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# Understanding the Relationship Between Study Abroad and Integrity Development

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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDY ABROAD

AND INTEGRITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between study abroad and integrity development. Past research has indicated that a participant's experience studying abroad impacts their values, personal and global awareness, and ways of developing as a person. While research looking specifically at the development of integrity through study abroad has yet to be explored, current research surrounding integrity holds similar themes aligning with the developmental outcomes of study abroad. Using the Integrity Scale developed by Schlenker, Miller, and Johnson (2009), 419 students were surveyed at a small, private, religiously affiliated institution in the Midwest region of the United States. Using both independent t-tests and descriptive statistics, the measure of integrity was compared to that of individuals who had not participated in a study abroad experience. The results indicated that study abroad has a low but practical impact on integrity development. The results of this study support the need for institutions to evaluate the development of integrity within their students as they engage in worldly experiences, such as study abroad. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between study abroad and integrity development.

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**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

Ask any student who has participated in a study abroad experience, and they will likely tell you the experience changed them. Their stories prompt self-reflection and recognition of themselves and the greater world. According to a recent survey conducted by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), alumni data from all IES study abroad programs from 1950 through to 1999 showed that, no matter where participants studied or how long their program lasted, studying abroad is a defining occasion that continues to impact the individual's life long after the experience has ended. When asked about personal growth, 97% of the survey's respondents answered that studying abroad stimulated increased maturity; 96% reported significant increases in self-confidence; 89% claimed it equipped them to handle ambiguity better; and 95% proclaimed that it impacted their perception of the world in a lasting way (Institute of International Education, 2018, para. 7).

Students attribute growth to their participation abroad. As students continue to participate in study abroad trips during their college careers, there is a growing need for administrators within international study offices to provide services needed for participants to begin the process of fully recognizing the benefits and developmental attributes of their experience.

Outcomes of a study abroad experience often impact one's sense of identity. Theorists such as Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser (1993) theorized concerning the various ways students develop a sense of identity that they then carry throughout their life. The theory of identity development in college students was designed to understand better the phases that students go through in fully developing and living out their identity in a holistic manner (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The theory poses seven vectors, but the seventh vector—developing integrity—was the primary focus of the current study.

Research, while limited to only a handful of studies, defines integrity as a person's life process of systematically refining, developing, and challenging personal values based in the community's ethical and moral norms; the individual acts courageously on these held convictions consistently, even when facing difficulties or resistance (Calhoun, 1995; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009; Palanski & Yammarino, 2007; Schlenker, 2008, 2011). Parker Palmer (1998), when describing integrity, said,

> Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not—and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me: do I welcome them or fear them, embrace them or reject them, move with them or against them? By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am. (p. 4)

In short, integrity is a steadfast commitment to one's whole person.

The effects of participation in a study abroad experience are numerous. From an institutional perspective, study abroad programs provide a growing benefit to society and

the institution as they develop students into culturally aware, mature, and competent individuals. The overall components that affect a student's participation and engagement with a study abroad experience can play a key role in how the student reflects upon and adapts what they have experienced into their lives post-experience. With the increasing number of students participating in various study abroad opportunities throughout college (NAFSA, 2018), ensuring these experiences are positively contributing to students' overall education and individual development is important. Therefore, the present study was guided by the following research question: What relationship, if any, is there between participation in study abroad and the development of integrity?

**Chapter 2**

**Literature Review**

A study abroad experience is often noted by participants as being the best experience of their undergraduate career (Cash, 1993; Stryker, 1997).  The literature reveals that students who study abroad develop morally, socially, and personally—in addition to academically—throughout their college experience (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).  Participants in a study abroad experience go through various changes and developmental processes in an unfamiliar environment.  In particular, their development of integrity is challenged within such an experience.  According to Schlenker, Miller, and Johnson (2009), integrity is a commitment to one's moral principles (see also Schlenker, 2008) and is embedded within each student.  Like Palmer's description of integrity, there is a need to understand the whole person and better recognize how one views their own values and sense of integrity as they continue to contextualize their own understanding of the experiences impacting their development.

**Integrity Development**

In most societies, integrity is a basic principle of decent human interaction (Dunn, 2009; Moorman & Grover, 2009; Veríssimo & Lacerda, 2014).  One's core values and beliefs provide the foundation for interpreting experience, guiding behavior, and maintaining self-respect. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word *integrity* comes from the Latin word *integritas*.  This has the same root as the English word *integer,*

meaning "intact" or "whole" ("Integrity," n.d.). This definition of integrity can then be used in reference to persons, specifically to the wholeness of personal character. That is, a person of integrity can be thought of as an individual who is not fragmented in the way that he or she approaches various aspects and situations in his or her life. Scholars of the concept of integrity have associated this notion of wholeness with markers of integrity such as keeping one's word (Erhard, Jensen, & Zaffron, 2009).

