapter will present the results of the study.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This dissertation examined the influences of intercultural communication competence, attitudes toward study abroad, and subjective norm via face-to-face and computer mediated communication on U.S. undergraduate student decision-making about studying abroad. A quantitative approach was employed, using a survey designed for the present study to collect data from the undergraduate population at a large southeastern university, University of Miami. Chapter three described the study design, including the procedure, participant recruitment, and instrument. The present chapter presents the findings of the study. Descriptive data are first presented to characterize the overall participant population and provide insight into the level of interest in studying abroad. Next, correlations between the major demographic and theoretical variables are presented to investigate the relationships between these variables. Finally, both simultaneous and stepwise regression results are reported to answer the research question and hypotheses.

Descriptive Statistics

Place of residence. A detailed description of the participants (n = 459) is contained in chapter three. Half of the participants (50.3%) lived on campus. Almost one-third (31.4%) of the participants lived off-campus with roommates or alone, while 16.1% of the participants lived off-campus with their families (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.1

*Participant Residence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live on campus</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live off campus, not with family</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live off campus, with family</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Ten participants did not report residence.

**Parental education.** The participants, overall, came from highly educated families (see Figure 4.1). Two-thirds of participants reported mother education as bachelor’s degree or higher (69.7%) or father education as bachelor’s degree or higher (66.7%).

Figure 4.1

*Participant Parental Education*
Financial aid use. Financial aid use indicated that the participants overall were of a high socio-economic status. The largest share (34.6%) of the participants did use any financial aid (loans or grants) to attend college. Twenty-one percent reported using some aid, 18.7% reported using aid to cover about half of the costs of attending college, 15.7% used aid to cover most of the costs, and 7.8% reported using aid to cover all of the costs (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

Participant Use of Financial Aid to Pay for College
Previous travel abroad. Most participants had some previous overseas exposure; only 7.4% had never traveled abroad. The majority, 62.2%, had traveled abroad between one week and one month (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Participant Longest Trip Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Travel Abroad</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one week</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One week to one month</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two months to five months</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six months to one year</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one year</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: One participant did not report longest trip abroad.
Interest in foreign languages. Participants had a high overall interest in learning a new foreign language ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.24$). Almost half (45.1%) were very interested in learning a foreign language. The results can be found in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Participant Interest in Learning a New Foreign Language*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest in language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intent to study abroad. There was a fairly even distribution of student interest in studying abroad ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.46$). The largest share, 32.7%, indicated they were very likely to study abroad during college. Sixteen percent indicated they were likely to study abroad; 17% were undecided, 19.6% indicated they were unlikely to study abroad, and 14.6% indicated “no chance” of studying abroad as an undergraduate student.

The likelihood of studying abroad greatly increases if finances are removed as a barrier. When students were asked if they would study abroad were financing the program not an issue, the distribution was skewed in favor of intending to study abroad ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.20$). Sixty-two percent indicated they would be very likely to study abroad as an undergraduate student, while an additional 15.5% indicated they would be
likely to study abroad. Nine percent were undecided, 7.6% indicated they were unlikely to study abroad, and 5.0% indicated “no chance” of studying abroad. Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of responses to both questions.

Figure 4.3

*Participant Likelihood of Studying Abroad as an Undergraduate Student*

**Correlations**

Pearson’s $r$ is a measure of the linear relationship between two variables. Table 4.4 shows correlations among the ordinal and ratio level demographic variables and intent to study abroad, as well as intent to study abroad were financing not an issue. Intent to study abroad was significantly positively correlated with foreign language interest, $r = .18$, $p < .01$. There was a significant negative correlation between intent and amount of financial aid received, $r = -.15$, $p < .01$, as well as year in college, $r = -.44$, $p <$
.01. When finances were not considered in the decision to study abroad, financial aid received, \( r = .08, p = \text{n.s.} \), and parental education, \( r = .03, p = \text{n.s.} \), are no longer significantly correlated with intention to study abroad. Intent to study abroad regardless of finances was significantly positively correlated with foreign language interest, \( r = .28, p < .01 \), and negatively correlated with year in college, \( r = .20, p < .01 \).

Table 4.4

*Correlations of Selected Participant Characteristics with Intent to Study Abroad*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Foreign language</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Longest trip abroad</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Financial aid received</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parental education</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Year in college</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Intent to study abroad</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>-.44**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Intent to study abroad regardless of finances</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Std. Deviation

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \( p < .05 \) (2-tailed)  
** \( p < .01 \) (2-tailed)

Correlations were calculated to present information on the relationships between the theoretical variables in the model. This information is presented in Table 4.5. Intent to study abroad was significantly correlated with beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes, \( r = .54, p < .01 \), attitude toward study abroad, \( r = .39, p < .01 \), injunctive norm,
Intercultural communication competence was not significantly correlated with intent to study abroad, $r = .02, p = \text{n.s.d.}$ However, it was significantly correlated with intent to study abroad when finances were not considered in the decision to study abroad, $r = .16, p < .01$. Intent to study abroad regardless of finances was also significantly correlated with beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes, $r = .48, p < .01$, attitude toward study abroad, $r = .30, p < .01$, injunctive norm, $r = .41, p < .01$, descriptive norm, $r = .39, p < .01$, and subjective norm, $r = .44, p < .01$.

Table 4.5

*Correlations among Theoretically Relevant Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ICC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Beliefs</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attitude</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Injunctive norm</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Descriptive norm</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Subjective norm</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Intent to study abroad</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Intent to study abroad regardless of finances</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean**

5.02  4.62  6.02  48.89  30.26  3.62  3.33  4.22

**Std. Deviation**

1.04  0.68  1.03  19.45  14.79  1.15  1.46  1.20

*Note: All correlations reported are significant at the $p < .01$ level with the exception of ICC (1) and intent to study abroad (7), which is non-significant.*
Research Question and Hypotheses Testing

This section reports the results of the research question and hypotheses that were introduced in Chapter 2.

Research Question One.

Research question one asked among U.S. undergraduate students, what is the relationship of gender, ethnicity, major, residence, use of financial aid, parent level of education, length of previous travel, and interest in foreign languages to: (a) intent to study abroad and (b) intent to study regardless of finances? Independent sample t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to determine relationships between the categorical demographic variables and dependent variables, intent to study abroad and intent to study abroad regardless of finances. The dependent variables were then regressed against each of the continuous demographic variables.

Gender. A t-test showed a significant effect for gender, $t_{(450)} = -4.49, p < .001$, with females indicating a greater intent to study abroad than males. The difference between males and females was also evident when asked to indicate intent to study abroad regardless of finances, $t_{(398)} = -4.79, p < .001$.

Ethnicity. Regarding ethnicity, there was no significant difference between Caucasians/Whites and non-Caucasians with respect to intent to study abroad, $t_{(457)} = .89, p = .37$.

Academic major. Participant academic majors were collapsed into five categories: social sciences, business, sciences, humanities/arts, and communication. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test for differences among academic major in intent to study abroad (See Table 4.6 for means). There was a significant main effect for major, $F_{(4, 426)}$
= 4.28, \( p = .002 \), indicating that there was a significant difference among majors regarding intent to study abroad. Partial eta squared (\( \eta^2 \)) was .04, indicating a small effect of academic major on intent to study abroad. Post-hoc follow up tests were conducted using Tukey’s adjustment to evaluate main differences among the five categories of majors. There was a significant difference in intent to study abroad (\( M_{\text{diff}} = 1.02, SE = .28, p = .003 \)) between the means of communication majors (\( M = 3.65, SD = 1.39, n = 142 \)) and humanities/arts majors (\( M = 2.63, SD = 2.63, n = 32 \)). There were no significant differences in means of the other academic majors.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Arts</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test for differences among academic major in intent to study abroad regardless of finances (see Table 4.7 for means). The Levene’s test of equality of error variance was significant, \( F_{(4, 425)} = 5.17, p < .001 \), thus the null hypothesis, that there is no significant difference in error variances, was rejected. It was assumed that there was not homogeneity of error variances. Thus, significance level of .025 was used for testing the null hypothesis. The ANOVA indicated that intent to study
abroad varied across the five academic majors, $F_{(4,425)} = 3.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .03$, which means that major had a small effect on intent to study abroad.

