

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

Colegio de Postgrados

**El impacto de género en las experiencias de estudiantes
norteamericanos en Ecuador**

**The Impact of Gender on the Experience of U.S. College Students in
Ecuador**

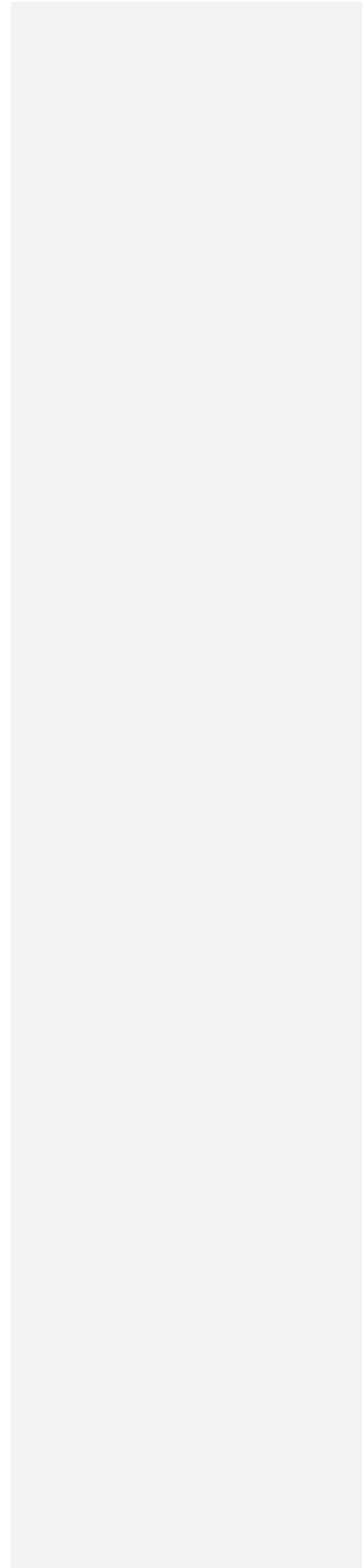
(el idioma de esta tesis es inglés)

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**Tesis de grado presentada como requisito para la obtención
del título de Magíster en Educación**

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*To my family who supported me
through this exciting adventure of living abroad.
I could not have accomplished what I did without you!*

*Thanks to David who encouraged me to excel and achieve my goals,
To Diego who supported me and taught me about international students,
And to Mike who provided insight and suggestions.*

Abstract

The Impact of Gender on the Experience of U.S. College Students Abroad in Ecuador is a mixed-design study of 31 male and 31 female U.S. study abroad college students in Ecuador. Cross-cultural experiences affect international students differently, resulting in a variety of outcomes. The purpose of this study was threefold: 1) Identify the differences between male and female international students' experiences; 2) Measure how students' global perceptions, interpersonal skills, and personal development change after 12 weeks into the study abroad experience; and 3) Suggest ways that study abroad programs can better prepare, orient, and support international students. Participants were given a survey to complete upon arriving in Ecuador, and another 12 weeks later. Furthermore, an institutional perspective from qualitative interviews with the USFQ international studies staff: 1) highlights perspectives on the concerns and problems students face while studying abroad in Ecuador, 2) and discusses gender differences in international students from their perspective that they witness; and 3) make suggestions as to how international student departments can prepare, orient, and support their students more efficiently. This study identifies how gender impacts U.S. students' study abroad experiences in Ecuador. The findings show that international students benefited from studying in Ecuador by developing their conflict management and coping skills. Unmet expectations and goals 12 weeks into the semester include making friends with Ecuadorians, reaching a proficiency level of Spanish, becoming academically successful, and understanding global issues and concerns better; students' desire to learn about Ecuador also diminished. Men were found to be more nationalistic, and socially adaptable and successful, whereas women are global-minded citizens, have difficulties making friends, seek out challenging academic experiences, and are excited about studying abroad. The study concludes with international policy and program recommendations stem from these findings.

Resume

El impacto de género en la experiencia de estudiantes universitarios de Estados Unidos en Ecuador es un estudio de diseño mixto en el cuál participaron 31 estudiantes hombres y 31 estudiantes mujeres Estadounidenses. La experiencia cultural afecta de diferente forma a los estudiantes, dando como resultado una variedad de efectos. Los propósitos de este estudio fueron tres: 1) Identificar las diferencias de experiencia entre estudiantes internacionales hombres y mujeres; 2) Medir como cambia la percepción global, las destrezas interpersonal, y el desarrollo personal en los estudiantes luego de 12 semanas de experiencia de estudio en el extranjero; y 3) Sugerir formas para mejorar la preparación de programas de intercambio, así como su orientación y el apoyo a los estudiantes internacionales. Los participantes completaron una encuesta que se les entregó a su arribo en Ecuador y otra entregada 12 semanas más tarde. Una perspectiva institucional, a partir de entrevistas cualitativas al personal de estudios internacionales en la USFQ: 1) resalta las perspectivas en la preocupación y en los problemas que los estudiantes enfrentan al estudiar en el exterior en Ecuador, 2) analiza las diferencias de género en los estudiantes internacionales desde su perspectiva según presenciaron; y 3) plantea sugerencias sobre como el departamento de estudiantes internacionales puede preparar, orientar y apoyar a sus estudiantes de manera más eficiente. Este estudio identifica como el género impacta en las experiencias de estudiantes Estadounidenses en Ecuador. Los resultados muestran que, los estudiantes internacionales se beneficiaron al estudiar en Ecuador ya que desarrollaron habilidades respecto al manejo de conflictos. Las expectativas y metas no alcanzadas durante las 12 semanas incluyen el hacer amigos Ecuatorianos, alcanzar un nivel de competencia en su español, lograr éxito académico, comprender mejor asuntos globales; asimismo disminuyó el deseo de aprender sobre Ecuador. Los hombres resultaron ser más nacionalistas y más aceptados socialmente, por su parte las mujeres presentan una mentalidad más global, buscan experiencias académicas desafiantes, están emocionadas para estudiar en el extranjero, pero tuvieron más dificultades para hacerse de amigos. El estudio concluye con políticas internacionales y recomendaciones para el programa, derivados de los resultados encontrados.

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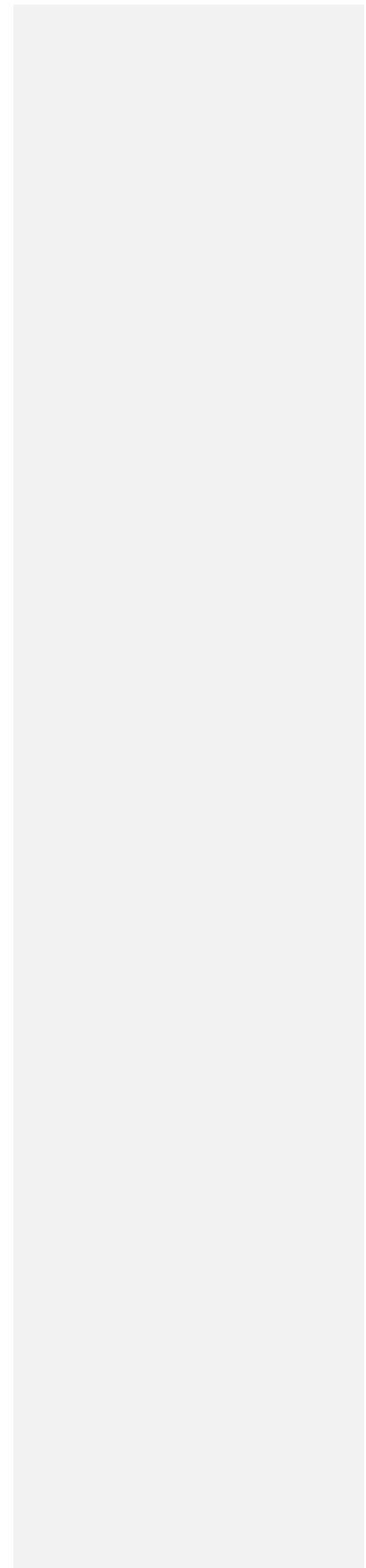


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I. INTRODUCTION

Study-abroad students face a variety of challenges that make their cross-cultural experiences unique and at times difficult. Values, beliefs, and gender roles that individuals feel are appropriate are constructed by their perceptions and influenced by families and communities. These social constructs differ from one society to another, and can create difficulties for international students during their study abroad, resulting in culture shock. Culture shock can vary for each individual, and has a variety of documented causes (Brislin, 1981). In some cases culture shock is caused by different expectations of gender norms.

International students have ideas about how to behave and interact with others in foreign cultures based on gender roles and behaviors that have rarely been questioned in their home countries. Distinct gender roles and expected behaviors that cause inequalities between men and women in Latin American countries are generally accepted as

chauvinism in the United States (Nencel, 1996). When entering a chauvinistic society, such as those found in Latin American countries, U.S. college students can be challenged and frustrated by the distinct behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of their hosts (Anderson, 2003; Twombly, 1995). Because of these unexpected norms, the interactions international students have in their host country can be more difficult for females due to gender socialization and expectations of behaviors than for their male counterparts.

This study explores how gender and culture shock impact the experiences, outcomes and perceptions of sixty-two North American study abroad students in Ecuador during the course of an academic semester. Gender can influence international experiences and culture shock stages, though the literature is very sparse in this field. It is vital to understand how males and females react to culture shock and adjust to the new society during their semester abroad in order to maximize the positive aspects of this experience. The importance of such a study is magnified when global numbers are analyzed and the large amount of U.S. university student participation is considered.

The purpose of this study is to examine how outcomes for U.S. college students studying abroad differ between males and females after twelve weeks in Ecuador in order to identify the variables that can be manipulated to enhance each gender's experience. In particular, 31 U.S. female and 31 U.S. male students were identified to examine the positive and negative effects of living in Ecuador while studying at a prestigious, private liberal arts university. The analysis of their experience in turn generated recommendations for better orientation processes for similar programs in the future.

Additionally, these students' experiences were compared with counselor and administrative perspectives about challenges that international student usually complain about while studying at this university for triangulation purposes to confirm findings.

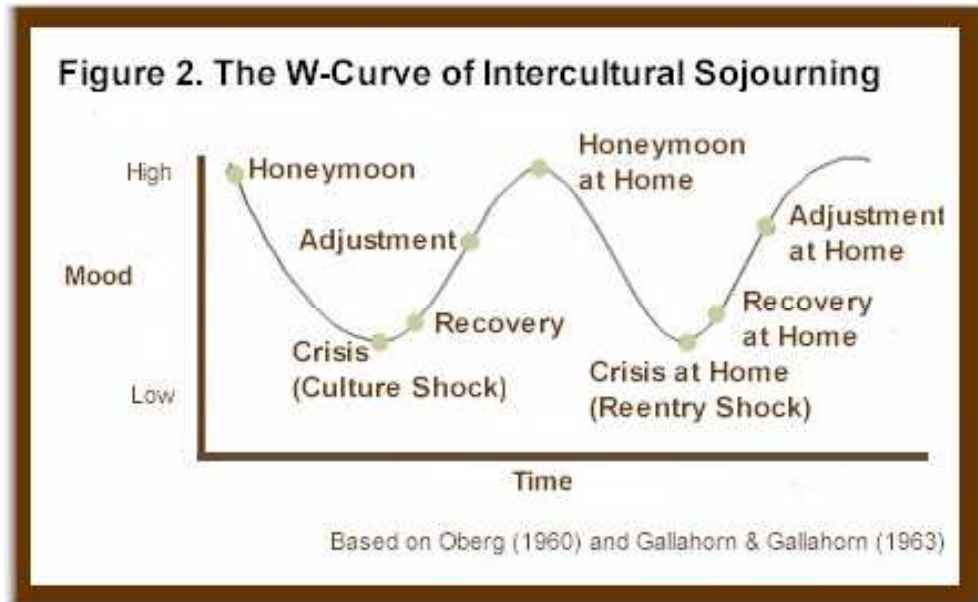
A. Rationale, Relevance, and Significance

Students' individual experiences, traits, skills, support groups, preparation and orientation can influence their perceptions of their study abroad experiences (Brislin, 1981). U.S. students have established identities, gender roles, and expectations based on their experiences and upbringings in the United States. Hall (1969) refers to how North Americans are known for the large amount of space they prefer to have between themselves in social interactions and the punctual manner in which they perceive time and appointments. The investigator claims that she has learned more about the U.S. culture and the values and beliefs she has based on the North American society, such as considering punctuality as respectful, feeling safe with physical space between her and strangers, expecting to be an independent woman, others expecting her to be able to perform as well as men, and not worrying about political instability and safety. These social constructions become challenged and are different in other countries, which can cause conflict, misunderstandings, and analysis. Students studying in foreign countries, especially those with political and economical instability such as Ecuador, face additional challenges. The law enforcement system is often corrupt, which means that police often do not help foreigners. Political upheavals can lead to riot situations involving tear gas and violent protests which generate fear, discomfort, or excitement for international students (Hendrix, 2001). Another important variable is gender. Distinct gender roles

and the way men and women are expected to behave are marked around the world; roles different from what international students are accustomed to may cause a strong sense of discomfort and culture shock for foreigners. Ecuador is a society with different gender roles compared with the United States. North American students may react differently when confronted by a chauvinistic mind-set (Anderson, 2003). These reactions can heighten the effects of culture shock, resulting in different outcomes and experiences for female and male international students.

Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg first presented the theory of culture shock in 1954, which continues to be analyzed and studied today (Davis, 2003; McComb & Foster, 1974; Oberg, 1960). Culture shock refers to the reactions and abilities of people adapting to a society in which they were not raised. Based on the symptoms of culture shock, such as excitement, enthusiasm, frustration, embarrassment, understanding and rapport with the culture, five stages were created to categorize students' feelings and behaviors. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1962) designed a W-Curve hypothesis that led to the theory that students react positively and negatively during certain stages of their semester study abroad. This begins with the honeymoon stage, followed by stages of hostility and humor, then a stage where the individual feels "at-home", and culminating in reverse culture shock stages upon return to the home country (Brislin, 1981). Fristick created a diagram based on Gullahorn et al. (1962) and Oberg (1960) to demonstrate culture shock pattern (2005, p. 52).

Diagram 1: The W-Curve of Cross Cultural Adaptation



(Source: <http://interculturalrelations.com/v2i1Winter1999/w99hart.htm>)

Understanding the cultural context of Latin America, including gender roles and how culture shock affects international students, is vital in the dynamic world of globalization. As one director of a study abroad program at USFQ pointed out, study abroad experiences are necessary to unify individualistic societies to become globally-minded. Experiences such as studying abroad is one of the only forms in which U.S. college students can experience and witness a different culture, preparing them to become global citizens. A large number of U.S. universities require undergraduate students to participate in study abroad programs before graduating. The 1990 *National Mandate for Education Abroad: Getting on with the Task Report* recommended that at least ten percent of all college students should study abroad (Hoffa, 1990). Additionally, every college graduate by the year 2015 is expected to have a cross-cultural encounter, as a

national policy and requirement for the United States (*The Future of International Education*, 2004).

Studies differ on the number of U.S. college students studying abroad. A dramatic increase of U.S. college students studying in foreign countries was reported by the Institute of International Education's Open Doors survey (2005). The study reports that since the 2000-2001 academic year, U.S. foreign study participants have increased by twenty percent. Over one hundred ninety-one thousand (191,321) college students were reported to be studying abroad throughout the world in 2005 (IIE, 2005). Another report in 2004 shows that this amounts to just five percent of pre-graduate students studying abroad and receiving college credit, however (Chieffo, et al, 2004), while others found that only one percent of all college students actually study abroad (Lewis, 2005). Independent of the exact number, thousands of Americans study abroad annually, and their successful experiences may lead to even more students doing so in the future. These students' abilities to adapt to their new cultures, based on their socialization skills, directly affect their level of success in their host country.

A variety of cross-cultural experiences in regions less traveled, such as Latin America, was also strongly urged in the National Mandate (Hoffa, 1990). European countries receive a large amount of American study abroad students, often as a result of the fear of not being able to adjust or communicate in a country with a foreign language (IIE, 2005):

Almost one-third [of international students] enroll in programs that take place in English-speaking countries or that use English as the language of

instruction. That reduces the impact of the experience because of the lack of immersion in a foreign language. (Lewis, et al, 2005)

Tonkin and colleagues found that in his sample of students with language majors, the majority of American students went to France, Mexico, or Ecuador (2004).

The U.S. Congress passed the National Security Education Act of 1991 to encourage students to study abroad in educational areas such as language instruction as a direct response to the National Mandate (Twombly, 1995). Reports show these acts have been successful. An increase of U.S. college study abroad participants throughout third world countries has also been reported. In 2003-2004, 1,678 students participated in a semester abroad in Ecuador, demonstrating a seven percent increase from previous years (IIE, 2005). The overarching goal of these U.S. acts was to provide U.S. citizens with a global literacy, “thus [to] provide [a] means of developing skills necessary to compete in an increasingly interdependent, multicultural world” (Dwyer, et. al., 2004, p. N/D).

There are numerous benefits for college students in studying abroad. Many international students report higher global understanding (Hadis, 2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Lewis, et al, 2005; Mestenhauser, 1976), better self-comprehension (Dwyer, et. al., 1996; Hopkins, 1999), and language proficiency (Freed, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Mendelson, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998) due to their cross-cultural experience. Moreover, reports indicate that study abroad has a positive influence on students’ personal development, academic commitment, intercultural development, and career development, emphasizing the importance of learning new languages and improving understanding of other cultures (Dwyer, et. al., 1996).

B. Purpose of the Study

Globalization calls for a greater understanding of other cultures and the ability to communicate universally. The obligation to comprehend behaviors of different people increases as the world continues to shrink and as interactions become more intimate, rapid, and important for business and related activities. Cross-cultural trade and experiences have dramatically risen, and more U.S. universities oblige their students to study abroad as a result. However, relatively speaking there are only a few study abroad opportunities to train North Americans to become globally aware citizens (Dwyer, et. al, 2004). By examining U.S. international students' experiences in other countries and identifying variables that include gender patterns, this study proposes recommendations for study abroad orientation programs, which promotes making Americans more cross culturally sensitive and literate.

The purpose of this study is to 1) Identify the differences between male and female international students' experiences; 2) Measure how students' global, interpersonal, and personal perceptions change after twelve weeks into the study abroad experience; and 3) Suggest ways that study abroad programs can better prepare, orient, and support international students.

Referring to Crain's (1996) statement about Ecuadorian Native women, "...identities are historically produced, multiple and shifting..." This quote, although taken out of its intended anthropological context, is precisely what the investigator

believes for U.S. gender roles. International students' perceptions and behaviors will change throughout their semester abroad in Ecuador, shifting as they experience new paradigms and witness other forms in which societies function.

This study will have a great impact on the policies and international programs that the Universidad San Francisco (USFQ) offers to North Americans. A significant sample of 62 international students was selected to be monitored, measuring the benefits, expectations, and gender differences that international students encounter in Ecuador, Documenting these experiences and speaking in detail with the university's international programs' staff highlight concerns and better ways to minimize them.

II. Literature Review

Research shows that upon returning to their home country many international students can identify with the patterns of culture shock, which helps them understand what they experienced (Brislin, 1981). International student orientation leaders and advisors should understand the following factors in order to structure a better program for their students (Brislin, 1981).

1. Individual traits and skills: Each student has their own strengths and weaknesses that impact their abilities to adapt to a foreign country.
2. Range of situations: Students will experience culture shock depending on the types of situations they face.
3. Amount of change demanded in different countries: Students experience heightened culture shock when they face cultures and situations extremely different from their home culture.
4. Presence or absence of support groups during the early stages of an international student: The importance of a strong support group during the culture shock

stages is pertinent to the adaptability and survival of international students. The type of support system students have will affect how they deal with culture shock.

5. The length and adequacy of training programs: Studies found that training and orientation programs are vital for the success of study abroad students. Whether or not the students were effectively prepared for their cross-cultural experience can influence the extremity of the culture shock they experience.
6. Amount of time spent in the host country: Culture shock will occur differently depending on the amount of time the student spends in the host country. It takes time for students to adjust and experience all of the stages of culture shock so short-term students' experiences will be different from semester or annual study-abroad experiences.

Authors such as Brislin (1981), Dahl (n/a) and Hall (1969) identified ten distinct features in which cultures differ from each other, which are paraphrased below:

1. The national character / basic personality: countries have certain characteristics that can cause differentiating culture shock symptoms. For example, chauvinistic societies, which may include some in Latin America, can create conflict for students coming from a country that promotes feminism and equal-rights, such as the United States.
2. Global and gender perceptions: Countries also have distinct perspectives of the world, race, and gender based on their history and previous experiences and beliefs.
3. Concepts about time: Time is managed differently from country to country. For example, the common phrase of "my time or your time" demonstrates how cultures view time. In Latin America, time is relaxed and punctuality is not perceived as a form of respect, whereas the United States is punctual where time is seen as money.
4. Concepts about space: People differ in how much space they use or need. The physical distance between people when they interact can be often misinterpreted by outsiders and cause discomfort for foreigners.
5. Ways of thinking: Philosophies and worldviews differ based on a country's experiences and history. People think and perceive situations differently because of what they know and have been told.
6. Language: Differences in languages cause differences in how foreigners interact with hosts.

7. Non-verbal communication: This form of communication can differ between countries. The interpretations of actions, gestures, eye contact and body language can vary and in turn affect how foreigners understand what hosts are communicating.
8. Values: These can vary significantly; examples include definitions of honesty, integrity, and personal commitment in relationships.
9. Behaviors: Behaviors and interactions differ between societies. This can be demonstrated in the concepts of time, space, perceptions, etc.
10. Social groupings and relationships: The ways nationals interact with each other in a wide range of social settings vary significantly from country to country.

Students' cross-cultural experiences can be interpreted using the W-shaped hypothesis through the analysis of these variables (Gullahorn, et al., 1962). These elements are identified throughout the literature as aspects of culture that can cause conflicts for international students. This paper proposes that students have different study abroad experiences based in part on the cultural construct of gender between the United States and the host country. One suggested outcome of this study is that this information can be adapted to orientation programs to help American exchange students become more aware of the differences they will encounter in their host country.

A.C. Cultural Context

Men and women approach intercultural exchanges in different ways, including primary goals, emotional concerns, and safety considerations. For example, women's concern with safety and sexual harassment will affect their study abroad experience, whereas this is not usually a concern for men. No one individual has the same study

← --- Con formato: Numeración y viñetas

abroad experience as another, though generalizations about men and women and about culture shock can be made. Knowledge about gender issues is a reflection of values, behaviors, and social groupings/relationships which differ between men and women. This has an impact on successful or unsuccessful study abroad experiences.

1. Gender Differences

A study abroad experience can be approached differently by men and women for various reasons. First, the gender and social status of women and men in a host society such as Ecuador influences how the students are treated during their semester abroad. Additionally, the outcomes of an international experience depend on students' self-esteem and how they perceive themselves. Some authors suggest that men and women generally perceive themselves in different manners, furthering the gender difference, such as in the differing manners men and women view themselves and their self-esteem (Von Bergen, et al., n/a). Historically and religiously established Latin American gender roles increase the differences in how male and female international students perceive their study abroad experience in Ecuador. Ecuadorian gender roles differ from those in the United States, and can intensify difficulties for North American women to adapt in the Ecuadorian culture. These differences are cited by authors in cross-cultural case studies (Anderson, 2003; Twombly, 1995).

a. Gender and Social Status

The impact of culture shock and the ways in which individuals cope with it are influenced by gender. Some differences between genders have to do with the management of emotions and physical self-esteem, which have implications for a successful intercultural exchange. Other distinctions are the direct result of social behaviors. Specifically, women appear to be at a significant disadvantage socially, emotionally, and physically compared to men. For example, North American women receive a great amount of attention from men in Latin America. Some students can perceive this attention as negative and dangerous, and they are at a higher risk of being victimized. Routledge found that women are more vulnerable to domestic violence and rape, have unequal social, political, and economic status, and lack the support of their male partners. These factors contribute to a perceived inferiority status on the part of women in many societies (1999).

b. Self-Esteem and Self-Concept by Gender

The implications of male and female self-esteem and self-concept should be considered when planning intercultural orientation programs. Von Bergen, Soper, and Barlow (1996) measured how males and females perceived themselves based on response time and descriptive questions related to high self-esteem and self-concept. When describing themselves, all students with high self-esteem appeared to answer quickly.

Interestingly enough, males with low self-esteem also answered quickly about themselves, but females with low self-esteem were slower in their response time. Von Bergen et al. concluded that the difference between genders is based on the lack of focus society places on female self-esteem and self-concept (1996). These findings imply that more attention should be paid to women's self-perception issues in the cross-cultural orientation process. The information provided by these studies can be useful in recognizing key areas when working with culture shock, as the literature suggests that men and women have different needs. The lack of attention men receive in regards to self-esteem continues to widen the gap between genders. If men feel that they cannot express their problems or worries because society does not expect or permit it, then perhaps their actions do not reflect their problems. Women, on the other hand, may also have integration needs which are also not met by the current orientation structure. In practice, this could mean preparing students differently in orientation programs by focusing on gender roles and needs separately, which is considered in the conclusions.

2. Latin America Gender Roles

The history of Latin America has created a large gender gap. It is stated in Crain's writing in reference to Ecuador, "Native women's identities are historically produced, multiple and shifting, rather than being either hermetically sealed or existing in a pure, uncontaminated state" (1996, p. 152). In other words, women's roles have changed throughout history, constructed to respond to historical and social events. That is, rather than being independently defined, women's roles are determined by social influences and dynamics. Recently there has been an increase in the number of gender studies in Latin

America. This increase implies that the gender gap in Latin America has been recognized and taken seriously. For international students, machismo, differences in gender, and how women are treated can extenuate culture shock and increase the challenges of both women and men adapting to a host country.

a. Machismo in Latin America

Machismo is a term frequently used by authors when referring to Latin American gender roles (Nencel, 1996, p. 57):

In Latin America, the symbolic representation of masculinity and male sexuality merge in the concept of *machismo*. *Machismo* is an all-embracing concept determining women's subordination. It is often assumed to be synonymous with male dominance ... Generally, it is defined by describing attributes of men's attitudes or behavior, which make the *macho*.

While the definition of *machismo* is common throughout Latin America, Melhuus suggests that *machismo* is used in various ways by many people and cannot be referred to or understood only as a negative masculine concept (1996). *Machismo* differs within races and classes in Latin America.

b. Gender Imagery: Machismo and Virginity

Imagery in defined gender contradictions is another differentiating factor that creates contrasts between men and women in Latin America. The differences in gender and the attitudes and behaviors of *macho* vs. virgin gender roles can heighten culture shock and heighten difficulties in adapting to the host country. For example, it is common to see posters of half-naked women posted next to a religious reference to God ones

public bus in Ecuador. Such imagery places men and women on exact opposite ends of a scale, with few overlapping characteristics. These images portray a gender distinction of the ideal male as a savior and the women as a sexual object. Melhuus described contradicting gender images found in Mexico, contrasting the masculine and feminine roles (1996, p. 232):

Whereas the former is inscribed in notions of power...and machismo, the latter is mediated through the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe as the Virgin Mother, and the local meanings of virginity, which are reflected in a particular perception of the ideal of suffering, which in turn is linked to motherhood.

Melhuus found that in Mexico girls were brought up not only to be mothers, but more importantly virgins until marriage; female sexuality for the Mexicans is a source of grace and virtue (1996). Women, by this definition, are meant to suffer, as did the Virgin Mother, and the female role is to serve the male's will.

c. Historical Division of Women's Characteristics

Historical developments, such as the conquest of the native Indians, the fight for independence from Spain and Portugal, and the proselytization by the Catholic Church, contributed to gender differences and an ethno-racial division within Latin America (Melhuus, et al., 1996). These entities introduced the concept of the "other", which continues to remain in Latin American gender roles today (Melhuus et al., 1996). Ethno-racial gender distinctions in Latin America were first noted in the 17th and 18th centuries with the marriage of a Spaniard with a darker or indigenous woman (Kellogg, 2000). Social classes continued to divide with immigration and intermarriages of Latinos and Spaniards, and class differences among women increased. For example, the use of the woman's income in the household, and how men treat women vary between the working

and upper classes (Butler, 1998). An example that crosses economic barriers, however, is that when a woman marries in a Latin country, her last name changes to “de” which is short for “de la casa de ...” of her husband, signifying that she is now possession of the husband’s household. While this is a linguistic marker, it is telling of the values of a culture. This symbolic addition to women’s last names when marrying is becoming less prominent throughout Ecuador and Latin America, as is the custom of U.S. women taking their husbands’ last names when marrying. Again, these changes show once again how identities and gender roles shift throughout time.

As the Spaniards entered Latin America, intermarriage and the concept of *Mestizaje* were introduced. *Mestizaje* refers to someone with mixed ancestry, especially a European with Native American blood (Kellogg, 2000). Laws forbade marriages of social unequals and the division of class became more distinct for women in Latin America (Kellogg, 2000). The Latin America female attitude of being the inferior gender persists as a direct result of the conquistadores and the Catholic Church (Melhuus, 1996). Depending on what part of Ecuador international students visit or study, they will encounter distinct gender roles and perspectives that will influence how they are treated.

d. Religious Values and the Catholic Church

Religion has played an important role in the development of gender roles, especially the influence of the Catholic Church on society. The Catholic Church is determined not to use the term gender in social teachings (Butler, 1998; Franco, 1996). The Catholic Church, which continues to reject the use of contraceptives and abortions,

has influenced Latin American governments, refusing to encourage the teaching of sexual education and safe sexual practices (Collier, 2005; Franco, 1996; Fraser et al, 2004). An example is that when working on an educational reform in Argentina, the Church emphasized the importance of not studying gender, but rather using the term sex (Butler, 1998; Franco, 1996; Hallum, 2003), which demonstrates the lack of recognition that there are socialized differences in societies that create inequalities that need to be considered.

A conflict between religious beliefs and daily actions is also present in Latin America. When polled, 95 percent of the Peruvian population stated that they believed in God, and 80% agreed with using contraceptives (Franco, 1996). There were an estimated 17,000 abortions in Chile in 1996, and a reported one out of every two births in Mexico and one out of every three births in Peru ended in abortions as a result of the difficulty to obtain contraceptives (Franco, 1996). The legalization of abortion in Mexico in 2007 is in contrast to the current fact many women die in Latin American when having an abortion “since abortions are performed clandestinely and often in less than optimal conditions,” (Franco, 1996, p. 7). Women’s rights advocates report an estimated 4.4 million deaths from abortions per year in Latin America (Fraser et al, 2004). In Colombia and Mexico, a high rate of hospitalizations and deaths result from these poor conditions (Franco, 1996). The Catholic Church’s philosophy of sexual practices is directly related to the virginal ideal for girls previously mentioned. The importance of virginity and chastity throughout Latin American societies is reflected in a demonstrated desire to be like the Virgin Mary, while the gender contradiction of the *macho* male and virginal female can be seen in multiple cultural artifacts and images.