Literature on college students' development of integrity is sparse. Some argue that, because developing integrity is the highest order vector in Chickering and Reisser's (1993) model, students in college may not be achieving integrity in ways congruent with the authors' definition of the concept. However, the results and continued analysis of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) indicate students are clarifying and committing to core values in ways that indicate the beginnings of their own personal journeys toward living lives of integrity (Dugan & Komives, 2007). As such, continuing to understand what values students are developing in college, what levels of congruence may be developing in college, and what experiences may or may not be influencing that development can help student affairs practitioners better structure programs and services to support the development of integrity.

Integrity appears to be a lifelong construct (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; HERI, 1996; Rest, 1984). Accordingly, students will continually refine their values and congruence throughout their lives. It is, therefore, important to understand the influence of college experiences on this development.

**Defining integrity.** The definition of integrity utilized for this study was developed based upon two key frameworks: Chickering's theory of Identity

Development—which addresses the development of integrity—and psychologist Dr. Barry R. Schlenker's collaborative integrity research. While Chickering's theory focuses more on the development of integrity, Schlenker's research looks at the broader understanding of what integrity is and how it is defined. Both frameworks provide the current study with an understanding of what integrity is and how one develops integrity.

Schlenker (2008) defined integrity as the commitment to moral principles, reflected in people's ethical ideologies. He addressed the difference between ethical, principled, and expedient ideologies as they relate to integrity. An *ethical ideology* is an "integrated system of beliefs, values, standards and self-definitions that define an individual's orientation towards matters of right and wrong" (p. 3). Such an ideology provides a moral schema for evaluating events and a moral identity that describes one's ethical character. High integrity is defined by a "*principled ideology*, consisting of the ideas that ethical principles should be followed regardless of personal consequences or rationalizations and that integrity is an inherently valuable component of one's identity" (p. 3). Conversely, low integrity is defined by an "*expedient ideology* consisting of the ideas that moral principles can be flexible, it is important to take advantage of profitable opportunities and foolish not to do so; integrity, while important, is not a vital component of one's identity" (Schlenker et al., 2009, p. 3).

Rost (1993) used similar language when talking about ethical implications of individual behavior. He incorporated both content and process of integrity. Content refers to the idea that one's end purpose or values must be acceptable given the societal and communal norms and the individual's personal convictions (Rost, 1993). The process therefore refers to how one achieves congruence with those values (Rost, 1993).

Thus, integrity is defined as an individual's life process of systematically refining, developing, and challenging personal values based in the community's ethical and moral norms; that person acts courageously on these held convictions consistently, even when facing difficulties or resistance (Calhoun, 1995; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Komives et al., 2009; Palanski & Yammarino, 2007; Schlenker, 2008, 2011). As one develops the ability to lead a more principled life, with core convictions and values guiding their behavior, they begin developing their own personal sense of integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Schlenker, 2008). Integrity is, therefore, core to one's identity.

**Developing integrity.** Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development proposed seven vectors of development that contribute to the formation of one's identity: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. The concept of a vector is used to describe the direction and magnitude that each one possesses (Evans et al., 1998). The seventh vector, developing integrity, includes "three sequential but overlapping stages" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 5): humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence. Each of these stages encompasses a need for reflection and desire on the part of the individual to seek understanding.

*Humanizing values*. The first stage, humanizing values, entails an individual developing from rather fixed thinking to a more holistic, humanized system of values that balances others' interests with one's own (Evans et al., 1998). Such thinking represents a shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules to a more relative view, making connections between rules and the purposes they are meant to serve. This change, also

called "liberalization of the superego" or "enlightenment of conscience," is "the process by which the rigid rules received unquestioned from parents are reformulated in the light of a wider experience and made relevant to new conditions" (Sanford, 1962, p. 278).

The values that students hold are formed by their experiences and surroundings, many of which tie back to familial values that have been instilled in them at a young age. As students begin to experience the world more openly and are confronted with other values held by individuals outside of their immediate environments, they begin to compare and analyze their own values against the values of others, thus beginning to take ownership over their values for the first time (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

*Personalizing values.* The second stage, personalizing values, is where a student establishes a personalized value system in which their core values are consciously affirmed, and the beliefs of others are acknowledged and respected (Evans et al., 1998). As in the humanizing value stage of integrity development, students begin to recognize where their values are placed in their own lives, becoming aware and receptive to the values and beliefs of others.

During this stage, students take more ownership over and civil responsibility for their values. Their values no longer only matter to themselves alone but to others as well. They begin to see how their values and beliefs compare to others' and seek to develop congruence in their lives.