There was a significant difference in intent to study abroad regardless of finances ($M_{\text{diff}} = .77$, $SE = .25$, $p = .021$) between the means of social science majors ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.19$, $n = 73$) and humanities/arts majors ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.56$, $n = 32$). There was a significant difference in intent to study abroad regardless of finances ($M_{\text{diff}} = .83$, $SE = .23$, $p = .004$) between the means of communication majors ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.03$, $n = 142$) and humanities/arts majors ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.56$, $n = 32$). There were no significant differences in means of the other academic majors.

Table 4.7

| Academic Major and Intent to Study Abroad if Finances Not a Consideration |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Major                           | Mean            | Std. Deviation  | N     |
| Social Sciences                 | 4.33            | 1.19            | 74    |
| Business                        | 4.12            | 1.23            | 108   |
| Humanities and Arts             | 3.56            | 1.56            | 32    |
| Sciences                        | 4.16            | 1.22            | 75    |
| Communication                   | 4.39            | 1.03            | 142   |

Residence. There was no significant difference between students who lived with family and those who lived with roommates or alone with respect to intent to study abroad, $t_{(446)} = .60$, $p = .54$.

Financial aid use. There was a small but significant negative correlation between use of financial aid and intent to study abroad, $r = -.15$, $p < .01$. Financial aid use significantly predicted intent to study abroad, $b = -.15$, $t = -3.23$, $p < .01$. Adjusted r-
squared was .02, indicating that financial aid use explained 2% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The correlation became non-significant when participants indicated intent to study abroad regardless of finances, \( r = .09, p = \text{n.s.d.} \). Financial aid use did not significantly predict intent to study abroad when finances were not a consideration, \( b = .09, t = 1.90, p = .06, \text{adjusted } r^2 = .01 \).

**Parental education.** There was a small but significant correlation between parental education and intent to study abroad, \( r = .10, p = .03 \). The correlation became non-significant when participants evaluated intent to study abroad regardless of finances, \( r = -.03, p = \text{n.s.d.} \).

**Longest trip abroad.** Length of previous travel was not significantly correlated with intent to study abroad, \( r = .01, p = \text{n.s.d.} \), or with intent to study abroad regardless of finances, \( r = .01, p = \text{n.s.d.} \).

**Foreign language interest.** There was a small but significant correlation between interest in foreign languages and intent to study abroad, \( r = .18, p < .01 \). Foreign language interest was also correlated with intent to study abroad regardless of finances, \( r = .28, p < .01 \).

**Hypothesis One.**

Hypothesis one stated that U.S. undergraduate students with higher intercultural communication competence will be more likely to have a favorable attitude toward study abroad. A simple linear regression was calculated to determine whether intercultural communication competence would predict attitude toward study abroad. Intercultural communication competence significantly predicted attitude toward study abroad, \( \beta = .20, \)
\( t = 4.24, p < .001 \). ICC explained a small proportion of the variance in attitude toward study abroad, adjusted \( R^2 = .04, F_{(1, 440)} = 17.98, p < .001 \) (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

**Summary of Regression Analysis of ICC and Attitude Toward Study Abroad**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( b )</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( T )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis Two.**

Hypothesis two stated that U.S. undergraduate students with higher intercultural communication competence will be more likely to intend to study abroad. A simple linear regression was calculated to determine whether intercultural communication competence would predict intent to study abroad. Intercultural communication competence did not significantly predict intent toward study abroad, \( \beta = .02, t = .50, p = \text{n.s.d.} \). Intercultural communication competence was a significant predictor of intent to study abroad if finances not a factor, \( \beta = .16, t = 3.47, p = .001 \). ICC explained a small proportion of the variance in intent to study abroad if finances not a factor, adjusted \( R^2 = .02, F_{(1, 450)} = 12.09, p = .001 \) (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

**Summary of Regression Analysis of ICC and Intent to Study Abroad/Intent if Finances not Considered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( b )</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( T )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>.03/.18</td>
<td>.07/.05</td>
<td>.02/.16</td>
<td>.50/3.47</td>
<td>n.s.d./.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis Three.

Hypothesis three stated that U.S. undergraduate students with more positive beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes will have a more favorable attitude toward study abroad. A simple regression analysis found that beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes significantly predicted attitude toward study abroad, $\beta = .46$, $t = 10.80$, $p < .001$. Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes explained 21% of the variance in attitudes, adjusted $R^2 = .21$, $F(1, 439) = 116.71$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Summary of Regression Analysis for Beliefs and Attitude Toward Study Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Four.

Hypotheses four stated that U.S. undergraduate students with more positive beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes will be more likely to intend to study abroad. A simple regression analysis found that beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes significantly predicted intent to study abroad, $\beta = .54$, $t = 13.56$, $p < .001$. Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes explained 29% of the variance in intent to study abroad, adjusted $R^2 = .29$, $F(1, 450) = 183.86$, $p < .001$. A simple regression analysis was also conducted with the dependent variable intent to study abroad if finances were not a factor. Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes significantly predicted intent without financial factor, $\beta = .48$, $t = 11.62$, $p < .001$. Beliefs explained
23% of the variance in intent without financial factor, adjusted $R^2 = .23$, $F_{(1, 449)} = 135.04$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11

Summary of Regression Analysis of Beliefs and Intent to Study Abroad/Intent if Finances not Considered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>.12/08</td>
<td>.01/01</td>
<td>.54/.48</td>
<td>13.56/11.62</td>
<td>.001/001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Five.

Hypothesis 5 stated that U. S. undergraduate students with a more favorable attitude toward study abroad will be more likely to intend to study abroad. A simple regression analysis found that attitude toward study abroad participation significantly predicted intent to study abroad, $\beta = .29$, $t = 6.30$, $p < .001$. Attitude explained 8% of the variance in intent to study abroad, adjusted $R^2 = .08$, $F_{(1, 446)} = 39.75$, $p < .001$. A simple regression analysis was also conducted with the dependent variable, intent to study abroad if finances were not a factor. Attitude significantly predicted intent without financial factor, $\beta = .30$, $t = 6.70$, $p < .001$. Attitude explained 9% of the variance in intent without financial factor, adjusted $R^2 = .09$, $F_{(1, 445)} = 44.90$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12

Summary of Regression Analysis of Attitude and Intent to Study Abroad/Intent if Finances not Considered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>.07/.06</td>
<td>.01/.01</td>
<td>.29/.30</td>
<td>6.30/6.70</td>
<td>.001/.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis Six.

Hypothesis six stated that U.S. undergraduate students with higher injunctive subjective norm will have a higher overall subjective norm. Injunctive norm was significantly correlated with subjective norm, $r = .70, p < .001$. A simple regression analysis found that injunctive subjective norm significantly predicted overall subjective norm, $\beta = .70, t = 20.70, p < .001$. Injunctive subjective norm explained 48% of the variance in overall subjective norm, adjusted $R^2 = .48, F_{(1, 453)} = 428.41, p < .001$ (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Injunctive Norm</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>20.70</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Seven.

Hypothesis seven stated that U.S. undergraduate students with higher descriptive subjective norm will have a higher overall subjective norm. Descriptive subjective norm was significantly correlated with overall subjective norm, $r = .44, p < .001$. A simple regression analysis found that descriptive subjective norm significantly predicted overall subjective norm, $\beta = .44, t = 10.49, p < .001$. Descriptive subjective norm explained 19% of the variance in overall subjective norm, adjusted $R^2 = .19, F_{(1, 454)} = 110.3, p < .001$ (see Table 4.14).
Table 4.14

Summary of Regression Analysis of Descriptive Norm and Subjective Norm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>10.49</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis Eight.**

Hypothesis eight stated that U. S. undergraduate students with higher injunctive subjective norm will be more likely to intend to study abroad. A simple regression analysis found that injunctive norm significantly predicted intent to study abroad, $\beta = .47$, $t = 11.18$, $p < .001$. Injunctive norm explained 21% of the variance in intent to study abroad, adjusted $R^2 = .21$, $F_{(1, 453)} = 124.97$, $p < .001$. A simple regression analysis was also conducted with the dependent variable, intent to study abroad regardless of finances. Injunctive norm significantly predicted intent regardless of finances, $\beta = .41$, $t = 9.47$, $p < .001$. Injunctive norm explained 16% of the variance in intent regardless of finances, adjusted $R^2 = .16$, $F_{(1, 452)} = 89.49$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15

Summary of Regression Analysis of Injunctive Norm and Intent to Study Abroad/Intent if Finances not Considered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Injunctive</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis Nine.**

Hypothesis nine stated that U.S. undergraduate students with higher descriptive subjective norm will be more likely to intend to study abroad. A simple regression analysis found that descriptive norm significantly predicted intent to study abroad, $\beta =$
.31, \( t = 6.92, p < .001 \). Descriptive norm explained 9\% of the variance in intent to study abroad, adjusted \( R^2 = .09, F_{(1, 454)} = 47.87, p < .001 \). A simple regression analysis was also conducted with the dependent variable, intent to study abroad regardless of finances. Descriptive norm significantly predicted intent regardless of finances, \( \beta = .39, t = 9.00, p < .001 \). Descriptive norm explained 15\% of the variance in intent regardless of finances, adjusted \( R^2 = .15, F_{(1, 453)} = 81.00, p < .001 \) (see Table 4.16).