“The social nature of gender emphasizes relationships of differential power, which requires a deep knowledge of the heterogeneity of male and female relationships in Latin America” (Butler, 1998). These modern gender orientations cause a conflict in Latin American countries and heighten the distinction between the genders (Franco, 1996). These views are often difficult for American students in Ecuador to understand at first, and present an additional and significant challenge to integrating smoothly into a new culture.

e. Feminism

The evolution of feminism has increased global awareness of the gender struggle in Latin America. Latin America has been confronted with gender roles and feminism for generations. Post-1960s feminists consider gender the social construction of masculine and feminine differences (Franco, 1996). This definition of gender separates the concepts of “sex” and “gender”; gender identifies the masculine and feminine roles, actions, and social acceptance of a man and woman, whereas “sex” refers to the biological differences in human beings. The gender gap in Latin America divides men and women; women are more impoverished and struggle to stay alive more than men:

If feminism in North America and Western Europe is identified with the intellectual elite and a movement by women who want to participate fully in all aspects of their cultures, it means something quite different in many areas of Latin America. There it is often identified with the deepest poverty and with women’s struggles for safety for themselves and their children. At the most fundamental level, feminism in Latin America can simply mean struggling to stay alive, a battle often joined by church agencies and women of faith. (Fraser, et al., 2004, p. 1)

An increase in feminism has occurred in Latin America in the past two decades, augmenting the number of organizations and feminists working to promote women's rights, including birth control and marital status (Franco, 1996; Fraser, et al, 2004).

An interesting trend is reflected in the large shift from Catholicism to Pentecostalism in Latin America in the last decades (Hallum, 2003). Some suggest that the less traditional view of birth control and changed perceptions of *machismo* have led to this change in religions. Many religious organizations and feminist groups note how Pentecostals have helped women in Latin America confront gender conflicts (Hallum, 2003, p.181):

[Organizations] in Latin America note its value for helping women confront the demon of machismo; i.e., the complex of male behaviors such as excessive drinking, violence against women, chronic infidelity, abdication of household duties, and a general identification with the street culture rather than with the home.

With these efforts, women in Latin America are becoming more secure and therefore more successful in their everyday lives. The promotion of women's rights and efforts to diminish *machismo* are now more common throughout Latin America, including Ecuador.

f. Labor Force

Labor issues in Latin America have also become a feminist focus. Latin American women are subjected to work in the informal sector of the labor force that for the most part discriminates against women. Jobs such as street vendors, garbage collecting and brick making are sectors in which lower-class women work and exploited

(Wilson, 1998). In Guayaquil, Ecuador, 70 percent of *microcomerciantes* are women and in Quito, and 72.6 percent of the ambulant vendors are women (Buvinic, et al, 1988; cited by Wilson, 1998). Such differences in labor conditions related to gender are ones that international students do not necessarily encounter while in the United States (Fraser et al, 2004).

In the United States, equal action and minority rights minimize the difference in treatment between men and women. The investigator recognizes the expectation for women to act and be able to perform in the United States as men do, even in the realm of physical labor. Men, as well as women, are expected carry materials and manage heavy machinery as equals. Furthermore, the investigator believes that the glass ceiling, although still existing, is becoming less. More women are now in college, achieving professional positions of power, and earning money as men do. The equality of men and women can be considered to the point of extreme, minimize traditional behavior and actions of a gentleman and a lady. Again, these changes shift throughout time, showing how identities and gender roles are historically and culturally created, and are modified and adapted to the modern needs throughout time.

Adding to the state of Ecuadorian women's situations, women carry with them many fears in their daily life related to the unjust circumstances and gender differences in their lives. "Women are paid far less than men for equal work, and violence against women....has reached levels that alarm women's rights activists throughout the region [of Latin America]" (Fraser et al, 2004, p. 10). To add economic insult to psychological

injury, about half of all workingwomen in Latin America are in the informal sector of the economy, and 15% of them are domestic employees (Fraser et al, 2004).

3. Ecuadorian Gender Profile

Literary and educational statistics demonstrate a gender gap. The Gender Profile from the World Bank Index of Ecuador suggests little difference between genders in literacy and education. Statistics rate male and female differences in education and literacy rates within one or two percent of each other, which has decreased since the 1980s; the average current rate is nine percent (2004).

While this is encouraging, research suggests that in general there is a significant gender gap in Latin America. Feminist groups and religious organizations are working to fight for women's rights in order to decrease the injustice due to gender. However, this is a problem that has occurred for centuries. Elizabeth Quay warns that the recent interest in studying gender in Latin America and the increase of feminist groups does not guarantee an improvement and further understanding of why gender inequalities exist (2003, p. 287):

Whereas the central task of early women's history was to "get it right" when stirring women into the historical mix, gender analysis has proven even more disruptive, calling into question paradigms that de-historicize or oversimplify the nature of gender inequality in Latin America.

In other words, studying gender issues in this area of the world actually aggravates the problem due to the perceptions of gender instilled in the minds of people by the Catholic Church because of this complex paradigm when one attempts to simplify the gender gap. The consequences of gender are probably something counter-intuitive to a U.S. college

student's initial perception, a reality for which they are rarely prepared for in orientation sessions prior to arrival.

4. Cross-Cultural Studies

Cross-cultural studies provide insight to how study abroad students adapt to foreign cultures. Two case studies that report findings of how North American women experience their semester abroad in Latin America (Anderson, 2003; Twombly, 1995). The increase in these types of studies implies that there is an increased interest in gender roles in cross-cultural studies.

a. Females in Latin America

Gender differences are a complex issue that cannot be resolved nor understood easily. The gender gap and inequalities within Latin America can and do cause difficulties for international students, and often result in substantially different experiences for males and females studying abroad. As the literature states, depending on where U.S. students visit and study, they will encounter different gender roles and attitudes that will influence their cross-cultural experiences and perceptions of Ecuadorians. Although the literature does not state the statistics of the numbers of male and female international students studying in Ecuador, the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* received far more female students than male students during the spring of 2006 (Menking, 2006), drawing even further attention to the orientation issues related to women in study abroad programs in Latin America.

b. Recent Increase of Gender Studies

Cross-cultural studies have been conducted to examine the social difficulties U.S. female college students experience in Latin America. One particular study claims that U.S. women and men of local nationality appear to have more relationships than foreign men and local women. Researchers suggest that the reason for this phenomenon of women from other countries seeking relationships with other men is based on a need for a “thrill or an escape, for self-esteem, or an encounter with the exotic” (Anderson, 2003, p. 30). Despite these findings, female international students reported that it was a challenge to make local male and female friends (Anderson, 2003). Twombly reported that North American female study abroad students’ experiences were influenced by their inability to make local female friends (1996). The reports showed that when American women sought out friendships with local Costa Rican females, the locals were closed to the idea. Only through home-stays were female international students successful in building relationships with other women, and on a superficial level at that. Furthermore, international students recognized that their North American friends were far more important than they had expected (1996). A generalization could be made from this study that women have a stronger need to create interpersonal relationships than men, and this could affect the differences in the cross-cultural experiences of international students. This information was confirmed not only in the literature, but through the participants in the current study. Such findings should be incorporated into study-abroad orientations and the support networks provided by international study offices.

c. Gender Target: Harassment

Anderson also found that women faced the obstacle of being racially different and a gender target for the local men (Anderson, 2003). *Piropos* is a Spanish word that cannot be directly translated into English. It is a form Latino men use to give women “compliments.” They are comments made by male strangers toward an attractive woman and “Latin women are expected to appreciate them and take them as a compliment” (Twombly, 1995, p. 10). However, many U.S. female international students complain about *piropos* and see them as a form of verbal harassment. Although the female students had been told these “cat calls”, comments, and stares were harmless, women still reported being offended by the sexual innuendos. Female students often reported a constant concern for safety and fear of harassment while in Latin America (Anderson, 2003). Physical forms of harassment were also reported by female international students, which created a challenge for them to integrate into their host society (Twombly, 1995). This behavior is explained by the superior *machista* attitude. Latin American women are sometimes portrayed as feeling proud and grateful for the compliment and extra male attention. Gender roles in the United States differ, with a focus on equality and partnership of duties, resulting in men acting differently toward women and not needing to pursue women in these aspects. Although an explicit lesson and briefing of this behavior will probably not be sufficient in helping students adapt to the host country and feel less threatened, it would likely make the female students more aware of the experiences they may face and provide them with the necessary skills to deal with this specific treatment and to understand the historical and cultural basis from which it comes.

The specific contribution of this mixed-method study is an understanding of the connection between gender and culture shock. Study abroad students will experience

culture shock; understanding the cultural context of gender and the negative effects and positive outcomes of study abroad can help identify which benefits and outcomes each gender enjoys. While there are gender differences in all societies, it is not known how and to what extent those differences contribute to different cross-cultural experiences in the context of culture shock.

B-D. Culture Shock

International students' experiences during their semester abroad greatly depend on how students cope with their international experience. Their perception of their experiences during the semester abroad depend on the types of experiences and changes they encountered in the host country, their ability to adapt, and their physical and emotional state during the experience. The coping strategies and feelings international students experience when adapting to a foreign culture is commonly known as "culture shock" (Brislin, 1981).

1. Definition of Culture Shock

"The concept of culture shock has most often been used when analyzing the experiences of people who live for significant periods of time in another country" (Paige, 1990, p. 155). Kalvero Oberg, the originator of the term "culture shock", developed a theory that international students have conflicts with their host culture, lifestyle, and beliefs, generating positive and negative side effects that influence students' cross-cultural experiences (1960). Oberg found that students encounter difficulties due to the adjustment to a new society during a cross-cultural experience. According to Brislin,

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students studying abroad “may experience considerable stress when adjusting to the differences they encounter” (1990, p. 167), implying that the study abroad experience will improve students’ abilities to adjust and adapt to various situations.

Paige refers to culture shock as “cultural adjustment” and “cultural learning,” which can cause negative responses for the international students due to communication and interaction problems between the international students and their hosts (1990). Normal interactions can be distinguished from culture shock through the identification of very specific symptoms.

2. Universals of culture shock

There are a variety of background variables exclusive to each student that produces unique cross-cultural experiences, including the constructed idea of gender. Before beginning a cross-cultural experience, all international students bring a set of “attitudes, traits, and skills that have an influence on the success or failure of their stay in another country” (Brislin, 1981, p. 68). Some of these include social networks, beliefs, faith, and etcetera. In other words, students bring their own “cultural baggage” to a host culture. Attitudes refer to the “feelings, beliefs, and readiness for action with respect to various social objects” (Brislin, 1981, p. 68). Among those attitudes are prejudices, “attitudes directed at out-groups that are both negative and based on prevailing ‘wisdom’ within a culture rather than first-hand contact” (Brislin, 1981, p. 69). Bochner found that severe culture shock occurs more frequently when international students experience extremely different cultures or situations: “the distance between the cultures of the

participants will have an effect on the smoothness of the interaction” (2003, p.3). This refers not only to geographical distance, but also to the difference in beliefs, cultures, and other areas such as western versus eastern thought.

Diagram 2: Culture Shock Decisions

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

(Source: Elmer, 2002)

The basis of culture shock is that students encounter foreign situations that are sometimes difficult to adjust to. Outcomes will vary, depending on how the students react to the differences and the choices they make. The visual chart above demonstrates the typical reactions and choices of international students when encountering culture shock stages (Elmer, 2002). These choices lead to either positive or negative reactions and coping strategies while abroad, influencing the result of their overall study abroad experience.

3. *Outcomes of Culture Shock*

Reactions to culture shock can be negative and positive, and are manifested both emotionally and behaviorally (Gaw, 2000). Gaw found, however, that culture shock helps students develop both psychologically and socially, despite with the immediate negative consequences (2000). The goal of a successful international student exchange program would be that students obtain and develop those positive attributes and experience, with as few of the negative consequences as possible. This thesis is designed to measure differences and perceptions of an Ecuadorian study abroad experience by gender, identifying the positive and negative outcomes and benefits of the cross-cultural experience for males and females, respectively.

a. Symptoms

Culture shock frequently refers to the physical and emotional symptoms of studying abroad. Trifonovitch named the different stages as pre-arrival, orientation, honeymoon, hostility, humor, at-home, and reverse culture shock stages (cited by Brislin, 1981). Negative symptoms usually occur during the *hostility* stage of the culture shock cycle (Oberg, 1960).

i. Physical

Students mistakenly identify more with the role of a “student under stress” rather than a “person from a different culture” (Brislin, 1981, p. 169). Research shows that many international students complain of somatic symptoms, such as insomnia, headaches, and diarrhea, indicative of the physical reactions to stress. These complaints

are often misinterpreted as something other than severe culture shock (1981).

ii. Emotional

International students' emotions are also affected by culture shock. Students often report questioning their own abilities and intelligence due to the difficulty in adjusting to the host country (Brislin, 1981; Gaw, 2000). International students develop a sense of hopelessness when living in the host country; despite their desire to relate and socialize with fellow country people, they are embarrassed by their inadequacy (Brislin, 1981; Gaw, 2000). "The constant coping with unfamiliar situations causes almost all sojourners to question their competence. The resulting self-doubt is the primary symptom of culture shock" (Brislin, 1981, p. 155). This insecure and inferior mentality is visible when observing children of the host-country behaving in a more appropriate and effective manner (Brislin, 1981), which in turn causes international students to feel mediocre in their abilities. The results of this insecurity can cause negative reactions to study abroad experiences, including excessive preoccupations with one's surrounding, irritability, over-interpretation of severe criticism, negative feelings toward hosts, and a resistance to learn the host-country's language and proper behavior (Brislin, 1981). Fatigue, discomfort, and frustration are heightened when international students search for new behaviors and ways to face foreign situations. These effects of culture shock lead to a strong sense of loneliness, and a "decline in inventiveness, spontaneity, and flexibility" (Brislin, 1981, p. 157).

b. Positive outcomes

Adjusting to a new culture can also be a learning experience that leads individuals to develop positive attributes and personal growth (Gaw, 2000). Some positive changes resulting from moving into a new culture can include new “attitudes, behaviors, global awareness, worldviews, values, cultural understanding and empathy, and ethno-relativism” (Gaw, 2000, p. 85). Brislin acknowledged the positive effect of participating in a cross-cultural experience as the reaffirmation of one’s native culture (1981). However, it should be noted that positive changes can be enhanced when there is a clear understanding of expectations in the host culture, especially as they relate to gender roles. As paraphrased below, Adler proposed seven forms of transforming culture shock into individual improvement (1975, cited in Brislin, 1981).

1. One can develop new responses and ideas as a result of international experiences, due to all the new experiences that challenge international students.
2. Culture shock is an experience that each individual will experience in a unique way. This individualism can become motivation for making a person feel special.
3. Through daily analysis, students can challenge themselves, enhance their self-knowledge, and define their values and beliefs.
4. Adler suggests people learn better in stressful and anxious situations. Culture shock provides numerous situations that cause anxiety, in which students will be more motivated to learn and acquire new skills and knowledge.
5. International students are able to witness from and learn about a new culture, traditions, and relationships; many times people in their home-countries do not recognize how they act and why. An outsider is able to provide feedback and experience how others live.
6. When living in a foreign country, students are able to try new behaviors and attitudes on a trial and error basis. This allows them to experience different types of success one normally is not allowed to experience.
7. Through ethnocentricity and comparison of the host-country with home-country, students are able to compare and contrast, and in essence learn more about his or her own culture and country.

Reaffirming the last point by Adler (1975), Brislin recognizes the positive effect of participating in a cross-cultural experience as the reaffirmation of one's native culture (1981) in that students examine and challenge their beliefs and cultures, leading to a stronger knowledge of and appreciation for that culture.

4. Pre-orientation / cross-cultural preparation

Some students are more prepared for their cross-cultural experiences than others. It is the responsibility of education abroad advisers and administrators to prepare their students to go abroad, by providing practical information, helping students become aware of global concerns, explaining the culture shock cycle and advising students on how to cope with the cultural differences, motivating students to learn about the culture they will be living in, and defining students' goals for their semester abroad (Thebodo, et al., 2005). A cross-cultural orientation refers to those "intercultural programs that are designed to prepare specific groups of learners to reside in specific target cultures for specific purposes" (Bhawuk, 1990, p. 326). An orientation program for those facing an international, cross-cultural experience can be evaluated by the interaction of the individual while abroad. Such a program is based on the following four categories (Bhawuk, 1990, p. 327):

1. International students' positive reflection of their abroad experience due to their ability to adapt to the new culture effectively.
2. International students' positive feelings of their interaction.
3. The students' goals were accomplished (for example learning a foreign language or understanding a new culture).
4. The absence of visible or invisible stresses upon return.

These categories point to ways for international programs to evaluate and enhance students' abroad experiences. In the preparation and orientation process of studying abroad, it is important to keep these in mind to help students prepare for what they might experience.

In the case of the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* (USFQ) international students in Ecuador, this means that the U.S. study abroad students should be prepared to adapt, reflect, and transmit positive feelings about their cross-cultural experience. Their goals should be accomplished and they should return to the United States stress-free. Through feedback and support groups, students can recognize and categorize their positive and negative experiences, as well as the changes in their own beliefs, strengths and weaknesses (Brislin, 1981). Students can use their background traits and skills to compare their own cultural experiences and context with Ecuador, and analyze their own attitudes and behaviors (Brislin, 1981). Students' initial attitudes and behaviors may cause conflicts and obstacles while the international students are abroad. For example, their interpersonal relationships and communication skills may be misinterpreted by the host culture. However, with an open-mind, students will be able receive feedback and analyze their own behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes in an authentic manner.

5. Measuring the Success of International Experiences and Culture Shock

One way to measure a successful cross-cultural experience is to qualify it as the “psychological feelings of well-being, the establishment of cordial relations with host-country people, and the completion of one’s task” (Brislin, 1981, p. 70). Brislin identified variables that lead to success, including tolerance of different points of view; positive self-confidence; gregariousness and the ability to be a leader as well as a follower; an intelligence that searches for the truth beyond stereotypes; task orientation; and one’s ability to receive and give feedback of the cross-cultural experience (1981). There are many examples of how study abroad experiences can increase personal growth for international students such as these listed. Some instances include developing broader global perceptions when conversing with people from Ecuador. For example, the investigator notes that many Ecuadorians have resentful views of the United States and U.S. citizens because of the

War in Iraq. Similar encounters are referred to by various authors, recognizing that international students will be confronted by natives in their host countries and re-evaluate their feelings of being from the United States (Hall, 1981; Spaeth, 1997; Tonkin, 2007). International students will witness these types of confrontations and diverse opinions. As a result, not only will students learn how other people think differently, but hopefully they will understand why other nationalities feel and perceive things differently and therefore come to appreciate these different perspectives. Students will also find themselves in uncomfortable social situations. Another example of situations that make students personally grow when abroad is when international students find it difficult to converse in Spanish or initiate conversations. In these cases, students may become more gregarious and self-confident due to their study abroad experience. To ensure this, international exchange programs should consider preparing students for the upcoming challenges, help them develop skills that will facilitate their abilities to adapt to a foreign country, and present a constant support system for them while abroad.

It is also important to remember that cross-cultural experiences can be more successful due to certain skills that students possess, like the abilities to use one's knowledge and skills, language proficiency, communication and nonverbal behaviors, to take advantage of opportunities and experiences, the ability to use traits and a knowledge of everyday behavior in the foreign culture, and the ability to complete one's task that involves demonstrating sensitivity of others (Brislin, 1981). That is, the "cultural baggage" or past cultural experiences a student arrives with can often be used in his favor to find success in the host country.

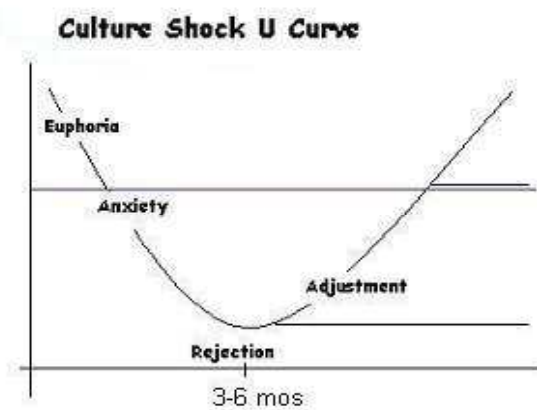
6. Culture shock cycle

A number of W-Curve hypotheses have been proposed to demonstrate international students' experiences in foreign countries by showing the different stages of coping with cultural differences. Gullahorn and Gullahorn developed a pattern in students' satisfaction during short-term cross-cultural experiences (1962). These authors expanded Oberg's theory of culture shock to include reverse-culture shock (1960), which is the feeling of being foreign in one's host country upon return. This is basically a replica of the students' time abroad, but it occurs when they return home.

Although this pattern has not proven by all cross-cultural experts, it is well known and is used for analyzing experiences abroad (Black et al, 1990).

Graphics such as the W-, U-, J- curve hypotheses were developed to better understand the emotions international students face. The W-curve previous mentioned in the literature was designed because there are ups and downs that correspond to how international students feel. Whether the shape or letter of the graph, they demonstrate the first two stages of culture shock similarly.

Diagram 3: Culture Shock U Curve



For example, a thorough study conducted by Black and Mendenhall (1991) concluded that the U- and J- curve cycles are similar to the W-curve pattern, but have measured different emotional and behavioral high and low points during the cross-cultural experience. However, these authors also found that the majority of the U-curve, J-curve or W-curve pattern studies have been based on empirical evidence. Black et al. found that there is a lack of statistical evidence, replication, and analysis of individual variables to substantiate any of these theories, which results in various tentative culture shock pattern concepts (1990). Independent of the specific labels for each stage, the culture shock cycle is generally accepted by those working with international students. International program employees have found that awareness of this process is often helpful to

students with coping (NAFSA, 2006). This graph is used by many educators to ask students about their cross-cultural experiences; it can be useful in that it helps students recognize what they experienced and understand the emotional ups and downs of their experiences. Research shows that upon returning to their home country many international students can identify with the patterns of the culture shock cycle. Through the recognition of their experience, they are able to begin long-term adjustments (Brislin, 1981), which help them maximize their learning experience and a positive balance of events.

It should be noted, however, that often these studies do not coincide due to the diverse student populations and independent background variables that enter into the cross-cultural experiences. The “cultural baggage” of the students is challenging to measure and can lead to the stages occurring at different times and in different ways (Brislin, 1981). Nevertheless, while individual experiences may vary somewhat, overall patterns exist. To date, culture shock cycle studies have not emphasized gender as a vital differentiating factor in the benefits and culture shock symptoms of international students, though the importance of this variable is now clear.

a. Environment

International students are faced with different types of environments that can contribute to culture shock and be influenced by gender differences. Janak Pandey recognized the three main domains of the environment as natural, built, and social (1990). Natural environments are due to nature, including geographical features, landscapes, wilderness, disasters, pollutions, energy sources, and flora and fauna. Depending on the type of society, interactions with the environment vary. The built environment refers to what society creates, such as the type of houses, hospitals, schools, and communities. This environment is typically influenced by the natural environment. Lastly, the social environment influences the perspectives of those in cross-cultural experiences most

dramatically. This environment encompasses personal space, sense of privacy, and how people interact with each other. These environments, according to Pandey (1990), are highly social and cultural. These environmental characteristics can affect international students' experiences in foreign countries. Experiences will vary and can lead to gender differences based on the individual and the environment they encounter abroad. In the Ecuador context, this is noted in a variety of ways.

Environments can provide students with a feeling of comfort or discomfort in their surroundings. Without four seasons in Quito, Ecuador has a fairly moderate temperature year-round. This leads to a lack of air conditioning and heaters inside the home. The investigator notes that despite the fair weather, the temperature inside homes tends to be cooler and more uncomfortable than in the United States. However, one professor disagrees, stating "I prefer the cooler and more widely ranging temperatures in the houses here compared to the 'too warm' weather in Southern California and the homogenous controlled temps in the home there".

Environment can also provide a sense of, or lack thereof, safety. Natural environments can provide a sense of comfort or discomfort for international students. There are reoccurring warnings of natural disasters, causing students to feel insecure in their surroundings. This includes, among others, the great number of active volcanoes in Ecuador

The political and social environments are also different between Ecuador and the

United States. In the United States, students are not necessarily concerned with political instability. Presidents typically remain in the presidency for their full terms, who implement policies that students may or may not agree with, and then run for a second term or U.S. citizens vote in another president. In Ecuador, threats of political instability can cause distress for international students. The replacing, sometimes violent, of Ecuadorian political leaders is consistently present in the newspaper headlines. Students may experience protests and tear gas in the historical center of Quito, as the investigator has.

These conceptions and views of the environment, specifically the political and social environment, are perceptions of the surroundings influenced by the media. Bad news attracts attention and sales of the media, and therefore a main focus. Both in the United States and Ecuador media instills the perception that these societies are violent, dangerous, and instable. Students will see in Ecuador that the political instability, while a reality, is not as much of a threat as the media may express.

i. Space

Part of the environment includes personal space and boundaries, which are relative to each culture and society. Personal space can also cause great distress for U.S. students, especially for women. U.S. women are taught to be cautious of their surroundings and the space they should keep between themselves and unknown men; their paradigm of social appropriateness and safety may be affected due to the smaller

Latin American space parameters. The way Europeans and Americans act in public is different than those in other parts in the world (Hall, 1969). The increased noise level and amount of space they maintain when interacting in social settings can be misinterpreted by “outsiders”. These distinct public manners and relations create uncomfortable experiences for international students. Similar to humans, “animals are surrounded by a series of bubbles or irregularly shaped balloons that serve to maintain proper spacing between individuals” (Hall, 1969, p. 128) which is a personal and social distance that is applied to humans and can be “easily observed during interactions between members of the same species” (Hall, 1969, p. 10).

There are four sub-categories to space: intimate, personal, social, and public. Depending on feelings and situations, the amount of distance when standing next to, talking, and interacting with others varies. These categories of space differ between cultures (Hall, 1969, p. 128):

In other parts of the world, relationships tend to fall into other patterns [other than intimate, personal, social, and public as in the USA], such as the family / non-family pattern common in Spain and Portugal and their former colonies or the caste and outcast system of India. Both the Arabs and the Jews also make sharp distinctions between whom they are related to and those to whom they are not.

Due to the differences of spatial limits defined in cultures, the way people interact can create conflicts and misunderstandings. For example, in Ecuador, American females may interpret the smaller space distances between people as threatening or as advances, when the closeness could be due purely to cultural norms. Such an example of social environment norms is one of many that can influence the study abroad experience differently for men and women. The investigator believes that men and women may feel

unsafe or threatened because someone stands too close to them, but for different reasons. U.S. women may express concern and discomfort because a man is standing too close, threatening their sense of safety, in regards to sexual violations. Men, on the other hand, may feel discomfort as well, but in regards to a physical safety and being robbed. The space limit is often misinterpreted as well, such as when students use public transportation or wait in a line at a bank. In Ecuador, public buses exceed their maximum capacity daily. The majority of international students studying at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* (USFQ) take a bus for thirty to sixty minutes to arrive to school. On the bus, students are bumped, touched, pushed, and grabbed. These actions are not usually threatening but can be perceived as threats and make students feel sexually, physically, and emotionally vulnerable. Another example is waiting in line, such as at the bank. The space between people waiting in a line in Ecuador is much less than the amount U.S. citizens leave in order to feel comfortable. If students continue to stand at a distance behind others, Ecuadorians will cut in front of them, yet if they stand closer, they may feel uncomfortable. This can be an extremely delicate situation at a bank or other institution, when students are managing their money while having to stand close to others around them, hence, making them feel vulnerable. These situations described in the context of Ecuador are not dangerous for international students. However, the change in environmental space that makes students feel safe can be psychologically threatening for students, causing students anxiety and fear of these types of encounters.

Sometimes social distances can be psychological, “one at which the animal [or human] apparently begins to feel anxious when he exceeds its limits” (Hall, 1969, p. 14).

This psychological space can become threatened when international students need their space and “alone time”, or even when students need an outlet of what is familiar. Many times international students choose to be together because it is easier. When students are emotionally strained as a result of speaking Spanish, and by coping with social and cultural differences in Ecuador, there comes a point when they have had enough and need to vent. In cases such as these, students feel that the Ecuadorian culture and society may have exceeded their acceptable influence upon their lives.

ii. Concept of time

The concept of time is culturally distinct. The way Americans perceive time versus the way other cultures perceive it can cause cultural conflicts and confusion. For example, Latin America is known for its relaxed idea of time, while Americans see time as a sign of respect, and are more punctual. When international students live in Latin American, the phrase “our time or your time?” is frequently used when making plans (Hall, 1981). Many North Americans who travel to or live in Ecuador are affected by Ecuadorian, or Latino, time. Arriving late in the United States is not taken lightly, nor is it acceptable. If someone is late and another person is waiting, it affects everything else scheduled for the day. The difference in the concept of time can cause international students to become frustrated. Ecuadorians will be late to meetings, meals, and dates, sometimes without a phone call in advance, which causes many international students to wait, and feel stood up. If this happens often, North Americans may become so frustrated with the social culture that they perhaps would not seek out more Ecuadorian relationships in fear and frustration that this would happen again.

There is a clear link in how the environment can cause distress for international students. While international programs offices cannot change the environment of the study abroad site, they can help students prepare for these types of experiences. With this knowledge, advisors can provide suggestions of how international students can cope with the time and space differences. They can also move into action emergency plans to ensure students' safety in the event of political instability and natural disasters. These tasks that may not require too much time for study abroad offices can make a tremendous difference for international students' perceived safety and preparation for their experience.

7. Study Abroad Goals

Each international student enters a study abroad program with a unique vision and goals as to what the experience will mean to them. Some of the personal goals students have related to studying abroad include developing personally, improving a second language and becoming fluent (Freed, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Mendelson, 2004), obtaining a global view and perspective, as well as gaining knowledge of the host culture and people (Chieffo, et al, 2004; Hadis, 2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Lewis, et al, 2005; Mestenhauser, 1976). Furthermore, students and professors' study abroad goals include:

...developing an appreciation of diversity; encouragement of international friendships; understanding of other cultures, and hence of one's own; enrichment of educational opportunities; access to resources or methods of research not available on campus; and educational and professional opportunities. (Hopkins, 1999, p.37)

While it was once typical for only foreign language majors to study abroad as a requirement to learn about the culture and language of their host country, today study abroad has expanded to become a goal and requirement for a variety of majors in many liberal arts universities. Programs lasting a few weeks to a semester abroad or longer have now been established to meet the needs of diverse students (Hopkins, 1999). International development and/or relations, business, economics, history, and in general social sciences are just some of the majors and professions where study abroad is an asset.