*Developing congruence.* Over the course of developing congruence, values and actions become compatible and authentic as self-interest is balanced by a sense of social responsibility (Evans et al., 1998). Once students have both humanized and personalized

their own values and beliefs, they start to establish a balance of those values with the needs and expectations of the world.

At this final stage, students recognize how their experiences have shaped their identity and set of values. They look further down the road to see how they can take what they have learned and apply it to other areas of their lives. Individuals with high integrity demonstrate behaviors that directly align with their values, showing a commitment to those values through congruence in behavior (Simons, 2002).

**Study Abroad**

Study abroad programs, defined as all educational programs that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin, have gained popularity and interest in recent years (Carlson, Bum, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1991; NAFSA, 2018). Such experiences have become increasingly important educational experiences in fostering global learning and development, intercultural competence, intercultural maturity, and intercultural sensitivity of students. As such, these programs have been accepted as integral components of an effective liberal education (Bolen, 2007).

**Program model.** Within the realm of international education, varying program designs exist (UIC, 2018). An island model program, designed to take a group of American students abroad for a designated duration of time, was chosen for the purposes of the current study. This model can be implemented at either an international institution of higher education or a home base so long as the program is directed by an American faculty member in the host country (O'Callaghan, 2006).

**Immersive design.** Within an immersive design, courses are taught in English and students participate in cultural interactions with the host country. This model focuses

most often on immersing and integrating the student as much as possible in the surrounding local culture; this can be done through staying with a host family, taking structured trip, enrolling in language learning courses, and completing academic assignments to reflect on learning beyond the classroom (UIC, 2018). Ideally, study abroad programs remove students from familiar surroundings and immerse them in a new culture (Kinginger, 2013). The immersive design of study abroad programs presents an opportunity for students to learn more about themselves and experience personal growth.

**Student participation**. Student participation in study abroad programs mostly depends upon students' expectations of specific benefits from such programs (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). The Study Abroad Goal Scale (SAGS) revealed a condensed list of factors that students report for joining study abroad programs: enhancing cross-cultural skills, becoming more proficient in the subject matter, and socializing (Kitsantas, 2004).

Similarly, Engle and Engle (2003) attributed several key components to students' choices to participate in experiential study abroad programs: "length of student sojourn, entry target-language competence, language used in course work, context of academic work, types of student housing, provisions for guided/structured cultural interaction and experiential learning, and guided reflection on culture experience" (p. 8).

**Outcomes of participation.** According to Kitsantas (2004),

Several studies focusing on study abroad outcomes have shown that study abroad programs enhance students' worldview (Carlson & Widman, 1988), global perspective (McCabe, 1994), cross-cultural effectiveness (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001), interest in travel, art, foreign languages, history and architecture (Carsello

& Creaser, 1976), and increase reflective thought, self-reliance, self-confidence and personal well-being (Kauffmann & Kuh, 1984).  (p. 441).

Each of these expectations and the attached benefits influence students to participate in study abroad.

**Participant expectations**.  Identity and self-perception are directly related to expectations.  Kegan (1994) argued that, as people grow, they engage in meaning making (i.e., trying to make sense of their journey through life).  In doing so, they rely not only on their thinking but also on their feelings and on relating with others in forming and reforming their journey in life.  The inability to share meanings and make sense of new perspectives produces anxiety.  Without a space to utilize the new abilities and talents acquired while abroad, the student may begin to feel isolated and shut down.  Such feelings of dissonance are often confusing for returnees, rendering them unable to express themselves within their relationships back home (Sussman, 1986).

As students return home from their experience abroad, they enter back into a world that has evolved since they left.  During months away, they were exposed to new cultures, worldviews, and perspectives—all of which have begun to impact their own views.  As such, students face the need not only to learn how to adjust back into their old lives, but to begin processing through the ways in which their study abroad experience has affected their own integrity development.

**Study Abroad and Integrity Development**

Study abroad experiences widely affect the range of values students hold (Kauffmann, Martin, Weaver, & Weaver, 1992; Meara, 1994).  During study abroad, the following values—among others—are often developed: better understanding of personal

relationships, enhanced cross-cultural understanding and leadership ability, and increased levels of self-esteem and self-confidence (Kauffmann et al., 1992; Sowa, 2002). Some of these values may have already existed within the student participant but may have been dormant or left unacknowledged until their study abroad experience. These values, whether old or new, hold both meaning and various levels of value for each student.

Such values and perspectives play a key role in the development of and commitment to one's integrity. Students choosing to study abroad during college do so based upon a certain set of already held values and expectations. Throughout their journey, they encounter others who hold similar and different values, causing them to reflect upon their own.

