Intent to Study Abroad: The Role of Subjective Social Status and Intolerance of Ambiguity

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore variables related to intent to study abroad in an effort to aid attempts by universities to internationalize. The personality variables of subjective social status and intolerance of ambiguity were considered. This is the first time subjective social status has been considered in research on intent to study abroad, and helps to answer the question of how students are affected by divergent social positions. Participants included 167 undergraduate students from a large American public university. Three scales were administered measuring intent to study abroad, subjective social status, and intolerance of ambiguity. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze data. Results do not support subjective social status as a predictor of intent to study abroad, however intolerance of ambiguity was found to be associated with intent to study abroad. Recommendations were made as to how educational institutions can account for these results and increase participation in study abroad programs. Although findings relating to subjective social status were not statistically significant in this study, it is suggested that future research consider the impact that related socio-economic and demographic variables have on intent to study abroad.

Keywords: study abroad, intent, subjective social status, intolerance of ambiguity, internationalization

Intent to Study Abroad: The Role of Subjective Social Status and Intolerance of Ambiguity

Between 2010 and 2011 approximately 236,000 Americans studied abroad at the post-secondary level (Institute of International Education, 2012). As educational institutions work to operate in an increasingly globalized world they must consider the varying influences that encourage or discourage participation in study abroad programs. A body of research has explored the decision-making process, primarily charting personality variables that are theorized to influence the behavior of studying abroad (Goel, de Jong, & Schnusenberg, 2010). These variables include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and others (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004). While this research has informed institutions as to various methods that can be used to increase study abroad participation, there exists a notable gap in considering how subjective measures of socio-economic status affect participation. The current study looks to fill this gap by considering how subjective social status relates to intent to study abroad, and to build on previous research by assessing how intolerance of ambiguity is related to intent to study abroad.

Internationalization as an Institutional Imperative

The increasing international presence of educational institutions follows the two decade-long trend of internationalization (Mazon, 2009). For the purposes of this paper internationalization in a university context can be defined as the propensity for educational institutions to structure their physical presence, student recruitment, and curriculums to include an international focus. Gacel-Ávila (2005) and others have described the process of internationalization among higher education institutions as being dialectical in relationship to the general advent of globalization (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). In this context, it is argued that internationalization differs from globalization in that it works to incorporate aspects of other

cultures into a heterogeneous home culture (the home culture in the this case being that of the United States), as opposed to working to break down cultural differences. Essentially, internationalization in the U.S. can be seen as an attempt by universities to provide a foundation of global competency to American students. Increasingly, however, the separation between these two forces is becoming blurred, particularly as universities recruit more international students, and as they set up satellite campuses around the world (Hser, 2005).

Regardless of the semantic relationship between internationalization and globalization, the experiences of institutions in the United States have been closely aligned with historical developments and change. While universities have historically maintained at least a minimal level of 'internationality', whether through international research involvement, exchange programs, or less formal activities (e.g., international faculty), it was not until the late 1980s that these efforts were seen as part of a collective trend. This trend aligned with the end of the Cold War period, in which Americans were encouraged out of a feeling of necessity to consider the complexities of political, economic, and social idiosyncrasies around the world (Hser, 2005). In combination with subsequent economic policy changes, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization, a more global perspective was cultivated.

The growing importance of internationalization is the result of these historical shifts, combined with the necessity for educational institutions to be competitive in a changed external landscape. Indeed, large ranking scales of universities place value on variables related to internationalization (Altbach, 2012). These variables may include the number of international students present on a campus, the presence of international staff, and international surveys assessing reputation, among others (Marginson, 2007). While the reliability, validity, and general methodology of these scales are regularly criticized, the importance of obtaining a high