C. Literature Summary

The literature in this field focuses on four key concepts: 1) the U.S. culture, 2) gender differences, 3) the Latin American cultural context and 4) culture shock. These components demonstrate some of the obstacles, challenges, joys, and excitement that international students can experience when they are studying abroad. Each of these areas is discussed in detail below.

1. U.S. Culture and International Students

U.S. college students have their own perceptions, values, and beliefs based on their upbringings in a development country. Gender roles can be confusing in the United States, bringing men and women distinct perceptions of their role in society are. Men and women are expected to behave and act both as the masculine “man” and feminine “woman” and as equals. This contradiction is confusing, for the investigator perceives that the U.S. society expects men to still be the provider, become a support system and safety net for women, and maintain a more traditional role in dating such as asking the

woman out; women are expected to look feminine, have a job, help out financially, and be able to cook and raise family. Both men and women are also expected to have jobs, be sensitive, and be partners to the other gender. Distinct gender roles are becoming less marked in the United States, shifting toward a more equalistic society. Mind-sets such as independence, equality, and strong feminist views are prevalent in the United States and become part of U.S. students' identities.

Students are not overly concerned with political instability, violent riots, and overturning of their president in the United States. Policies made by the government may not be agreed with, but there is an underlying sense of security in the United States, according to the investigator.

The U.S. cultural context establishes expectations for young adults as well. Young adults, especially from the middle and upper class, are expected to attend high school and college, participate in extra curricular activities, be successful, receive at least an undergraduate degree, and work either during their years as a student or directly after they graduate. Students are independent, live on their loan, and many times have to take out loans or find their own financial means to study. At 18 years old, the U.S. culture expects students to move away from their parents' homes and students are encouraged to be independent adults.

Due to socialized concepts, foreign students arrive in a host country with specific ideas as to how to solve conflicts, and what worldly conflicts exist due to their own

contexts and study abroad provides and aims to mold students into open-minded cosmopolitans that can see conflicts from distinct points of view. In this sense, study abroad cultivates empathy, but it can also be a source of stress when one's past reality is challenged. This study is designed in part to measure how international students cope with and adapt to the Ecuadorian society. Based on the type of culture shock experience international students have, the outcome of the experience will be directly influenced. Furthermore, this study includes an element to compare and analyze men and women to find patterns in culture shock. The results provide suggestions of how international program offices can orient and support their students more efficiently during the culture shock cycle.

2. Gender differences

Only 25% of the cases studies reviewed which considered gender differences refer to both men and women (Anderson, 2003; Routledge, 1999; Twombly, 1996; Von Bergen et al., 1996). In other words, 75% of case studies concerning how male and female students differ only rely on women's problems and concerns, and fail to compare how men act and feel in the same situations.

There are two conclusions that can be drawn from this gender biased literature. First, one can conclude that gender studies are necessary to determine if men or women need extra support when abroad. In general, the literature suggests that women need more support than men. On the other hand, this focus on women could suggest that men need more help and support than what has been suggested by the literature. All of the articles reviewed for gender differences in international study abroad experiences

mentioned women as encountering more difficulties than men in some aspect of their experience.

3. *The Latin American Cultural Context*

Furthermore, the literature recognizes the great difference of cultures and the distinctiveness of Latin American society. Eighty-eight percent of the authors referring to the historical and religious influences related to the gender gap refer to both men and women and their relationship to one another (Butler, 1998; Collier, 2005; Crain, 1996; Fraser et al., 2004; Franco, 1996; Hallum, 2003; Kellogg, 2000; Melhuus, 1996; Nencel, 1996; Wilson, 1998). However, considering case studies related to international students and gender, women are the focus of case studies more than men in an overwhelming number of cases. Anderson (2003) and Twombly (1996) refer to the study abroad experience for women, and don't compare them with the experiences male international students' experience.

One reason for the strong focus on women is due to the number of cultural differences there are between Latin American countries and the United States. For example, Latin American countries, such as Ecuador, are *machista* societies (Nencel, 1996). The difference in gender roles and how women are treated in Ecuador will influence the study abroad experience for women more than men. There are other cultural influences that affect both male and female international students' experiences abroad.

In Latin America, differences between the United States and Ecuador in evident in various areas: environment, social issues, space and time, relationships, and language differences. Hall (1969, 1981) and Pandey (1990) refer in detail to the environmental differences that effect international students' experiences abroad, specifically space and time. While many students study abroad in order to improve a second language, language barriers can become an obstacle for international students (Brislin, 1981; Dahl, n/a; Dwyer et al., 1996; Freed, 1998; Gaw, 2000; Hopkins, 1999; Mendelson, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998) Further information concerning communication and relationship differences international students will encounter is incorporated into the conceptual framework (Dwyer et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2005). These differences can lead to overall global perspective differences and difficulties when adapting to different cultures, as explained in the literature and in the conceptual framework (Berry, 1990; Brislin, 1990; Drew et al., 1996; Dwyer, 2004; Hadis, 1998; Hall, 1981; Lewis et al., 2005; Mestenhauser, 1976; NAFSA, 2006; Spaeth, 1997; Tonkin et al., 2004).

3. Culture Shock

Of the elements impacting study abroad experiences, there is a strong concentration in the literature on culture shock, which influences the outcomes of study abroad experiences for students. Thirteen authors refer to culture shock and the need for international program administrators to help students through the culture shock stages. Although only three authors defined culture shock, the overall concept is the same: international students will experience emotional highs and lows due to the differences in culture that they experience while abroad (Brislin, 1990; Oberg, 1960; Paige, 1990).

Numerous authors either refer to or have created different culture shock stages, curves or cycles in order to explain the emotions international students feel while abroad (Black et al., 1990; Brislin, 1981; Davis, 2003; Elmer, 2002; Fristick, 2005; Gullahorn, et al., McComb et al., 1974; 1962; Oberg, 1960). Bochner (2003), Brislin (1981), and Elmer (2002) refer to the independent variables that influence how students react to culture shock, influencing the outcome of the study abroad experience. Other authors explain how international students' culture shock experience effect students' study abroad outcomes or perceptions (Brislin, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Oberg, 1960; Adler, 1975). Students' reactions to their international experience and the support that they receive will influence their impression of the experience. The findings of this literature support the need for appropriate and successful pre-departure, entry, and re-entry programs for international students (Bhawuk, 1990; Brislin 1981; Theobodo, et al., 2005).

III. Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study is based on the literature reviewed focusing on gender studies, Latin American comparative studies, culture shock concepts, surveys of students, interviews with administrators of a study abroad program in Ecuador, and the author's experience as a study abroad student. The framework proposed guides the study that will provide additional insight into male and female international students' experiences when studying in Ecuador. The conceptual framework draws on the literature and expands the ideas previously stated by other authors to develop a gender study based on international students in Ecuador. This conceptual framework is based on the disciplines mentioned above and is a theory of process, coming from a sequence of

experiences which foreign students experience before and during their international experience. The heart of this framework is that “identities are historically produced, multiple and shifting” (Crain, 1996, p. 152). International students will benefit from, be disappointed with, and change during their study abroad experience in Ecuador.

A. Personal Development

1. Culture Shock: Adaptability and Conflict Resolution

The ability to move successfully into a new and diverse society is directly related to culture shock as students who are unable to manage conflicts or stress are more likely to experience more severe culture shock (Brislin, 1981). Despite the importance of students’ abilities to manage conflicts and challenges, one study found the study abroad experience had little influence on students’ problem-solving skills (Dwyer, et al., 2003). Some researchers in the field are convinced that foreign students can see how their own perceptions of a society and culture shape their prejudices, as well as how others perceive them “through the looking-glass”, to use Carroll’s analogy (1871). Furthermore, Mestenhauser identified study abroad students’ ability to comprehend and create solutions for national and international problems as strength of the experience, leading to personal growth (1976).

2. Self-Knowledge and Self-Concept

Studies have found that study abroad experiences have a positive outcome of students’ self-perceptions and personal development. Cross-cultural experiences allow students to explore, question, and develop their personality in a different sense (Dwyer et

al, 2004; Hadis, 1998). The International Education of Students (IES) organization surveyed study abroad participants from 1950-1999 and around the world about the benefits they realized from their cross-cultural experience (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Dwyer et al. found that the majority of the 3400 study participants increased their self-esteem and maturity as a result of their study abroad experiences. Cross-cultural experiences help students redefine their identity and values, experience the importance of adapting to new and difficult situations, and learn about new cultures and traditions (Brislin, 1980; Gaw, 2000). It is important for administrators to understand how students' experiences are shaped in order to orient them in the best possible way.

It is crucial for study abroad administrators to understand students' self-esteem and how it can be affected during a cultural exchange experience. Students' development and maturity will affect individuals' growth during and after their experience abroad. The students' self-knowledge and self-esteem can be greatly affected by the host country's society. For example, in Ecuador, the *piropos*, sexual innuendos and social environment will most likely affect men and women's self-esteem differently, and administrators should call attention to this in order to guide students through this confrontation of cultural norms. It should be acknowledged that the extra attention from *piropos*, for example, can be taken positively or negatively by international students, and continue to affect them upon their return to the United States.

There is a great focus on self-growth during study abroad experiences in the literature (Brislin, 1981, 1990; Dwyer, et al., 2004; Freed, 1998; Gullahorn, et al., 1962;

Hadis, 1998; Hopkin, n/d; Kitsantas, 2004; Lewis, et al, 2005; Levine, 2004; Mendelson, 2004; Mestenhauser, 1976; Paige, 1990; Wilkinson, 1998). Authors refer to self-growth in culture shock, as well as professional and academic development. As students continue to learn more about themselves, it tends to affect their academic and professional development as well. Students can begin understanding who they are, and therefore what their priorities are, what they want to do with their lives, and how much influence they have over their success in academics and their future professions.

3. Professional and Academic Development

a. Course Selection

A survey of international students in Costa Rica concluded there were a number of benefits for U.S. college students who participate in short-term cross-cultural experiences (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). Some of the results included students who enrolled in courses outside their major. Students also recognized the importance of interdisciplinary studies, and began to take classes outside their study of major (Lewis et al., 2005). Academic and professional developments have also been noted as benefits of study abroad programs. After the cross-cultural experience, students enrolled in courses outside their major and over half of the students continued to travel or study abroad. Additionally, these same students recognized the importance of interdisciplinary studies and showed a change of the students' perceptions of the costs and benefits of globalization (Lewis, et al., 2005).

b. Academic Benefits of Study Abroad Programs

A majority of these students indicated that by being in an experimental setting it helped them to prepare for their careers, real-life situations, and future challenges (Dwyer et al, 2004; Hadis, 1998). As one participant of Hopkin's (1999) case study reported:

I got more out of my study-abroad experience than any other four months in my life because, through challenges I had never faced before, I was learning a lot about myself, culture, interests [...including] a more healthy perspective on what is important in life.

Authors' findings coincide with each other in their findings with the overall positive affect study abroad experiences have on international students' academic development. However, there is a contradiction in authors' findings of how study abroad experiences affect grade point averages (GPAs) were also influenced by study abroad experiences. Hadis' study showed that some college students' GPAs improved after studying abroad, which was interpreted as indicating a more focused college student (1998). Another study found that students' academic commitment and career development were positively influenced by their cross-cultural experience. An average of 80% of Dwyer et al.'s participants reported their study abroad experience enhanced their interest in academic study and influenced subsequent educational experience (2004). Furthermore, participants' acquired skills abroad and ignited interests directed them in specific career directions (Dwyer et al., 2004). However, Farrell et al. found that academic and career development were the least of the benefits study abroad students, with little findings that proved whether or not students' academic performances had improved or declined due to the experience (Farrell, et al., 2003). These studies were administered in different parts of the world with various methodologies and participants, which could cause the difference in results. For these reasons, an academic and professional development category was included in this study.

c. Summary of the Benefits of Study Abroad Experiences

Due to these findings and results of previous studies, it can be summarized that the outcomes of study-abroad varies for students but can be beneficial in many aspects. It should also be noted that of all the major findings of these studies, none highlighted particular differences based on gender. It is important for international programs to be aware of the benefits and help structure pre-departure information, orientation and post-study abroad program to encourage students to grow and take advantage of these new found desires.

4. Language Acquisition

a. Primary Goal of Study Abroad

Many international students study abroad in order to learn a second language (Freed, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Mendelson, 2004); this implies that they arrive to the host country without the proper language skills to communicate effectively. Eighty percent of participants in one study reported their cross-cultural experience was reinforced and they were committed to language acquisition as a result (Dwyer et al., 2004). “The fastest way to become fluent in a language is to live in the host country with a family that has limited English skills and in an area that attracts few English-speaking tourists” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 121). International students who choose this type of cross-cultural experience face an extra obstacle when adapting to a culture. The “lack of language skills can be debilitating” for an international student (Brislin, 1981, p. 64), especially when acknowledging that there may also be a gender difference in language learning skills.

b. Women and Social-Communication Skills

While women tend to speak more, there is normally no difference in the level of fluency achieved in a second language based on gender. However in one study language learning was found increasingly difficult for female study abroad participants; male students succeeded more in listening and speaking skills (Anderson, 2003). This has implications for study abroad programs as expectations and reality match impact satisfaction with the experience.

Students' perceptions of academic satisfaction and language acquisition are not only based on grades, but also on the social aspect of their academic careers. If students are able to relate to and communicate with other international students and/or Ecuadorians, their experiences and perceptions of their interpersonal skills will be affected. It is difficult for American students to make friends with Ecuadorians if they don't speak Spanish. This could have a direct connection to whom exchange students make friends with, and what their social life is like while abroad.

B. Interpersonal Skills: Communication and Relationships

1. Diversity and Social Groups

Interpersonal skills are developed from cross-cultural experiences and perceived as priceless for recent college graduates. Since cross-cultural experiences provide the interaction of new and distinct beliefs, living philosophies, and values, they can expand students' understandings of how to cooperate and work with diversity. Dwyer et al.

found that students sought out a greater diversity of friends after their study abroad experience (2004). Furthermore, the study abroad experience was reported to influence the interactions students' had with people from different cultures (Dwyer et al., 2004). Another study also found there was an increase of students' desires to interact with strangers, seek out a more diverse group of friends, and level of comfort about people different from the student (Farrell et al., 2003). Over half of the student participants continued to travel or study abroad, in order to make international connections and gain a broader global perspective (Lewis et al., 2005).

2. Male and Female Communication Changes Over Time

It is imperative for international education offices to know and understand if there are social differences between their male and female students. This study measures how international students perceive their communication and social skills when they first arrive to Ecuador and 12 weeks later. Patterns found can help offices prepare, orient, and support international students for and during their study abroad experience. Students able to develop interpersonal skills and adapt to Ecuadorian culture are going to be able to adapt more easily in the world of globalization.

C. Global Perceptions

1. Cosmopolitanism vs. Ethnocentricity

The National survey on preparation for a global society found that 90% of the American public gave importance to providing future generations with the skills and knowledge to create a more interconnected world (NAFSA, 2006). Professionals reported

that they expect college study abroad students to enhance their “understanding of other peoples and their cultures, a growth of cosmopolitanism and lessening of parochialism, and more focus on the meaning of one’s college education” (Hadis, 1998, p.1). Drew et al. found that “those who have studied abroad are more likely to conceptualize other national groups in terms of what we have called ‘personal’ references” (1996, p. 452). In other words, the students with cross-cultural experiences were able to categorize and understand national groups through individuals and individual experiences, rather than only through generalizations of food and culture (Drew, et. al., 1996). Furthermore, international students reported understanding their own cultural values and biases more due to studying abroad (Dwyer, 2004).

a. The Growing Ability to Compare and Contrast Culture Individuals and Societies

According to Berry, there are two aspects of cross-cultural psychology that influences a person’s perception of an international experience (1990). First, one makes a comparative examination of the two cultures’ similarities and differences. The second aspect is the psychological adaptation made by the individual once in the new society. The learning objective to adjust attitudes and to confront opinions can be truly educational as a result (Mestenhauser, 1976). In the context of this study, this aspect of the study abroad experience is key to a self-understanding about the differences of gender roles in differing societies.

Ethnocentricity is a key concept that university students in cross-cultural experience will be confronted by. To be ethnocentric, people use “standards from their

own cultural background to judge and to make conclusions about people from other cultures” (Brislin, 1990, p. 18), implying that a weakness of study abroad is ethnocentricity. Ethnocentricity can create a one-sided global view and students can slide into a pattern of spending time with their international classmates. “One of the best ways to observe culture and cultural differences is for people from one country to live in a culture other than the one in which they were socialized” (Brislin, 1990, p. 10). The literature lacks a focus on gender and whether or not men or women have greater difficulty with their global perceptions and being ethnocentric or cosmopolitan. This thesis measures how men and women perceive their global views and if there is a gender gap in these perspectives. Study abroad offices can provide extra focus on global perspective if patterns show that men or women report lower perspectives, or for the entire population depending on who the international experience affects students.

2. U.S. Identity

One confrontation that students in international study abroad programs will face is the American identity and how people feel toward North Americans. Ironically, many foreigners look down upon the USA and Americans despite the perceived and desired American Dream, the multicultural 1990’s U.S.A. and a model for democracy, capitalism, entrepreneurship, and a liberal society (Spaeth, 1997), possibly due to the superiority stance or enforcement of the U.S. military that the government imposes on others. For example, many foreigners are upset with the United States and North Americans due to the War in Iraq. In Ecuador, there are constant discussions of how abusive the United States is toward other societies, and the insinuation that Americans act

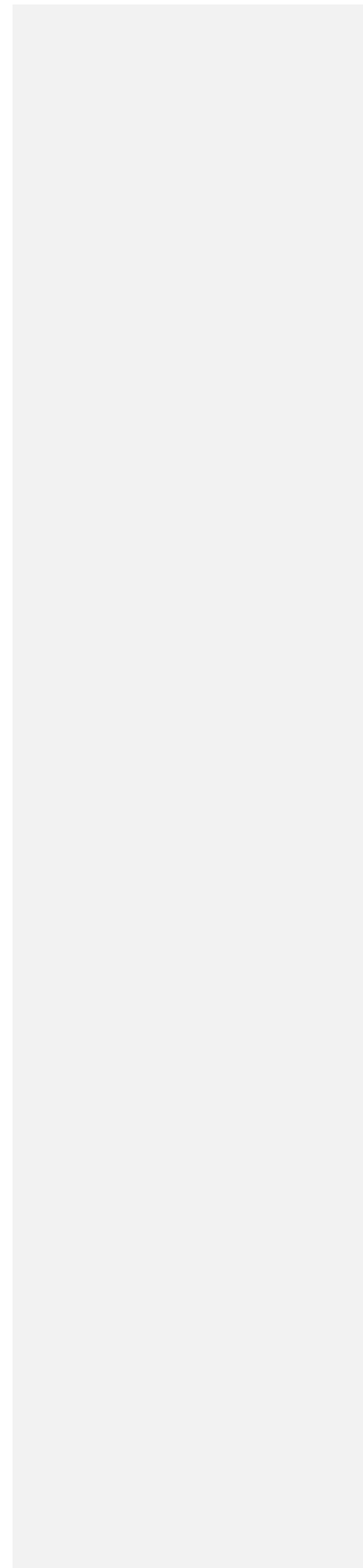
as they want in order to achieve their goals, without thinking of the greater affect on others. These cultural values and philosophies are unexpectedly challenged once international students step on foreign soil, “We [USA] are frequently thought of as a country lacking a sense of history, an empty continent waiting to be inscribed with an individual’s or group’s dreams and hopes, and a superficial society” (Spaeth, 1997). This has been exacerbated recently with troubles in the Middle East, the U.S. approach to a War on Terrorism, which seeks out enemies to some extent, and a political leadership which believes that “you’re either with us or against us” (Bush, 2001, p. N/D).

b. Unintended Messages Sent Due to Misunderstandings

Hall, a pioneer in the field of anthropology and U.S. identity, proposed that ignorance, the lack of understanding of what other countries expect of behavior, and the inability to communicate both verbally and physically effectively transmit a negative message to those of other cultures (1981). The stereotype of the “loud, impatient American tourist” affects the cross-cultural experience study abroad students have in foreign countries (Hall, 1981; Spaeth, 1997). A further study of international students found that national identity was a major issue for students while abroad. Even though students reported being treated well and fairly, they reported that their cross-cultural experience made them “question their national pride and identity and to confront their ethnocentrism” (Tonkin et al, 2004, p. 141).

D. Conceptual Framework Summary

Based on the cultural context and students' background variables and outcomes found in the literature and pilot study, this study has been created to qualify how intercultural experiences differ by gender. This investigation will determine which benefits, difficulties, and patterns occur by gender, and then make recommendations for international programs as to how they can better support and prepare their students for and during their study abroad experience. The following diagram is the theoretical contribution to the literature, and the basis of the study (see Diagram 4: The Impact of Gender on the Experience of U.S. Study Abroad Students).



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TIFF (LZW) decompressor
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IV. Design and Methodology

Based on the literature and conceptual framework, the study was designed to measure the differences between men and women and the effects studying abroad have

on their perspectives of individual, interpersonal and global views. The methodology is based on the work of McMillan et al. (2001), Fitzpatrick (et. al., 2004) and Tokuhama-Espinosa (2006), calling for both quantitative and qualitative methods and instruments.

A. Site Selection, Description, and Access

This quantitative-qualitative study focuses on how gender affects study abroad students from the United States. The research identified in the literature review mentions gender, culture shock, study abroad, and Ecuador, but there has not yet been a study conducted in Ecuador combining student background variables and study abroad outcomes through the analysis of gender. This study was conducted at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito*, in Ecuador (USFQ). USFQ is a small, private, liberal arts university located in the suburbs of the country's capital, and is one of the most prestigious universities in Ecuador established in 1988 and is well known throughout the United States. USFQ markets itself on the amount of professors holding terminal degrees from countries abroad, and seventy percent of those employed are Ecuadorians with terminal degrees in their field (Gangotena, 2005). USFQ has exchange programs with universities in 16 other countries (Menking, 2006). USFQ was selected for this study because of its similarity to the U.S. university system, the large number of international students who attend, and the researcher's connection to the university as a student and employee.

In the fall of 2006, 251 international students enrolled at USFQ (Guerrero, 2007). Students from countries in Asia, Europe, and North America participated in the exchange

program. USFQ offers a variety of services to assist international students during their cross-cultural experience, such as providing them with a Spanish placement test, registration guidance for class selection, credit-transfer information, and a two-day orientation program. The majority of students live with host families in Quito that have been pre-assigned by the university coordinators. Additionally, some of the larger sister universities have representatives that live in Quito and assist the international students with any problems they face. Those universities provide extra support as well as excursions for their students.

Access to this site was obtained through the researcher's connection to the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ). The investigator is a current employee working directly with international students, which implies a bias in the recommendations made for better orientation services for men and women attending the University as exchange students. The researcher negotiated access and permission to study the USFQ international students through the International Programs Office. It was with this department's help that the researcher was able to obtain access to student emails, phone numbers, and allotted time to administer surveys during the International Students' orientation.

B. Researcher's Role and Biases

This study compares international students' cross-cultural experiences by gender. The researcher is a North American female who has lived in Ecuador for three years and previously participated as a study abroad student in Mexico. The researcher has

experienced culture shock and understands what female international students encounter and feel through first-hand experience as a foreigner living in Latin America. The investigator's role and contact with the participants facilitated this mixed-method study. Additionally, the researcher is an international student herself and is currently a Master's of Education candidate at USFQ. Through these experiences, the researcher has become very conscious of gender roles in Latin America and, in particular, in Ecuador. These experiences create biases for the researcher. Due to the author's experience as a North American woman in Latin America, the gender portion of the conceptual framework was extremely important.

While the researcher suspects that almost all international students will experience culture shock and that their perspectives on life will alter due to their experience abroad, it is gender that makes this study unique. It is from her experiences and relationships with other international and national students that she suspects women will have more difficulty and show a greater fluctuation in their answers from the first to second survey. Interviews with the USFQ international programs office employees add a qualitative aspect to this study. These employees were interviewed about their experiences with international students and the problems they have helped students solve during study abroad semesters. This enriches the study by using the quantitative data given by the international students as reference to what international offices deal with on a daily basis. Combined, these results provide a more in-depth study and recommendations of the preparation and orientation for, and support during semesters abroad. In order to better

understand and provide insights into her biases, the researcher met with her thesis committee director several times for critical feedback.

C. Pilot Study Lessons

The investigator conducted a prior pilot investigation at USFQ mentioned in the preceding literature review, which was a quantitative study that included five male and five female U.S. student participants during the spring semester of 2006 (Sakraida, 2006). Findings from the pilot study contributed to the design of the current study, which concentrates on the culture shock cycle, attempting to measure if males or females enter stages of culture shock differently, and if their outcomes varied. The results of this comparison revealed noticeable differences and changes within the categories of U.S. identity, students' perceptions of Ecuador, individual values, support systems, decision-making skills, and positive and negative culture shock symptoms (Sakraida, 2006). These findings suggest a difference between how male and female students adjust to the cross-cultural experience during the first two stages of culture shock, though not to the extent initially expected by the author.

Limitations to the study point to the importance of timing and consistency in research procedures. For example, the pilot aided the author in restructuring the study to anticipate changes in participants due to personal reasons, the importance of obtaining responses from all participants in the same stage of the culture shock cycle, and the level of personal commitment by participants to voluntary studies. The findings from the pilot study were also helpful in recognizing that the number of participants for a quantitative

study was too small, and did not providing the option to generalize about the entire international study abroad program in Ecuador.

D. Current Research

The pilot project prompted the current research, with the goal of validating the pilot study findings with a larger sample. The theme was expanded to determine the outcomes of students' study abroad experience after 12 weeks in Ecuador through gender comparison, as well as by providing students with the opportunity to give recommendations for orientation programs. Most importantly, this study has a qualitative element to it, documenting the comments students make about their experiences to include a more personalized aspect.

Fitzpatrick (et. al., 2004) and Tokuhama-Espinosa (2006) state the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative data. These authors acknowledge the importance of quantitative data that is many times considered more valid and can help determine conclusions, decisions and recommendations in a more objective manner (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2006):

On one hand, quantitative data collection through rated-item surveys of professors and students will offer solid numbers on which to base formative decisions. On the other hand, open-ended survey questions and interviews of students and professors will provide qualitative data, which will help refine the program in question.

Despite the strong emphasis of the importance of quantitative methods of data collection, qualitative data provides an insight that humanizes the study and helps people relate and understand the participants' feelings, reactions and perspectives. "...Qualitative data

offers “careful, thorough, narrative description... glean people’s perceptions,” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p.64) in a more detailed and rich way than rated-item surveys (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2006). The positive and negative qualities of both forms of data collection were considered. The researcher combined the methodologies in order to make contributions in data and information to the literature. The investigator opted to include both quantitative and qualitative data based on Tokuhama-Espinosa’s suggestions that “... the question of data collection in quantitative (numerical) versus qualitative (nonnumeric) forms brings with it a particular challenge as both have merits and will potentially contribute to a better reception of the findings by the stakeholders and serve to refine the program.” (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2006).

The quantitative data for this study were collected through two surveys with Likert scale responses in which participants rate their agreement or disagreement with purposeful statements (McMillan et al., 2001). Interviews with the International Programs Office staff at USFQ provide a qualitative perspective on what problems the administration perceives international students encounter during their semester in Ecuador.

E. Purposive Sampling Strategies

An initial meeting with the USFQ International Programs department was held to obtain access to the students, prior to their arrival (See Appendix A: Chronogram). This conversation helped identify which U.S. students would be selected for this study, based on information provided in their international study abroad applications. With the permission of the International Program Director, the investigator made a speech that

addressed the pre-selected candidates on the second day of orientation. Students were notified that they had been chosen to participate in a cross-cultural study, and a detailed verbal explanation of what was expected from each participant was included, including the time commitment and future tasks, as well as the opportunity to confirm and clarify comments of any conclusions drawn (see Appendix B: Consent Form). The students were requested to participate and turn in the surveys and completed consent forms at the end of the orientation to the investigator or in the international student office. Of the total 251 international students studying at USFQ during the fall semester of 2006, 31 male and 31 female students were originally selected to participate in this study. Twenty seven male and 28 female international students completed the first survey, and 21 male and 24 female participants completed the second survey that was administered by email. Once described, the consent forms and the first quantitative survey were distributed to the 31 female and 31 male selected participants, by announcing their name and locating the student. All participants were voluntary and no financial incentive was provided.

A sample of 31 male and 31 female U.S. college study abroad students was selected to complete the two surveys. This number was selected in anticipation that not all students would participate and complete the two surveys, providing flexibility in reaching the sample goal of 25 male and 25 female students completing both surveys for the study. Due to the small percentage of male study abroad participants at USFQ (27.6% according to the International Programs Office, 2006), the investigator first identified all the male participants that fulfilled the criteria. Thirty one male, English-speaking students from the United States were selected. Only the students who arrived

on or near the recommended arrival date were chosen to participate, therefore eliminating participants from certain universities that arrived in Ecuador earlier than others. The female participants were then selected based on this number of male participants.

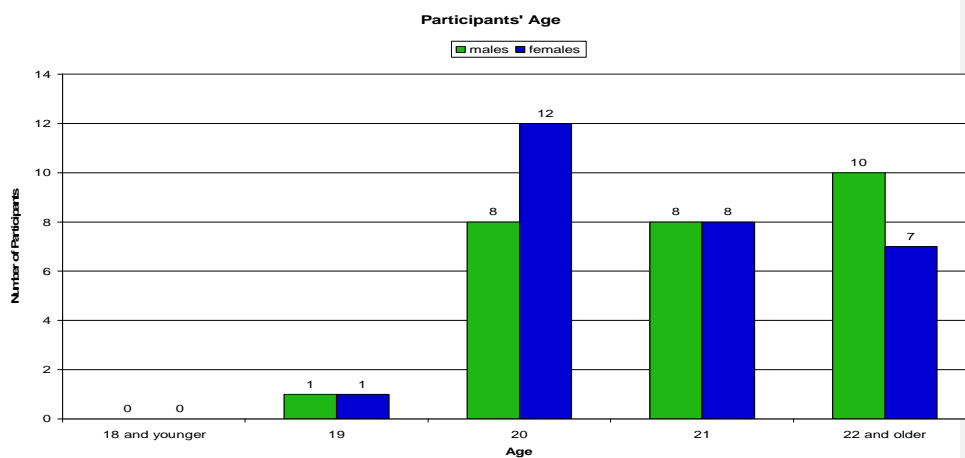
The researcher selected the purposive sampling strategy to select her participants for various reasons: to ensure participants met the requirements set by the researcher, to represent a vast number of universities, and to eliminate students who arrived in Ecuador before the recommended arrival date (McMillan et al., 2001). Due to the limited number of male international students, it was important to have a representative population from around the United States. Furthermore, due to possible racism in Ecuador, it was important that gender be studied, rather than race. Therefore, the researcher selected Caucasian participants for the study. The purposive sample was selected using the following criteria:

1. Participants are citizens of the United States.
2. Participants are sophomores or juniors in college.
3. Participants have a home-stay arrangement in Ecuador.
4. Participants come from home institutions that vary in size, location, etc.
5. Participants who were raised in cities and states dispersed throughout the USA.
6. One female and one male participant for each university represented when possible.
7. English is their first language.