**Summary**

Students develop a better understanding and awareness of other cultures following their experience abroad (Sowa, 2002). They better empathize with cultures and values other than their own (Gray, Murdock, & Stebbins, 2002), and their experiences help them not only to better understand who they are, but also to grow in maturity (Holland, 2003).

The development and commitment to one's integrity can be attributed to many things. Most, if not all, experiences that students have during their lives somehow affect their understandings of integrity. A study abroad experience has been shown to develop one's identity in many ways. Such an experience may have influence on the development of one's integrity and how students develop congruence throughout their lives after returning home from their study abroad experience.

**Chapter 3**

**Methodology**

The purpose of the study was to understand better the relationship between a student's study abroad experience and integrity development. Therefore, the study sought to answer the following question: What relationship, if any, is there between participation in study abroad and the development of integrity?

A quantitative methodology was employed because such methods are most useful when examining relationships between and among variables (Christensen & Johnson, 2012; Mertens, 2005). Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development, along with Schlenker's (2011) research on integrity development, were utilized to support the analysis of the data. The approach provided space for exploring whether study abroad in a one-semester time frame relates to a student's integrity development.

**Design**

The study intended to add to the existing, limited research on the topic of integrity development. Therefore, the research was conducted through a quantitative descriptive design to conduct a means comparison among the participants (Lauer & Asher, 1988). The data was used to identify trends in the results and was analyzed to explore if a relationship exists between a study abroad experience and integrity development.

**Context**

Data was collected from a small, religiously affiliated, liberal arts university in the Midwestern United States. The undergraduate enrollment is approximately 2,100 with the population being 55% female and 45% male. Most students are of traditional age (18-25 years old) and live on campus in residence halls. Eighty percent of students participate in an overseas experience during their undergraduate years. The university offers a variety of off-campus, international programs including week-, month-, and semester-long programs, both academic and service-learning focused.

**Participants**

Two groups of participants were selected: those who had participated in a study abroad experience (Group 1) and a randomized population of those who had not participated (Group 2). The first group of participants was selected from the population of undergraduate students who had participated in an international academic study abroad trip lasting longer than six weeks. The second group of participants comprised those who had not participated in a study abroad trip but were currently enrolled in the institution. The researcher chose to focus solely on semester-long trips as opposed to the week- or month-long trips available, since research shows that an experience lasting closer to a full semester is more beneficial for the participants overall (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

Students' names and emails were obtained from the university's Center for Off-Campus Programs; an email was sent containing a link to the study's survey with an informed consent form to be filled out before participating. Participant criteria for the first group were (a) to have completed their study abroad experience, (b) for the experience to have lasted longer than six weeks, and (c) for the experience to have been

primarily academic in nature.  The criteria for the control group were to be (a) currently

enrolled at the university and (b) not to have participated in a study abroad experience.

**Instrument**

> **Schlenker's Integrity Scale.**  A previously validated and reliability-tested scale

(Appendix A) was used to explore the proposed research question.  Schlenker's (2008)

scale has good reliability and validity with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .84 to .90.

Test-retest reliability was also good: $r = .82$, $p < .0001$ for 2 to 5.5-week interval and $r = .72$, $p < .0001$ for 5 to 12 week interval.  The scale consists of 18 questions answered on a

Linkert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

> The Integrity Scale was designed to measure one's inherent value of principles.

While some items speak directly to certain principles, such as *honesty* or *truth* (e.g., It is

foolish to tell the truth when big profits can be made by lying), participants are left to

define *principles* and *values* for themselves (Schlenker, 2011).  Integrity scores are

associated with a more positive outlook towards life, more beneficial beliefs about

oneself, greater authenticity and inner orientation, a more positive orientation towards

others, greater spirituality and less rationalization of illegal and immoral behaviors

(Schlenker, 2008).

> The scale has been used in numerous studies to better understand participants'

levels of integrity in relation to values-driven decision-making and actions.  The value in

these personal interpretations is important because integrity, for the current study, is

inherently defined in a way that could differ for each participant.  Items in the scale were

selected to represent beliefs, values, and self-categorizations associated with integrity.

Each item assesses the steadfast commitment to principles despite costs or temptations.

**Procedures**

The Center for Off-Campus Programs selected 169 undergraduate students who had completed a study abroad experience; through the university registrar, the researcher also collected a randomized group of 250 students who had not participated in study abroad. First, an invitation to participate was sent to all 419 participants via participants' school email addresses. The researcher emailed a link to the study's survey to the 250 possible participants who had not studied abroad, and the Center for Off-Campus Programs emailed the 169 possible participants who had studied abroad. Second, informed consent was collected electronically as the first step in completing the survey. Out of the 419 possible participants for this study, 111 students responded to the researcher's initial invitation, yielding an overall response rate of 24%: 55 participants with a study abroad experience and 56 participants who had not studied abroad. Lastly, the researcher analyzed the data and looked for themes relating to the research question.