ranking in these scales is still notable (Morris, 2011). The most explicit way in which these ranking scales impact universities is in the recruitment of students and faculty. There is debate as far as the extent to which positions on large ranking scales impact student enrollment, however there is evidence that niche populations of students, such as young males seeking postgraduate education overseas, are significantly impacted by such rankings (Morris, 2011). Perhaps more significant, however, is the more implicit way in which ranking systems, and therefore levels of internationalization, impact funding and political capital. Institutions that are considered to be high in these rankings are more likely to receive funding externally, and individual departments within institutions are more likely to receive funding internally if they are more highly rated (Morris, 2011). Finally, university ranking scales have been used to determine eligibility for employment and immigration qualifications. In Denmark, for example, applicants for the Greencard permanent resident scheme are awarded "bonus points" for attending a top university named in the *THES-QS World Ranking* scale (The Danish Agency for Labour Retention and International Recruitment, 2013).

Study abroad participation is seen as essential to the development of internationalization efforts. Strategic plans created by universities are therefore likely to include efforts to expand the number students studying abroad, however these plans vary widely both across and within institutions based a number of factors, including university culture, structure, and fields of study (Bartell, 2003). Between 2010 and 2011, the top three fields represented by students studying abroad were social science (22.9% of the study abroad population), business and management (20.5%), and the humanities (11.3%), while the bottom three (5.8%) were math and computer science, agriculture, and undeclared (Institute of International Education, 2012). Individual institutions will therefore differ in regards to their efforts to increase study abroad participation.

However, in general, large institutions such as the University of South Florida are succumbing to the increasing pressures of internationalization.

Research on Study Abroad – From Institutions to Individuals

The institutional imperative just described is not actionable unless educational institutions consider the environmental factors and individual motivations that encourage students to be active participants in internationalization efforts. A significant environmental factor that could influence students is the current tumultuous economic environment. The Great Recession, as it became known, has had ripple effects on the financial stability and psychological wellbeing of young Americans over the past five or so years (Debevec, Schewe, Madden, & Diamond, 2013). The current unemployment rate in the United States is 7.6% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). National unemployment rates disproportionately affect young people (Debevec, Schewe, Madden, & Diamond, 2013). This dynamic is clear given the fact that the unemployment rate for those between the ages of 20 and 24 is 13.3% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Indeed, recent research shows that an overwhelming majority, 93% of young people, believes that the crisis negatively impacted their psychological, physical, academic, and financial well-being (Trombitas, 2012; University of Arizona. 2010). Given these statistics, disparities among college students are likely to result in significant population differences based on socio-economic status. This makes the consideration of the impact of these ripple effects as important as ever when evaluating intent to study abroad.

The financial situation is an environmental context that influences individuals on a psychological level. However, it is also necessary to consider other multivariate motivations that influence the likelihood that individuals will be active participants in efforts to internationalize educational institutions. Since studying abroad is a fundamental element of internationalization,

and in essence a measurable behavior related to internationalization, understanding the motivations that impact student intent to study abroad can be a powerful tool for educational institutions to use. This is likely the reason why scholarly research relating to intent to study abroad has increased dramatically since the advent of internationalization (McClure, 2010).

It has long been theorized that individual predispositions exist that account for differences in individual intent to study abroad. These differences have been measured through the use of broad questionnaires, personality survey instruments, and qualitative interviews (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). Participant recruitment has largely consisted of university-specific convenience samples, so individual studies differ on specific effects and conclusions. As one would expect, there is a general consensus that variables such as the extent to which one expresses an interest in understanding other cultures, interest in foreign languages, and interest in travel are all positively correlated with intent to study abroad (BaileyShea, 2009).

The inspiration for the current study came from Bakalis and Joiner (2004), who sought to elucidate how the personality factors of openness and intolerance of ambiguity impact intent to study abroad among a population of Australian undergraduate students (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004). Results of the study found that those high in openness and low in intolerance of ambiguity were more likely to participate in exchange programs. While this study was only exploratory in nature, as it contained a small sample size and was confounded by a cross-sectional design, the authors theorized that openness and intolerance of ambiguity, as well as other personality variables should be considered as institutions look to increase study abroad participation.