Table 4.16

| Summary of Regression Analysis of Descriptive Norm and Intent to Study Abroad/Intent if Finances not Considered |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | \( b \) | SE(b) | \( \beta \) | \( T \) | \( p \) |
| Descriptive Norm | .03/.03 | .00/.00 | .31/.49 | 6.92/9.00 | .001/.001 |

**Hypothesis Ten.**

Hypothesis ten stated that U.S. undergraduate students with a higher general subjective norm will be more likely to intend to study abroad. A simple regression analysis found that subjective norm significantly predicted intent to study abroad, \( \beta = .49, t = 12.07, p < .001 \). Injunctive norm explained 24\% of the variance in intent to study abroad, adjusted \( R^2 = .24, F_{(1, 456)} = 145.64, p < .001 \). A simple regression analysis was also conducted with the dependent variable, intent to study abroad regardless of finances. Descriptive norm significantly predicted intent regardless of finances, \( \beta = .44, t = 10.49, p < .001 \). Descriptive norm explained 19\% of the variance in intent regardless of finances, adjusted \( R^2 = .19, F_{(1, 455)} = 109.99, p < .001 \) (see Table 4.17).
Table 4.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>12.07</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 11a**

Hypothesis 11a stated that subjective norm and attitude toward study abroad will predict intent to study abroad among U.S. undergraduate students. A simultaneous regression analysis using these two predictors was conducted to evaluate how well these measures predict the outcome variable. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .51) indicated a moderate relationship between intent to study abroad and the predictors. The coefficient of determination, adjusted R-squared was .25, indicating that the two predictors explained 25% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(2,445)} = 77.58, p < .01$, indicating that at least one predictor was found to be significant in explaining the variation in outcome. Using these indices, the model was found to be a good fit to the data. The coefficients for both attitude toward study abroad $\beta = .14, t = 3.14, p = .002$ and subjective norm $\beta = .44, t = 10.30, p < .001$ significantly predicted intent to study abroad. This result, shown in Table 4.18, suggests that students with a more positive attitude toward study abroad and with social influence may be more likely to consider enrolling in an overseas program.
Hypothesis 11b

Hypothesis 11b stated that subjective norm and attitude toward study abroad will predict intent to study abroad, regardless of finances, among U.S. undergraduate students. A simultaneous regression analysis with attitude and subjective norm as predictors, and the DV intent w/o financial barrier, was conducted to evaluate how well these measures predict the outcome variable. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = .47$) indicated a moderate relationship between the predictors and the DV. The coefficient of determination, adjusted $R$-squared was .22, indicating that the two predictors explained 22% of the variance in intent w/o financial barrier. The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(2,444)} = 63.21, p < .01$, indicating that at least one predictor was found to be significant in explaining the variation in outcome. Using these indices, the model was found to be a good fit to the data. The coefficients for both attitude toward study abroad $\beta = .17, t = 3.94, p < .001$ and subjective norm $\beta = .38, t = 8.61, p < .001$ significantly predicted intent to study abroad if finances were not a barrier. These results,
shown in Table 4.19 suggest that attitude and social influences affect interest in study abroad regardless of perceptions of financial barriers.

Table 4.19

*Multiple Regression Analysis with Attitude and Subjective Norm as Predictors of Intent to Study Abroad Without Financial Barriers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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<td>.22</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*= significant at p < .001

**Hypothesis 12a**

Hypothesis 12 stated that ICC, attitude toward study abroad, beliefs about study abroad outcomes, injunctive norm, descriptive norm and subjective norm will predict intent to study abroad among U.S. undergraduate students. A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well these measures predict the outcome variable. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .61) indicated a moderate relationship between intent to study abroad and the predictors. The coefficient of determination, adjusted R-squared was .36, indicating that the six predictors explained 36% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(6,34)} = 42.503$, $p < .01$, indicating that at least one predictor was found to be significant in explaining the variation in outcome. Using these indices, the model was found to be a good fit to the data. Intercultural communication competence, $\beta = -.13$, $t = -3.23$, $p = .001$, beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .37$, $t = 7.29$, $p < .001$, injunctive norm $\beta = .13$, $t = 2.38$, $p = .02$, and subjective norm, $\beta = .20$, $t = 3.68$, $p < .001$.
.001, significantly predicted intent to study abroad, however, the coefficients for descriptive norm and attitude toward study abroad were non-significant.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to verify the model discussed (See Table 4.20). A forward stepwise regression yielded similar results, supporting the findings in the simultaneous regression analysis. In forward selection the predictor with the highest correlation to the outcome variable is entered first (Ahn, 2012). Then the remaining predictors are added that significantly increase the amount of explained variance. This is continued until no added predictor significantly improves the amount of explained variance (Ahn, 2012). Model 1 included the beliefs about study abroad outcomes scale as a predictor. The correlation coefficient ($r = .54$) indicated a moderate relationship between the two variables. Adjusted r-squared was .29, which indicated that beliefs about study abroad outcomes explained 29% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(1,439)} = 179.36, p < .01$, indicating that beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .54, t = 13.39, p < .001$, was a significant predictor of intent to study abroad.

Model 2 included the above predictor and added subjective norm. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = .59$) indicated a moderate/strong relationship between the predictors and intent to study abroad. The adjusted R-squared was .34, indicating that the two predictors explained 34% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The R-squared change was .06 ($p < .01$). The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(2,438)} = 116.25, p < .01$; both beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .38, t = 8.38, p < .001$, and subjective norm, $\beta = .28, t = 6.17, p < .001$, significantly predicted intent to study abroad.
Model 3 included the above predictors and added ICC. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .60) indicated a moderate relationship between the predictors and intent to study abroad. The adjusted R-squared was .36, indicating that the three predictors explained 36% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The R-squared change was .01 (p < .01). The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(3,437)} = 82.19, p < .01$. Beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .41, t = 8.90, p < .001$, subjective norm, $\beta = .29, t = 6.30, p < .001$, and ICC, $\beta = -.12, t = -3.09, p = .002$ significantly predicted intent to study abroad.

Model 4 (see Figure 4.4) included the above predictors and added injunctive subjective norm. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .61) indicated a moderate relationship between the predictors and intent to study abroad. The adjusted R-squared was .37, indicating that the four predictors explained 37% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The R-squared change was .01 (p = .01). The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(4,436)} = 63.85, p < .01$. Beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .38, t = 8.06, p < .001$; subjective norm, $\beta = .21, t = 3.78, p < .001$; ICC, $\beta = -.125, t = -3.18, p = .002$; and injunctive subjective norm, $\beta = .13, t = 2.45, p = .015$, significantly predicted intent to study abroad.