**Data Analysis**

Independent t-tests and descriptive statistics were used to analyze data and compare if a difference existed in the means. Finding a difference between the two groups of students would lead to the conclusion that participation in a study abroad experience relates to the development of integrity. The guiding hypothesis for the research was that students will exhibit a difference in the development of integrity based on whether they participated in a study abroad experience or not. Based on the data, further hypotheses were developed to examine differences between genders, student classifications, and timing of participation of the study abroad experience.

# Chapter 4

## Results

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of participating in a study abroad experience and one's development of integrity. It also examined whether demographic variables such as gender, timing of experience, and student classification affect the development of integrity. The following hypothesis was used to give scope and focus to the study, as well as help in guiding the analysis of the findings:

$H_1$: There is a difference between participants of a study abroad experience and non-participants on integrity scores.

$H_0$: There will be no difference between participants and non-participants of a study abroad experience on integrity scores.

Based on the number of participants in this study, two types of analysis were conducted: independent t-tests and descriptive statistics. The results are presented below.

### Independent T-Test

The first step was to prepare the data for the analysis. Participants who did not complete the entire survey were not included in the final data set. The data was also reviewed for extreme outliers. These outliers were also not included in the final data set, as they were inconsistent with the majority of the data.

The next step in the data analysis process was to test the hypothesis. An independent t-test was used to test integrity scores in those who had participated in study

abroad (Group 1) and those who had not participated (Group 2). There was a significant difference between the scores for Group 1 and Group 2; t (95) = -2.073, p = .041. The means and standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Differences in Integrity Scores

| Variable | $n$ | $M$ | $SD$ |
|----------|-----|------|------|
| Group 1 | 46 | 3.967 | .381 |
| Group 2 | 51 | 4.131 | .399 |

*Note*: n = number of participants, M = mean, SD = standard deviation, Group 1 = participants of study abroad, Group 2 = non-participants of study abroad

As indicated by the results of the t-test, those who did not participate in a study abroad trip scored higher on their integrity scores than those who did participate. These results, while statistically significant, have a minimal effect size. An effect size of .42 was calculated through Cohen's d. Consequently, there is minimal magnitude between the two groups. This suggests that the practicality of study abroad impacting integrity development is low to non-existent.

**Gender: Female.** In order to discover the impact of gender between Group 1 and Group 2, an independent t-test was used to test the means between the dependent variable gender—female—and the independent variable—participation in a study abroad experience. When integrity scores were measured against gender, the data showed that the mean scores between female participants and female non-participants ($t_{(81)}$ = -1.870, *p* = .065) was not significantly different. The results are also presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Gender Differences between Females in Integrity Scores

| Variable | n | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female Participants | 40 | 4.003 | .363 |
| Female Non-Participants | 43 | 4.160 | .401 |

*Note*: n = number of participants, M = mean, SD = standard deviation

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Gender: Male.** To discover the impact of gender between Group 1 and Group 2, a descriptive statistical analysis tested the means between the dependent variable gender—male—and the independent variable—participation in a study abroad experience. Due to low male participation rates, only descriptive statistical analysis could be performed on the category of male in both groups. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3

Gender Differences between Males in Integrity Scores

| Variable | n | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male Participants | 6 | 3.72 | .443 |
| Male Non-Participants | 8 | 3.972 | .368 |

*Note*: n = number of participants, M = mean, SD = standard deviation

According to Table 3, there emerged a slight difference between the means with the male non-participants scoring higher.

**Timing.**  Due to low participation rates, descriptive statistics were used to examine the difference between the dependent variable—timing—and the independent variable—participation in a study abroad experience.  Participants who went abroad in Spring 2017 and Fall 2016 were grouped within the last year.  Those who went abroad in Spring 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015, and Fall 2014 were designated as having participated one year or more since taking part in this study.  The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Timing Differences between Participants of Study Abroad in Integrity Scores

| Variable | *n* | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Within the Last Year | 28 | 4.05 | .373 |
| One-Year or More | 18 | 3.83 | .363 |

*Note*: n = number of participants, M = mean, SD = standard deviation, 'Within the Last Year' = Spring 2017 and Fall 2016, 'One-Year or More' = Spring 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015 and Fall 2014

When integrity was measured based on when the participant went abroad, the results indicated that the mean scores of participants who chose to study abroad within the last year were minimally higher than those who went abroad over a year ago.