A recent set of research articles have addressed the factors contributing to intent to study abroad by utilizing the social psychological Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The TPB was developed to mitigate the difficulty in studying the relationship between general predispositions

and attitudes, and specific behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). According to the theory, three factors contribute to an individual's intent to perform a specific action. The first of these is the 'attitude toward the behavior', which, as one would expect, concerns itself with whether or not an individual views the behavior as being positive or negative. The second factor is the 'subjective norm', which accounts for social pressure surrounding the behavior. The third factor, 'perceived behavioral control', reflects the ease at which one can perform the behavior. Armitage and Conner (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of the theory, and determined that it was capable of explaining 20% of the variance in measures of actual behavior – representing a medium to large effect size (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

Models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior operate under the assumption that intent to perform a certain behavior is predictive of engaging in the behavior itself, and that various antecedents exist which moderate intent (Ajzen, 1991). Research has thoroughly assessed the relationship between individual intent and the performance of various behaviors (Chandon, Morwitz, & Reinartz, 2005). While there is no certain relationship between intent and behavior, or one particular model that is optimally predictive across all settings, there is a general consensus that intentions are reliably correlated with behavior (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Research conducted in the fields of marketing and health has largely confirmed the predictive power of theoretical models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988; Webb & Sheeran, 2006).

Schnusenberg, de Jong, and Goel (2012), for example, used the Theory of Planned Behavior to chart the determinants of intent to study abroad by considering the variables of affordability, willingness to pay, and desire (Schnusenberg, de Jong, & Goel, 2012). The results provide support for the notion that students are willing to pay for a study abroad program should

the benefits be perceived to outweigh the costs, and should future job prospects be seen as a significant benefit to studying abroad. Along these lines, Presley, Damron-Martinez, and Zhang (2010), in a study of undergraduate business students, found that factors such as cost of the program considered significantly impacted intent to study abroad (Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010).

Previous research such as this has shown various elements of socio-economic status to be related to intent to study abroad, but has not considered the impact of individual perceptions of social position. It is possible that these individual perceptions account for the findings that socio-economic variables impact intent to study abroad, as opposed to a simple causal relationship between objective variables such as income and employment status, and intent to study abroad. The current study uses a scale of subjective social status to account for these possible effects. Subjective social status (SSS) is a self-report measure that evaluates how an individual perceives her or his position relative to a reference group (Goldman, Cornman, & Chang, 2006). SSS is often used in the field of health psychology in order to help explore disparities in healthcare, and was designed to capture aspects of social hierarchy (Adler, Singh-Manoux, Schwartz, Stewart, Matthews, & Marmot, 2008). Given the broad scope of SSS, the measure is considered to be more sensitive than objective socio-economic measures (Wolff, Acevedo-Garcia, Subramanian, Weber, & Kawachi, 2010). It is for these reasons that the SSS scale was chosen in lieu of a traditional objective socio-economic status scale.

The current study therefore considers the question of how intent to study abroad varies systematically based on perceptions of social status, and on discomfort with new situations. It is hypothesized that subjective social status and the personality variable of intolerance of ambiguity are related to intent to study abroad. Particularly, it is hypothesized that subjective social status

is positively correlated with intent to study abroad, and that intolerance of ambiguity is negatively correlated with intent to study abroad.

Methods

Participants

A total of 167 participants were surveyed in this study. Recruitment occurred at a large 4-year public university in the southeastern United States in accordance to IRB protocol. Recruitment postings were made in a number of psychology and business classes. Extra credit was offered to compensate participants for their time. The only demographic information collected was gender in an attempt to minimize the likelihood that participants can be identified. Approximately 77% of those surveyed were female.

Data Collection and Procedures

Data collection occurred during a month-long period, with participants accessing the survey through a link contained in the recruitment posting. Individuals were able to complete the survey if they identified as undergraduate students, and have not studied abroad previously. An Internet-based survey service was used in administration of the survey, and was the only contact participants had to the survey content. 90.4% completed the survey, with 16 of the responses discarded due to incomplete data. Furthermore, 10% (17 students) studied abroad previously and were not included in the data analysis.