Attitude toward study abroad ($t = .70, p = n.s.d.$) and descriptive subjective norm ($t = .09, p = n.s.d.$) did not enter into the regression model, as they did not account for a significant portion of the variance in intent to study abroad. A backward stepwise regression yielded confirmatory results; attitude toward study abroad and descriptive subjective norm were removed from the model as they did not meet the criteria to significantly improve the model fit.
Figure 4.4

*Revised Intent to Study Abroad Model*

![Diagram showing the Revised Intent to Study Abroad Model. The model includes Intercultural communication competence, Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes, Injunctive Subjective Norm, and Overall Subjective Norm as predictors of Intent to study abroad. The arrows indicate the relationships and coefficients between the variables. All paths are significant at p < .01.]
Table 4.20

*Forward Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis with All Predictors of Intent to Study Abroad*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE(b)</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adj $R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>179.36*</td>
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<td>.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>13.39</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.34</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>.000</td>
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* = significant at $p < .001$
Based on the results, ICC emerged as a suppressor variable. According to Ahn (2012), “a suppressor effect can occur when $X_{sup}$ has a fairly small bivariate correlation with $Y$, but is related to other $X$s. Its beta weight when other $X$s are included in the regression is larger than its $r$” (Ahn, 2012, slide 33). Intercultural communication competence had an insignificant correlation with the outcome variable, intent to study abroad, but was related to the other independent variables. Therefore its beta weight increased, although the effect sized rendered its influence negligible.

**Hypotheses 12b.**

Hypothesis 12b stated that ICC, attitude toward study abroad, beliefs about study abroad outcomes, injunctive norm, descriptive norm and subjective norm will predict intent to study abroad, regardless of finances, among U.S. undergraduate students. A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well these measures predict the outcome variable, *intent to study abroad regardless of finances*. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = .55$) indicated a moderate relationship between intent regardless of finances and the predictors. The coefficient of determination, adjusted R-squared was .29, indicating that the six predictors explained 29% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $(F_{(6,34)} = 31.424, p < .01)$, indicating that at least one predictor was found to be significant in explaining the variation in outcome. Using these indices, the model was found to be a good fit to the data. Beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .26, t = 4.77, p < .001$, subjective norm, $\beta = .17, t = 2.95, p = .003$, and descriptive norm, $\beta = .15, t = 3.125, p < .02$, significantly predicted intent to study abroad, however, the coefficients for attitude toward study abroad, ICC, and subjective norm were non-significant.
Stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to verify the model discussed (see Table 4.21). A forward stepwise regression yielded similar results, supporting the findings in the simultaneous regression analysis. Model 1 included the beliefs about study abroad outcomes scale as a predictor of intent without financial concerns. The correlation coefficient ($r = .48$) indicated a moderate relationship between the two variables. Adjusted r-squared was .22, which indicated that beliefs about study abroad outcomes explained 22% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(1,439)} = 132.03, p < .001$, indicating that beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .48, t = 11.49, p < .001$, was a significant predictor of intent w/o financial concerns.

Model 2 included beliefs about study abroad outcomes and added subjective norm. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .53) indicated a moderate relationship between the predictors and intent to study abroad. The adjusted R-squared was .27, indicating that the two predictors explained 27% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The R-squared change was .04 ($p < .001$). The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(2,438)} = 84.07, p < .001$. Both beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .34, t = 7.08, p < .001$, and subjective norm, $\beta = .26, t = 5.29, p < .001$, significantly predicted intent regardless of finances.

Model 3 (see Figure 4.5) included beliefs about study abroad outcomes and subjective norm, and added descriptive norm. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .55) indicated a moderate relationship between the predictors and intent regardless of finances. The adjusted R-squared was .29, indicating that the three predictors explained 29% of the variance in intent to study abroad. The R-squared change was .02 ($p < .01$).
The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F_{(3,437)} = 61.78, p < .01$. Beliefs about study abroad outcomes, $\beta = .29$, $t = 5.91$, $p < .001$, subjective norm, $\beta = .21$, $t_{(456)} = 4.23$, $p < .001$, and descriptive norm, $\beta = .17$, $t = 3.56$, $p < .001$, significantly predicted intent to study abroad regardless of finances.

Intercultural communication competence ($t = .73$, $p = \text{n.s.d.}$), attitude toward study abroad ($t = 1.39$, $p = \text{n.s.d.}$) and injunctive norm ($t = .95$, $p = \text{n.s.d.}$) did not enter into the regression model, as they did not account for a significant portion of the variance in intent w/o financial concerns. A backward stepwise regression yielded confirmatory results; ICC, attitude toward study abroad and injunctive subjective norm were removed from the model as they did not meet the criteria to significantly improve the model fit.

Beliefs about study abroad outcomes and subjective norms emerged as significant predictors of both intent to study abroad and intent without financial barriers. Intercultural communication competence and injunctive normative beliefs were significant predictors of intent to study abroad, but not when the financial barrier was removed. The descriptive norm was a significant predictor only when the financial barrier was removed. Attitude toward study abroad did not enter into either model.
Figure 4.5

*Revised Intent to Study Abroad Model Using DV Intent Regardless of Finances*

Beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes

Descriptive Norm

Subjective Norm

Intent to study abroad regardless of finances

All paths are significant at p < .01
This chapter examined the study results. The findings indicated that participant level of intercultural communication competence was not a predictor of intent to study abroad ($r = .02$). Thus, students with high and low levels of intercultural communication competence were equally interested in studying abroad. On the other hand, students were influenced by peers and other people important to them when considering their intention to study abroad during college. The next chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the significance of the findings, implications of this study, limitations, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This study of American undergraduate students explored the factors that contribute to their decisions regarding participation in study abroad programs. The theoretical framework proposed that several communication constructs were related to intent to study abroad. Specifically, intercultural communication competence (ICC), and social influence via face-to-face and computer-mediated communication, were proposed to affect intent to study abroad. Hypotheses generated in this research were grounded in literature on the above constructs and guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Previous literature found that intercultural attitudes such as openness to other cultures and diversity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication apprehension, influenced study abroad participation (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011; Stroud, 2010). Given previous data, it was hypothesized that ICC would influence intent to study abroad. Also, the impressionability of college-aged students and the widespread use of social networking sites (SNSs) led to the hypothesis that online activities by peers regarding study abroad would influence participant intent to study abroad. Results of this study indicated that participant level of intercultural communication competence was not a predictor of intent to study abroad \(r = .02\). This result signifies that students were interested in studying abroad regardless of their level of intercultural communication competence. On the other hand, face-to-face communication \(r = .39\) and computer-mediated communication \(r = .31\) were both predictors of intent to study abroad. This means that students were influenced by communication with peers and other people important to them (i.e., faculty, advisors, parents, and friends).
The following discussion focuses on the characteristics of students, relationships among the variables, and key findings regarding communication variables of the theoretical model. Implications of this study, limitations, suggestions for future research, and conclusions are also provided.

**Characteristics of Students**

This section discusses the relationship between the study population characteristics and interest in studying abroad. Two demographic variables, gender and academic major, were significantly related to intent to study abroad. In the present study, women were more likely than men to indicate intent to study abroad ($t = 4.49$). This finding is consistent with previous studies (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010; Shirley, 2006) as well as data reported by the Institute of International Education (2013) indicating females study abroad at twice the rate of males. This enduring gender gap indicates a need for greater understanding of the reasons contributing to lower male participation and studies to determine if specific messages targeting males would encourage their interest in study abroad programs.

Academic major had a slight effect on intent to study abroad. Communication and social science majors were more likely to study abroad than humanities and arts majors ($M_{diff} = 1.02$). This effect may be due to the large percentage in the humanities and arts sample population the reported an architecture major (50%). Architecture majors in this research have a strict course of study, often taking longer than the traditional four years to fulfill the curricular requirements. Consequently, these students may find participating in study abroad less opportune. Unlike previous data on study
abroad participation (IIE, 2013; Shirley, 2006), in the present study science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors were as likely to indicate interest in studying abroad as non-STEM majors. This result supported Rust, Dhanitya, Furuto, and Khelltash’s (2007) analysis of intent to study abroad among college freshmen, which found that students planning to major in STEM fields were as interested in studying abroad as other majors. The finding of the current research indicates interest in study abroad is fairly evenly distributed among the academic majors of these participants. The challenge is to turn interest into participation. Perhaps the integration of study abroad coursework into curricular requirements for STEM majors would encourage greater representation in overseas programs. However, curriculum integration requires a broad university effort that involves the support of faculty and administrators.