The sample aims to represent different states and universities, varying in geographical size and population.

F. Participants

Thirty-one male and 31 female international students were pre-selected to participate in this investigation. Twenty-seven males and 28 females actually completed the first survey, resulting in an 89% response rate. Some of the pre-selected students (out of the original 31 male and 31 female selected students) were not at the orientation and/or did not study abroad, and therefore were eliminated, narrowing the number of participants. Of this participating population, the average study abroad age is between 20 to 22 years old (see Graph 1: Participants' Age).



More females reported having significant others, or relationships, than males at the beginning of this study abroad experience in August 2006. This piece of data was included for one specific reason. If students have a significant other back home, it could affect how much they put into their social life in aspects of making friends and dating.

There is not a great difference between male and female international students in regards to their dating habits when they first arrive to Ecuador, which minimizes possible rationale and explanations of interpersonal skills if statistical distinctions are found in the analysis of this study. Out of these 55 participating international students, 14 females and 13 males had studied abroad previously (see chart 1: Student Profile). Ten male and 10 female students reported studying abroad for more than one month in a prior experience. Two-thirds of this population had studied abroad in other Latin American countries (18 out of the 27 participants).

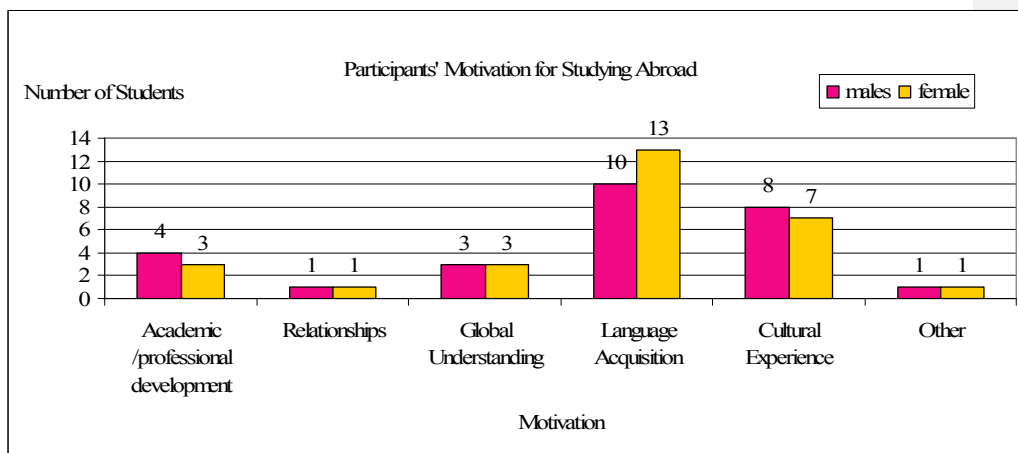
The participants reported studying abroad in Ecuador for various reasons, including academic and professional development, to make relationships, and for global understanding, language acquisition, and cultural experiences. The majority of the students' greatest motivation to study abroad was in is order to learn and improve their Spanish language skills and for the cross-cultural experience (See graph 2: Participants' Motivation for Studying Abroad).

Chart 1: Student Profile

Profile Item	# of Males	# of Female
Number of Pre-Test Participants	27	28
Number of Post-Test Participants	21	24
Students with previous study abroad experience	13	14
Students with +1 month abroad	10	10
Students with significant others (pre-test)	16	19
Single (pre-test)	11	9
Age: 18 or younger	0	0
Age: 19	1	1
Age: 20	8	12
Age: 21	8	8
Age: 21 or older	10	7
Motivation: Academic /professional development	4	3

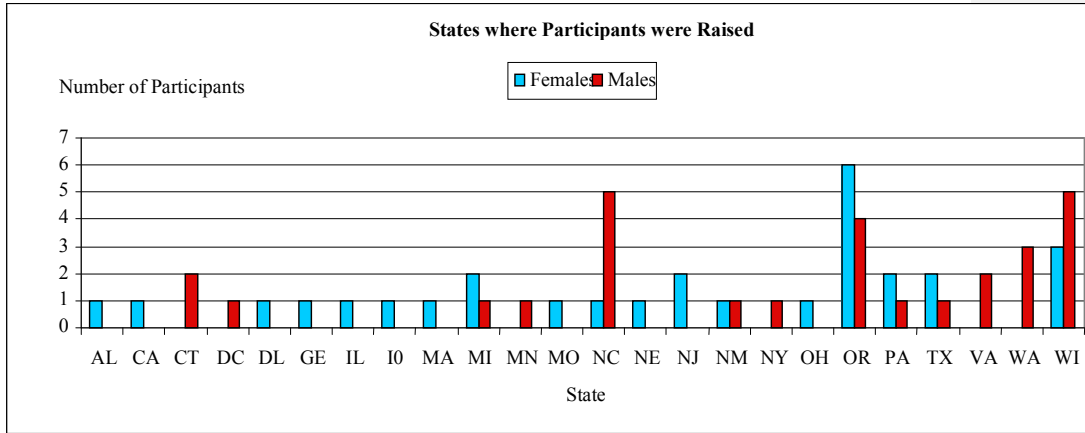
Motivation: Relationships	1	1
Motivation: Global Understanding	3	3
Motivation: Language Acquisition	10	13
Motivation: Cultural Experience	8	7
Motivation: Other	1	1

Graph 2: Participants' Motivation for Studying Abroad

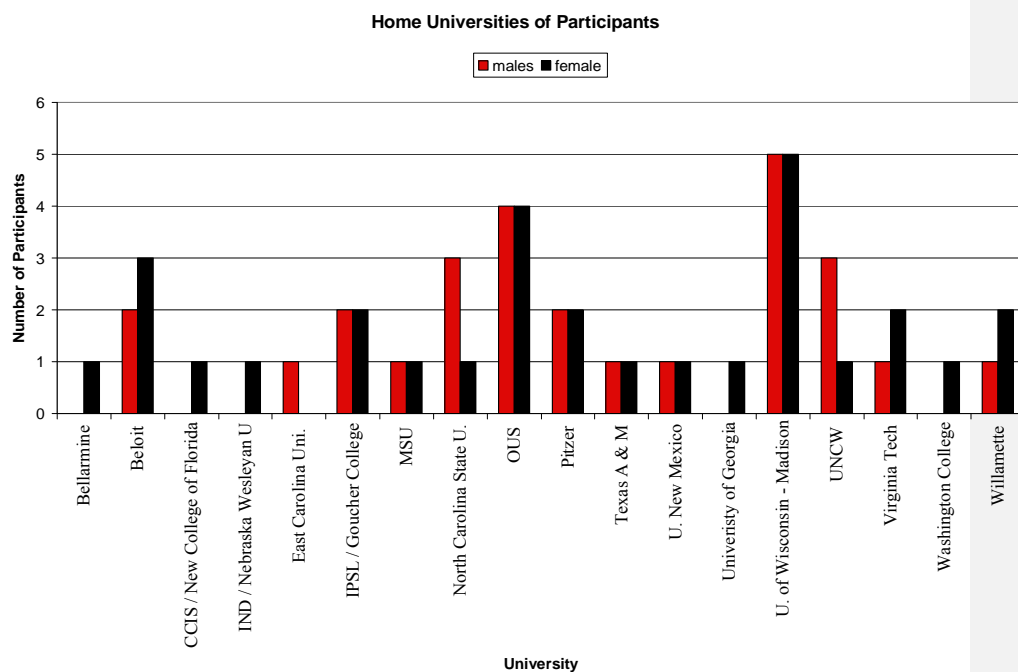


The sample also was asked for information about their origin in the United States (see Graph 3: States where Participants were Raised). Although this was difficult to measure before selecting the students since the information was not included on the applications and had to be acquired after arrival, it was a criterion that the investigator thought important for several reasons. People's views, beliefs and behaviors are impacted by where they grow up because of their distinct experiences, such as being raised in different regions and states of the USA, or in big cities versus small towns.

Graph 3: States where Participants were Raised



The *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* also has a number of partner universities throughout the world, with the majority in the United States (see Appendix B. USFQ Partner Universities). Of those universities, and students who enrolled in programs independent from their home institutions, students from the following universities in the United States were represented (see Graph 4: Home Universities of Participants). These universities are a mixed of elite and state schools, implying that the participants come from a variety of backgrounds and academic experiences.



The data collection proved more challenging during the actual survey than in the pilot study. The second survey was administered through email; some participants responded immediately, but over half of the participants did not. There was no incentive for students to participate in the study, except to be provided with the results in knowledge of the outcomes and the hope of helping other students in a similar experience. The investigator sent a total of four emails to students, the first two including all participants, and last two directly to the students who still had not responded. After the emails were sent out, the researcher contacted the students at home and requested they check their emails or pass by the International Programs Office to complete a survey. The researcher noted that female participants responded more promptly than males. After 12 days of trying to localize and contact participants, there was over a 70 percent

response rate for each gender that allowed the researcher to continue with the data analysis, which is higher than normal response to direct mailing and email surveys (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). After the data were collected and analyzed from the two surveys, the investigator sent a follow-up email for qualitative input and reflection of the findings.

V. Data Collection, Instruments, and Procedures

Thirty-one male and 31 female U.S. participants were asked to complete quantitative surveys comprised of 70 questions in five categories (See Appendix A: Chronogram). The first survey was handed-out on the second day of International Programs Orientation in Quito, Ecuador, August 29, 2006 which corresponds to the first stage of culture shock: *The Honeymoon Period*, according to Oberg (1960). The second survey was administered 12 weeks later through email, estimated to occur during the second stage of culture shock, or Oberg's *Hostility Period* (Oberg, 1960). After the quantitative data were collected, interviews with the International Programs (IPO) staff were conducted to give the staff a chance to comment on their concerns for international students, the problems students encounter, any gender differences they recognize between male and female students, and recommendations for international program departments. The investigator met with her thesis director throughout the data collection and analysis process to provide another perspective on the data and methodology, but no critical observer was consulted in this process.

The design of this part of the current study is based on the literature, studies previously mentioned, and the investigator’s pilot study results (See Appendix C and D: Survey). The format of the instrument used to collect data from the participants was primarily based on a study conducted by Dwyer et al., in *The Benefits of Study Abroad* (2004). This instrument aimed to measure the gains and changes of three thousand four hundred participants who studied abroad throughout the world from 1950 to 1999 and participated with the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) study. The survey was divided into three categories and seven sub-categories that asked quantitative questions. Hardin’s instrument was also used based on the open-ended qualitative questions with quantitative statements to aid the evaluator in gauging the level of passion felt by participants on a variety of issues pertaining to the course and skills in question (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2004; McMillan et al., 2001). This qualitative method was incorporated through interviews with the staff members of USFQ’s International Programs Office (IPO).

A. Instrument: Quantitative Survey

A Likert scale was used to gauge responses and had a range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, with the categories of “disagree”, “neutral”, and “agree” in the middle, respectively (McMillan et al., 2001), and was calculated on a numeric range was from -2 to +2. For example, question #17 was structured as follows:

<u>Chart 1:</u> <u>Instrument</u>	Strongly disagree (-2)	Somewhat agree (-1)	Neutral (0)	Somewhat disagree (+1)	Strongly agree (+2)
17. I anticipate that I will observe different					

Con formato: Fuente: Negrita

customs and social interactions in Ecuador.					
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The students were requested to check the appropriate numerical response to the statement, providing the researcher with a way to qualify their statements.

The survey attempted to measure how gender affects the gains and changes of U.S. study abroad students twelve weeks into their cross-cultural experience. The instruments related the students' background variables to the outcomes after this time abroad, analyzing the results through gender within three categories suggested by various comparative studies of international students (see Crosier, et al., n/d; Dwyer, et al., 2004; Farrell, et al., 2003; Hardin, n/d; *Summer Undergraduate Research Opportunities*, n/d; University of Central Arkansas, n/d). The categories that were used to frame this study were advances in (1) Personal Development; (2) Interpersonal Skills; and (3) Global Perceptions.

The categories and the sub-categories described below were selected based on studies previously mentioned in the literature review which involve both large scale comparisons of student experiences and/or are based on study abroad programs of U.S. students in various countries, including Ecuador (Crosier et al., n/d; Dwyer et al., 2004; Farrell et al., 2003; Hardin, n/d; Levine, 2004; University of Central Arkansas, n/d). Additionally, these studies focus on the three determined categories, providing similar questions in different formats of surveys. Each survey attempted to either measure the

reasons why students study abroad, the goals they sought to accomplish, or the benefits or outcomes of the cross-cultural experience. Furthermore, these studies were conducted to promote study abroad programs and improve them for future students, rather than to provide a direct benefit to the participants.

Once the investigator determined the categories to use in the current study, the statements were randomly arranged in the surveys so they would not be obvious to the participants (see Appendix C: Pre-Test Survey). The first and second surveys include the same statements in the same location, but are formatted with different tenses. For example, the first survey asks how the students felt on the day of orientation and their expectations for their study abroad experience, while the second survey was grammatically worded for students to respond after 12 weeks in Ecuador.

B. Instrument: Qualitative Interviews

The International Programs Office (IPO) at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* is made up of a four-person staff. The Director of the International Programs Office is a 43-year-old North American. He has lived in Ecuador for six years. While only being the director of IPO for one year, he has worked with foreigners as the Director of the Master of Education program at USFQ throughout his career with the University. The Assistant Director of IPO is an Ecuadorian woman with 16 years experience on campus. Her expertise with international students and the problems they face provide insight that other administrators are unable to provide. The Coordinator of IPO has five years of experience, is 26-years old and has also witnessed the struggles and problems

that international students face. As the Coordinator, he helps guide students before they arrive and during their semester in Ecuador. The fourth staff member is a 35 year old Ecuadorian who has two years experience at IPO. As a previous international student herself, Veronica understands the problems and troubles international students encounter. Together, these four create the multicultural team that offers support and guidance to international students. Their experience working with international students provides insight to student problems and concerns. To gain an additional perspective on problems that international students face when studying abroad in Ecuador, these four staff members were interviewed about their perceptions of problems faced by visiting scholars.

C. Procedure

Once the quantitative surveys were collected, the data were entered into a database. The participants received numeric IDs to minimize the biases of the investigator. The investigator looked for patterns and significant differences between each variable, based on gender, and did a cross-examination of the first and second survey of the most important elements of the study. The quantitative data were reviewed and refined for reporting. When participants failed to respond to an item, it was left blank and considered missing data. These items were then counted, and taken into consideration as part of the final analysis, where the count, mean, and confidence level was adjusted. The database was arranged in a way to analyze it more efficiently, by locating the variables horizontally with the participants listed vertically. When comparing between males and females, the results of the pre- and post- tests were entered next to

each other, for each variable (see Appendix E. Database). The variables were analyzed in categories pre-established by the literature and conceptual framework.

The selected items that were described had one of two characteristics: 1) the item was an extreme on the continuum in comparison to other items in the category; or 2) the item resulted in a statistically significant difference when analyzing gender and / or the pre- and post-survey results. Each variable included an analysis of the following: the count, minimum and maximum responses, mean, and confidence level (see Appendix E. Database). The count was used to find how many participants responded to the variable, and how many left it blank. Very few of the items were left unanswered, and this was checked by the count for each variable to ensure that the final results would be minimally affected. Responses were screened to ensure that the values fell within the appropriate range, thus reducing the human error factor in entering the values into the database. Where numbers were entered that were not part of the scale, the data were re-entered correctly.

The means and confidence levels were used to determine patterns and the central tendency of the responses of the participants. Low variance would mean that the majority of the participants responded similarly to a particular variable. If the confidence level was high, this would suggest differences in how the participants answered, and therefore the mean is not necessarily a representation of the population, but rather demonstrates that the participants vary on their thoughts or feelings toward a particular item. On each survey, these elements were analyzed to determine the distribution of

responses. The variables that had a compact range in the confidence level were then analyzed by gender. Graphs were created to demonstrate the range of each variable, for the pre- and post -tests. The pre-test referred to students' anticipations and expectations of their study abroad experience, as well as their perceptions of their personal development, interpersonal skills, and global views. Twelve weeks later a survey with the same statements but in the present tense were presented to the students. This survey was used to compare any changes that the students experienced from when they first arrived to Ecuador to 12 weeks later. Standard scores were also derived in order to compare the pre- and post- tests and genders in an efficient fashion.

Variables that showed extreme positive and negative responses, as well as statistically significant differences were analyzed to find patterns between how students responded to certain variables and if there were connections between the categories. Once these patterns were identified and analyzed, the investigator compared the findings to the literature and conceptual framework for verification. Graphs were developed to visually represent the differences between each variable in each of the two surveys, with a focus on gender.

VI. Extremes on the Continuum of Responses

Items selected to be discussed in this category did not result in statistically significant differences, but rather showed extremes on the continuum in the categories. These findings and observations are still valid and important to recognize in this study

because they can still provide further insight to the thoughts and emotions that international students are experiencing while studying in Ecuador.

A. Personal Development

1. Culture Shock

The results in the culture shock sub-category suggest two things: 1) women need more support during the *hostility* portion of their study abroad experience, 2) the literature focusing in detail on women more than men may be due to the extra attention and support women need. Both women and men on average reported having less homesickness, fears and anxieties than they had reported expecting when they first arrived to Ecuador. It appears to be an individual cycle that could differ for each student, meaning students may still be in the *Honeymoon* stage when tested, rather than in the *Hostility* stage which students would respond to the results differently. Two patterns were found in the sub-category of culture shock. Three items found in the sub-category of culture shock were answered on average as negative or very neutral (items 7, 8, 34).

7F. I don't anticipate disliking my study abroad experience at some point during my stay.

8F. I will not experience homesickness during my study abroad experience.

34F. I don't have fears and anxieties about studying abroad.

All of these items were in regards to students' expectations about their semester abroad in Ecuador, measuring if students' anticipations were met.

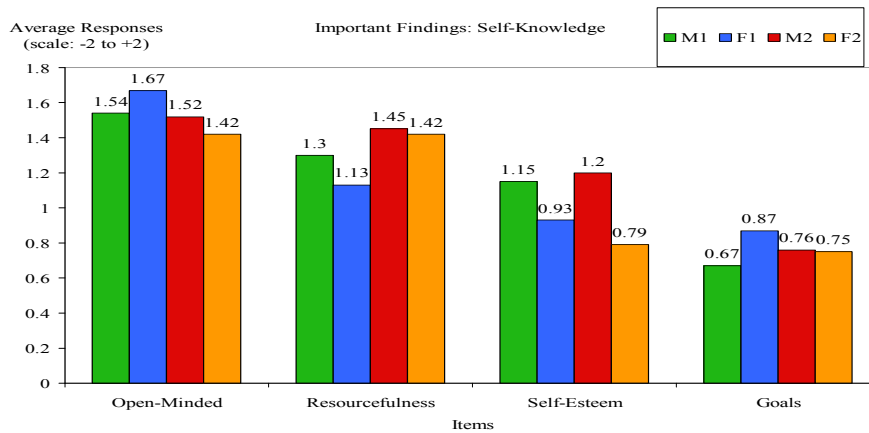
Furthermore, there is a greater difference in the change of the women's responses than the men's. Two out of every three items analyzed resulted in the female participants' responses fluctuating more between the first and second survey than the

male participants. The average of women's results for these items was more negative than male responses on at least one of the two surveys, with the majority of declines being reflected in the post-test. Overall, these results suggest that women have more difficulties than men 12 weeks into the culture shock cycle, reflecting they may be experiencing more symptoms of the *hostility* stage of culture shock than men.

2. *Conflict Management and Self-Knowledge*

On one hand, the study abroad experience influenced women's perceptions of how they can find the means to get what they want in conflict situations more positively than for men. On the other hand, women reported a decline and lower average in the second survey when compared to men in their perception of being able to accomplish their goals, being open-minded, and in regards to their self-esteem in both surveys.

Graph 5: Important Findings: Self-Knowledge



These findings are opposite from what literature states, as well as how international program offices advertise. However, these results again relate to the results found in the culture shock section of this work, suggesting that women at 12 weeks of their study abroad experience are experiencing culture shock and perhaps symptoms of the *Hostility* stage. The support given to women before and during their study abroad experience may not be sufficient. It is vital that international education offices develop means to provide women the extra support they need in the middle of their experience abroad. Von Bergen et al. (1996) suggest placing a stronger emphasis toward women's self-esteem in their developing years, and one could now conclude during their study abroad experience as well. These findings support the investigator's suspicion that women's self-esteem and image need to be focused on by international programs in the preparation, orientation, and support during the study abroad experience. The various studies cited in this work tend to focus more on women than men, and these results support the extra attention that men receive.

3. Language Acquisition and Communication Findings Coincide

The study abroad program increased women's need to interpret non-verbal communication skills, whereas the experienced decreased how much men rely on these skills. These results also indicate that the gender gap between men and women in regards to interpreting behavior minimizes after studying in Ecuador for 12 weeks. These findings relate to the results previously found in the Language Acquisition section of this analysis. Women reported finding language as a greater barrier for communication than they had anticipated, whereas men reported the barrier less than they had expected. If these results coincide, then women more than men would need to rely on the gestures and behaviors of Ecuadorians while communicating in order to understand the conversation, to interpret behaviors, and tones.

B. Interpersonal Skills: Relationships

The items in the Relationships sub-category show contrasting results between men and women. For example, male participants perceived that their parents and friends supported their decision to study in Ecuador less after 12 weeks, while the women felt they had more support. The score for the women remained the same, insinuating that they did not experience a difference in the amount of support they were receiving while they studied in Ecuador.

Women had more difficulties socializing with foreigners, specifically Ecuadorians, than men after studying in Ecuador for 12 weeks. In contrast, men actually reported that it was slightly easier to socialize with people not from the United States

after living in Ecuador. This suggests that the study abroad experience influenced how male and female students seek out friends, implying that perhaps the participants, specifically women, sought out more international students for a support group, rather than Ecuadorians.

C. Global Perceptions

The results as a whole in comparison to the literature are far more negative than was expected on all points of inquiry of global perceptions. The findings both increased and decreased for males and females, with men demonstrating more of a decline than women in regards to global perceptions after living in Ecuador for 12 weeks. Participants reported witnessing new and diverse customs in Ecuador, as well as having a high appreciation for human differences. However, after studying 12 weeks in Ecuador, men and women appreciated those differences less.

VII. Results Based on Categories

Based on the conceptual framework, three categories guide the data analysis and discussion (personal development; interpersonal skills; and global perceptions) described in detail below.

A. Personal Development

The personal development category was divided into five sub-categories, including culture shock symptoms and feelings; conflict management; self-knowledge and concept; academic and professional development, and language skills which were

developed from the literature and organized by the author of this study. This section measures the values as well as behaviors of individuals. Societies determine what is considered to be appropriate behavior, and values are often invisible and unchallenged. International students' values may be challenged during their cross-cultural experience, such as their nationalistic perspectives and appropriate gender roles including independence and equality. This creates self-reflection and therefore influences how students perceive themselves during the cross-cultural experience (Brislin, 1981; Dahl, n/d; Sakraida, 2006). This category is of special importance as many students claim that they choose to participate in study abroad programs precisely for personal development reasons.

The sub-categories of personal development, cited in the literature and cross-cultural studies, are vital to understanding how gender alters international students' experiences. If patterns are found that determine and identify strengths or weaknesses based on gender, then study abroad coordinators and directors can be better prepared to support students for upcoming challenges. These statements can also identify if certain personal goals and expectations differ between genders.

1. Culture Shock

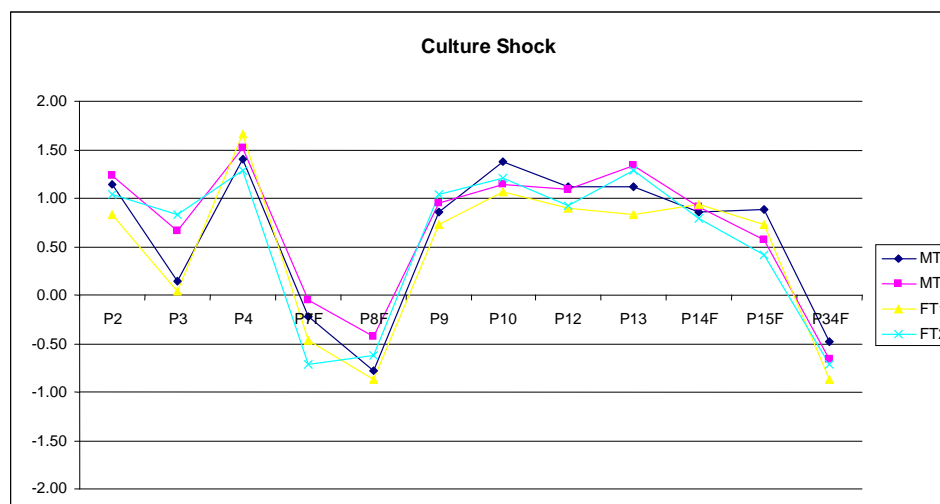
Twelve items were developed to create a culture shock section in an attempt to measure how international students adapt to Ecuador (see [chart 2](#): Sub-Category 1: Culture Shock Items). The visual graph shows that there is considerable variation between the items for culture shock items (see Graph 6: Culture Shock). The graph has

many negative and positive peaks that are not found in the majority of the other categories. This shows that there is a great fluctuation in how the students feel toward these statements. However, only two variables resulted in statistically significant differences between the first and second surveys. Those listed in bold are the items with statistically significant differences in the results of the pre- and post- tests.

Sub-Category 1: Culture Shock Items

- 2. I manage the stress of encountering new situations well.
- 3. I will be able to act in Ecuador as I do in the USA.**
- 4. I enjoy change and experiencing new situations.
- 7F. I don't anticipate disliking my study abroad experience at some point during my stay.
- 8F. I will not experience homesickness during my study abroad experience.
- 9. I am able to adapt to different paces of life without becoming impatient.
- 10. I expect I will assimilate to cultural practices and customs while abroad.
- 12. I will be able to adapt easily to a new way of life in my host country.
- 13. I can handle unexpected situations.**
- 14. I anticipate regretting my abroad experience at some point during my stay.
- 15 I don't enjoy unfamiliar situations.
- 34F. I don't have fears and anxieties about studying abroad.

Graph 6: Culture Shock



a. *Behaving in Ecuador*

Two items in the culture shock category have statistically significant findings. There was a significant change in how both men and women answered on items 3 and 13. In item number three, the statement was designed to measure how similarly students anticipated they would be able to act in Ecuador as the United States, "I will be able to act in Ecuador as I do in the USA". When asked at the beginning of their study abroad experience, men and women on average responded very neutrally to their expectations, insinuating that the students were unsure of how they were expected to act in Ecuador, and whether they could behave the same as they do in the United States (men: 0.15; women: 0.03). When asked twelve weeks later, the averages for both men and women increased (men: 0.67; women: 0.83); on average they reported that they agreed that they are able to act in Ecuador as they do in the United States. Both men and women felt they could behave in Ecuador as they do in the United States more than they originally anticipated. The women's score in the second survey was more favorably than the men's score. As a North American living in Ecuador, the investigator feels that she is able to behave in Ecuador as she does in the United States, but the consequences are different. For example, she lives as an independent woman in Ecuador, but feels frowned upon and misunderstood by Ecuadorians. Furthermore, she feels she is able to wear similar clothing as she does in the United States, but feels she is stared at when wearing certain attire, such as a baseball cap. In the United States, the investigator feels it is acceptable for women to ask men out on dates, yet in Ecuador the men get the wrong impression if and when it happens.

b. Manage Unexpected Situations

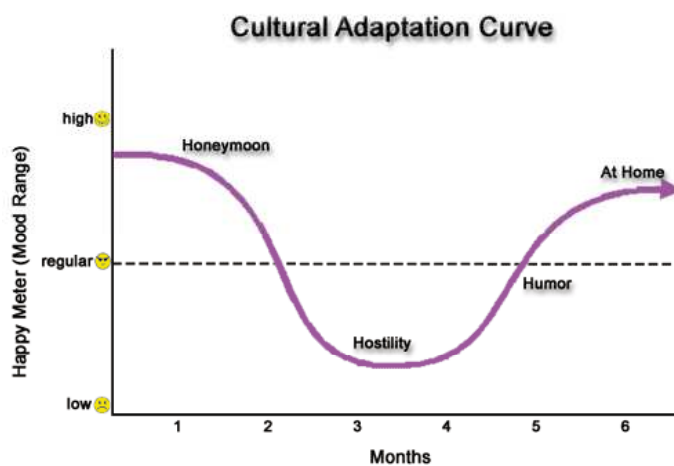
For item number 13, students were asked to rank their perceptions of how they are able to handle unexpected situations. When the international students first arrived in Ecuador, the average score for both men and women were relatively high in comparison to the other items, with the average for men higher than women. Men responded +1.11 and women responded on an average of +0.83 to being able to handle unexpected situations, both in overall agreement. When surveyed a second time, both men and women's average score increased. The men's average increased to +1.33 and the women to +1.29, with a greater difference shown by the female participants between the two surveys. For both men and women, there was an increase in how they perceived their ability to handle unexpected situations due to their study abroad experience. The investigator has experienced many unexpected situations in Ecuador, such as experiencing confrontations of personal beliefs and values and witnessing abuse and corruption. Through these experiences, she feels she is better able to handle these unexpected and difficult situations, as the international students are able to.

c. Culture Shock Wrap-up: Literature and the Findings

The purpose of the items focusing on culture shock is to measure the validity of concept and compare difference by gender. The contribution this study makes to the literature is identifying why gender and culture shock are inseparable when considering the structure of orientation programs designed to combat potential ill effects. (Brislin, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Paige, 1990). The investigator chose to administer the surveys during two different stages of culture shock, the *Honeymoon* and *Hostility* stages, with values qualifying how study abroad affects international students' personal development.

One unique aspect of this study is that it measures how men and women feel and perceive themselves through the cross-cultural context, which includes their culture shock experience. Culture shock may occur when U.S. students' preconceived ideas of appropriate behavior do not apply in Ecuador. The differentiating gender roles in the United States and Ecuador could cause misinterpretations of actions between the hosts and study abroad students (Black et al., 1990; Brislin, 1981; Dahl, n/d; Gaw, 2000; Gullahorn, et al., 1962; Oberg, 1960; Paige, 1990). Based on the literature and specifically the studies Crosier et al., (n/d) and Levine (2004), statements have been included on the survey to measure the culture shock experience in adaptability and feelings toward the study abroad experience. The statements are directly related to the studies and Oberg's culture shock cycle (Crosier et al., n/d, Levine, 2004; Oberg, 1960) (see Graph 7: Cultural Adaptation Curve).