Instruments

Intent to study abroad. The scale used in this study measuring intent to study abroad was adapted from two scale items used in an article that developed a preliminary framework for use in charting behaviors and intentions related to studying abroad (Goel, de Jong, & Schnusenberg, 2010). Six additional scale items were created, accounting for greater variation in

intent to study abroad (see Appendix B). Examples of these items include, "Rate how strongly you intend to participate in a study abroad program" and, "How important is participating in a study abroad program to completing your degree program?" The scale therefore contained eight closed question items, measured using a five-level Likert scale ranging from 'do not intend' or 'not very interested/important', to 'strongly intend' or 'extremely interested/important'. Chronbach's alpha measure of reliability for this study's sample was .86. An alpha of .70 or above is generally considered to be optimal (Nunnaly, 1978). Goel, de Jong, and Schnusenberg (2010) reported reliability to be approximately .90 among the original two item intent scale (Goel, de Jong, & Schnusenberg, 2010). There is no current established predictive validity for this scale. Validity can be established through replication of the current scale. Correlation with objective socio-economic status scales, possibly including measures of parental income and education level, would provide support for concurrent validity.

Subjective social status. Measurement of subjective social status was conducted using the MacAuthur Scale of Subjective Social Status, as adapted from an article evaluating the relationship between social status and health (Goldman, Cornman, & Chang, 2006). Minor text revisions of the socio-economic version of the scale were made (see Appendix C), specifying the comparative population as being "all other people in the United States." Administration of the scale occurred by participants observing a graphical representation of a ladder that has ten rungs (an interval scale), and choosing which rung represents his or her place on the social ladder. Variables measured by this scale primarily include financial wealth, education, and employment. The relationship between subjective and objective social status has been assessed by a variety of different studies (Singh-Manouxa, Adlerb, & Marmota, 2003). Generally, subjective social status was found to strongly correlate with measures of objective social status (e.g., wealth,

occupational grade, employment), but not to the degree that the scale is redundant (2003).

Intolerance of ambiguity. This scale measures intolerance of ambiguity, operationalized as "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as a source of threat" (Budner, 1962, p. 29). The scale contained a total of 16 structured question items – 8 items capturing tolerance of ambiguity and 8 items capturing intolerance of ambiguity – and was used in its original form from Budner's (1962) work (see referenced article for text of the scale items). A high score on the scale indicates intolerance of ambiguity, and a low score indicates tolerance of ambiguity. Items were scored using a six-level Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Cronbach's alpha measure of reliability for the original scale was .65. In this sample Cronbach's alpha was .60. The scale displayed convergent validity by correlating with measurements of conventionality, religious dogmatism, authoritarianism, and other related constructs (1962).

Results

Descriptive

Table A1 shows the descriptive statistics for the three primary variables of intent to study abroad, subjective social status, and intolerance of ambiguity. Measures of skewness and kurtosis indicate that, for all variables, a normal distribution can be assumed. Total scores were obtained by adding all the items together. Scores indicate that participants have a slightly more than moderate ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.86$) intent to study abroad, and a moderate intolerance of ambiguity ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.47$). Participants also indicated that they believe they have a slightly higher social status than the average American.

Inferential

An intercorrelation matrix showed the intent scale to be negatively correlated with

intolerance of ambiguity, r = -.20, and subjective social status to be positively correlated with intolerance of ambiguity, r =.19, at statistically significant levels, $p < .05$ (see Table A2 for the intercorrelation matrix). Multiple linear regression was used, with all variables entered simultaneously. Intent to study abroad served as the dependent variable and was regressed onto the independent variables of subjective social status and intolerance of ambiguity. The model was not significant, $R^2 = .04$, $F(2, 134) = 2.90$, $p = 0.056$ (see Table A3 for the regression model). In this model subjective social status was not significant, p =.65, however, intolerance of ambiguity was significant, p =.03.