This study did not find significant differences among ethnicities regarding intent to study abroad, which is inconsistent with previous data on study abroad participation showing that ethnic minorities do not study abroad in proportion to their population in college (“Encouraging underrepresented students,” n. d.; IIE, 2013; McClure et al., 2010; Penn & Tanner, 2009). The interest in study abroad among all ethnicities in the current research may be attributable to the relatively diverse undergraduate population of the study site: white non-Hispanic (50%), Hispanic (27%), Asian/Pacific Islander (12%), Black (8%), multiracial (3%), and American Indian (<1%) (Student Enrollment, 2013). The current study participants somewhat reflected this diversity, reporting the following ethnicities: Caucasian or White (58.2%), Hispanic (14.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (5.9%), Black (7.2%), Middle Eastern or Arab (.9%), American Indian or Alaska Native
(.2%), multiracial/other (11.4%). The same reasons that attracted students to a diverse campus may be motivating factors for them to study abroad.

The present data supports Rust et al.’s (2007) study that found freshmen ethnic minority students were just as likely to indicate intent to study abroad as other students. It is important to note that Rust and colleagues’ study and the present study measured intent to study abroad instead of actual participation. Data indicates that minority students have lower participation rates (IIE, 2013), suggesting a “fall out” (Rust et al., 2007, p. 10) of minority students somewhere between freshman senior year. This gap between interest and participation suggests that universities should sustain initial interest, while addressing influences such as costs and fears of delaying graduation (Rust et al.).

Several socio-economic indicators were included in this research. Parental education, residence and length of previous travel did not significantly differ among those who intended to study abroad. These results do not support previous studies, which found that parental education (Clemens, 2002), length of distance of residence from university (BaileyShea, 2009; Stroud, 2010), and previous travel (Goldstein & Kim, 2006) were linked to study abroad participation. Several reasons may explain the present study’s results. Participants in this study came from highly educated families; 69.7% of the participants’ mothers and 66.7% of participants’ fathers were college educated. Thus, it may be difficult to discern the impact of parental education, as most of the participants came from a similar family education background. Also, this study explored the impact of living at home with family versus living with roommates or on-campus, unlike previous studies that measured the impact of attending school geographically far from home. Students living with family may be equally interested in studying abroad as other
students because they may see the overseas experience as an opportunity to be independent from their families for the first time. Finally, the participants reported a high level of previous travel; 92% percent had traveled overseas. This overall high level might render it difficult to understand the impact that previous travel has on study abroad interest. A sample with a more even distribution of previous travel may be more likely to discriminate differences in study abroad intent.

One socio-economic indicator negatively predicted intent to study abroad: use of financial aid ($b = -0.15$). Participants initially indicated a moderate level of interest in studying abroad ($M = 3.33, SD = 1.46$); however, interest grew significantly when participants were asked to consider study abroad without regard to finances ($M = 4.22, SD = 1.20$). When participants were asked to indicate intent to study abroad irrespective of costs, use of financial aid became non-significant as a predictor of intent. This result indicated that cost was important to students when considering participation in a study abroad program. The high perceived cost of studying abroad has been reported as a barrier in previous studies (Salisbury et al., 2009; Salisbury et al., 2011; Stroud, 2010; Torricelli, 2012). National organizations identified students of limited financial means as an underrepresented group in these programs (“Encouraging underrepresented students”, n. d.). Federal Government efforts to increase study abroad participation attempt to reduce disparities caused by lack of finances by offering scholarships such as the Gilman and NSEP Boren (National Security Education Program, 2014; U.S. Department of State, 2014). The financial barrier, or perception of one, is a concern for institutions to address in when communicating study abroad opportunities. Addressing the lack of perceived resources is important in the overall mission of promoting students’ global awareness
through study abroad participation. The important benefits of studying abroad outweigh many of the potential costs, but lack of finances—or a perception that studying abroad is too expensive—may deter students from exploring options.

Nearly 75% of participants indicated that they were “interested” or “very interested” in learning a foreign language. In this study, foreign language interest was associated with intent to study abroad ($r = .28$), supporting previous research that has found similar results (Goldstein & Kim, 2005; Kim & Goldstein, 2006). This result suggests that foreign language programs are an avenue to generate interest in studying abroad and disseminate information about travel opportunities. The challenge is reaching students in foreign language programs to disseminate information.

**Relationships Among Theoretical Variables**

Hypotheses one through hypothesis ten investigated the relationships among the constructs in the theoretical model: intercultural communication competence, beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes, attitude toward study abroad, overall subjective norm, injunctive norm, and descriptive norm. Each of the ten alternative hypotheses was supported, indicating the variables in the model were significantly correlated with each other. Correlations between the theoretical constructs were discussed in detail in Chapter IV; see Table 4.5 for the results. Relationships of practical significance emerged between several of the variables. The strongest relationship emerged between injunctive norm and overall subjective norm ($r = .70$). The injunctive norm is the sum of the influences of faculty, advisor, parental, and friends. The subjective norm is a general statement of overall influence of important others. The
above result is consistent with the mean correlation (0.50) found in a meta-analysis of normative beliefs and subjective norm (Ajzen, 2012).

This study found that subjective norm, injunctive norm, and descriptive norm were significant predictors of intent to study abroad. The descriptive norm is participant perceptions of what others are doing. Intercultural communication competence was a statistically significant predictor of intent to study abroad when finances were not considered ($b = .16$); however, the proportion of variance explained (2%) suggested that study abroad interest was likely influenced by a combination of other factors such as social influence.

**Discussion of Key Findings**

**Predictors of intent to study abroad.** The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) was used as the guiding framework for this research. Hypothesis 11a and 11b tested the two primary predictors of intent (attitude and subjective norm) according to the TRA. Both hypotheses were supported: attitude and subjective norm were predictors of intent to study abroad. These predictors explained 25% of the variance in the dependent variable (DV) intent to study abroad, and 22% of the variance of the DV intent when finances not considered. Considering the complexity of deciding to study abroad and the personal, academic and financial issues that affect this decision, the study result indicates that the model fit the data well. This result indicated that students were influenced by their perceptions of study abroad and by people important to them. Specifically, the subjective norm indicated that social influence of family, friends, faculty and advisors had an impact on student decisions regarding study abroad. The result of
Hypotheses 11a and 11b contribute to the understanding of the TRA by providing additional evidence that attitudes and subjective norm were predictors of intent to behave, thereby supporting this theory. Theory of Reasoned Action proposes that attitude toward a behavior and subjective norm about a behavior are the two primary predictors of intention to behave. This study found that these two predictors accounted for 25% of the variance in intent to study abroad. Peterson’s (2003) results also supported the application of TRA in understanding how students decide to study abroad. Her study found significant differences in attitude and subjective norm between participants who did and did not study abroad. While results of the present study indicated that subjective norm and attitude accounted for one-fourth of the variance in intent to study abroad, hypotheses 12a and 12b explored additional factors (intercultural communication competence, beliefs, injunctive norm and descriptive norm) to help explain intent to study abroad.

Hypotheses 12a and 12b tested the six independent variables (IVs: intercultural communication competence, attitude, beliefs, subjective norm, injunctive norm, and descriptive norm) and the two DVs (intent to study abroad and intent without regard to finances). The hypotheses were partially supported; four of the IVs were significant in explaining the variance in the DVs. Participant beliefs about study abroad outcomes was the largest predictor of intent to study abroad (adjusted r-squared equal to .29) and intent without finances (adjusted r-squared equal to .22). This result was expected, as beliefs about study abroad would seem likely to impact one’s propensity to participate. Subjective norm was also a predictor of both DVs. That is, students were generally influenced by important others. Injunctive norm was a significant predictor of the DV
intent to study abroad, but was not a significant predictor of the DV intent without finances. Injunctive norm included the influences of faculty, advisors, parents and friends. Conversely, descriptive norm was a predictor only when finances were not considered. In other words, students were influenced by their friends’ online photos and status updates regarding study abroad, and became more interested in participating themselves. Attitude toward study abroad did not emerge as a significant predictor. Intercultural communication competence did not end up contributing to the prediction of intent to study abroad. These findings will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Four models were generated to explain influence of the variables in Hypothesis 12a (see Chapter 4, Table 4.20). The fourth model, the Intent to Study Abroad Model, provided the most comprehensive explanation of variance in the DV, accounting for 37%. The Intent to Study Abroad Model included beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes, subjective norm, injunctive norm, and intercultural communication competence. The coefficient of intercultural communication competence was -.12, indicating a slightly negative effect on study abroad intent. This model showed that the influence of others, as shown by the subjective and the injunctive norms, was prevalent in the decision to consider studying abroad. Participant beliefs about study abroad outcomes was also a large determinant of intent. Beliefs about study abroad outcomes refer to the perceptions of the outcomes of studying abroad. Students who were more positive about the outcomes, such as learning a foreign language or expanding knowledge of another culture, tended to have a greater propensity to intend to study abroad.
Three models were generated to explain influence of the variables in Hypothesis 12b (see Chapter 4, Table 4.21). The third model, Intent to Study Abroad Regardless of Finances, provided the most comprehensive explanation of variance in intent without regard to finances, accounting for 29%. Model 3 included beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes, subjective norm, and descriptive norm. This model, like the previous one, showed that participants were largely influenced by the people considered important to them. Similarly, beliefs about study abroad participation outcomes was a useful predictor of study abroad intent. This strong predictor shows that whether or not students considered finances when contemplating study abroad, their perceptions of the effects of study abroad were important to their decisions about study abroad.