Graph 7: Cultural Adaptation Curve



According to the W-curve, students should have responded more negatively in the post-test when comparing the pre- and post-tests. The results found in this thesis demonstrated a variety of results, some more positive or negative in the post-test.

There are only two items that show statistically significant differences in the culture shock sub-category of Personal Development. These statistical differences are noted in the entire population, and not between men and women, which was what the investigator set out to measure. According to these results, there is not a great difference between how men and women feel in their adapting to and coping with culture shock. The sample showed a statistically significant increase in how students are able to handle unexpected situations after living in Ecuador for 12 weeks. Furthermore, men and women both reported being able to act in Ecuador as they do in the United States more than they had expected. These are positive results, insinuating that students already are benefiting from the study abroad experience in Ecuador, even though 12 weeks into the experience should have them feeling symptoms of the *hostility* stage of culture shock. Even though the quantitative results did not show negative changes in international students, the Investigator notes that many of her students come and complain about their frustrations with the Ecuadorian culture and Spanish language. These types of complaints relate to the culture shock cycle.

While these items are appropriate for a culture shock section, they are difficult to quantify because many of them are based on students' expectations before and perceptions during the study abroad experience. Furthermore, the entire study could

reflect students experiencing culture shock, not just this section. Culture shock influences the entire study abroad experience in a variety of manners and ways, and therefore can be reflected throughout all categories in this study. While the literature states that there are difficulties for women due to *machismo* and societal views of the traditional woman, the literature does not recognize a difference in the culture shock cycle for men and women

2. *Conflict Management*

The conflict management sub-category is a compilation of statements that measures how international students perceive their conflict management skills, including their abilities to solve conflicts and problems, and if they feel they remain calm when facing difficult situations. This sub-category was developed because it directly relates to culture shock and self-knowledge, as well as to the global perceptions section. The motivation for this category was based on the belief that international students would come across conflicts that they had not experienced in the United States. Its purpose is to measure how international students reflect on their abilities to solve conflicts effectively. The four statements based on Crosier, et al., (n/d) and Farrell et al. (2003) were used to measure how students perceive their abilities to cope with conflicts and problems, and if there is a difference between genders due to the study abroad program, taking note of any differences perceived by gender (See Sub-Category 2: Conflict Management Items).

While all means of the results were positive, one item resulted in a statistically significant difference between the entire sample in their responses in the first survey and the second survey (see Graph 8: Conflict Management).

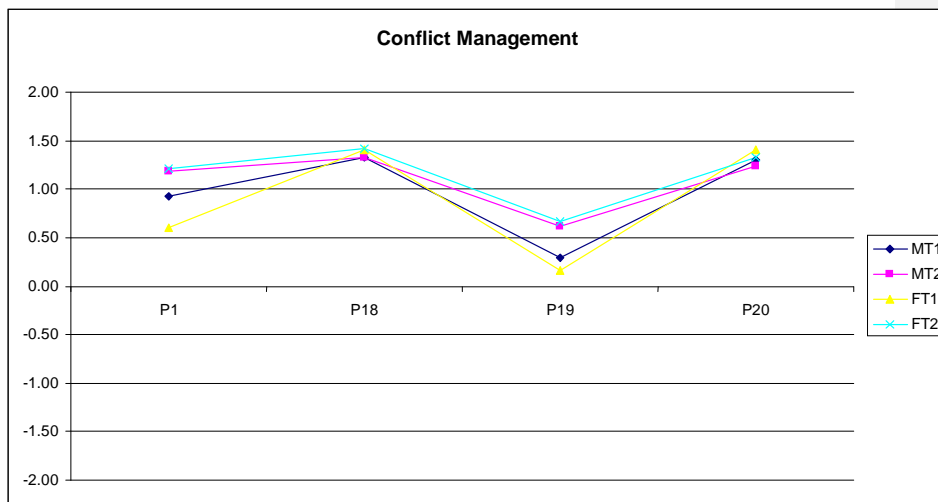
Sub-Category 2: Conflict Management Items

1. I usually remain calm when facing difficult situations.

18. I have good problem-solving skills.

19. If someone opposes me, I can usually find the means and ways to get what I want.

Graph 8: Conflict Management



a. Remaining Calm in Difficult Situations

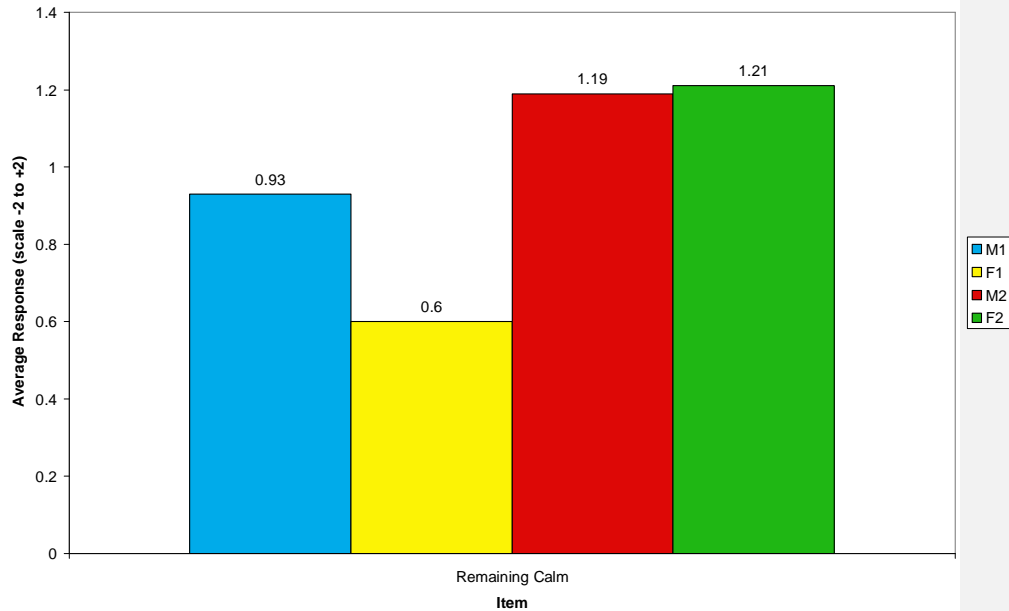
Statistically, the students' perceptions of their ability to remain calm when facing difficult situations showed significant difference in the results when comparing the responses of the two surveys. The mean of the female participants' responses in the first survey was +0.6 and the males' score was +0.93. This average qualifies that both males and females on average responded neutrally or in agreement to this item. In the second survey, the responses were statistically more favorable for men and women. The men

reported +1.19 and the women +1.21, a score ranking between agreeing and strongly agreeing that they are able to remain calm in difficult situations. This significant difference implies that studying abroad in Ecuador had a significantly positive impact on international students' abilities to remain calm in difficult situations.

In difficult situations, it is important that students are able to remain calm. Men responded more confidently that they remain calm in difficult situations in the pre-test, and women in the post-test. For women, their answers were far more negative than the average male response when they first arrived to Ecuador. Furthermore, the responses that the female participants provided show a greater change in answers between the first and second surveys than compared to the men. This implies that 12 weeks studying abroad had a greater impact on how women perceive their conflict management skills than men.

Graph 9: Important Findings: Conflict Management Skills

Important Findings: Conflict Management Skills



Overall, the entire population benefited significantly from studying abroad in Ecuador in their abilities to manage conflicts. The findings also suggest that the study abroad experience for these participants lessened the gender gap in regards to conflict management and resolution skills.

b. Studying Abroad Improves Students' Conflict Management Skills

The positive impact the study abroad experience had on these international students in regards to conflict management is extremely important to U.S. society and students. With the amount of violence present throughout the world, it is important that universities help instill conflict management skills in students (Brislin, 1981). This significant finding implies that study abroad experiences are important factors in

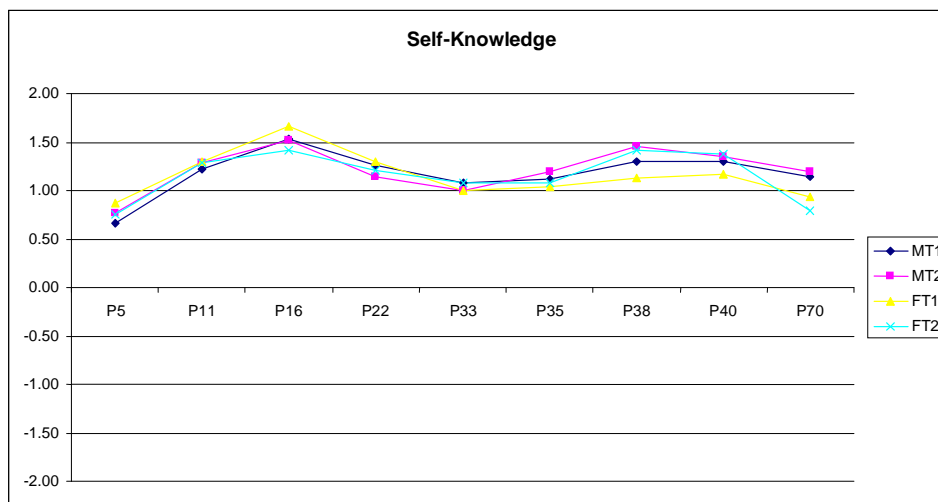
developing social skills such as conflict management for international students. Such results demonstrate the importance of studying abroad for men and women in their social development. Part of the positive culture shock effect is being able to understand other cultures (Brislin, 1981). If students learn to be more comprehensive of diversity, they will be able to use that toward conflict management skills due to apathy. Part of the culture shock cycle is affected by students' abilities to manage conflict. As Brislin (1981) found, students without the skills to manage conflict experience more negative culture shock cycles.

This benefit of study abroad experiences contradict Dwyer et al.'s finding (1996). These authors reported that study abroad had little effect on students' ability to manage conflicts after the international experience. There are two possible explanations for the difference in findings between these two studies. First, the post-test of this work did not occur after the semester abroad, but rather 12 weeks into the semester. Secondly, students could be experiencing some type of culture shock or difficulties that have led them to perceive themselves as having more skills to solve and manage conflicts. Despite the differences, this point is important within the U.S. Ecuadorian context as it relates to the USFQ study abroad experience.

3. Self Knowledge

Self-knowledge and concept statements were gathered from four studies and combined to measure how students perceive themselves (Dwyer, 2004; Farrell, et al., 2003; Hardin, n/d; Levine, 2004). The purpose of these items focusing on Self-

Knowledge is to measure how the international student participants perceive themselves as individuals in regard to their personalities, behaviors, and self-image. Statements on the survey provided a way for students to measure how they felt and perceived themselves upon arriving to Ecuador, and if these perceptions remained the same or changed 12 weeks into their cross-cultural experience, especially as they relate to differences in gender (see Sub-category 3: Self Knowledge Items). As visually demonstrated on the continuum, the average of responses is relatively high compared to the other sub-categories (see Graph 10: Self-Knowledge). However, there are not any items that have result in statistically significant differences.



Sub-category 3: Self-Knowledge Items

- 5. It is easy for me to realize my goals.
- 11. I am self-reliant.
- 16. I am open-minded.
- 22. My critical thinking skills are well developed.
- 33. I have strong leadership skills.
- 35. I am self-confident.
- 38. I am a resourceful person.
- 40. I am independent.
- 70. I have a high self-esteem.

Surprisingly to the investigator, there were no significant differences between men and women, or significant changes due to the study abroad experience, in this sub-category. Routledge (1999) found that women are more vulnerable than men for a number of reasons, including receiving unwanted sexual attention and becoming victims to male predators. Anderson conducted a study of women living abroad and found that the cat calls and sexual innuendos in Latin America can be damaging to the female self-esteem (2003). Women entering into a *machismo* society (Nencel, 1996) may have more difficulties than men in adjusting and adapting in Ecuador. The contrasts between the roles of men and women in Latin America could conflict with the idea of equality and civil rights in the United States (Melhuus, 1996). The results in this study coincide with these ideas and can help explain why women's responses are lower than the male participants. However, significant changes were not present in the data for men or women in regards to their self-perceptions, self-esteem, and confidence.

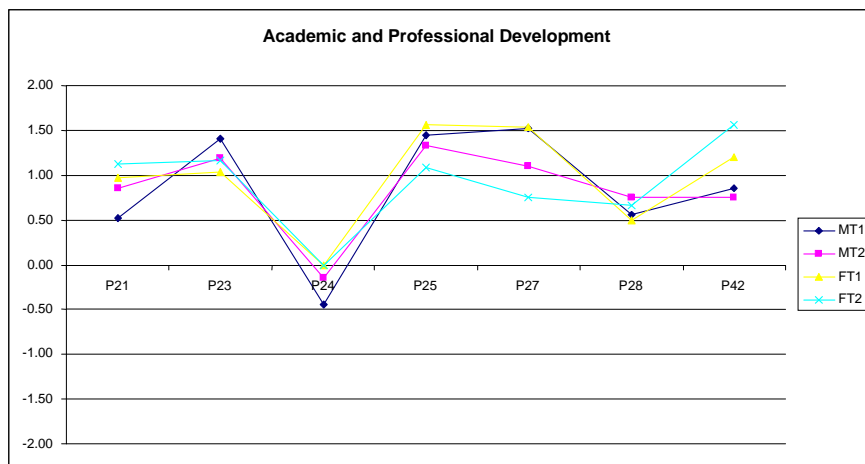
4. Academic and Professional Development

The literature also refers to academic and professional development due to cross-cultural experiences. The literature reports that students' study abroad experience influence their academic and professional goals (Crosier, et al., n/d; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell, et al., 2003; Hardin, n/d). Statements were designed to measure how their academic and professional development altered after 12 weeks in Ecuador, and if there is a significant difference in male and female responses. These statements focus primarily in assessing whether or not the study abroad experience was positive enough to encourage students to

pursue future experiences in the same vein, and encourage them to expand their career horizons (See Sub-category 4: Academic and Professional Development Items).

Three of the seven items in the Academic and Professional Development sub-category show statistically significance differences between the scores of men and women and the first and second surveys. This category was designed to assess the influence this study abroad experience has on men and women in their academic and professional development. Results varied in this category with 12 weeks in Ecuador having both a negative and positive influence over men and women’s academic and professional development. As the visual graph shows, there is considerable variation between the variables in this section (see Graph 11: Academic and Professional Development).

Graph 11: Academic and Professional Development



Sub-Category 4: Academic and Professional Development Items

- 21. I believe I will study abroad again after this experience is over.
- 23. I have many career options.
- 24. I have chosen a profession.
- 25. My academic performance is satisfactory.**
- 27. I have a direct influence over the level of academic success I will enjoy in this program.**
- 28. Much of my success depends on the environment I am in.
- 42. I actively seek out challenging educational experiences.**

a. Seeking out Challenging Experiences: Gender Difference

There is a statistically significant difference between men and women when asked if students actively seek out challenging educational experiences after studying in Ecuador for 12 weeks. The average of the men in the first survey was +0.85, representing an average responding as neutral and in agreement. In the second survey, the average declined by 0.10. On the other hand, the women in the first survey responded with a mean of +1.20, qualifying between agrees and strongly agrees. Their average continued to rise in the second survey taken 12 weeks later, with the mean of +1.57. In other words, the average of the male participants' declined and the female average became more favorable, leaving a difference of 0.82 between the averages of men and women. This difference shows a great difference between men and women in this variable. It can be concluded that studying in Ecuador for 12 weeks had a great impact on the student population and opposite effects on men and women. After 12 weeks in Ecuador, men feel that they seek out challenging educational experiences less than when they first arrived, whereas the women claim to seek out more.

c. Academic Dissatisfaction at USFQ

A significant difference was found between the first and second survey results in regard to students' academic satisfaction. When international students first arrived to Ecuador, they reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied

with their academic performances. However, when asked 12 weeks later, their responses declined. The mean for the men declined 0.11 and the mean for the women decreased 0.49. This means that the students' perceptions of their academic satisfaction in their home institutions were more favorable than in Ecuador. This could be explained in part by the academic challenges or the language barrier in Ecuador. Culture shock also leads students to experience a decline in their academic performances, when students feel inadequate in their language proficiency and abilities to be successful in different arenas of the study abroad experience (Brislin, 1981). Complaints of classrooms and classmates are presented to the Investigator by many of her international students. Students sometimes have difficulties taking classes in Spanish because they are yet to be fluent. International students also talk about their classes being filled with other international students, and not Ecuadorians. This is a concern for international programs and students.

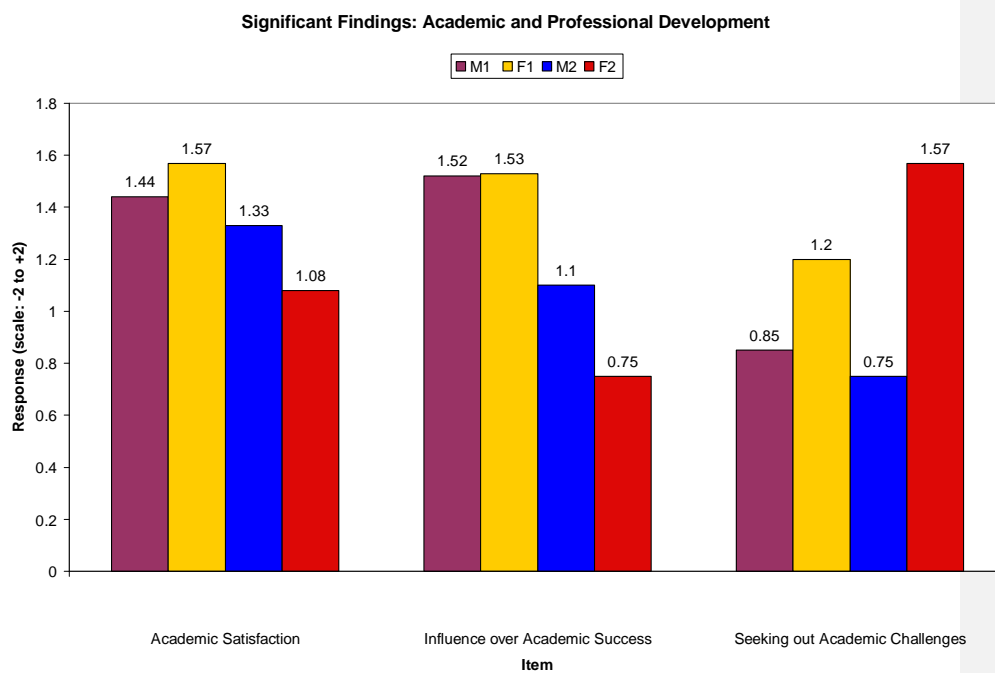
Furthermore, both men and women responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that they have direct influence over the level of academic success they enjoy in this program (men: 1.52; women: 1.53). The mean for both men and women varied by only .01, signifying that men and women arrived to Ecuador with similar perspectives on the influence they had over their academic success. However, 12 weeks later their answers declined (men: 1.10; women: 0.75). There was a far greater decline in women's scores than men's, implying that studying in Ecuador had a greater influence over how women perceived their academic success in Ecuador than men. In short, students' believed that they had more control over their academic success in their home institutions than what

they claimed to have at USFQ; the responses given by women indicate that women feel they had less direct influence over their academic success than men in Ecuador.

d. Conclusions of the Academic and Professional Development Findings: Overview

The three items showing statistically significant differences and changes are academically based, whereas the other variables in this section focused on students' careers (see Graph 12: Significant Findings: Academic and Professional Development).

Graph 12: Significant Findings: Academic and Professional Development



The average response declined for the men in all three items in the second survey, whereas only two of the three items showed more negative answers in the post-test given by women. The items that resulted in decreased responses were only those directed toward academics. Due to the results of these findings, it can be concluded that 12 weeks in Ecuador had a more negative affect on the male participants than female participants in relation to academics. Many times students enter the USFQ international office and complain to the investigator, “Courses are too difficult! I came to study abroad in order to enjoy myself, learn a new language, and travel Ecuador! How I am supposed to do this with an academic load?” However, there was greater difference found in the mean of the items for women when comparing the pre- and post-tests, signifying that this experience in Ecuador perhaps had a greater impact and influence on the women in the academic and profession realm.

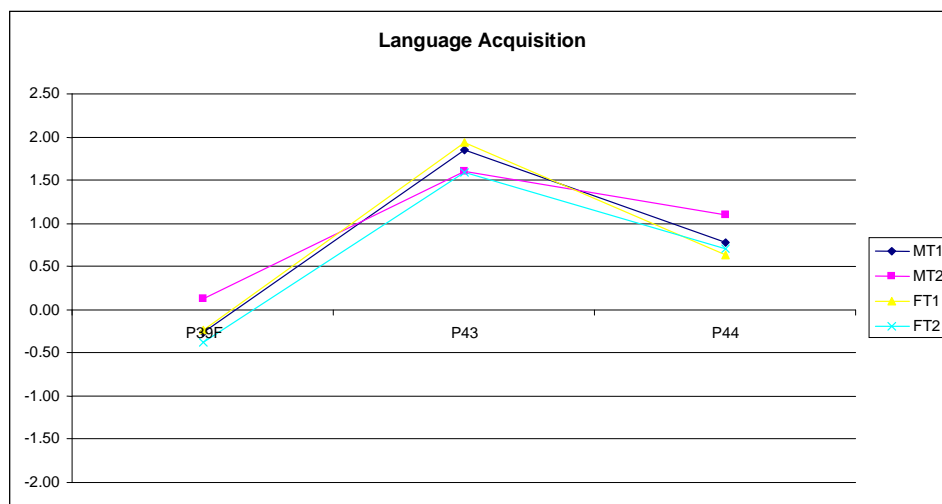
5. Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is a sub-category that many authors identify as a goal for study abroad students (Freed, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Mendelson, 2004). Based on these authors’ findings, international students go abroad primarily to learn a foreign language. Three statements were created to measure the level of Spanish comprehension and improvement for students when studying in Ecuador based on different author’s questionnaires (Crosier, et al., n/d; Farrell et al., 2003; Levine, 2004). These statements, measuring the students’ confidence in Spanish and whether or not language creates a communication barrier while in Ecuador, are vital elements to a study abroad program. It

is essential to measure language for cross-cultural experiences as there is a rich source of literature and assumptions about language.

An additional intriguing issue related to language and this study is that Spanish and English vary in gender interpretations. Spanish applies gender distinctions to articles that are not present in English, which is a particular challenge to English speakers. The following three items were developed to create the Language Acquisition category (see Sub-Category 5: Language Acquisition Items). Three items were developed to quantify language acquisition of the international students studying in Ecuador, specifically at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito*, and to measure if students' expectations were met. One of these items resulted in statistically significance change between the first and second survey for the entire sample (see Graph 12: Language Acquisition)

Graph 12: Language Acquisition



Category 5: Language Acquisition Items

39F. I believe that language will not be a barrier to interacting with Ecuadorians.

43. This study abroad experience will increase my skills to communicate in Spanish.

44. I am confident in my Spanish language abilities.

a. Studying Abroad Increases International Students' Spanish Skills

The item selected to focus on in this section was developed to measure if the participants' study abroad experience increased their skills to communicate in Spanish. A statistically significant difference was found in the analysis of men and women together from the first survey to the second survey. In the first survey, the average for the male participants was 1.85, and for the women was 1.93. However, after 12 weeks of living in a Spanish speaking country, the averages declined for both males and females. The mean decreased by 0.15 for men and 0.35 for women. This difference was statistically significant, implying that students' expected to learn and practice far more Spanish in Ecuador than what they experienced 12 weeks later. The investigator believes and experienced herself a plateau in her perception of learning Spanish when she studied abroad. She believes that language skills have a similar cycle as culture shock, which corresponds. At the beginning of the experience students learn a lot of Spanish and are able to survive. However, as one of her colleagues mentioned, 12 weeks later students realize that they are unable to express themselves and communicate at a more complicated and proficient level. This is many times perceived as a decline in students' Spanish ability.

b. The Literature in Response to the Language Acquisition Findings

Freed (1998), Hopkins (1999), and Mendelson (2004) reported the language acquisition is a goal for students to study abroad. The majority of the present participants also claimed that their motivation for studying abroad was to learn and improve their Spanish skills. Many students study abroad in order to improve their language skills in as a result purposively select a country that does not regularly speak their native tongue, such as Ecuador. The participating students of this study had a vast range of language ability. Despite the differences, the majority of men and women in this study reported high anticipation of language acquisition while in Ecuador, yet the results 12 weeks they were disappointed with their Spanish language skills..

Dahl (n/d) found that encountering and coping with a different language could affect how foreigners interact with their hosts. Gaw (2000) noted that international students can become extremely frustrated and hopeless concerning their language abilities and their inability to communicate, having a negative emotional affect on students. The results correspond to this literature, providing reason for students' responses, specifically females, in regard to these averages declining in the second survey. The results could also be affected by culture shock. If the international students responded to the second survey during the *Hostility* stage of the culture shock cycle, these negative results could reflect a resistance international students have toward learning Spanish in Ecuador (Brislin, 1981).

Furthermore, these neutral findings in the post-test of students' perception of the Spanish they learned 12 weeks into their experience could be a direct result of their own

actions. First, international students reported they spent the majority of their time with other exchange students, limiting the amount of Spanish they were able to speak and learn. Secondly, the expectations of language acquisition could have been entirely unrealistic for international students in the length of time they studied at USFQ.

Disregarding the suggested reasons why students' reported a disappointing perception of their language acquisition, it is vital that international programs take these results into consideration. If students are studying abroad with the goal to learn a foreign language, and 12 weeks into the semester they feel they have not learned it very well, their should be a focus on language learning activities. For example, international program leaders could provide more mixers and social opportunities for international students to meet and be with native students in the middle of their semester. Tutoring sessions and lessons could be offered, helping students find a partner and exchange English lessons for Spanish lessons. Finally, encourage students to focus on speaking Spanish, even when difficult, at all times while abroad.

B. Interpersonal Skills

Some of the international student participants reported their motivation and goal for studying abroad in Ecuador was to build relationships, make friends and develop their interpersonal skills. Communication and relationships are two divisions of interpersonal development that international students will experience and are described separately below.

1. Communication

The communication sub-category was developed because students may find communication with Ecuadorians challenging. In addition to the language challenges mentioned previously, communication includes non-verbal skills that help people from different cultures interact and understand each other. The difference in body language and gestures can be misunderstood and create conflicts or difficulties in cross-cultural relationships. One of the investigator's female colleagues who is currently learning Spanish said, "The hardest part of learning Spanish and being in Ecuador is when I speak on the phone. I am unable to understand what they want to say and their tone without seeing the person!" She referred to the difference in how people interact and their body language they use. For instance, this colleague mentioned the close perimeter in which people stand to talk to you, the amount of physical contact there is that does not insinuate messages that would in the United States. If students are unable to communicate with their host families or other Ecuadorians, relationship building will result difficult. Three statements based on surveys were gathered and created to measure whether or not there are differences between genders in their abilities to communicate as indicated by various authors including Crosier, et al., (n/d), Hall, (1959, 1966); Hardin, n/d; Levine, (2004). The section on communication skills evaluates three items (see Sub-Category 6: Communication Items). These items measure the "hidden dimension" (Hall, 1966), or people's abilities to communicate through body language and words across cultures (see Graph 13: Communication Statements).

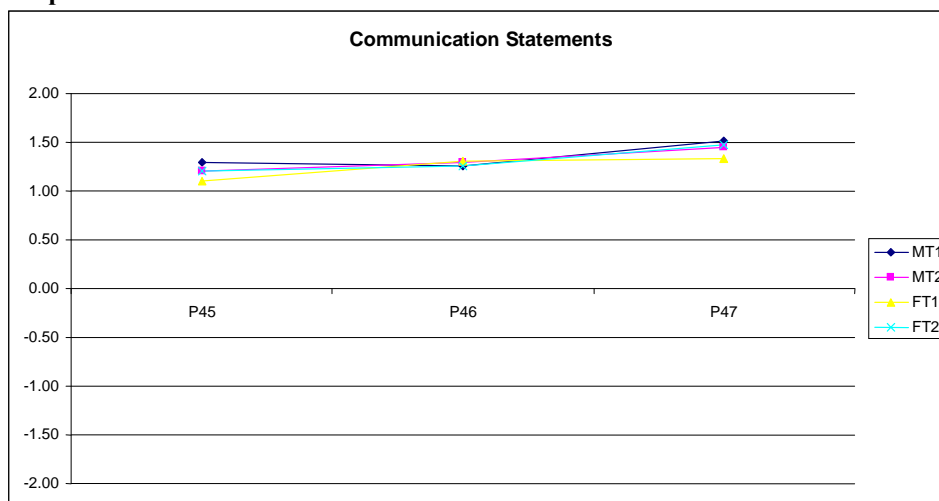
Sub-Category 6: Communication Items

45. I have the patience to communicate with people who do not understand me.

46. I typically try to enter into meaningful conversation with people.

47. **I attempt to interpret the behavior of people such as their gestures, postures, appropriate**

Graph 13: Communication



This communication sub-category of interpersonal skills only included three items, which does not provide much data to analyze. However, the averages for both men and women were relatively positive in comparison to other items in the other sub-categories, although there were not any statistically significant findings. The literature stated that non-verbal communication could differ between cultures, and therefore affect how foreign students understand what their hosts communicate to them (Dahl, n/d).

2. Relationships

Relationships can be one of the most challenging aspects of the study abroad experience for international students. When students are living abroad, they must learn to balance their relationships with the new acquaintances and their connections back home. The statements regarding relationships inquire about students' social networks and support systems, and well as their abilities to make friend (Crosier, et al., n/d; Dwyer et al., 2004; Farrell et al., 2003; Levine, 2004) (See Sub-Category 7: Relationship Items).