Discussion

At the foundation of this paper is an attempt to elucidate variables that may impact intent to study abroad. The statistical model considered subjective social status and intolerance of ambiguity as variables hypothesized to influence undergraduate students' intent to study abroad. Results have shown that the hypothesized model was not statistically significant. Additionally, intolerance of ambiguity was correlated with intent to study abroad at a statistically significant level, as originally predicted. The scale of subjective social status did not significantly correlate with intent to study abroad. These findings, while not fully confirming of the relationships originally predicted, do have implications for educational institutions to consider in their attempt to bolster efforts of internationalization.

Results and the Relation to Previous Research

Previous research has considered a number of constructs related to intent to study abroad, and has used various theoretical models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior to chart these (Garver & Divine, 2008; Goel, de Jong, & Schnusenberg, 2010). Although this research has been broad in scope, subjective social status has previously not been considered as a variable of

interest. The results of the current study do not directly support the inclusion of subjective social status as a variable impacting intent to study abroad, however previous research has confirmed the importance of considering a number of empirically related measures.

Traditional measures of socio-economic status have been correlated with subjective social status in a number of studies (Wolff, Acevedo-Garcia, Subramanian, Weber, & Kawachi, 2010). However, the strength of correlation between objective socio-economic variables and subjective social status using the MacAuthur Scale appears to be lessened for Hispanic and African American populations (Adler et. al, 2009). Generally, given that income and other similar variables were found to be related to intent to study abroad, the ambivalent scores derived from the subjective social status scale used in this study are unlikely to be the result of socio-economic variables (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009).

Other variables shown in research to be related to subjective social status include ethnicity, age, and gender (Goldman, Cornman, & Chang, 2006; Wolff, Acevedo-Garcia, Subramanian, Weber, & Kawachi, 2010). Furthermore, research on intent to study abroad has found associations to exist based on ethnicity (McClure, 2010) and gender (Relyea, Cocchiara, & Studdard, 2008). While these variables were not directly considered in the current analysis, homogeneity within the sample relating to these demographic variables may have impacted the statistical strength of the scale. That said, it is unclear given the associations between socio-economic and demographic variables, and intent to study abroad, why the scores on the subjective social status scale were not statistically significant.

The scale of intolerance of ambiguity was slightly correlated with intent to study abroad in this study. This finding builds on previous research associating intolerance of ambiguity with participation in study abroad programs (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004), although at least one study

found no association with intent to study abroad (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). The notion that intolerance of ambiguity is associated with intent to study abroad aligns with general findings and theories describing the relationship between intercultural attitudes, such as ethnocentrism, and intent study abroad (McClure, 2010). Aside from relationships with intent, a significant body of research has investigated the effects of studying abroad, particularly the impact of studying abroad on cultural sensitivity and competence (Ning & Chen, 2010). These findings work to reinforce the importance of considering an individual portfolio of psychological feelings, beliefs, and biases towards experiences that are new (i.e., foreign cultures), or unfamiliar, and may therefore be considered threatening to students who may otherwise be willing to study abroad.

Recommendations for Educational Institutions

A number of other researchers have made recommendations to educational institutions as to how they can increase study abroad participation. Garver and Divine (2008) identified various preference segments among students considering studying abroad (Garver & & Divine, 2008). Students who valued trip location and price were more likely to study aboard. Students who considered trip the additional variables of language spoken in the study abroad program and trip duration were less likely to consider studying abroad, as they were more affected by risk aversion and intolerance of ambiguity than students in other segments. Given these findings, the authors recommended that educational institutions which would like to raise participation rates focus on recruiting students by emphasizing a variety of study abroad locations, and a variety of price options.