**Intercultural Communication Competence.** A major goal of this research was to explore the connection between intercultural communication competence (ICC) and intent to participate in study abroad programs. Previous studies found that intercultural attitudes such as openness to other cultures and diversity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication apprehension, influenced study abroad participation (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011; Stroud, 2010, Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). This study built upon the research of intercultural attitudes to include ICC as a predictor of study abroad interest. Unlike previous studies that found a relationship between intercultural variables and study abroad interest, the current study found that ICC had a non-significant relationship with intent to study abroad ($r = .02$). Several reasons might account for this non-significant result.
Participant perception of the study abroad experience may have influenced the study results. Possessing higher ICC may not have affected student decisions to study abroad if they envisioned the experience as a tourist-like field trip, such as an “island program” (Pederson, 2010, p. 78). During island programs, American students live and study together, frequently with faculty members from the home university. Students take courses with other Americans and participate in group excursions. Thus, a self-contained group studies in familiar surroundings within the foreign culture. This program model has potential to foster isolation, rather than immersion, in the host country. Participants may be attracted to programs that feature the comforts of home while touring glamorous cities such as Paris, London, and Madrid. Additionally, many study abroad programs are shorter than a semester – as short as one week – and may be viewed as a tourist trip rather than a cultural experience. The notion of a cultural and linguistic immersion that would appeal to students with high ICC may be different from the participants’ image of study abroad. Consequently, it would be useful to further study the relationship between student characteristics and expectation of cultural exposure during study abroad programs (Anderson, 2007).

This study did not differentiate between students interested in group-oriented programs and those interested in longer or more culturally immersive programs. Island programs are one example of experiences that may appeal to a wide variety of students. On the other hand, students with high intercultural competence may be more likely to choose an immersive type of study abroad program, such as one where courses are taken with host country peers or a homestay component is included. This study did not ask participants about the length, geographical location, or program type that was most
appealing. This information may reveal differences among students. Prior research has found greater support for the development of intercultural competence in longer programs (Behrnd & Porzel, 2012). The longer duration abroad would allow for more cultural immersion and varied experiences, thereby possibly providing a greater impact on self-development. If longer programs are more impactful, it is important to know if students are interested in these types of experiences.

Another reason for this outcome may be the inherent limitations of measuring intercultural communication competence with a single instrument. This study employed the most appropriate instrument available to measure the three dimensions (attitude, knowledge and behavior) of ICC. However, even as defined for the purpose of this study, ICC is a complex construct and may warrant multiple approaches to measurement. Measuring awareness of one’s own ICC may improve measurement of this construct. For example, participants could be asked, “How confident are you of your intercultural communication competence?” The scale utilized in this study measured ICC levels of each participant using items to assess each dimension of ICC, rather than awareness of their ICC. However, what may be more important than their actual ICC is perceived ICC. In other words, how confident individuals feel in their cross-cultural abilities, rather than self-assessment of actual level, may be more predictive of their inclination to study abroad. Individuals who do not realize they have a high level of ICC (despite a high score) may not be motivated to study abroad. In other words, people with a high level of ICC, but with lower confidence in their abilities to communicate with people from other cultures, may not be interested in studying abroad. Conversely, people who actually have low levels of ICC, but perceive themselves to have high levels, may be eager to go
abroad. This result would account for people who are confident in their abilities to communicate across cultures (even if not very skilled) and therefore more interested in study abroad.

An additional reason for the non-significant result may relate to the mean score for scale items, 5.61 (on a Likert-type scale of 1 – 7), suggesting that perhaps the items were not worded strongly enough to discriminate among different levels of ICC. When the mean is near one of the ends of the scale range, the scale may “fail to detect certain values of the construct” (DeVellis, 2012, p. 107). More strongly worded items may be necessary for a population with a high level of intercultural competencies. The relatively high mean may also be due to social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is a phenomenon in which scale respondents answer items in a way that is viewed favorably by others (Fisher, 1993), and can interfere with a scale’s validity. In this study, participants may have found it desirable to express a high level of intercultural competence, which may have reduced the ability of the scale to measure their actual ICC level.

Interestingly, most of the previous intercultural communication competence research in the context of study abroad participation concerns the development of ICC as an outcome of program participation (Anderson et al., 2006; Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Clarke, Flaherty, Wright & McMillen, 2009; Jackson, 2008; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Lombardi, 2011; Pedersen, 2010; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013; Williams, 2005). The current research attempted to explain the inverse, how intercultural communication competence affected student intent to study abroad. It is reasonable to interpret these results as an indicator that students not having previous
opportunities to develop intercultural competence would be more interested in traveling overseas to foster cultural awareness. However, students already engaging in previous experiences to develop intercultural competencies may not express a greater desire to study abroad if they do not perceive a lack of interactive cross-cultural skills.

Knowing that ICC is a hopeful outcome of program participation, it is auspicious that students with lower levels of ICC were as interested in studying abroad as students with higher ICC, because students who lack cross-cultural communication skills may benefit most from a study abroad program. Students who develop ICC through study abroad program participation help to fulfill university internationalization objectives of creating globally aware graduates.

**Social Influence.** Results indicated that social influence played a significant role in student intent to study abroad. Social influence was divided into two types. The first type consisted of the injunctive and subjective norm. The injunctive norm was the sum of the influence of faculty, advisors, parents and friends. The subjective norm measured the overall influence of important people. The second type of social influence was the descriptive norm, or perceptions of what others are doing. This was measured through participant perceptions of friends’ online status and photo updates about studying abroad. All of the norms predicted intent to study abroad: injunctive norm \((r = .46)\), subjective norm \((r = .49)\) and descriptive norm \((r = .31)\).

Subjective norm and injunctive norm will be discussed together, as they are components of the same measure, namely, how influential important people are on one’s intent to study abroad. As mentioned, these two norms were predictors of intent to study
abroad. This result supports other findings (Booker 2001; Peterson, 2003) and suggests that interpersonal communication is an effective means of disseminating information and helping to form opinions about study abroad. Since parents, faculty, advisors and friends were included in subjective norm of the present study, the results suggested that these were influential people to prospective study abroad students. Therefore, the types of messages that students receive from these groups can impact their interest in studying abroad to some extent. Efforts targeting these important groups could potentially influence study abroad applicants. Parents can be informed about study abroad opportunities through orientation sessions at the start of the academic year, and invited to view materials posted on the university’s international programs website. Parent information sessions may be especially effective because they can meet study abroad alumni, which may alleviate fears of sending their sons and daughters abroad. A biannual workshop to inform advisors of study abroad programs is a key element of their awareness of opportunities. Advisors and faculty members have frequent contact with students and are therefore excellent sources of information and encouragement about study abroad opportunities. They can communicate how study abroad will complement curricular requirements and allay fears of a delayed graduation. Former participants can be utilized to share stories of making the decision to study abroad and overcoming financial and academic barriers.