Sub-Category 7: Relationship Items

6. I anticipate dating an Ecuadorian while here.

26. I feel comfortable spending time alone.

29. I expect my host family to treat me as an independent adult.

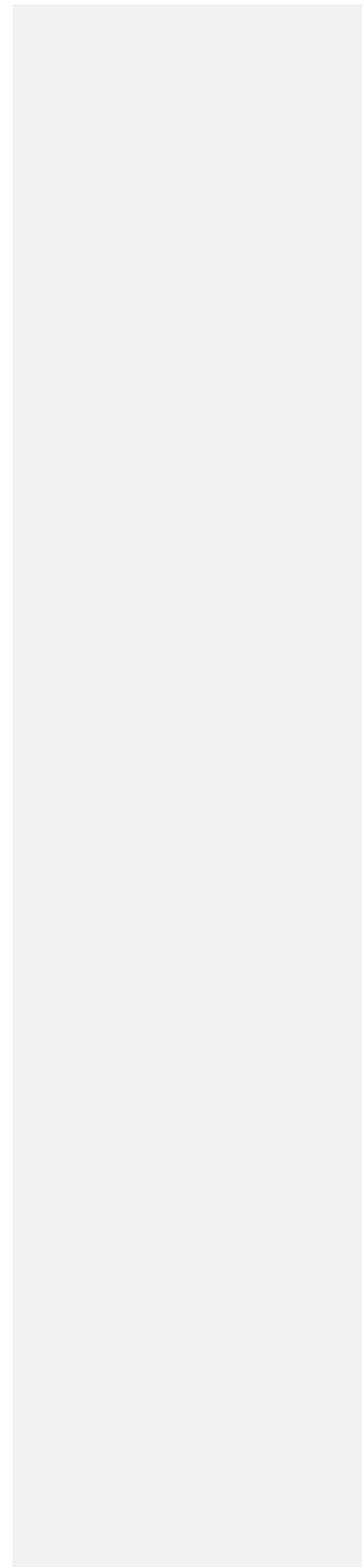
30. My parents support my decision to study abroad in Ecuador.

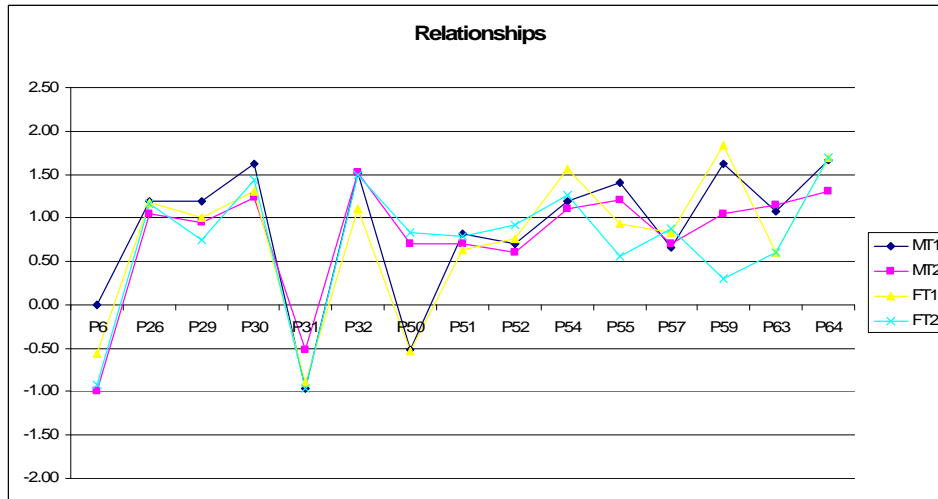
31. It is difficult to socialize with others who do not share my own culture or beliefs.

32. I intend to make friends with other foreign students like myself when abroad.

The purpose of the items focusing on relationships is to assess how 12 weeks in Ecuador affect international students' relationships, specifically the patterns found between men and women. There is a great variance of answers by the participants in the continuum (see Graph 14: Relationships).

Graph 14: Relationships





One out of every three items indicates statistically significant differences either between males and females, or in the overall pre- and post- results. These items include 6, 32, 50, 55, and 59.

a. Dating Ecuadorians

First, there was a significant decrease in the average response for men and women in regards to dating Ecuadorians. This finding is important to the study because it shows the types of relationships international students are struggling with. Furthermore, this finding for women correlates with the literature about the Latin American *machista* society. Students constantly tell the investigator, “I just want to have a friend! I don’t need a boyfriend or another person interested in me. If I had a man as a friend, maybe a relationship could build!” Comments such as this lead the investigator to believe that Ecuadorian men want a superficial fling with female international students and international students are hoping to build friendships and meaningful relationships. The

same could be said for men. The men answered neutrally about their expectations of dating an Ecuadorian, and women responded with an average of -0.56, between neutral and disagreement. In other words, both men and women did not agree that they would date Ecuadorians while they studied abroad. However, when asked 12 weeks later, the average response by men was less favorable, reporting an average of -1.0, in disagreement. The mean for women also decreased to -0.92, a similar result. This implies that while some men and women may have felt neutral or hoped to date Ecuadorians, the majority did not. However, when analyzing the distribution of responses by men and women, there is a distinct difference than what the average shows (see Chart 2: Distribution Chart: Language is a Barrier).

Chart 23: Distribution Chart: Language is a Barrier

	M1	M2	F1	F2
-2 (strongly disagree)	15%	14%	3%	4%
-1 (disagree)	15%	48%	30%	29%
0 (neutral)	19%	0%	17%	13%
1 (agree)	33%	14%	40%	33%
2 (strongly agree)	19%	19%	10%	21%

Tabla con formato

The distribution of responses is vital to analyze this item because it provides further insight to the how both men and women responded. To begin, the distribution proves that although the average may imply students did not date Ecuadorians, this is not the case. Twenty-five percent of women agreed or strongly agreed that they dated Ecuadorians, where as 33% men reported dating an Ecuadorian. Eighty-one percent men and 75% women reported that they did not date Ecuadorians.

b. Making Friends

One item that resulted in statistically significant gender differences is in response in the pre-test when asked if international students anticipated seeking out other foreign students as friends in Ecuador. The men reported the same average in both surveys (+1.52), suggesting that they agreed and strongly agreed that they would seek out friendships with other international students, and 12 weeks later they reported that they did. However, the mean of response for the women was statistically lower in the first survey than the male participants (+1.10). The women anticipated making friends in Ecuador with other international students far less than what the men expected. In the end, the final average for women was similar to the men's (1.50). In other words, both men and women scored similarly: they strongly agreed that they made friends with other international students. Observing international students at USFQ shows exactly this. The International Programs house is in the back of the university and slightly separated from the rest of campus. There you can find only international students studying, talking, and hanging out. There is a concern with how international students intermix and make friends with Ecuadorians. The USFQ environment is not conducive to students meeting and spending time together, and the international programs office attempts have not been successful according to a USFQ staff member.

c. Spending Time with International Students

There was also a significant difference found in the results between the pre- and post- test in regards to students' anticipation about spending the majority of their free time with other U.S. students. The score of the responses in the first survey was less favorable than the average in the second survey. Both men and women responded

between neutral and disagreeing on the continuum when asked if they expected to spend the majority of their free time with other U.S. students (MT1: -0.52; FT1: -0.53). However, there was a statistically significant increase in results in the second survey (MT2: +0.72; FT2: +0.83). These results indicate both men and women agreed that they spent the majority of their time with U.S. students 12 weeks into their study abroad experience.

d. Making Ecuadorian Friends

Directly related to these items is another variable that produced a statistically significant gender difference in the second survey, and the entire population in the pre- and post- tests. Asked if international students intended to make friends with Ecuadorian students at USFQ, the answers varied. When the students first arrived, the women and men were both very positive in their expectations to make Ecuadorian friends (MT1: 1.63; FT1: 1.83). The average response for men and women was between agreeing and strongly agreeing on the continuum. However, the responses in the second survey changed greatly. The average response given by the male participants was 1.05, declining to only agree. Furthermore, the women responded with an average of +0.30, scoring neutrally as to whether or not they made Ecuadorian friends. This has major implications in the study abroad experience in Ecuador, indicating that expectations were not met in the relationship arena. International students at USFQ are constantly seeking out advice from the international programs office as to how to make Ecuadorian friends, and asking why they do not seem able to, according to the Investigator.

e. Establishing Friendships Easily

In relation to the results described above, a significant difference was found in the responses by men and women in both surveys when asked if they are able to establish friendships with people easily. The average of women in both responses was statistically lower than men. The women responded with a mean of +0.93 and then it declined to +0.57 in the second survey. The mean for the men, on the other hand, began at +1.41 and decreased to +1.2 in the second survey. These results suggest that men perceived that they had good social skills and were able to make friends easily; on average, women perceived they were unable to make as friends as easily when compared to the men. It appears that the study abroad in experience made both men and women feel it was more difficult to make friendships in Ecuador than in the United States.

d. Overview: The Literature and Study Findings Coincide on Relationships

The mean of the responses vary on the continuum, demonstrating that the sample scored with negative and positive results. However, most of the items that students agreed to more were answered in the first survey, with averages declining in the second survey. The items that resulted in great statistically significant differences were in regards to dating and friendships. It appears that international students anticipated making more Ecuadorian friends and building less U.S. friendships than what actually occurred while they studied abroad.

The difference of international students' expectation and actual experience suggests a number of things: 1) neither men nor women's expectations of making

Ecuadorian friends were met while studying at USFQ; 2) the average response for women declined far more than men in the post-test, implying that the majority of female international students did not make as many Ecuadorian friends as they had anticipated, and 3) the students' view of their own social and relationship skills declined after living in Ecuador for 12 weeks. Social integration is a concern for international programs offices. First, students need to be advised of the actual social situation at USFQ before studying there. This will reduce students' unrealistic expectations. Second, administrators should attempt to create more interactive programs that will help international and Ecuadorian students connect on a social level.

The results regarding relationships coincide with Twombly's findings (1995). Twombly reported that women found it difficult to make local female friends. These findings are similar to the results in this thesis, tested in five items, suggesting that women did have difficulty making local friends, even more so than men. The female participants anticipated making more Ecuadorian friends than men at the beginning of their study abroad experience. However, when asked again about their social experience in Ecuador, women agreed that they: 1) made less Ecuadorian friends than expected, which appears to be less than men; 2) perceived a decline in their ability to make friends in general; 3) dated less Ecuadorians than the men; and 4) anticipated spending less of their free time with other international students than men, and then reported an increased average that exceeded the results of the male participants. This also coincides with Twombly's findings (1995) that female study abroad students realized the importance of

their relationships with other North American students during and after their international experience.

Two of the nine items were in regards to students' support systems, indicating a difference in how men and women perceived how their friends and family supported their decision to study abroad. Brislin (1981) referred to the importance of support groups for international students. Support groups include friends and family, as well as the orientation and preparation process students receive before arriving to their host countries. The results demonstrate how important this support groups can be for international students. The findings show that men felt less supported by their friends and family than women 12 weeks into their experience abroad. This suggests that while there has been a pattern of difficulties for women, and therefore perhaps greater focuses on related issues, men still need to receive support and attention during this portion of their study abroad experience.

C. Global Perceptions

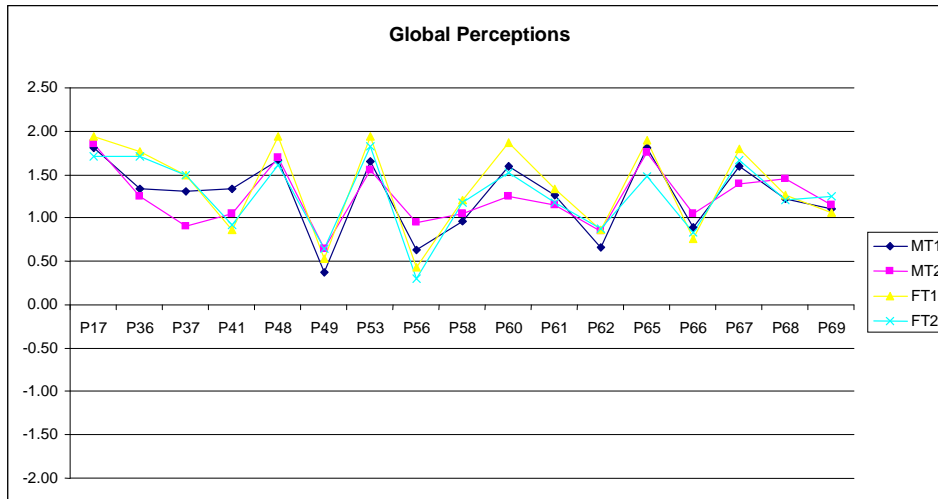
The final category was developed to measure international students' global perceptions and how the study abroad experience changed their knowledge and points of view toward the world. The second highest motivation for students' studying abroad in Ecuador was for the cultural experience. International students come to Ecuador with preconceptions of other cultures and of their own culture in the United States. Students' identities may be challenged by their host families, which can provide an opportunity for students to explore one's national identity by denying or celebrating it. The re-

examination and analysis of being a U.S. citizen, and having a clearer understanding of what the United States represents in the world, may lead students to question who they are. These challenges could also lead students to develop certain perspectives and feelings toward Ecuador and Ecuadorians. This is a particularly intriguing category of questions in 2006, given the international relationship challenges faced by the United States (See Sub-Category 8: Global Perception Items). The Global Perceptions category was developed to analyze any gender differences students' concerning global perspectives, and any changes found between the pre- and post- tests (See Graph 15: Global Perceptions).

Sub-Category 8: Global Perceptions Items

- 17. I anticipate that I will observe different customs and social interactions in Ecuador.
- 36. I perceive the values and beliefs of the people of other countries as valid.**
- 37. I am nonjudgmental of the people of different countries who maintain different views, customs, and traditions.**
- 41. I have a clear understanding of U.S. Culture.
- 48. I respect Ecuadorians.**
- 49. I have a clear understanding of other cultures.
- 53. I am curious about other cultures.**
- 56. I am proud to be from the United States.**
- 58. I understand my own cultural values and biases.
- 60. I have a strong interest in learning about the traditions and customs of Ecuador.**
- 61. I am open-minded about the political system of other countries.
- 62. I have a clear understanding of critical social issues.
- 65. This study abroad experience will contribute to my understanding of other cultures.**
- 66. I have a good understanding of international issues.
- 67. I appreciate human differences.
- 68. I am aware of how culture shapes me.

Graph 15: Global Perceptions



1. Statistically Significant Differences

One in every three items resulted in statistically significant differences. Six of the seven items with statistical differences are the responses compared between men and women, indicating the greatest difference between genders in all of the categories.

a. Values and Beliefs of Others

When the responses were quantified in regard to students' views of the values and beliefs of the people in different countries, the responses were more favorable in the first survey than the averages in the second survey. However, the women overall responded more favorably than men in both surveys (MT1: 1.33; FT1: 1.77; MT2: 1.25; FT2: 1.71). In other words, there is a statistically significant difference between male and female study abroad students concerning how they feel about the validity of the values and beliefs of people in different countries. Studying abroad for 12 weeks did not decrease the gender gap. Overall, men reported a statistically significant lower average than

women, suggesting that they do not perceive the values of others as being as valid as women. The impact of studying abroad on international students and the process and cycle of their feelings relate to this finding. Students become frustrated with the Ecuadorian culture, customs, and behaviors. “I just don’t understand why Ecuadorians act this way!” is commonly heard from students. These frustrations lead students to value the perceptions and beliefs of Ecuadorians less in the middle of the semester abroad.

In relation to the item previously described, there is a significant difference in the responses between men and women in the second survey when asked if they perceived themselves as judgmental of people from different countries who maintain different views, customs and traditions. The average response women provided in both surveys did not change in this sub-category, yet the average of the men decreased considerably in the second survey. In the first survey, the women ranked more favorably in their perception of themselves as less judgmental than men (FT1: 1.5; FT2: 1.5; MT1: 1.33). However, there was a 0.41 decline in average for the men in the post-test (MT2: 0.9). These findings imply that men perceived themselves to be more judgmental than women toward people of different cultures, customs, and beliefs, such as Ecuadorians, after studying abroad in Ecuador for 12 weeks.

b. Respecting Ecuadorians

When asked if international students respect Ecuadorians, the average response in the first survey shows a statistically significant gender difference in the pre-test. In the

first survey, the women responded far more favorable than the men (FT1: 1.93; MT1: 1.67). This difference indicates that while both men and women agreed or strongly agreed, the men viewed their respect for Ecuadorians as significantly lower than women. In the post-test 12 weeks later, the gap between the averages of men and women narrowed, with the responses for men increasing and those for women declined (FT2: 1.61; MT2: 1.70). These results show that the responses of women varied greater than men, scoring more extreme averages. This suggests that the perception women had regarding their respect for Ecuadorians was influenced more negatively than men in the 12 weeks they lived in Ecuador.

c. Curiosity of Other Cultures, Traditions and Customs

A statistically significant difference was found in the results when comparing how men and women responded to their curiosity of other cultures in the first survey. The average response between men and women was that they agree or strongly agree that they are curious about other cultures, even though there is a statistically significant difference between the men and women (MT1: 1.65; FT1: 1.93). This suggests that women perceive themselves to be more curious toward other cultures than men. However, when followed up in the post-test, the statistically significant gender difference did not exist, even though both men and women's responses declined (MT2: 1.55; FT2: 1.83). These findings indicate students' felt a decline in how much they respect Ecuadorians men after studying abroad for 12 weeks. When the USFQ international programs staff during the semester encourages students to go on an outing that will teach students about the Ecuadorian culture, responses are mixed. Some students enthusiastically participate in

any event or suggestion to take full advantage of their study abroad experience. Other students comment, "I just don't care anymore!" Comments such as these usually come later on in the semester and correspond with this data result.

The results regarding how international students perceived their interest in learning about the traditions and customs of Ecuador also showed a statistically significant difference between men and women, and the results for the entire sample between the pre- and post-tests. The answers for men and women in both surveys were relatively high on the continuum compared to other items. However, there was a statistical decline in responses for male and female participants in the second survey. In the pre-test, women responded more favorably than the men in regards to their interest of learning about the customs and traditions in Ecuador (MT1: 1.59; FT1: 1.87). The result in the second survey declined statistically for both men and women, demonstrating a statistical difference between the responses for both genders (MT2: 1.25; FT2: 1.52). It can be concluded that in 12 weeks in Ecuador, both men and women's lost some interest in learning about the Ecuadorian culture after living there for 12 weeks. These results are again directly related the culture shock, for students in the hostility stage will loose desire to learn and adapt to the culture of their host country.

d. Studying Abroad does not Increase Cross-Cultural Understandings

Asked if international students thought their study abroad experience would contribute to their understanding of other cultures, the results quantified as agree and

strongly agree (MT1: 1.81; FT1: 1.90). However, when followed up 12 weeks later, students results suggest that they felt their understanding of other cultures declined (MT2: 1.75; FT2: 1.48). There was a great decrease in the results of the women, suggesting that women felt they understood other cultures less. As Disraeli (1845) said, “To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge”.

e. Being a U.S. Citizen

There is a statistically significant gender difference in the responses concerning students’ perceptions on how they feel about being from the United States. Asked if they were proud to be from the U.S.A., the scores declined for women and became more favorable for men after living in Ecuador for 12 weeks. In the pre-test, the gender gap was smaller than in the post-test (MT1: 0.63; FT1: 0.43; MT2: 0.95; FT2: 0.30). These results suggest that the entire sample on average felt neutral or agreed to be proud of being from the United States. However, 12 weeks in Ecuador had a great influence on their perceptions and feelings of being U.S. citizens. It appears that the women became less proud and the men more proud of being from the United States after their experience in Ecuador. These results indicate that men become more nationalistic throughout their study abroad experience, strengthening their ideas and views they have of the United States, whereas women challenge their identities more throughout the semester abroad.

As various authors stated that abroad experiences increase students' global understanding (Dwyer et al., 1996; Hadis, 2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Lewis et al., 2005; Mestenhauser, 1976). Dwyer et al. informs that these abroad experiences increase international students' understanding of other cultures. The results coincide with the literature, for only one item shows a significant decline of responses for the entire population in the second survey.

Both men and women reported a statistically significantly lower score of their curiosity of other cultures, and their interest in learning about the traditions and customs of Ecuador after being in Ecuador for 12 weeks. The average for men corresponding to these items was statistically lower than women. When considering women as an entity, they responded slightly more negatively than men regarding how they respect Ecuadorians, as well as their perceived understanding of other cultures.

When comparing the responses of female participants to male participants, there are some patterns to be acknowledged in regards to students' global perceptions:

- 1) A significant difference between men and women was found in their perceived respect for Ecuadorians in the pre-test, which did not occur in the post-test.
- 2) Men reported a significantly lower curiosity of other cultures, as well as interest in learning about other cultures than women in the first survey. This difference was not present in the results of the second survey.

These results show that while men perceived their global interest as significantly lower than women, the gender gap lessens after studying in Ecuador for 12 weeks. These

findings suggest the importance of international education departments motivating and promoting men to study abroad. There may not be as great of an interest for male students to study abroad before doing so, but living abroad narrows the gap between women and men's interest in understanding diverse people and cultures.

There was a statistically significant gender difference in the results of how students perceive the values and beliefs of the people of other countries as valid, with women responding with a higher average. These findings were present in both tests. Men also reported agreeing significantly more to being judgmental toward diverse views, customs and traditions than women 12 weeks into their study abroad experience.

While the results for men were found to be significantly lower than women on some items in the global perceptions category, their perceived U.S. identity is significantly higher in regards to being proud of being from the USA than women after living in Ecuador for 12 weeks. The results for how women felt to be U.S. citizens declined drastically from when they first arrived to Ecuador to 12 weeks later. The men's responses were the opposite, becoming more positive. Neither gender responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that they were proud to be from the United States. This finding could be linked to Spaeth's recognition of foreigners looking down on North Americans (1997). Various authors wrote about the world's negative view of people from the United States, and if international students felt this, it would affect how they feel about being a U.S. citizen (Hall, 1981; Spaeth, 1997; Tonkin, et al., 2004). The interesting result of this item is the difference between men and women.

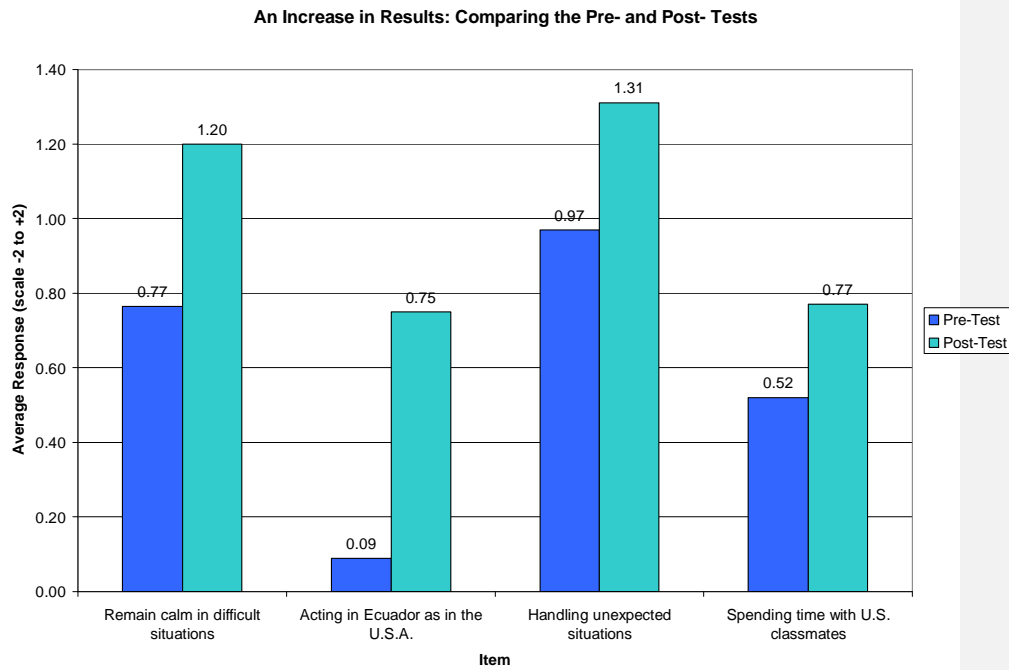
VII. Discussion of Key Quantitative Findings

This overview helps readers understand the items that show statistically significant difference between men and women, as well the differences in results between the pre- and post- tests. The previous discussion of each category gave a detailed picture of the findings in each category, discussing the data and literature based on the results located in extreme positions when compared to other items in the category, or items with statistically significant differences. This discussion provides concluding remarks about the statistically significant quantitative findings.

A. Study Abroad: A Positive Impact on Students: Pre- and Post-Tests Results

Three out of the four statistically significant items increase from the pre- to post-test come from items in the personal development category; the last item showing a statistical increase that coincides with interpersonal skills. Study abroad participants are able to cope with unexpected and difficult calmly and with more ease, act in Ecuador as they can in the United States, and they spend time with other international students (see Graph 16: Statistically Significant Increase in Post-Test Results).

Graph 16: Statistically Significant Increase in Post-Test Results



Study abroad participants are able to remain calm in difficult situations and handle unexpected encounters more easily due to their study abroad experience. These coping skill changes were expected based on the existing literature. Students in Ecuador are confronted with difficult and unexpected situations that are due to cultural and language differences. Multiple encounters of this type of encounter help students develop conflict management skills, awareness, and the ability to manage and solve conflicts. These coping skills will be a valuable asset to all students, for they will be able to manage various conflicts and difficult situations in both their personal and professional lives.

International students are able to behave in Ecuador as they do in the United States. There are fewer differences in the Ecuadorian and North American culture than students had expected. Quito is a modern city with many conveniences, stores, and restaurants that would be found in a U.S. city. Furthermore, the mentality of Ecuadorians is modern, tending to accept differences. The host families that students live with have experience with international students and usually treat them as independent college students.

International students seek out other international students to be their friends. It is important that students have a support system that allows students to share their experiences with others. It is common to hear international students say, “I am so frustrated with this culture! I just want someone to talk to who understands!” Building a support net with other international students provides this outlet. Culture shock symptoms in the hostility stage are based on negative feeling toward students’ host countries and feeling misunderstood by their hosts. International students naturally recognize the need to bond with others who are experiencing the same feelings and thoughts, and who come from similar backgrounds.

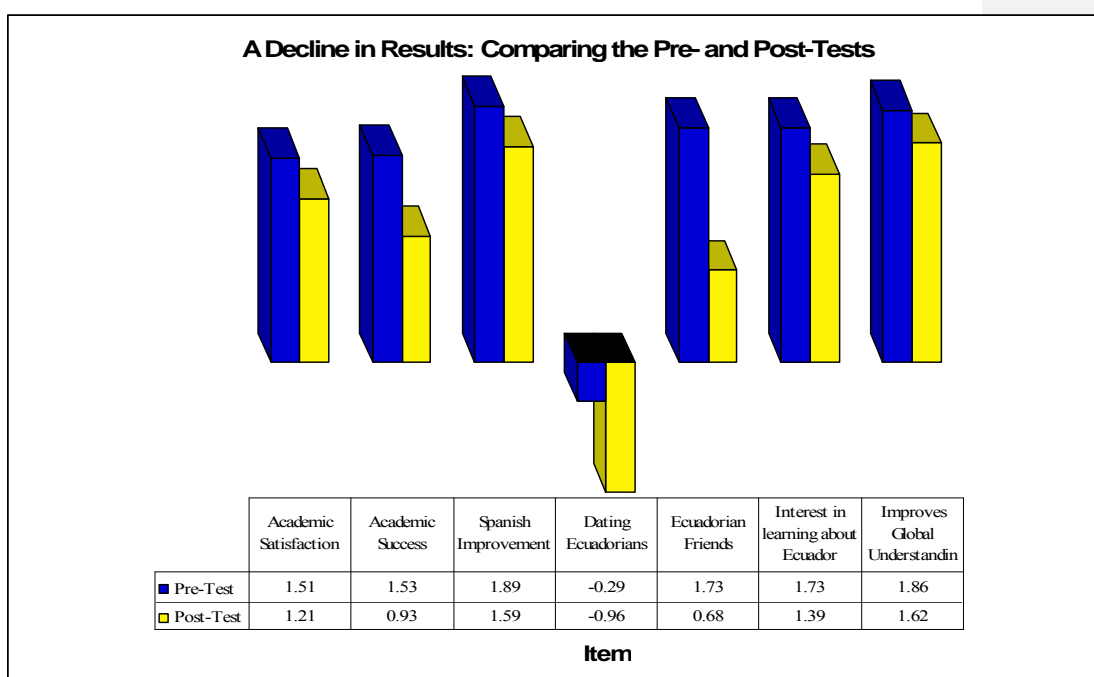
B. Statistically Significant Decline: Pre- and Post- Tests

The literature expresses that one outcome from study abroad experiences is personal growth and development. However, seven items reflect a decrease in scores in the second survey when comparing the overall population (see Graph 17: A Decline in

Results: Comparing Pre-and Post-Test). Students feel studying abroad in Ecuador did not 1) improve their Spanish fluency as much as they had hoped and expected, 2) increase their global understanding or 3) positively affect their interest in learning more about Ecuador. Furthermore, students feel that USFQ did not live up to their academic expectations. International students feel less satisfied with their academic experience in Ecuador than in the United States and reported that they had less influence over their own academic success than they had in their home institutions. Finally, the entire population made fewer Ecuadorian friends and dated Ecuadorians less they had anticipated.

Graph 17: A Decline in Results: Comparing Pre-and Post-Tests

Con formato: Fuente: Negrita



The items that declined in the post-test suggest different assumptions. To begin, 12 weeks in Ecuador marks students entering into the *hostility* stage of culture shock stage (Gullahorn, et. al., 1963). Culture shock explains students' negative feelings about

their academic performances, language acquisition, global understandings, and friendships because they have feelings of discomfort, annoyance, frustration, tension, and embarrassment in Ecuador at this time (Brislin, 1981; Desai, n/d; Gullahorn, et. al., 1963). If the study and surveys had been administered throughout the semester or at the end, results might be different and more positive.

These components are all related. Students who want to learn a second language need to spend their free time practicing that language with native speakers. However, these international students do not socially interact with Ecuadorian students, and therefore do not learn about the Ecuadorian culture or improve their Spanish skills as much as they had wanted to. International students are secluded and have built similar groups of friends to what they have in the United States, contributing to students' diminished desire to learn about Ecuador, and not facilitating a greater global understanding. The more time students spend with other international students, the less desire they have to learn about Ecuador.

International students' expectations may have been set too high at the beginning of their study abroad experience and it may be unrealistic to achieve Spanish fluency in one semester. However, USFQ as the home institution also could do more to help the students. The atmosphere at USFQ is not as conducive for international students to adapt socially with Ecuadorians due to the great amount of international students and the difference in the U.S. and Ecuadorian cultures. Students who are unable to integrate with Ecuadorians are less likely to practice and improve their Spanish skills as they had

expected. Not only are students studying with other international students, they are also taking classes in Spanish that may be above their understanding abilities. Together, students' motivation and therefore their perception of academic success can be responsible for the decline in responses. Furthermore, some international students are motivated to study abroad not primarily for academic purposes, but in order to understand foreign cultures, improve language skills, gain global perspective, and for personal development (Cheiffo, et al., 2004; Freed, 1998; Hadis, 2005; Hopkins, 1999; Kitsantas, 2004; Lewis, et al., 2005; Mendelson, 2004; and Mestenhauser, 1976). If students are not as concerned with grades and motivated in their classes, the perception of their success in the classroom will be effected.

