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**A Comparative Study of
International and American
Study Abroad Students’
Expectations and Experiences with Host Countries in
Selected Institutions of Higher Education**

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ABSTRACT

This was a comparative study of international and American study abroad students’ experiences and expectations with the host countries. The rationale for this study was to acquire a deeper understanding of different experiences of students who study abroad and to understand whether their expectations of the host country have an impact on their experiences. An opportunity sample of American study abroad and international students was selected from the United States student population and their expectations and experiences of the host country compared.

The study addressed 6 research questions, using a mixed-method approach. The principal instrument for the investigation was the Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire conducted online. Associated hypotheses with the research questions were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and Paired samples t-tests at an alpha level of .05 and the results were described using descriptive statistics. The open-ended questions were analyzed according to established qualitative techniques. The survey was completed by 421 respondents comprised of 155 international students, 252 American study abroad students, and 14 unknown labeled as others.

The results of this study identified language fluency, building relationships with the host nationals, learning about a new culture, and personal change as significant expectations of the students. Overall, the students reported being satisfied with the services provided. International students were slightly more satisfied with access to support services than the American study abroad students. American study abroad students had experiences that closer matched their expectations of study abroad than was the case for international students.