One theme emerging in this research was the concern over the high cost, or perceived cost of studying abroad. Interest in studying abroad increased when the financial barrier was removed, and receipt of financial aid was slightly negatively correlated with interest in studying abroad. These results were indicative of the
perception that studying abroad is too expensive. Although studying abroad involves extra expenses such as paying for travel, visa, and accommodations, the costs vary greatly and may be more manageable than students perceive. Given this critical issue, it is important for students to have a better understanding of costs involved with studying abroad. Students participating in university related study abroad programs often pay the same tuition for courses, as take advantage of additional financial support to encourage involvement in these programs. Subsequently, the influence of important others can be engaged to discuss the potential costs of studying abroad and how to address this barrier. Friends who have studied abroad, advisors, and faculty members could be available to discuss information regarding financial concerns of potential participants, as well as direct students to proper resources to obtain more information.

The descriptive norm was the other type of social influence measured in this study. It was perceptions of what important others are doing. This was measured by participant reports of friends’ online activity regarding study abroad experiences and how this activity influenced their interest in studying abroad. The descriptive norm was a predictor of study abroad intent without regard to finances. When the financial barrier was removed, descriptive norm became a significant predictor of studying abroad. Although the effect size was small, this result is an important outcome for several reasons. First, the measurement of the descriptive norm was designed as a preliminary probe into the influence of new media, which had not been previously researched in the study abroad context. Thus, it indicated more research should be conducted in this area. Second, the measurement items assumed that the participants were active social networking site (SNS) users. Previous research confirmed nearly ubiquitous use of social
media among college students (Aubrey & Rill, 2013), and the present research found that the participants all responded to the survey items indicating SNS use. Participants reported that they had observed friends’ photos and status updates from abroad, and these updates encouraged them to think about studying abroad. This result confirmed that participants were engaging in friends’ activities online, which had a positive impact on their interest in participating in a study abroad experience. This significant result also demonstrated the potential power of social media as a medium of messages about study abroad programs. The current data supports a recent study on the use of SNSs to influence emotions (Kramer, Guillory, & Hancock, 2014). Kramer and colleagues found that by manipulating the emotional states appearing on an individual’s personal networking page, the SNS could alter the emotional states of that individual. That result suggested that people in general may influenced by what they see online. Similarly, in the present study, students were influenced by their peers’ activities online.

A major aspect of this research is support for the influence of social norms to communicate study abroad benefits. These results help to advance research one step closer to explaining student intentions to study abroad. Conceivably, if influential others communicate positive messages about studying abroad to students, then in turn students who observe experiences of friends’ online may be more encouraged to study abroad. As social media becomes more prevalent and mobile applications diversify the ways in which people can interact, the potential for influence of SNSs will continue to increase. Institutions that recognize the advantages of utilizing new technology in this situation would be in a position to benefit from tapping into these resources. This idea is discussed further in the study implications.
Implications of Study

Preparing undergraduate students to be successful in a global environment is one goal of university internationalization efforts. Results of the current study suggest that internationalization efforts in the area of study abroad programs can encourage student participation. Students were receptive to messages from important others, such as faculty, advisors, parents and friends. Institutions can target influential persons such as those with persuasive message appeals. One recommendation is for administrators to conduct biannual workshops where faculty and advisors would learn tools to inform students about study abroad programs. These trainings would provide these important individuals with a greater ability to influence prospective participants.

Social media is another medium that university internationalization efforts can use to increase study abroad participation. Study abroad is no longer an experience confined to memories shared by a person upon his or her return. With social media, the participant can share the experience in nearly real-time, and friends back home can observe the excitement of being abroad in the moment. This ability also extends the influence of participants to a wider network, as they can communicate with many friends back home simultaneously and influence the interest of their peers. Given the widespread use of SNSs, the influence of such networks on college students (including exposure to study abroad) should continue to increase. It is advisable for universities to take advantage of this trend to promote studying abroad through SNSs. If trends continue, strengthening efforts at employing social media venues to expose students to study abroad opportunities could have an impact on participation rates. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and Vine are examples of SNSs that provide ways for current participants to share their
experiences in a more personal way than posters or written testimonials. These sites include videos, photos, and status updates. For example, on Vine, users can post short, looping videos of their experiences overseas. Facebook and Instagram allows students to share special moments with online friends and followers. Prospective participants may be intrigued by the real-time events such as standing by the Great Wall of China or taking in the sounds of a music concert in Germany, and consider the idea of engaging in similar activities through their own study abroad experience. Social media has opened a dynamic and new array of opportunities to share these study abroad experiences. Students are now able to communicate their interactions with different cultures in multiple countries in a way that was not possible prior to SNSs. The best study abroad promotion may be to have students currently engaging in these programs communicate to potential participants through social media the enjoyment and benefits of learning first-hand about diverse cultures. By encouraging and coordinating current participants to post photos and updates of their cultural experiences on SNS pages, these messages would be reaching social network members in real time.

**Limitations**

This research faced a number of limitations that should be addressed. First, the data was collected via a convenience sample at a single university in the Southeastern U.S., which limits external validity of the results. While University of Miami is ethnically diverse and offers a variety of majors, no single study site can representatively portray the characteristics of the national undergraduate student body. Although the data may be representative of other diverse institutions and private universities, results may
differ substantially at a land grant or state university, small liberal arts college, or a college in a rural environment. Therefore, the study results may not be generalizable to all U.S. college students.

Second, this study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the inference of causality. In other words, one cannot confirm that the independent variables caused the dependent variables. Longitudinal designs are best suited for establishing causality because they can ascertain the temporal order of effects. Multiple regression was utilized to analyze this data. However, it is difficult to establish causality with regression analysis and other non-experimental data analysis techniques since they cannot eliminate alternative explanations. This weakens the internal validity of the results.

Third, this study faced limitations measuring intercultural communication competence. A 16-item scale was employed to capture three broad dimensions of ICC. Using a scale may provide a limited view of competence, as measuring such a complex construct with a single instrument is difficult. Ideally, qualitative measures, third-person assessments, or quasi-experimental design should be used to support the results of a questionnaire.

Fourth, this study employed a one-item measure of the subjective norm, which precluded reliability tests. Measures with a greater number of items should be developed in future studies to yield a reliability coefficient. This study also employed a two-item measure of the descriptive norm, which is perceptions of what others are doing. This was measured by participants’ perceptions of friends’ status updates and photo postings online. More measurement items would also be required for an in-depth analysis of students’ perceptions of computer-mediated communication.
Suggestions for Future Research

Several suggestions for future research are proposed based on results of this study. First, the relationship between the influence of social media sites and intent to study abroad should be examined in greater detail. The results of this study suggest that students observe their online friends’ activities and then become encouraged to engage in similar behaviors. However, this norm was not investigated in-depth in the current study. Because of the pervasive use of SNSs among college students, scholars need to look more carefully at how usage affects user behavior. By examining the relationship between SNS use and attitude toward study abroad, scholars will be able to generate more information about how peer groups can help to promote program participation through their everyday computer usage. Scholars can then use this knowledge to design and test messages encouraging students to study abroad.

Second, a qualitative research design can explore the reasons behind students’ impressionability and motivations to study abroad. In-depth interviews and focus groups can be used to collect data on the social influences (both interpersonal and mediated communication) that impact student decision making on participation in study abroad programs. Through qualitative data the researcher can more clearly uncover the “whys” of the communication influences on study abroad participation. Intercultural communication competence can also be measured qualitatively. The use of another measure to triangulate results found may elucidate the true effect of intercultural communication competence on study abroad interest.

Third, the study can employ a longitudinal design that includes a pre-test, intervention, and post-test. For example, a researcher can survey participants before and
after an on-campus intercultural program to see if it had an effect on intent to study abroad. A mixed-mode study design could incorporate both the large-scale survey and qualitative information bolster the findings.

Other alternative approaches include a multi-site quantitative survey, a randomized sample, and segmentation of participants into one or more demographic categories based on the differences in study abroad participation rates. This study was conducted in an urban region known for cultural diversity. The same study can be replicated at a university located in an environment less hospitable to foreigners and intercultural interactions, as there might be a greater diversity of intercultural communication competence levels. This may lead to interesting comparisons about regional differences and the impact of campus environment on social norms.