Presley, Damron-Martinez, and Zhang (2010) made a number of recommendations to institutions regarding the facilitation of study abroad participation (Presley, Damron-Martinez, &

Zhang, 2010). The first of these is the promotion of factors that increase positive perceptions of studying abroad, including career opportunities, social connections (particularly for female students), and participation in fun or exciting new experiences. The authors also recommend targeting employers specifically, encouraging them to communicate the value of international experiences to students. Lastly, the authors support findings made by others (see McLeod and Wainwright, 2009) that particular segments of students should be differentiated and marketed to based on variables such as social orientation and other motivating factors.

In relation to the current study, there are two primary approaches educational institutions can take to mitigate the effects of intolerance of ambiguity. The first of these is to attempt to modify the level of intolerance that students have (i.e., work to alter that personality trait), and the second is to simply account for the possibility that some students will be more ambiguity-adverse than others (i.e., work around that personality trait). The construct of intolerance of ambiguity is one of psychological personality. Given this, it is assumed that the scale is generally beholden to principles of personality research.

The question of whether or not personality variables can be altered substantially has been addressed by research (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). For example, in a meta-analysis evaluating the rank-order stability of Big Five personality traits it was found that test-retest correlations increased from .41 in childhood, to .70 between the ages of 50 and 70 (Fraley & Roberts, 2005). Capsi, Roberts, and Shiner (2005) describe these findings as being indicative that, "…The only psychological constructs more consistent than personality traits are measures of cognitive ability" (Capsi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005, pg.466). While it can be argued that intolerance of ambiguity can be altered specifically in the context of ambiguity surrounding study abroad (e.g., through cultural sensitivity interventions), the overall construct is unlikely to

be significantly impacted by this approach.

Given the general stability of personality traits, it would be prudent for educational institutions to accept the presence of individual differences relating to intolerance of ambiguity and work to compensate for them. For the sake of the recommendations made in this paper it is assumed that students with a high intolerance of ambiguity will be more likely to consider studying abroad if they feel as though doing so is not so novel as to be threatening. This is different from attempting to alter intolerance of ambiguity itself, as that would entail interventions by educational institutions to make students feel less threatened in novel situations (i.e., make students more comfortable with doing new things, such as studying abroad). Essentially, by making the experience of studying abroad less novel, educational institutions can circumvent the effects of intolerance of ambiguity.

Circumventing intolerance of ambiguity may be aided by designing an interventional program that is both internal and external in nature. Internally, educational institutions could consider the integration of an international perspective into curricula, as well as consider developing study abroad learning communities. The importance of designing curricula that include an international perspective is clear given the knowledge-disseminating role that educational institutions have. Indeed, internationalization efforts often include elements of curriculum development or redevelopment (Gacel-Ávila, 2005). The process of internationalizing curricula has been studied by a relatively small number of researchers (Mazon, 2009), however Leask and Bridge (2013) developed a framework that educational institutions can use when deciding how to go about aligning their efforts to internationalize with curricula (Leask & Bridge, 2013). The authors stress the importance of accounting for institutional, local, national and regional, and global contexts when engaging in this process. Essentially, changing

individual curriculums should not be seen as an isolated piece of the puzzle, but rather as a part of a holistic effort to provide students with a tangible connection to the outside world. It is this tangible connection that will work to decrease feelings that studying abroad is a novel, and therefore threatening, activity.

Learning communities at the university level have long been used in an effort to increase student engagement (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Student learning communities have been defined as "relatively small groups of students and faculty working together to enhance students' learning and to help students become well-rounded, broad-based individuals" (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 5). Student learning communities come in a number of forms, but can be designed to foster student development in a particular area – in this case, study abroad. Possible elements of such a learning community include intercultural awareness development and language learning (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). At least one research study has found significant associations to exist between the use of general learning communities and openness to diversity. Cabrera et al. (2002), in a study of second year undergraduate students, found that collaborative learning involving group work on a variety of topics had more of an effect on openness to diversity than variables such as socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity (Cabrera, Nora, Crissman, Terenzini, & Pascarella, 2002). Given these findings it is likely that learning communities developed with an international focus will increase these effects, and ultimately work to counter intolerance of ambiguity.