Various authors support the notion that study abroad experiences have a positive impact on students' success in academic performance and language acquisition (Dwyer, et al., 2004; Hadis, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Lewis, et al., 2005). The findings of this study were more negative than expected when compared to the literature. However, most of the literature was related to how students responded in their academic lives during and after returning to the United States. In contrast, this current investigation focuses on the students' perceptions of their academic success 12 weeks into their study abroad experience.

C. Statistically Significant Gender Differences

The greatest contribution this thesis makes to the literature is the results of the similarities and differences in male and female international students, and the patterns

found in these differences. These results provide international education offices with a more in-depth understanding of their students studying abroad, as well as the needs of each gender. The gender results found that men and women responded differently in items related to interpersonal skills and global perceptions.

1. Nationalistic or Global Citizens

a. Global Citizens

Patterns in global perceptions are identifiable between men and women. Women tend to be active global citizens, whereas men appear more nationalistic (See Graphs 18 and 19). When students first arrived to Ecuador, men and women had an overall positive global perception. However, women were more enthusiastic about the study abroad experience and new cultural encounters than men. Women respect Ecuadorians and diverse values and beliefs more than men. Furthermore, women tend to be more curious of other cultures and interested in learning about them.

Graph 18: Pre-Test: Women Respond Significantly Higher than Men

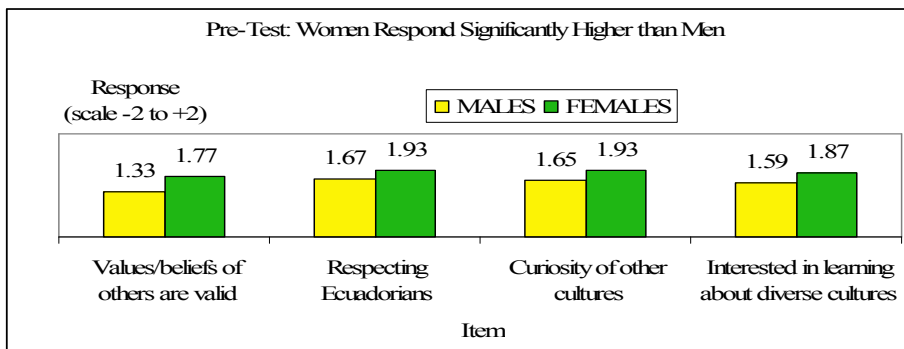


Chart 43: Significant Male Findings: Pre-Test

Item	M1	F1	Difference in answers (M1-F1)	M2	F2	Difference in answers (M2-F2)
Values and Beliefs of Others are Valid	1.33	1.77	0.44	1.25	1.71	0.46
Respecting Ecuadorians	1.67	1.93	0.26	1.7	1.61	0.19
Curiosity of Other Cultures	1.65	1.93	0.28	1.55	1.83	0.29
Interested in Learning about other cultures	1.59	1.87	0.28	1.25	1.52	0.27

*scores based on Likert scale: -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree)

The gender gap between male and female international students concerning students' global perceptions declined after studying abroad in Ecuador for 12 weeks, with fewer items showing statistically significant differences in the post-test (see Graph 19: Post-Test: Women Respond Significantly Higher than Men). In this case, it is important for international programs to encourage and seek out male students for study abroad programs. In the post-test, women remained more positive about the values and beliefs of others being valid, and appear to be less judgmental of those different than themselves than men.

Graph 19: Post-Test: Women Respond Significantly Higher than Men

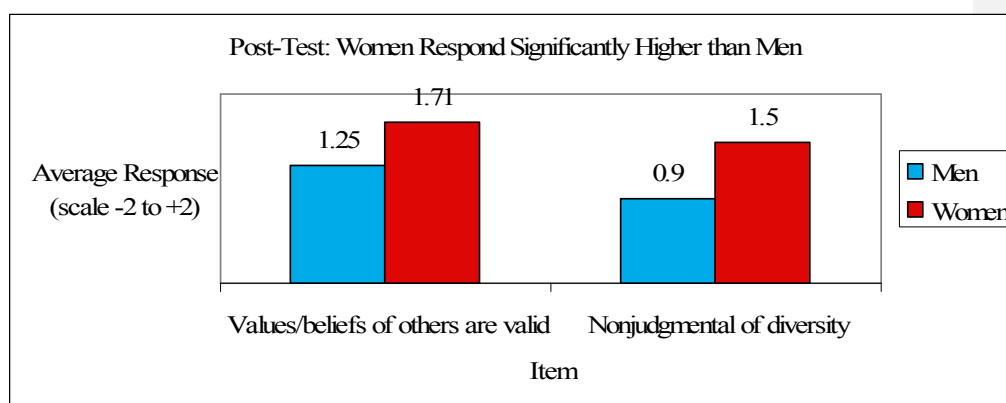


Chart 54: Significant Male Findings: Post-Test

Con formato: Fuente: Negrita

Item	M1	F1	Difference in answers (M1-F1)	M2	F2	Difference in answers (M2-F2)
Nonjudgmental of Diversity	1.31	1.5	0.19	0.9	1.5	0.6

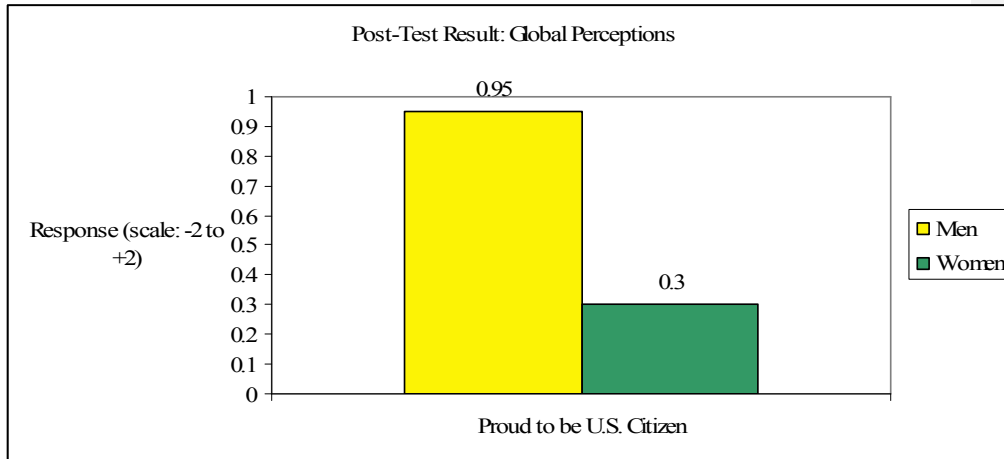
*scores based on Likert scale: -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree)

Men tend to be less enthusiastic about studying abroad, learning about global views and diversity, and having cross-cultural experiences. Women are more open-minded to diverse cultural beliefs and behaviors. They tend to be less judgmental of people's views and actions, whereas men are apt to be more set in their ways and beliefs. The Ecuadorian culture, being old-fashioned in the dating scene, may also contribute to male students' nationalistic attitudes. Men are still expected to open doors for women, act as gentlemen, ask women out for a date, etcetera.

b. Being Nationalistic

The findings show that men tend to be more nationalistic than women (see Graph 20: Post-Test Result: Global Perceptions).

Graph 20: Post-Test Result: Global Perceptions

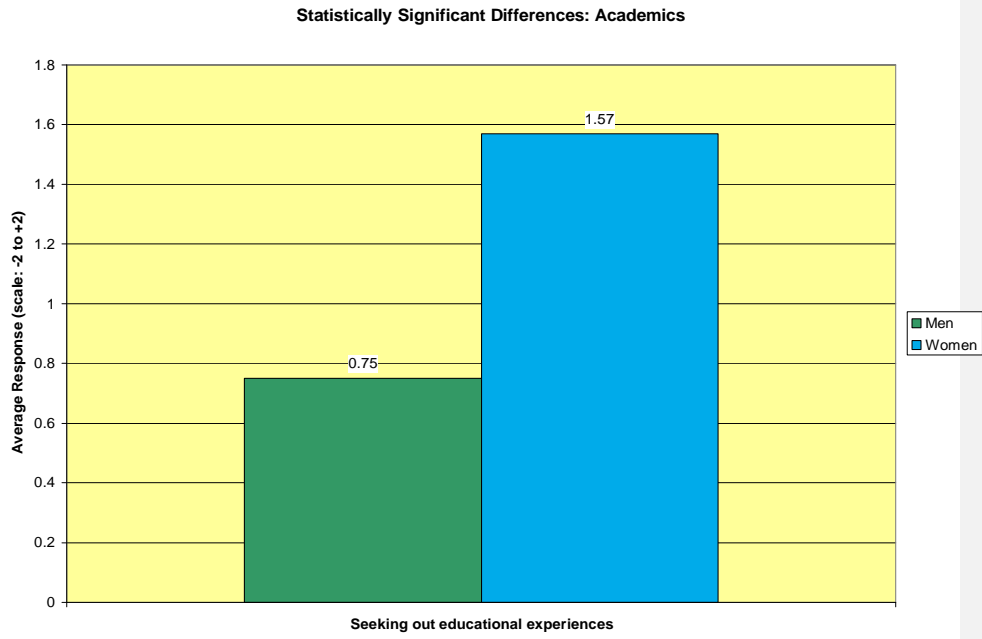


Female students are more sensitive to the negative references made by their Ecuadorian hosts to the United States. They become more easily frustrated and disappointed with the United States, its political decisions and its interaction with other countries. This coincides with literature previously mentioned, which states that international students' hosts will have negative views of the United States and express them openly (Hall, 1961; Spaeth, 1997, Tonkin, 2007). Women also like and connect with the Ecuadorian culture more. Although the literature states that it is difficult for women to live in *machista* societies such as Ecuador, women also appreciate and feel good about the attention they receive from Ecuadorian men and how they are treated. The initial kiss when greeting someone is also enjoyed more by women. These cultural differences lead to a stronger tie to diverse cultures.

2. Women seek out more Educational Challenges than Men

A great difference between men and women was found in the results in the statement, "I actively seek out challenging academic experiences" (see Graph 21: Statistically Significant Differences: Academics).

Graph 21: Statistically Significant Differences: Academics



	M1	F1	Difference in answers (M1-F1)	M2	F2	Difference in answers (M2-F2)
Chart 6: Significant Male Findings: Post-Test						
<u>Seeking out Academic Challenges</u>	0.85	1.2	0.35	0.75	1.57	0.82

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*scores based on Likert scale: -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree)

	M1	F1	Difference in answers (M1-F1)	M2	F2	Difference in answers (M2-F2)
Chart 5: Significant Male Findings: Post-Test						
<u>Seeking out Academic Challenges</u>	0.85	1.2	0.35	0.75	1.57	0.82

*scores based on Likert scale: -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree)

It seems that many U.S. students look at study abroad experiences as a break from their daily tasks, and many international students either skip classes or complain about the

difficult courses. Some students also choose to study easier courses in their host institutions, which can lead to less motivation and desire to seek out challenging academic experiences. Students begin to make new friends, learn a new language, and travel a country that has wonders to discover and they lose their motivation to seek out academic challenges. USFQ is basically a commuter school, which does not provide many extra curricular activities as an institution for international students to become involved in. These results suggest that men are studying in Ecuador for a more social experience than women. Men are able to socially connect with others and thrive in Ecuador, which adds an additional distraction away from academics that women may not experience.

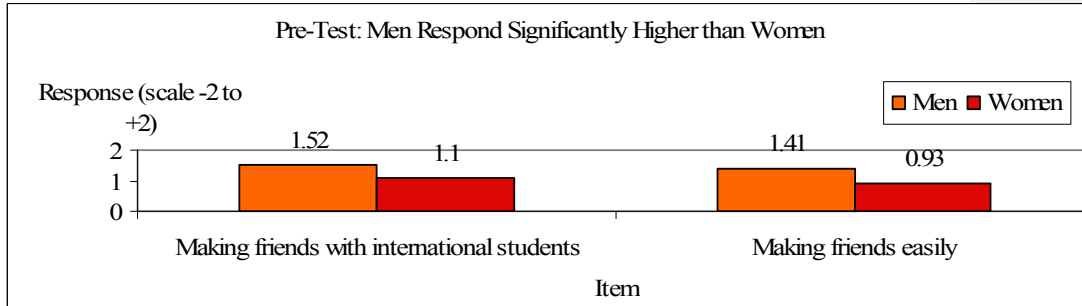
3. Relationships in Ecuador

There is a pattern of significant differences between men and women in regards to relationships. Men feel they are able to socialize more easily in Ecuador than women. The results show men rating themselves higher than women in their abilities to make friends in general, with other international students, and with Ecuadorians (see Graphs 22 and 23: Men Respond Higher than Women).

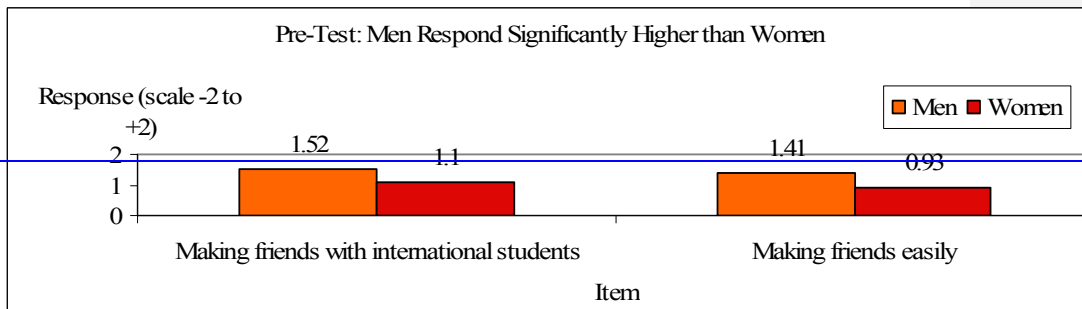
[Graph 22: Pre-Test: Men Respond Higher than Women](#)

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Graph 22: Pre-Test: Men Respond Higher than Women



Graph 23: Post-Test: Men Respond Higher than Women

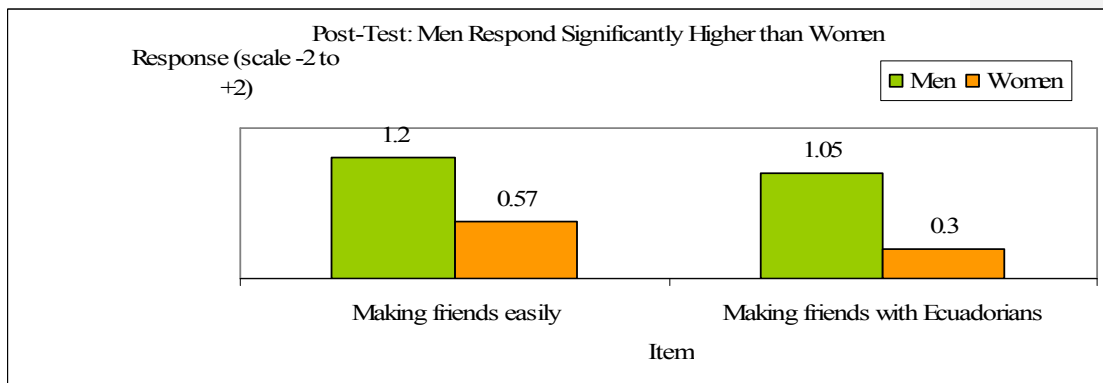


Chart 67 Significant Gender Findings:

Relationships

Item	M1	F1	Difference (M1-F1)	M2	F2	Difference (M2-F2)
Making friends with International Students	1.52	1.1	0.41	1.52	1.5	0.02
Making Friends Easily	1.41	0.93	0.38	1.2	0.57	0.63
Making Friends with Ecuadorians	1.63	1.83	2.0	1.05	0.3	0.75

*scores based on Likert scale: -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree)

Women expected to make less international friends than men when they first arrived to Ecuador. Furthermore, women made less Ecuadorian friends than men while they studied abroad. Male U.S. international students socially thrive in Ecuador, whereas women find making friends more difficult. Ecuador is a *machista* society, where men are able to make more friends and build relationships more easily. The expectations that women had about the relationships they might develop in Ecuador were unmet.

These results suggest that women found social integration to be more difficult than men in Ecuador. Anderson (2003) and Twombly (1995) wrote case studies about how women struggle to make meaningful relationships with natives during their semesters abroad. They noted that women struggle to make friendships with both Latino men and women, and they lean upon other international students for friendships. The participants in this study acted in similar ways. Female participants found that the Ecuadorian society was closed to friendships with other female Ecuadorians, and that men only wanted to be their boyfriends or have a quick encounter, rather than building a meaningful relationship.

In short, this study has found that the entire population benefited from studying abroad by improving their abilities to cope with and manage unexpected situations better. Some expectations that these international students had were unmet, such as the friendships and relationship that they developed with Ecuadorians, the amount of Spanish they learned, and their global understanding. Furthermore, students' felt that their academic satisfaction, the role they played in their academic success, and interest in learning about Ecuador declined after studying abroad and attending USFQ for 12 weeks. The most fascinating finding was the gender difference in the development of relationship and global perceptions. Men tend to be more nationalistic and women appear to be more globally-minded. Women tend to study abroad more for the academic challenge whereas men appear to thrive in the social arena in Ecuador. These significant findings are important to international programs to consider when developing support systems for students.

VIII. The Institutional Perspective: Interviews

The quantitative findings provide insight as to what international students are experiencing and feeling. The data could develop recommendations for international programs and study abroad advisors. However, it is important to understand how international students adapt to Ecuador and cope with cultural differences based on the perspective of USFQ's international programs staff. The International Programs Office staff was asked the following questions in order to gauge the professional opinion about gender issues and study abroad experiences:

1. If you had to make a top five list of the problems international students encounter, what would they be?
2. Are any of these problems gender related?
3. In your experience working with international students, do you think men or women have more difficulty studying in Ecuador, and why?
4. What can IPO do to better prepare, orient and support international students before, upon, and during their semester abroad in Ecuador to minimize these problems?

The responses to these questions provide insight as to what international students actually seek help for, as well as the administrative perspective of what international students are dealing with. The questions are designed to provoke thought as to how to improve the preparation, orientation, and support during a semester in Ecuador related to the concerns the staff members vocalize.

A. The Perceived Problems of International Students

The Assistant Director believed that the general problems the International Programs team feels that international students encounter are the following:

1. Adjusting to live with a host family and respect the “family rules”.
2. Adapting to a “big city” (Quito), that has “big” problems and no way to solve those because of the various continuous changes in the municipal system.

3. Adjusting to be “different” among Quiteños.
4. Studying in a new environment, trying to understand a little bit about “Why Ecuadorian students cheat”.
5. Making Ecuadorian friends.
6. Dealing, during the first month of their stay, with the Ecuadorian bureaucracy while registering their visas with almost no Spanish.
7. Accepting that “police” in Ecuador is not always a synonym of security.
8. Adapting to the new food, traditions, new political system.
9. Understanding the difference in communication.

B. Major Areas of Concern

There are four major areas of concern that the interviewees mention international students face, including academic struggles, social integration difficulties, housing conflicts, and adaptation and coping difficulties. Based on these concerns, the International Programs members suggest some ways to minimize the challenges international students face.

1. Academic Concerns

Asked about his experiences with international students, the Director replied that his experience is limited to academic issues, such as students not going to class, wanting to drop class, trying to return to the United States before the end of the semester, and attempting to gain academic permission. At the beginning of the semester, there are usually registration problems for international students. In order to provide extra support for students, USFQ has developed a mentor system for international students. This

mentor is someone assigned to students that help them register for classes and are there for the students throughout the semester. However, the mentor system has not been functioning as well as planned:

Our mentor system is a problem. International students only go to their mentors if they have a problem, and rarely do they actually go. We wanted the relationship to develop so students would go to them, instead of coming only to our office to vent. (Menking, 2007)

Students seem to rely solely on the international programs office when they have a problem, rather than taking advantage of the extra support they have been offered.

Another academic concern that The Director raised is in regards to the Spanish courses available:

There is a general concern that there are no Spanish classes offered at the intermediate level: you either take a basic Spanish course or a course in Spanish, such as history or anthropology. They don't make any special considerations for these (international) students. (Menking 2007)

This is a large issue due to the great number of international students and their goals to learn Spanish while abroad. Many students come to the IPO in order to drop a course because of the Spanish; "I can't understand the teacher" is a common complaint students make. The Assistant Director notes, "When students have to read a lot in Spanish, they can't take such a large academic load because they can't manage the courses in Spanish". She recognizes this as a positive attribute of international students who are able to foresee their limitations and abilities, while at the same time being a struggle for students because they are unable to fulfill the credits their home institution needs.

There is also a pattern of the types of international students that study at USFQ. These students are usually social science majors, which tend to take the same topics and subjects for their classes, such as Anthropology, Spanish Culture, and Spanish. The Coordinator notes, “The few times that we have engineering or economic students, [they] don’t have this problem” of social integration.

The Director feels that USFQ provides an academic link between students’ home universities. He stated, “They speak the same language in academic quality”, referring to the terminal degrees many USFQ professors have and the punctuality of classes that are not found in other Ecuadorian universities. However, this can also provide a reverse feeling for students. For example, the Coordinator, an Ecuadorian, feels that the atmosphere at USFQ is too Americanized, “Students feel they are living in a bubble. Everything is different [at USFQ] than at other Ecuadorian universities. We have such a heavy influence from the American universities and education system” (Guerrero, 2007).

The academic concern is directly related to how international students are able to socially integrate into Ecuadorian society. The Assistant Director comments, “If the international student is not in your class, it is hard to be friends with them or even talk to them” (Pazmino, 2007). On the other hand, it is difficult for international students who know little Spanish to start a conversation with an Ecuadorian stranger they have never formally met.

2. Social Integration Concerns

An overall concern the staff presented was how international students integrate socially with Ecuadorians. The Director recognizes USFQ as a commuter campus. He believes that other Ecuadorian universities located in Quito may not have as many social integration problems because students tend to spend more time after classes on or around campus. At USFQ, students complain that they are not welcome into the social circles. They regularly comment, “The Ecuadorian students are friendly on campus but they don’t invite us [international students] to get a drink or go out after school.” The Director feels the strongest factor to explain this situation is that USFQ “is an upper class, closed society that they don’t just let people into their circles” (Menking, 2007). As a male North American, the Director feels that the Ecuadorian society is closed, even toward him.

“How can we get your students to integrate with ours?” is a question the Director asks directors of other universities. The answer to this question has yet to be found. While Ecuador appears to have a closed society, the Director feels strongly that international students have to take more initiative in developing relationships with Ecuadorians: “I watch international students all day long hanging out together and not trying to connect with Ecuadorians” (Menking, 2007). The Ecuadorian Coordinator also recognizes this same problem: “International students create their own groups; sometimes we try to integrate them in the orientation, but this rarely successful. It is clear that it is not a language barrier, but rather due to cultural differences” (Guerrero, 2007). He feels that Ecuadorian USFQ students also lack interest in becoming friends with international students as they are only temporarily part of the social fabric. The Assistant Director feels

that while both Americans and Ecuadorians must make an effort, the onus is on the visitor:

Some of them don't try to make Ecuadorian friends or maybe they think it is too difficult; they encounter many difficulties in trying to make Ecuadorian friends ... maybe the culture is too difficult. Not all international students have this problem, and much of it has to do with personality. There are so many international students, especially Americans, that they don't need to try harder to make friends. (Pazmino, 2007)

Despite the efforts the IPO has made to help organize events and trips, students still do not integrate well. The trips that IPO plans for both international and Ecuadorians students are not successful mixers because it tends to be only the international students who want to travel; rarely do Ecuadorians attend.

Part of the social integration concern generates from the vast amounts of international students on campus. Sometimes students complain that there are too many international students, which make up a large percentage of the entire student population. The Assistant Director suggests international students just don't try to make Ecuadorian friends as much because there are so many international students, "It is hard to try to do something with Ecuadorians when you have 200 other Americans here" (Pazmino, 2007). According to the Coordinator, a running commentary of foreigners and international alike at USFQ is that "I've never seen that many *gringos* [Americans] together in my entire life!" Many international students were not expecting this; rather they anticipated studying in authentic Ecuadorian culture and school. On the other hand, international students were not anticipating having so many international students as their classmates
| either.

The social integration concern is taken seriously and the solution remains unsolved. The International Programs Office has tried to help students integrate with Ecuadorian students in a number of ways. First, on-campus clubs have been organized by IPO and Student Government to help students mix, such as the salsa club. According to the Coordinator, this club was successful because there was a common interest for all students to learn how to dance; male Ecuadorians were not there just to meet girls. There was also the *Conversation Buddy* program. This program was developed for international students who wanted to improve their Spanish, and Ecuadorians who wanted to improve their English. Students were to exchange lessons of their native languages, improving their language skills while making a friend. Unfortunately, this program was not as successful as the salsa club. “Ecuadorians are inefficient and don’t keep the meeting they make with the international students. International students have really high expectations but just got frustrated because their Ecuadorian partner didn’t show up”, sighed the Coordinator.

3. Housing Concerns

All IPO staff mentioned housing as a concern for international students, including personality conflicts with the host family. Students often feel neglected or at the other extreme, over-protected. Complaints by Americans include the feeling that their families are hosting them as a business rather than because they are interested in the student. After working at IPO for 16 years, the Assistant Director thinks this is the greatest difficulty for students. It appears that the adjustment into Ecuadorian culture is challenging for international students, especially living with host families. According to

the Coordinator, international students are usually independent and live on their own in the United States. “They come here and live with host families, conflicting with their host parents because they feel the families are protecting and taking care of them too much. If students could choose, they would probably choose to live by themselves and not with host families” he remarks. Living with host families may be a challenge for international students, but there is a strong motivation behind it. “Most programs make it mandatory for students to live with host families”, explained the Coordinator. “They do this for students to practice Spanish and understand the culture, an important part of the study abroad experience”. Despite this, he believes that if students had this opportunity to choose to live independently, they probably would.

a. The impact of Gender on Housing Issues

Asked if men or women have more difficulties living with host families, the responses were mixed. The Assistant Director was confident that female students find it more challenging to live with host families and notes that more girls change families during the semester. She explains this is probably because “Families are probably more open to allow boys to do more things than girls, because that is the way society is ... parents don’t allow their daughter to do certain things, and that is reflected on the international students” (Pazmino, 2007). She continues to explain that parents try to be more protective toward girls and international students don’t like that. Interestingly enough, her colleagues’ view differs, and according to them, “Male international students have more conflicts with their host families, they find it difficult to adapt, and it is more complicated for them” (Guerrero, 2007).

In regards to the concerns mentioned with host families, the Assistant Director suggests the International Programs Office should have a stronger group of host families, “Families should really understand what hosting an international student should be” (Pazmino, 2007). In order to do this, the suggestion to monitor host families closer, provide more in-depth trainings for host families, including a lecture by someone previously living with a host family in Ecuador, and reiterate to students that the staff is available to talk with them in event of any concerns.

4. Safety Concerns

Safety is another issue that international students deal with and this office provides support for students. Students feel comfortable coming into the office to talk about their problems, and the website has been helpful for other international programs administrative workers in the preparation process of academic success

5. Gender Differences

The entire IPO staff responded confidently that female international students encounter far more difficulties than males, and come into the office more than male students do for help. Their stories and responses coincide, reiterating the problems female international students encounter, and not mentioning difficulties specific to men.

The Coordinator is most adamant in saying that females have more difficulties than males during their semester abroad in regards to emergencies, safety, dealing with the opposite sex and *machismo*. He states confidently, “It is harder for girls, absolutely, without any doubts!” (Guerrero, 2007). Concurring with the Coordinator, the Assistant Director states, “I think it is harder for women. They have to live in a *machista* society; female North Americans are more aggressive and try to fight for the ‘women rights’ from a different perspective. They come here and feel that “being blonde” in Ecuador is hard” (Pazmino, 2007). The other staff is also in agreement: “I think it is probably easier for men. I think girls are too picky, they complain about everything, and men are easier going” (Castelo, 2007).

Aside from these specific issues of women living in a *machismo* society and having conflicts with Ecuadorian men, the staff did not see any other major differences between men and women’s study abroad experience. Only one staff member provided advantages of studying abroad as a woman and as a man. “Women are more self confident and come with a different attitude. The majority know why they want a study abroad experience. On the other hand, men are more open to new ‘experiences’ and they tend not to judge or criticize” (Pazmino, 2007).

a. Relationships while Studying Abroad

One gender difference the IPO staff sees in male and female international students is in regards to relationships with Ecuadorians. The Coordinator feels that some male Ecuadorians are interested in the *gringas*, or North American females, only as a fun

pastime, believing the *gringas* are here just to find a boyfriend or party, rather than for another interest such as studying. He commented that female students constantly ask, “Why can’t I have a male friend, a real friend, not a boyfriend?” (Guerrero, 2007). The Coordinator has never heard a male international students complain of this problem.

Female international students also have a difficulty adapting to the *machismo* society and often react using termination, rather than negotiation, methods of coping. “Two years ago two women left before the semester ended because male Ecuadorian students were making sexual innuendos toward them”, remembered the Assistant. Although this is a difficult situation for international students, she also believes it is the way students interpret behaviors, “You are in another country; you have to ask yourself, ‘Is this normal behavior?’” (Castelo, 2007). These actions are common in Ecuador and while they shouldn’t be taken lightly, they are part of the society. The attention women receive from strangers is easily misinterpreted by international students as threatening, yet in many cases it is innocent. The Assistant believes that these actions cause female international students to confuse appropriate behavior displayed by men. She comments that the Ecuadorian society expects international students cope with the sexual innuendos from strangers on the street, and students become confused as to what else is deemed appropriate behavior by Ecuadorians. Questions such as, “Is it normal that my host dad/brother hugs me so much, or kisses me so much?” are constantly asked by female students. The obvious response, according to the Assistant is “No! Of course not!”, but she also recognizes that women have a more difficult time understanding what the Ecuadorian culture permits and doesn’t permit. “Female international students have a

hard time understanding the boundaries of what is appropriate since it is a more affectionate society” (Castelo, 2007).

Information about what students should expect, including hooting, hollering, or cat calls, which would be considered sexual harassment in the United States, is included in the orientation manual, which many international students don’t read. “I think if students know about these challenges and cultural differences, they will take more precautions about what they wear and do. However, sometimes when students are on the bus, being pushed and touched by men, it is probably harder for women to get used to those things”, remarks the Assistant (Castelo, 2007).

C. Contributing to a Solution: What can we do to help at the IPO?

The general consensus of how international students adapt in Ecuador and the problems they encounter is positive. “Most people (international students) are smooth sailing”, the Director asserts. According to him, there have been very few problems in the last year since he became the Director. Staff members are also in agreement that there are only a few aspects of the study abroad experience that are more difficult for women. While some aspects of the social issues should be addressed directly to women, the Assistant states, “I don’t think that there are enough differences between men and women to have separate issues addressed to each gender” (Castelo, 2007). Greater are needs related to general cultural expectation, in their eyes.