**Conclusion**

Today, U.S. college students are entering into adulthood during a time of increased globalization of people, commerce and ideas. The world in which they live is globally connected and interdependent. The continuing strife between many countries, increasing ethnic diversity in the U.S., and the growing economic influence of China, Brazil, India and other nations shows the importance of being able to understand perspectives of others and to effectively pursue meaningful relationships across cultural contexts (Doyle et al., 2010). Global competencies are important for U.S. national security and foreign policy interests; however, diplomatic discussions require a sophisticated sense of intercultural understanding. Within the U.S., ethnic diversity is an impetus for the necessity to appreciate cultural differences and how these differences
impact communication. Diversity in local communities within the U.S. makes study abroad for domestic students even more important in today’s complex world. Intercultural experiences and proficiencies acquired while abroad can be utilized by students when they return home and throughout their life time. The emerging economies of China, Brazil, and India highlight the global business opportunities in various countries. Effective intercultural communication is a prerequisite requirement to connect and engage successfully with others, to operate businesses in a globalized world, and to promote international understanding.

Studying abroad is one conduit to assist in the development of fundamental intercultural communication skills. Participating in these programs can result in many skills applicable to intercultural communication (Kitsantas, 2004), such as increased empathy and understanding of other cultures (Lindsey, 2005), self-confidence, and language skills. Study abroad programs form an essential part of university internationalization, whereby students acquire a more global perspective (NAFSA: Comprehensive Internationalization, n.d.). Consequently, along with other curricular and co-curricular activities, studying abroad can better prepare students to live in a more complex, global society by developing important skills to navigate successfully.

Despite the importance of developing intercultural skills through study abroad, the stagnant rates of study abroad in colleges suggest that a wide range of students are not taking advantage of this experience. Thus, it is important to look at some of the reasons that may affect student decisions to study abroad. This research was the first to include intercultural communication competence and subjective norms together using the Theory of Reasoned Action to explain student decision making about study abroad participation. It is also one of the few projects to examine study abroad participation from a
communication perspective (Pederson, 2003). Based on the findings of previous research, intercultural communication competence was hypothesized to predict intent to study abroad. The current study found that student level of intercultural competence did not significantly impact their interest in studying abroad. This result indicated that students representing all levels of cultural competencies were interested in engaging in international experiences. This study also found that influences from important others via face-to-face (FTF) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) impacted intent to study abroad. Results of this study suggests that educational administrators could utilize the influence of critical others (such as faculty, advisors, parents and friends) to encourage a greater number of students to study abroad. Normative influences from these group members should positively impact potential participants to engage in study abroad experiences. Moreover, current participants should constructively influence decisions of their peers to partake in similar academic journeys.

This study also illustrates the validity of the Theory of Reasoned Action in explaining behavioral decision-making. As hypothesized utilizing this theory, attitude and subjective norm were predictors of intent to behave. Since study abroad decision-making is an intricate and complicated process, there is still a great deal to explore and uncover regarding additional predictors influencing the intentions of students. However, it is promising that the models in this study accounted for more than one-fourth of the variation in intent to study abroad. As the importance of becoming more interculturally competent increases, it will be essential for researchers to understand motivations behind the decisions-making process to participate in study abroad programs. The social influence of others and use of social media are important predictors of a seemingly
complex decision moving us one step closer to explaining student intentions to study abroad.
REFERENCES


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Appendix A
Intent to Study Abroad at University of Miami (ISA-UM) Questionnaire

Please indicate how much each statement describes you. (Write number in space provided).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I know the economic system of at least one other culture.
2. I speak at least one other language.
3. I know the cultural values of at least one other culture.
4. I know the marriage customs of at least one other culture.
5. I know the arts of at least one other culture.
6. I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in at least one other culture.
7. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
8. I feel confident that I can socialize with locals in an unfamiliar culture.
9. I feel sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a new culture.
10. I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar.
11. I feel confident that I can become accustomed to the daily routine in a different culture.
12. I use pauses and silence differently to fit different cross-cultural situations.
13. I usually adjust my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
14. I usually adjust how fast I talk when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
15. I usually adjust my nonverbal behaviors when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
16. I usually modify my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. (Write number in space provided).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Other cultures should consider modeling my culture.
18. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.
19. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.
20. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures.
21. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.
22. Other cultures would be smart to look up to my culture.
23. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.
24. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.
25. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as good as those in my culture.
26. I do not trust people who are different.
27. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.
28. I don’t really like the values and customs of other cultures.

29. How interested are you in learning a new foreign language? Please check one answer.

☐ VERY INTERESTED ☐ INTERESTED ☐ NEUTRAL ☐ SOMEWHAT INTERESTED ☐ NOT AT ALL INTERESTED

30. How long was your longest trip to another country? Please check one answer.

☐ Less than one week ☐ One week to one month ☐ Two months to five months
☐ Six months to one year ☐ More than one year ☐ I have never traveled abroad

“Study abroad” refers to traveling overseas to take courses for academic credit.

31. How likely are you to study abroad as an undergraduate student? Please check one answer.

☐ Very Likely ☐ Likely ☐ Undecided ☐ Unlikely ☐ No Chance
☐ I have already studied abroad ☐ I am currently studying abroad

32. If money were not a factor, how likely would you be to study abroad as an undergraduate student? (If you already participated or are currently studying abroad, indicate how likely you would be to study abroad again.)

☐ Very Likely ☐ Likely ☐ Undecided ☐ Unlikely ☐ No Chance
Below is a list of statements about study abroad. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study abroad…</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33. …would make me more marketable to employers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. …would help me learn about myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. …would enhance my ability to deal with different people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. …would open my eyes to the world.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. …would delay my graduation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. …would let me deeply experience a different culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. ...is fun.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. …is difficult to fit into my academic plans.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. …is expensive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. …would improve my foreign language skills.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the scales below, please indicate your feelings about "Study abroad". Numbers "1" and "7" indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers "2" and "6" indicate a strong feeling. Numbers "3" and "5" indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number "4" indicates you are undecided or do not understand the adjective pairs themselves.

I believe that study abroad is...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>BAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>WRONG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>RIGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>HARMFUL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>BENEFICIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>FAIR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>UNFAIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>WISE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>FOOLISH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>NEGATIVE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>POSITIVE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate the extent to which you believe other people think you should study abroad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49. My parents think I should study abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Some professors think I should study abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. My academic advisor(s) think I should study abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. My friends think I should study abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. In general, most people important to me think I should study abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, when it comes to a decision like participation in a study abroad program, how much do you want to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>VERY MUCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54. …do what your professors think you should do?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. …do what your academic advisor thinks you should do?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. …do what your friends think you should do?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. …do what your parents think you should do?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58. My friends often post photos online about studying abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. My friends often post status updates online about studying abroad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
60. When I see my friends’ photos online about study abroad, I feel like I should study abroad.

61. When I see my friends’ status updates online about study abroad, I feel like I should study abroad.

Please provide some basic information about yourself.

62. Year of birth: ________________

63. Gender:  □ Male  □ Female

64. Status:  □ U.S. Citizen  □ Permanent Resident  □ International Student
□ Exchange Student  □ Other

65. Racial/ethnic background: (check all that apply)
□ White/European  □ Black/African/African American  □ Asian/Asian American
□ Native American/Pacific Islander  □ Hispanic/Latino/Brazilian  □ Other
□ American Indian/Alaska Native  □ Middle Eastern/Arab

66. Year in college:  □ Freshman  □ Sophomore  □ Junior  □ Senior  □ Graduate

67. Major(s): ___________________________ ___________________________

68. Where do you live while attending UM?  □ On-campus  □ Off-campus, not with family
□ Off-campus, with family

69. To what extent do you use financial aid (loans or grants) to attend college?
□ No aid  □ Some aid  □ Aid covers about half the costs  □ Aid covers most of the costs  □ Aid covers all of the costs
70. What is your father's highest level of education?

☐ Did not complete high school  ☐ Graduated high school/earned GED  ☐ Some college/university

☐ Bachelor’s degree  ☐ Graduate degree (JD, MBA, MA, PhD)  ☐ Don’t know

71. What is your mother's highest level of education?

☐ Did not complete high school  ☐ Graduated high school/earned GED  ☐ Some college/university

☐ Bachelor’s degree  ☐ Graduate degree (JD, MBA, MA, PhD)  ☐ Don’t know

Thank you very much for participating in this study!