**Classification.**  When integrity was measured based on the classification of each participant (sophomore, junior, senior), it was discovered that the junior class scored

overall higher than sophomores and seniors, although, again, the difference between the means was minimal. However, each class that participated in a study abroad experience scored relatively high and very similarly on the instrument. The means and standard deviation for each group are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Classification Differences between Participants of Study Abroad in Integrity Scores

| Variable | $n$ | $M$ | $SD$ |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sophomore | 9 | 3.957 | .442 |
| Junior | 12 | 4.093 | .383 |
| Senior | 25 | 3.909 | .358 |

Note: n = number of participants, M = mean, SD = standard deviation

**Summary**

Results showed a statistically significant difference in the means between participants of a study abroad experience and non-participants, with those who had not participated in study abroad scoring higher, though, according to effect size, the findings have low practicality. Effect size evaluates magnitude or practical significance between the two groups. However, it is important to note that all participants of the study have a similarly strong commitment towards their integrity. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the results of this research and the research question: What relationship, if any, is there between participation in study abroad and the development of integrity?

**Chapter 5**

**Discussion**

In the discussion of the research, results are evaluated in the context of theories from Chickering (1993) and Schlenker et al. (2009) regarding integrity development. Demographic characteristics of gender, timing, and class are also examined. Lastly, the discussion includes recommendations for practice and future research as well as limitations of the study.

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between one's integrity development and their participation in a study abroad experience. Two rationales can be assumed based on the given research question. First, one could assume that participation in a study abroad experience has an impact on one's integrity development based on the research surrounding study abroad and its impact on intellectual and personal growth (Bates, 1997; Carlson & Widman, 1988; Carlson et al., 1991; Cash, 1993; Drews & Meyer, 1996; Hutchins, 1996; King & Young, 1994; McCabe, 1994; Zhai, 2000). Alternatively, one could reason that—since integrity is a concept defined differently for each person and is not fully understood until later in one's life (Schlenker, 2008) —such developmental awareness may not be recognized until years after the conclusion of the study abroad experience.

Results from the study indicate that those who have not participated in study abroad scored higher in their commitment towards integrity than those who have

participated in study abroad. Though minimal, the difference is statistically significant and therefore is worthy of consideration. Given the conceptual rationale for the scale, integrity scores should be related to people's personal qualities, judgments, and pro-social/antisocial orientations toward others (Schlenker et al., 2009). Based on the existing research on integrity, integrity development is an integral point of development for many. Therefore, educators ought to be mindful of the potential factors influencing students' integrity development.

**Participant Differences**

Studying abroad can be a life-changing experience, and for students who choose to take part in study abroad, their experiences can have a profound impact on the ways they understand their own integrity development. Findings from the primary question in the study suggest that participation in such an experience can be assumed to have two outcomes: (1) participating in study abroad has little to no impact on one's integrity development or (2) participation in study abroad impacts one's integrity development.

According to the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), study abroad participants grow in awareness not only of the world but also of themselves. Compared to Schlenker's (2009) research, one's worldly experiences significantly impact their development of self and formation of one's principles and intrinsic values. The findings of this study indicate a lower integrity score for those who had studied abroad than those who had not. With minimal practicality found within the study, the first outcome can be assumed: participating in study abroad does not impact integrity development.

These findings contrasted the assumption that study abroad provides a generally positive and developmental outcome. The literature surrounding global experiences has

been shown to highlight personal growth and character development on multiple accounts. With little to no practicality of the relationship to have been discovered between these two participant groups, further studies exploring the relationship between study abroad and integrity development should be conducted.

**Gender and Classification Differences**

The researcher chose to control for gender and student classification variables to reduce the impact of variables other than the actual study abroad experience in explaining the development of integrity in the study's participants. The study's findings indicated no significance between gender or student classification when measured against integrity scores. With the low probability that students' gender or classification impacts integrity development, it can be assumed that other factors are at work in their development.

**Timing of Participation in Study Abroad**

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), time describes the "chronosystem that moderates change across the life course" (p. xv). Bronfenbrenner noted one's life course is "powerfully shaped by conditions and events occurring during the historical period through which the person lives" (p. 641). Also, the timing of one's "biological and social transition as they relate to culturally defined age, role expectations, and opportunities throughout the life course" could be a major factor in human development (p. 641).

Based on the results of the descriptive statistics shown, the timing of participation did not have a significant impact on the dependent variable, integrity development. However, those who went abroad within the last year did score higher on average than those who had studied abroad at least one year or more prior to taking part in this study. These results contrasted Schlenker et al.'s (2009) findings, which indicate participants

may not be able to recognize their own integrity development immediately—it may not be years until they are fully aware of the development of their own integrity. These findings within this study indicate that time may, therefore, be a factor in the development of integrity as indicated in existing research (Schlenker et al., 2009).