Finally, the effects of intolerance of ambiguity can be ameliorated externally through partnerships with non-profit organizations such USAID, or other international NGOs, as well as private employers, to make the experience of working internationally more tangible. These partnerships may come in the form of simple presentations by these organizations to students, or

may be more involved, such as a mentoring program that connects individual students with international staff. Previous research has provided evidence that communicating to students the value of studying abroad to their future careers impacts intent to study abroad, so efforts that incorporate these elements are likely to make an impact (BaileyShea, 2009).

While the subjective social status scale did not produce statistically significant results, educational institutions can work to counter disparities relating to ethnicity and intent to study abroad. In doing so it is important to bear in mind the complexities involved in increasing intent to study abroad amongst particular minority groups. Simply focusing on one particular variable, such as financial concerns, is confounded by the cultural contexts in which students view these concerns through. Given this, it is recommended that educational institutions leverage existing infrastructure relating to minority development to specialize efforts in a way that accounts for large group differences. This method of specialized differentiation is supported by intent to study abroad research, and has been recommended in a number of different studies (Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010). Examples of this differentiation may include connecting the study abroad experience to ethnic heritages, and providing support to multicultural student groups present on campus (McClure, 2010). These efforts are likely to reduce the disparities currently present, but their effectiveness will depend on the circumstances at particular institutions – something that has been discussed within research (BaileyShea, 2009).

Finally, given the growing consensus in research assessing intent to study abroad that individual intent will vary based on a large number of variables, it is clear that no single effort can serve as a silver bullet in the quest to increase study abroad participation. Variation between institutions has been identified as an important consideration in these efforts (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009). A portfolio of initiatives that are tailored to specific educational

institutions will result in the greatest likelihood that intent to study abroad will be facilitated. Ultimately, what works will depend on the culture, demographics, and leadership structures present at a particular institution (2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

There are three primary limitations in the current study. The first relates to the generalizability and integrity of the sample. As with most studies assessing intent to study abroad, sampling consisted of undergraduate students at one particular university. This presents a problem, particularly given the diversity of student demographics across different campuses. Additionally, sampling itself was not random, as a convenience sample consisting of students from select courses was used. This also resulted in the sample size not being large relative to the population of the university studied, which currently consists of more than 47,000 students (University of South Florida, n.d.).

The second major limitation in the current study is the lack of demographic information collected from the sample. Previous research has documented the importance of considering demographic variables such as race and ethnicity in relation to intent to study abroad (BaileyShea, 2009; McClure, 2010). Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2010) evaluated the differences between white and minority students based on various measures in an article fittingly titled '*Why do All the Study Abroad Students Look Alike?'* (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011). Results of the study found significant differences in intent factors between Black, White, Asian, and Hispanic students, such as differences relating to openness to diversity and co-curricular involvement. For Hispanic students in particular, significant differences in intent were found to exist based on financial considerations. These findings were confirmed by McClure et al. (2010) in qualitative study of Hispanic students, which found that perceptions related to

financial affordability were culturally contingent (McClure, 2010). This was due to a number of participants citing the financial burden that studying abroad would place on their families. All of this research emphasizes the fact that student populations are often multi-faceted, and therefore works to show the importance of considering a multitude of demographic variables and how they impact intent to study abroad.

The final significant limitation in the current study relates to the statistical model used. A simple multiple linear regression model was used in an effort to establish an empirical relationship between subjective social status and intolerance of ambiguity, and intent to study abroad. This exploratory model was not statistically significant in part due to the way multiple linear regression regresses independent variables onto the dependent variable. In short, multiple linear regression reduces the chance of a Type 1 error by accounting for the accumulation of random variance resulting from multiple independent variables, and in doing so considers only the unique variance shared by each independent variable. Instead, step-wise or hierarchical regression analysis may have been more effective, should more variables have been included that share unique variance with intent to study abroad. These models are more sophisticated in regressing independent variables onto the dependent variable, and allow one to determine the amount of change produced with each subsequent inclusion of additional variables (i.e., in a step-by-step fashion). However, it is important to note that results can be affected by idiosyncrasies within the sample, and the order in which variables are entered (see Lewis, 2007).