1. Pre-conceived ideas

International students have a misconception of the university and/or Quito before arriving. The Coordinator points out that many international students thought that the indigenous population was much higher in Quito than what it actually is. They also thought the city would be less developed, “Quito is more developed and with more American chain stores than many U.S. towns that international students come from”, he explains (Guerrero, 2007). This is a general problem. The information international students receive from their home institutions does not reflect the reality of modern Quito. If USFQ provided more specific information about Quito, fewer misconceptions would be formed, decreasing disappointments and unrealistic goals. One staff member suggests that one way to provide this information is to have a former international student talk to them before arriving to Ecuador. U.S. universities could also help students reintegrate back into the home institution after studying in Ecuador by pairing for their study abroad experience. These students could be pen pals, exchanging questions for insight, experiences, and reality.

Overall, the Director thinks the “orientation was pretty thorough; for the amount of time we spent on it, it was good” (Menking, 2007). The orientation for international students covers health, culture, and safety issues. The lectures are given by experts that either work at USFQ or bring in guest speakers, such as people from the U.S. Embassy, to provide different perspectives. One staff member exclaims, “We tell international students everything at the orientation; we do everything we can think of to help them integrate into the Ecuadorian society and reduce any risks or danger, but many times our efforts aren’t completely successful!” (Castelo, 2007). The staff came up with some

additional ideas to improve student support and guidance in regards to the concerns international students have expressed.

One staff member remarked that it may not even occur to Ecuadorians that international students want to be friends with them, and that it is socially difficult for them to integrate into the USFQ/Ecuadorian culture. She suggests that international programs staff could talk to the Ecuadorian students, explain it is difficult for international students to integrate with Ecuadorians, and advise them to take the first step in building a friendship. The International Programs Office can also help international students make Ecuadorian friends is by developing a social program that introduces U.S. students with upcoming Ecuadorian international students, suggests the Assistant. This takes on some logistical considerations which she believes re manageable.

Every January, Ecuadorian students who will study abroad in the United States know where they want to go, what universities they have been accepted into, and if they want to study abroad. The International Programs Office could develop a program that offers or requires these same Ecuadorian students to meet with the current international students. “Approximately 60 USFQ Ecuadorian students go abroad a year, so it would be easy to develop a program to integrate these students”, states the Assistant excitedly (Castelo, 2007). The students would be able to integrate with these Ecuadorians, and the Ecuadorians would be interested in meeting international students since they would be going to the U.S. the following semester. Students can help each other by asking questions, exchanging language lessons, and so on. International programs could even

make this a requirement, or a one-credit seminar, by developing a global and cultural academic curriculum that combined articles and readings with student experiences and questions.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the staff readdresses some of the orientation issues. Recognizing that there are difficulties specifically concerning women, they should be addressed during the orientation and not only printed in the orientation manual. Furthermore, seeing as though there are four main categories of problems, orientation could even address these problems and provide students with either fliers or information on tips as to how to overcome these difficulties.

Two IPO staff members suggested having a counselor specifically for international students to help minimize the problems mentioned and increase student support. The Assistant Director states, “We could have an internal USFQ counselor just for international students, someone that can work directly with our office to support them” (Pazmino, 2007).

2. The Key is Communication

In order to find out what international students are experiencing and in order to help them, the Assistant Director reinforces her belief, “We must maintain in constant communication with the students and become a friend to them” (Pazmino, 2007). International offices are not only there for students to recruit and prepare them for their semester abroad, but continue to support them during their time in Ecuador. If the office

does this, students will feel more comfortable to come to them for support, and therefore the office members can help solve the problem. The Assistant Director's philosophy is simple, "My impression is that if any of us (staff) develop a good relationship starting the first day, and maintain a good communication with the students and give them confidence, it is easier for them to talk and tell us their problems" (Pazmino, 2007). Not always do international students go directly to the staff with problems and concerns, "Sometimes we learn about problems, obstacles, by a third person", she explains (Pazmino, 2007).

3. Summary Suggestions

"After accepting and solving these issues, international students are and feel part of the new environment and the majority of international students love their experience abroad" (Pazmino, 2007), affirms the Assistant Director. It is the responsibility of the IPO to continue to support international students even after the preparation and orientation phases are completed. The team that makes up the USFQ international programs office is a group of multicultural people with various experiences and ideas of how to improve students' semesters abroad. The comments and concerns the staff members provide coincide with much of the quantitative data found by the responses of international students. The data combined can help administrators to better prepare, orient and support international students. A focus on the four main categories international students tend to struggle with should not be taken lightly, including academic, social, living, and adapting concerns. These subjects should be re-addressed during orientation and programs should be developed to help support students in these areas. Furthermore, the IPO staff at USFQ found gender differences in students' study

abroad experiences in regards to adapting to a *machismo* society. This cultural element in Ecuador must be faced and dealt with to minimize its negative effect on students, specifically women.

XI. Limitations and Problems with the Study

Some of the limitations to this study include the type of methodology, number of participants, and the time frame used for this study. The investigator selected the same number of male and female participants in order to provide men with an equal voice in the thesis work as women. However, there were only 69 male international students according to the International Programs Office (2006). This small proportion limited the sample size in general, and therefore lessened the validity of the study. Once the final number of participants was selected, the number of students that responded was lower, leading to a smaller than ideal sample. Furthermore, it was difficult to receive feedback from the second survey and follow-up email, limiting the amount of feedback and restricting results. This directly corresponds to the time limitations of the study.

The timeframe for the study was also a limitation to the data collection process. The methodology included the study to be measured only at the beginning of the experience and 12 weeks later. Twelve weeks into the study abroad experience is when students are in the *hostility* stage of culture shock, which was intended by the investigator. However, without providing a third survey, the results cannot be measured

and compared to find if the negative responses were due to the culture shock cycle, or overall discontent.

It was difficult to quantitatively measure and understand the feelings and perceptions international students' experience during the different stages of culture shock without qualitative data directly from students. Without this data, the voice of the student was not present and therefore made it more difficult for readers to feel what international students experience.

The instrument used also affected the validity of the data results in this investigation. There were 70 survey items which proved to be numerous and difficult to measure. More participants and fewer items on the survey would provide data results that not only could be duplicated but also generalized. Better results may have been found if the items were redirected toward only one of the three categories developed in this thesis. This would provide more insight on only one theme, rather than attempting to measure various themes in few items.

VIII. Recommendations for Future Studies

Findings of this research study are significant and shed some light on important modifications that should be incorporated into orientation programs. Large distinctions between genders were not the major findings; rather unfulfilled expectations were a key finding and should be addressed in pre- and post-study orientations. The pilot study the investigator first completed led to recommendations of the methodology and data

analysis used in this current study. After her experience with this present investigation, the researcher has some recommendations for future studies on international students, gender, and culture shock.

Continuing with this recommendation, an additional follow-up of students' reverse culture shock experiences could be another future study. Investigators could measure how students feel when they first arrive home, 12 weeks later, and a third follow-up 24 weeks later. A comparative study of their experiences while in Ecuador and the United States would be interesting to see if the w-, u- or j- curves of culture shock vary.

For example, much of the literature and studies focus on the pre-departure and re-entry stages of studying abroad. This current investigation contributes to that literature by studying the arrival and 12 week presumed hostility stage of culture shock that students' experience. Due to this time frame, it is assumed that some of the negative results and responses international students gave were an effect of being in the hostility stage of culture shock. In this case, it would be helpful to actually see if these results increased or changed once they return to the United States. With this change, future investigators would be better able to monitor and mark the w-, u-, or j- curve of culture shock.

Another follow up study to help researchers understand and mark the time period of culture shock stages and symptoms is to create a more qualitative investigation with a smaller sample. Students could be asked to keep a journal and then plot their feelings

and experiences on a chart to see how closely their feelings align with a w-, u-, or j- curve is depending on the orientation they received.

The investigator recommends that focus groups be used as the follow-up qualitative methodology with students. The original methodology included this and then was minimized and altered due to lack of time and student participation, allowing for qualitative interviews with the USFQ-IPO staff only. The proposed student focus group should occur at the end of the semester, before students return to the United States, in order to speak directly with them and gain more insight. Including a qualitative portion of the data collection will not only help the research have some of the quantitative findings explained by the same students, but also allow a more in-depth, first hand insight to what students are really experiencing. By adding this data, the findings would become more valid. This additional data would be able to measure whether or not the negative results were due to culture shock, or if students actually respond negatively to some portions of the items, even when looking back on this experience.

IX. Recommendations for International Program Departments and Concluding

Remarks

Study abroad experiences are important to student development in three aspects: 1) personal development, 2) interpersonal skills, and 3) Global Perceptions. The literature states that students study abroad for various reasons and goals, and benefit the international experience in a number of ways. Such considerations resulted in the

National Mandate for Education Abroad was developed (Hoffa, 1990), highlighting the importance of study abroad for United States citizens. The majority of the participants from this current research decided to study abroad in order to improve their Spanish skills and for a cross-cultural experience.

Cross-cultural experiences are influenced by the students' backgrounds, the host countries' cultural context, and culture shock. In Ecuador, students encounter a *machista* society that influences gender roles and behaviors (Nencel, 1996; Melhuus, 1996). Case studies focus on the difficulties female international students have in Latin American countries due to these cultural differences (Anderson, 2003; Twombly, 1995). Students are also confronted by difference environments in their host countries. In Ecuador, the time and space are different, causing interactions with Ecuadorians to differ from the expected behaviors that students' grew up with. These differences can cause frustrations for international students. All of these types of cultural differences create culture shock, which are feelings and reactions to the cultural differences that international students' experience.

The results of this study show positive and negative fluctuations in students' perceptions of the statements. In understanding and reading this thesis and the results, one must be cautious before considering these findings as generalizations. The investigator warns this due to the limited sample size and the time constraints of the work. It should be noted that in regards to the fluctuations of results and gender differences, it cannot be assumed that one gender is weaker than another based on student responses to survey items. The survey results are objectively presented in a quantitative

manners for students to answer, but many of the items measure students' feelings and expectations, a subjective theme overall.

One goal of study abroad experiences is to help students become global citizens and well-rounded people. An international experience is one that presents new and difficult situations for international students. Through these struggles and misunderstandings, international students learn and become better at adapting to and coping with differences. The statistically significant gender findings show that men are more nationalistic and women tend to behave and think as global citizens. When interviewing the international programs staff, they did not recognize global perceptions and nationalistic attitudes to be a concern for international students. These findings indicate the international studies programs should seek out more male students to study abroad in order provide them the opportunity to become interested in global experiences. International program must search for ways to help men become better global citizens, but not only recruiting them to study abroad, but also helping and supporting them with their global views during their semester abroad.

On the other hand, the data indicate that women have more interpersonal difficulties than men. They had a more difficult time making Ecuadorian friends and felt it was more difficult to make friends in general than men. This is an important finding that coincides with the amount of literature focusing on women, as well as a contribution to the literature. Study abroad offices need to help female students know how to meet and interact with their hosts. If students can integrate with Ecuadorians, their study

abroad experiences will improve and their goals of language acquisition and having an authentic cultural experience will be met.

Study abroad experiences have a great benefit for international students, for they show a significant increase in their abilities to remain calm in difficult situations, and handle unexpected situations better. This is a great contribution to the U.S. society and the globalized world. As societies and cultures continue to interact, students will need to be able to handle the unknown. These skills will benefit both students' professional and personal lives.

Study abroad students in Ecuador report difficulties and disappointments in the relationships they made and their academic experience. Students reported studying abroad in order to improve their Spanish language skills, and 12 weeks later showed disappointing results. International program departments need to consider these findings and help all students integrate more with Ecuadorians. At USFQ, it is vital to help students by trying to intermix international and Ecuadorian students in classes, which will then allow exchange students to connect with Ecuadorians, make friends, and finally practice Spanish.

One tool to ease the challenges faced by students studying abroad is through well-designed orientation programs. Orientation programs are to help orient students about their upcoming international experience by providing information, motivating students to research their host country, advising and preparing students for culture shock, helping students comprehend global issues and how to be a global citizen, and developing study

abroad goals for students (Thebodo et al., 2005). These processes can provide students' the insight necessary to prepare mentally and emotionally for their experience abroad. Preparing students with realistic goals and upcoming encounters with help students achieve their goals and better prepare for the experience they will actually have. This will limit the number of unmet goals and disappointments. The support provided by international program offices does not stop at orientation / preparation, or during re-entry to the home institution. It is vital to maintain contact with students and continually provide the necessary support throughout the abroad semester.

The participants of this study are U.S. international students within the same age range, have similar race and socio-economic backgrounds, and have similar academic and personal interests which are made evident in their choosing to study abroad at USFQ in Ecuador. Through culture shock, the Latino cultural context, and gender, international students' experiences differed and their perceptions shifted (see Graph 5: The Impact of Gender of U.S. College Students in Ecuador). This student population benefits from studying abroad in Ecuador by becoming more able to adapt to and cope calmly with difficult and unexpected situations. Students also found that they were able to make friends with other international students and behave in Ecuador as they do in the United States. As a whole, the international students felt disappointed with the number of Ecuadorian friends they made, the amount of Spanish they learned, the level of academic success achieved and their influence over this success in Ecuador. Students' desires to learn about Ecuador also decreased after living there for 12 weeks. Students' found that studying abroad did not improve their global understandings as they had once believed it

would. Despite these similarities amongst the entire population, individual students' study abroad experience differed in large part due to gender. Men tend to be more nationalistic and women more globally minded; women experienced difficulties making friends while men socially thrived in Ecuador; and women seek out more challenging academic experiences. These findings need to be considered by international education administrators in the development of pre-departure and orientation processes, re-entry programs at the home institution, and throughout the semester abroad in order to effectively help and support international students.

The hard data combined with staff interviews provide insight to the special needs of men and women, as well as the types of problems and conflicts each gender has when studying abroad. The experience of students spending a semester abroad shifts students' perceptions and challenges students' identities, proving that identities are culturally and "historically produced, multiple and shifting" (Crain, 1996, p. 152). International programs must recognize these changes in international students and support them through this new construction of identity. The differences between men and women in

the global perceptions and interpersonal skills are data worth noting and developing policies to support students in these areas. Furthermore, international programs must provide students a reality of their host country and university in order to minimize disappointments from unrealistic expectations. Students will continue to study abroad, more now than ever with globalization and intermixing of cultures. Each culture will have its own context and obstacles for international students to face, and therefore treat men and women differently. At USFQ and in Ecuador, international students experience difficulties with the *machista* culture, gender roles, and closed off social circles. Despite this, international students gain many life-long skills and experiences that make them better global citizens.

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XIII. APPENDICES

A. Chronogram

DATE	TASK	DETAILS
JULY 25	Meet with International Programs to obtain a final number of international students, and permission to conduct the study and speak with students at the Orientation.	Meeting with Maricarmen Pazmino and Veronica Castillo at International Programs office.
AUGUST 1	Solicit participants for the study: provide consent forms, chronogram, and details of their responsibilities if the student is chosen.	International Student Orientation
AUGUST 28	Administer the first quantitative survey to the participants (during the honeymoon stage of culture shock)	At USFQ, in a group setting.
NOVEMBER 13	Administer the second quantitative survey during the hostility stage of culture shock.	Through email.
APRIL 30	Conduct qualitative interviews with IPO staff	At USFQ, in the morning.

B. Consent Form

AGREEMENT TO USE INFORMATION
(Consent Form)

Title of investigation: The Impact of Gender on U.S. Study Abroad Students in Ecuador

My name is NICOLE SAKRAIDA. I am a student in the Masters of Education program in the University of San Francisco of Quito, Cumbaya. You are invited to participate in a study that examines cross-cultural experiences North American students encounter during a study abroad program in Ecuador.

If you should decide to participate in this study, you will participate in two surveys. You will also have the opportunity to discuss and verify the final conclusions found by the investigator. The surveys will be conducted during the fall semester of 2006. Your participation will include filling out two surveys that are estimated to take approximately ten minutes each.

This study is part of the investigation for my dissertation. It will be presented in professional academic meetings and published in academic journals. Your identity will be protected as best possible during the entire period of study and after. Whatever information obtained in connection with this study that could identify you will remain anonymous and confidential, and will be revealed only with your permission. I will destroy all evidence of our interviews, surveys, and focus groups after three years of completing the study.

If you should decide to participate in this study, you are free to take back your consent form and drop out of participating at any moment without any penalty. If you should have a question about the study, and wish to call me, NICOLE SAKRAIDA, my phone number is: 097-287-414 or 297-1845.

I will provide a copy of this format for your own records.

You are making a decision to participate or not in this study. Your signature indicates you **have decided to participate** and you **have read the information** provided. However, signing this consent form **does not mean that you have renounced your legal rights.**

Date

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

C: USFQ's International Exchange Partner Universities

Last Updated: March 28, 2007

UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES (Individual Agreements)

Listing by country

- American University, Washington, DC, <http://www.american.edu/index1.html>
- Bellarmine University*, Louisville, Kentucky, www.bellarmino.edu
- Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin, www.beloit.edu
- Berklee College of Music, Boston, Massachusetts, (USFQ is a Network Member), <http://www.berklee.edu/>
- Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, www.bc.edu
- Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, www.bu.edu
- Brookdale Community College, Lincroft, New Jersey, www.brookdale.cc.nj.us (USFQ sends only)
- Clemson University*, Clemson, South Carolina, www.clemson.edu
- Coastal Carolina University, Conway, South Carolina, www.coastal.edu
- East Carolina University*, Greenville, North Carolina, www.ecu.edu
- Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois, www.elmhurst.edu
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, Florida, www.erau.edu
- Florida International University*, Miami, Florida, www.fiu.edu
- Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., www.georgetown.edu
- Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, www.juniata.edu
- Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, www.kzoo.edu
- Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, Kansas, www.kcai.edu
- Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire, www.keene.edu
- Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, www.msu.edu
- North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, www.ncsu.edu

- Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia, www.oglethorpe.edu
- Pitzer College*, Claremont, California, www.pitzer.edu
- Reed College, Portland, Oregon, www.web.reed.edu
- Rider University, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, www.rider.edu
- Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey, www.rowan.edu
- San Diego State University, San Diego, California, www.sdsu.edu
- St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wisconsin, www.snc.edu
- Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, www.tamu.edu
- Texas Lutheran University, Seguin, Texas, www.tlu.edu

- The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, www.uo.edu
- University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, www.uga.edu
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, www.uiuc.edu
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, www.umass.edu
- University of Mississippi ("Ole Miss"), University, Mississippi, www.miss.edu
- University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, www.unm.edu
- University of North Carolina at Wilmington, www.uncw.edu
- University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, www.wisc.edu
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*, www.vt.edu
- Virginia Tech Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center, Alexandria, Virginia, www.vt.edu
- Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland, www.washcoll.edu
- Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, www.willamette.edu
- Worcester State College, Worcester, Massachusetts, www.worcester.edu

CONSORTIUM AGREEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES (Consortium Agreements)

- Brethren Colleges Abroad (B.C.A.), Consorcio/Consortium, www.bcanet.org
- Bethel College, Kansas
- Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia
- DePauw University, Indiana
- Eastern Mennonite College, Virginia
- Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
- Fresno Pacific University, California
- Goshen College, Indiana
- Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania
- LaVerne University, LaVerne, California
- McPherson College, McPherson, Kansas
- Messiah College, Pennsylvania
- Manchester College, North Manchester, Indiana
- Nebraska Wesleyan University, Nebraska
- Winston Salem State University, North Carolina
- College of Staten Island / City University of New York (C.C.I.S), Consorcio/Consortium
- 60 varias universidades en Estados Unidos (USFQ receives only)
- Oregon University System, Consorcio/Consortium - www.orst.edu
- Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon,
- Portland State University, Portland, Oregon,
- University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon,
- Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, Oregon,
- Southern Oregon University, Ashland, Oregon,
- Western Oregon University, Monmouth, Oregon,
- Oregon Institute of Technology, Klamath Falls, Oregon,

- International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership - www.ipsl.org
Varias universidades en Estados Unidos.
- Institute for the International Education of Students ("IESAbroad"),
Consortio/Consortium - www.IESAbroad.org
Varias universidades a nivel mundial

D. Pre-Test Survey

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Name: _____

2. City, State you were raised in: _____, _____
(city) (state)

3. What is your gender? 1. Male 2. Female

4. How old are you?

1. 18 or younger 2. 19 3. 20 4. 21 5. 22 or older

5. What is your **primary** reason for studying abroad?

1. Academic/professional development
2. Relationships
3. Global Understanding
4. Language acquisition
5. Cultural experience
6. Other: _____

6. Have you ever lived abroad previous to this experience?

1. Yes 2. No

1. If so, for how long: 1. Less than one month 2. 1-6 months
3. 6-12 months 4. More than one year

Where did you live abroad? _____

7. Do you have a significant other? 1. Yes 2. No

Please answer the following statements to the best of your ability.

-2	1	0	1	2
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

1. I usually remain calm when facing difficult situations. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
2. I manage the stress of encountering new situations well. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
3. I will be able to act in Ecuador as I do in the USA. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2

4. I enjoy change and experiencing new situations.	-2	-1	0	1	2
5. It is easy for me to realize my goals.	-2	-1	0	1	2
6. I anticipate dating an Ecuadorian while here.	-2	-1	0	1	2
7. I anticipate disliking my study abroad experience at some point during my stay.	-2	-1	0	1	2
8. I will experience homesickness during my study abroad experience.	-2	-1	0	1	2
9. I am able to adapt to different paces of life without becoming impatient.	-2	-1	0	1	2
10. I expect I will assimilate to cultural practices and customs while abroad.	-2	-1	0	1	2
11. I am self-reliant	-2	-1	0	1	2
12. I will be able to adapt easily to a new way of life in my host country.	-2	-1	0	1	2
13. I can handle unexpected situations.	-2	-1	0	1	2
14. I anticipate regretting my abroad experience at some point during my stay.	-2	-1	0	1	2
15. I don't enjoy unfamiliar situations.	-2	-1	0	1	2
16. I am open-minded	-2	-1	0	1	2
17. I anticipate that I will observe different customs and social interactions in Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
18. I have good problem-solving skills.	-2	-1	0	1	2
19. If someone opposes me, I can usually find the means and ways to get what I want.	-2	-1	0	1	2
20. I usually manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	-2	-1	0	1	2
21. I believe I will study abroad again after this experience is over.	-2	-1	0	1	2
22. My critical thinking skills are well developed.	-2	-1	0	1	2
23. I have many career options.	-2	-1	0	1	2
24. I have chosen a profession.	-2	-1	0	1	2
25. My academic performance is satisfactory.	-2	-1	0	1	2
26. I feel comfortable spending time alone.	-2	-1	0	1	2
27. I have a direct influence over the level of academic success I will enjoy in this program.	-2	-1	0	1	2
28. Much of my success depends on the environment I am in.	-2	-1	0	1	2
29. I expect my host family to treat me as an independent adult.	-2	-1	0	1	2
30. My parents support my decision to study abroad in Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
31. It is difficult to socialize with others who do not share my own culture or beliefs.	-2	-1	0	1	2
32. I intend to make friends with other foreign students like myself when abroad.	-2	-1	0	1	2
33. I have strong leadership skills.	-2	-1	0	1	2
34. I have fears and anxieties about studying abroad.	-2	-1	0	1	2
35. I am self-confident.	-2	-1	0	1	2
36. I perceive the values and beliefs of the people of other countries as valid.	-2	-1	0	1	2
37. I am nonjudgmental of the people of different countries who maintain different views, customs, and traditions.	-2	-1	0	1	2
38. I am a resourceful person.	-2	-1	0	1	2
39. I believe that language will be a barrier to interacting with Ecuadorians.	-2	-1	0	1	2
40. I am independent.	-2	-1	0	1	2
41. I have a clear understanding of U.S. Culture.	-2	-1	0	1	2
42. I actively seek out challenging educational experiences.	-2	-1	0	1	2
43. This study abroad experience will increase my skills to communicate in Spanish.	-2	-1	0	1	2
44. I am confident in my Spanish language abilities.	-2	-1	0	1	2
45. I have the patience to communicate with people who do not understand me.	-2	-1	0	1	2
46. I typically try to enter into meaningful conversation with people.	-2	-1	0	1	2
47. I attempt to interpret the behavior of people such as their gestures, postures, appropriate eye contact and interpersonal space.	-2	-1	0	1	2
48. I respect Ecuadorians.	-2	-1	0	1	2
49. I have a clear understanding of other cultures.	-2	-1	0	1	2
50. I anticipate spending the majority of my free time with other U.S. students.	-2	-1	0	1	2
51. I have a strong desire to interact with strangers.	-2	-1	0	1	2
52. I enjoy spending time alone.	-2	-1	0	1	2
53. I am curious about other cultures.	-2	-1	0	1	2
54. I try to seek out a diverse group of friends.	-2	-1	0	1	2

55. I am able to establish friendships with people easily.	-2	-1	0	1	2
56. I am proud to be from the United States.	-2	-1	0	1	2
57. I am constantly in contact with my family and friends in the U.S.A.	-2	-1	0	1	2
58. I understand my own cultural values and biases.	-2	-1	0	1	2
59. I intend to make friends with Ecuadorian students at my host institution.	-2	-1	0	1	2
60. I have a strong interest in learning about the traditions and customs of Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
61. I am open-minded about the political system of other countries.	-2	-1	0	1	2
62. I have a clear understanding of critical social issues.	-2	-1	0	1	2
63. I feel my host family will treat me the same as any other student, despite my gender.	-2	-1	0	1	2
64. My friends support my decision to study abroad in Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
65. This study abroad experience will contribute to my understanding of other cultures.	-2	-1	0	1	2
66. I have a good understanding of international issues.	-2	-1	0	1	2
67. I appreciate human differences.	-2	-1	0	1	2
68. I am aware of how culture shapes me.	-2	-1	0	1	2
69. I understand the United States' role in the world.	-2	-1	0	1	2
70. I have a high self-esteem	-2	-1	0	1	2

E. Post-Test Survey

Survey 2

1. Name: _____
2. Gender: 1. Male 2. Female
3. Do you have a significant other now? 1. Yes 2. No

After being in Ecuador for two months, please answer the following statements.

-2 Strongly disagree	1 Disagree	0 Neutral	1 Agree	2 Strongly agree
-------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------	---------------------

1. I usually remain calm when facing difficult situations. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
2. I manage the stress of encountering new situations well. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
3. I am able to act in Ecuador as I do in the USA. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
4. I enjoy change and experiencing new situations. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
5. It is easy for me to realize my goals. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
6. I have dated an Ecuadorian while here. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
7. I disliked my study abroad experience at some point during my stay. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
8. I experienced homesickness during my study abroad experience. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
9. I am able to adapt to different paces of life without becoming impatient. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
10. I assimilated to cultural practices and customs while abroad. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
11. I am self-reliant _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
12. I was able to adapt easily to a new way of life in my host country. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
13. I can handle unexpected situations. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
14. I regretted my abroad experience at some point during my stay. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
15. I don't enjoy unfamiliar situations. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
16. I am open-minded _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
17. I observed different customs and social interactions in Ecuador. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
18. I have good problem-solving skills. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
19. If someone opposes me, I can usually find the means and ways to get
what I want. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
20. I usually manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
21. I believe I will study abroad again after this experience is over. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
22. My critical thinking skills are well developed. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
23. I have many career options. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
24. I have chosen a profession. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2
25. My academic performance is satisfactory. _____ -2 -1 0 1 2

26. I feel comfortable spending time alone.	-2	-1	0	1	2
27. I had a direct influence over the level of academic success I enjoyed in this program.	-2	-1	0	1	2
28. Much of my success depends on the environment I am in.	-2	-1	0	1	2
29. My host family treats me as an independent adult.	-2	-1	0	1	2
30. My parents support my decision to study abroad in Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
31. It is difficult to socialize with others who do not share my own culture or beliefs.	-2	-1	0	1	2
32. I have made friends with other foreign students like myself here.	-2	-1	0	1	2
33. I have strong leadership skills.	-2	-1	0	1	2
34. I have had fears and anxieties while studying abroad.	-2	-1	0	1	2
35. I am self-confident.	-2	-1	0	1	2
36. I perceive the values and beliefs of the people of other countries as valid.	-2	-1	0	1	2
37. I am nonjudgmental of the people of different countries who maintain different views, customs, and traditions.	-2	-1	0	1	2
38. I am a resourceful person.	-2	-1	0	1	2
39. Language has been a barrier to interacting with Ecuadorians.	-2	-1	0	1	2
40. I am independent.	-2	-1	0	1	2
41. I have a clear understanding of U. S. culture.	-2	-1	0	1	2
42. I actively seek out challenging educational experiences.	-2	-1	0	1	2
43. This study abroad experience has increased my skills to communicate in Spanish.	-2	-1	0	1	2
44. I am confident in my Spanish language abilities.	-2	-1	0	1	2
45. I have the patience to communicate with people who do not understand me.	-2	-1	0	1	2
46. I typically try to enter into meaningful dialogue with people.	-2	-1	0	1	2
47. I attempt to interpret the behavior of people such as their gestures, postures, appropriate eye contact and interpersonal space.	-2	-1	0	1	2
48. I respect Ecuadorians.	-2	-1	0	1	2
49. I have a clear understanding of other cultures.	-2	-1	0	1	2
50. I spend the majority of my free time with other U.S. students.	-2	-1	0	1	2
51. I have a strong desire to interact with strangers.	-2	-1	0	1	2
52. I enjoy spending time alone.	-2	-1	0	1	2
53. I am curious about other cultures.	-2	-1	0	1	2
54. I try to seek out a diverse group of friends.	-2	-1	0	1	2
55. I am able to establish friendships with people easily.	-2	-1	0	1	2
56. I am proud to be from the United States	-2	-1	0	1	2
57. I am constantly in contact with my family and friends in the U.S.A.	-2	-1	0	1	2
58. I understand my own cultural values and biases.	-2	-1	0	1	2
59. I have made friends with Ecuadorian students at my host institution.	-2	-1	0	1	2
60. I have a strong interest in learning about the traditions and customs of Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
61. I am open-minded about the political system of other countries.	-2	-1	0	1	2
62. I have a clear understanding of critical social issues.	-2	-1	0	1	2
63. My host family treats me the same as any other student, despite my gender.	-2	-1	0	1	2
64. My friends have supported my decision to study abroad in Ecuador.	-2	-1	0	1	2
65. This study abroad experience has contributed to my understanding of other cultures.	-2	-1	0	1	2
66. I have a good understanding of international issues.	-2	-1	0	1	2
67. I appreciate human differences.	-2	-1	0	1	2
68. I am aware of how culture shapes me.	-2	-1	0	1	2
69. I understand the United States' role in the world.	-2	-1	0	1	2
70. I have high self-esteem.	-2	-1	0	1	2