**Limitations**

Multiple factors contribute to limitations within the study. The sampling method used to generate participants, the scope of the study, the instrument, and the design of the study are all limitations.

First, the method used to generate participants was a limitation. Participants represented two groups: participants and non-participants of a study abroad experience. The sample was small as a result of a 24% response rate. Had the study collected data from a larger participant pool, the findings may have differed. Fortunately, the percentage from each sample group was nearly identical, with 29% of respondents having participated in a study abroad experience and 21% of respondents having indicated they had not participated in a study abroad experience.

Second, the sample of participants was a limitation. The study's participants came from a faith-based institution where the virtue of integrity was already valued and cultivated on an institutional level. Had the sample of participants represented a more diverse population of students, the findings from the study could have differed and indicated an alternative result.

Third, the instrument used within this study was a limitation. The Integrity Scale (Schlenker, 2008; Schlenker et al., 2009) measures the strengths of people's commitment to moral principles. As it permits respondents to define for themselves the concepts of

moral principles and right versus wrong, and as it is not directly concerned with peoples' reasoning concerning the origins of principles, the scale does not directly address specific experiences in which participants engage.  Therefore, the scale can gather data on the participants' commitments towards integrity but cannot directly correlate integrity and study abroad or other developmental experiences.

Fourth, the design of the study lacks the ability to explore in depth the experiences of the participants.  A quantitative design, as opposed to a qualitative method, diminishes the study's ability to retrieve deeper, more intrinsic data from participants.  Adding qualitative pre- and post-test interviews would have enriched the study's findings.  Additionally, the research could have been strengthened by comparing the experiences of two different groups of students who studied at different times.

Finally, the study was inspired by the researcher's own study abroad experience; therefore, a certain level of researcher bias could be a limitation to the study.  Having participated in study abroad and previously interacted with students in their reflection and processing of study abroad experiences, the research holds a certain level of bias.

**Implications for Practitioners**

First, existing research defends the basic assumption that participation in study abroad is a generally positive and beneficial experience (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Therefore, practitioners must help generate personal awareness of the developmental outcomes inherent in study abroad experiences.  Student affairs professionals, especially those working with students embarking on study abroad experiences, should communicate to students that the journey they are about to take is unique, allowing them to experience life in new and challenging ways.  To this end, pre- and post-trip reflections

with the participants should be implemented.  For students to recognize the values and principles underlying their views of the world, practitioners and institutions much encourage students to create space to understand themselves and their own experiences.

Second, institutions ought to recognize the benefit of study abroad for college students and try to support better the international mission on college campuses.  Better institutional support for study abroad programs, as well as for bringing international students to U.S. campuses, is a good start in allowing students to study abroad.  Ultimately, doing so will lend to the further development of students' own awareness of self and others as they interact with the world and its people.

Third, institutions that provide study abroad opportunities should consider the variety of values, principles, and worldviews of their students when establishing new study abroad programs.  With each new generation of students come new hopes, desires, experiences, and goals.  Therefore, thinking strategically about assessing and developing study abroad programs should always warrant consideration of student voices and needs.

Fourth, based on integrity development research, institutions should better integrate opportunities for further introspective development.  For instance, in a liberal arts education, the classroom provides a potentially beneficial context for developing critical thinking and interpersonal skills in students.  Knowing students already face numerous worldviews and challenging thoughts while abroad, institutions should provide an environment for continued interactions with the larger world, even post-study abroad.

Finally, institutions ought to communicate and seek to develop a clearly defined understanding of integrity in students.  Institutions, like the one in the current study, value the development of integrity.  However, integrity is often left a vague and

undefined concept. With a clear definition of integrity, study abroad, student life, and academic programs can better facilitate and measure the development of integrity in students.

**Further Research**

The lack of literature on the topic invites further studies on integrity development and study abroad experiences. A study utilizing a pre- and post-test would provide insight into the strength of integrity development in students, which would better inform the research. Moreover, similar studies could be performed at both public and private institutions to make comparisons between various study abroad programs. Additionally, if enough institutions conducted such studies, data could be aggregated, and broader conclusions could be drawn concerning the relationship between study abroad programs and integrity development.

In addition, individual institutions, including the one studied, would benefit from further studies evaluating individual study abroad trips. If not already in place, qualitative data could be gathered or evaluation forms utilized to discover whether individual trips offer quality reflection for personal development and growth in integrity. Such insight would prove worthwhile in assessing which trips do well and which may need further adaption in providing beneficial reflective help to participants.

Future studies could adapt a qualitative methodology to gather richer data concerning the relationship between study abroad and integrity development. Based on the findings of the study, further research prompting and evaluating reflection on one's study abroad experience could add to the existing literature and allow study abroad offices to take a deeper look into the integrity development occurring within students.

Finally, conducting a similar study at a non-faith based institution can bring about contrasting, yet enriching data surrounding the topic of integrity. Because the sample of participants in this study attended a faith-based institution, the development of integrity may have already been highly developed due to the construct being a virtue of many faith backgrounds. Had the participant sample represented a more diverse student population, the findings from the study may have differed and indicated an alternative result.

**Conclusion**

Integrity development is an important component of one's identity development, providing context for how one places value in his or her life and lives congruently in the face of adversity. Higher education professionals should strive to understand better the experiences of their students with regard to their development. As more students participate in study abroad, a greater need arises for reflection and helpful processing— facilitated by the institution. New initiatives need to help students understand integrity development and its relationship to study abroad experiences, both before and after such trips. By creating such initiatives, intuitions demonstrate their value of integrity development, a component of students' identities extending beyond time spent in college. As students continue to take part in formative practices throughout college, institutions must establish clear values and resources toward the goal of developing integrity.

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**Appendix A**

**Scale Questions: Schlenker's Integrity Scale**

Please read each of the following statements and indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree.

1. It is foolish to tell the truth when big profits can be made by lying. (R)
2. No matter how much money one makes, life is unsatisfactory without a strong sense of duty and character.
3. Regardless of concerns about principles, in today's world you have to be practical, adapt to opportunities, and do what is most advantageous for you. (R)
4. Being inflexible and refusing to compromise are good if it means standing up for what is right.
5. The reason it is important to tell the truth is because of what others will do to you if you don't, not because of any issue of right and wrong. (R)
6. The true test of character is a willingness to stand by one's principles, no matter what price one has to pay.
7. There are no principles worth dying for. (R)
8. It is important to me to feel that I have not compromised my principles.
9. If one believes something is right, one must stand by it, even if it means losing friends or missing out on profitable opportunities.
10. Compromising one's principles is always wrong, regardless of the circumstances or the amount that can be personally gained.
11. Universal ethical principles exist and should be applied under all circumstances, with no exceptions.
12. Lying is sometimes necessary to accomplish important, worthwhile goals. (R)
13. Integrity is more important than financial gain.
14. It is important to fulfill one's obligations at all times, even when nobody will know if one doesn't.
15. If done for the right reasons, even lying or cheating are ok. (R)
16. Some actions are wrong no matter what the consequences or justification.
17. One's principles should not be compromised regardless of the possible gain.
18. Some transgressions are wrong and cannot be legitimately justified or defended regardless of how much one tries.

(R) = reverse coded

**Appendix B**

**Informed Consent**

**TAYLOR UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT**

*Understanding the Relationship Between Study*

*Abroad and Integrity Development*

You are invited to participate in a research study concerning the relationship between study abroad and the development of integrity. You were selected as a possible subject because of your participation in an international study abroad program. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you many have before agreeing to be in the study. The study is being conducted by Lauren Drogo, a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Higher Education program (MAHE)

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to examine how studying abroad may or may not aid in the development of student integrity.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of 200+ subjects who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:
Complete the attached survey, which should take 5-7 minutes.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
While on the study, the risks are exceedingly minimal and unlikely. However, it is possible that if your study abroad experience was a particularly negative one, the survey could cause you to think back and re-experience some of the negative emotions associated with your study abroad experience. While completing this survey you have the right to not answer any question you feel uncomfortable or unable to answer.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
The benefits to participation that are reasonable to expect are: the survey may help you to reflect on your experience and studies have shown that reflecting well on an experience

increases the benefits received from that experience. Other than this, there is no direct benefit to the participant.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
Instead of being in the study, you have the option to choose not to participate.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored. Your name and information will not be attached to the data you provide unless you choose to supply your email at the end of the survey for further participation in the study.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, the study sponsor, Dr. Scott Gaier, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

COSTS
There are no costs associated with being a participant in this study.

PAYMENT
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY
Because there are no anticipated risks of physical harm for participating in this study there is no compensation for injury.

FINANCIAL INTEREST DISCLOSURE
The researcher does not stand to benefit financially from this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
For questions about the study contact the researcher Lauren Drogo at 501-580-5371.
In the event of an emergency, you may contact Lauren Drogo at 501-580-5371.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University or the MAHE program.

Your participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to your consent in the following circumstances: if for some reason the data you provide is unusable.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records.  I agree to take part in this study.

**Subject's Printed Name:** _____

**Subject's Signature:** _____        **Date:** _____


**Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent:** _____

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** _____        **Date:** _____