Future research can add to our collective understanding of what influences students to study abroad in a number of ways. Firstly, future research should take note of the business cliché that states, “think globally, act locally.” By including large, cross-institutional samples that allow for comparisons across institutions, the role that institutional differences have on the

portfolio of intent to study abroad determinants can be further clarified.

In relation to demographics, further research should build upon the findings of BaileyShea (2009) and Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella (2011) by quantitatively and qualitatively (e.g., through ethnography) addressing the gap of minority involvement (BaileyShea, 2009; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011). Along these lines, subjective social status should still be considered as a possible influencer of intent to study abroad given the many disparities cited relating to ethnicity and financial stability. The MacAuthur scale could still be an effective measure in this context, but this may require further exploring how demographic variation among the sample impacts scores. Also, the reference group students were asked to use in order to assess their social position was that of all Americans. This may have inflated scores on the scale in the sense that some participants could have felt that by attending college they were better off than the average American, both in the sense that they are educated (education was one variable they were asked to consider), and in the sense that are likely to be better off financially in the long run. A more developed sample would also contribute to the scale's effectiveness, in that it would be more likely than the sample used in the current study to capture differences between individual students.

Post-hoc exploratory analyses found that some survey items on the intent to study abroad scale were more impactful than others. Particularly of interest was the survey item (number 8) that assessed the extent to which participants viewed participation in a study abroad program as being important for the completion of their degree. This item correlated more than any other (r = .50) to the first question, which stated, "…rate how strongly you intend to participate in a study abroad program." Should this association be legitimate, it would support earlier research that found associations between perceived importance of studying abroad to one's education and

career path, and intent to study abroad (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). This would further provide support for the notion that internationalizing curriculums may help to increase intent to study abroad (BaileyShea, 2009).

Another angle future research can approach the question of how to increase intent to study abroad is to consider the process of measurement itself. Given the myriad of variables that impact individual intent, and the idiosyncratic compositions of educational institutions, assessing these dynamics can be of great value. However, benefits of measuring intent to study abroad may come from the simple act of asking participants questions relating intent to study abroad. The mere measurement effect accounts for this possibility. In the original study investigating this phenomenon, Sherman (1980) asked participants to rate the likelihood that they would perform a socially desirable behavior (volunteering for the American Cancer Society), and the likelihood that they would preform a socially undesirable behavior (singing the Star Spangled Banner on the phone) (Sherman, 1980). A control group was not asked to predict their behavior. Results showed that the experimental group was 27% more likely to perform the socially desirable behavior, and 28% less likely to perform the socially undesirable behavior than the control group. Later research built upon this original study, and found the mere measurement effect to be significant for purchasing behavior (Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004) and health behavior (Godin, Sheeran, Conner, & Germain, 2008). While the current study did not assess the presence of the mere measurement effect, and its effects have not been considered in context of intent to study abroad, this research suggests that it may play a role.

Finally, researchers should address the question of how educational institutions can recruit students through the admissions process who are more likely to consider participating in study abroad programs than others. The importance of internationalization to the development of

both educational institutions and students supports the notion that choosing students who are more likely to be involved in foreign study, whether at the school or abroad, would be beneficial. Of course, any effort to assess students in the admissions process based on intent to study abroad scores may be problematic given the multivariate complexities presented in this study. That said, given that educational institutions utilize a variety of objective variables – such as standardized testing scores and grade point averages – to assess the viability prospective students, one can postulate that the use of psychological scales such as intent to study abroad would also be useful in this process.

Conclusion

The current study has attempted to contribute to the global trend of internationalization by evaluating the impact that subjective social status and intolerance of ambiguity has on intent to study abroad. Ultimately, efforts of educational institutions to internationalize involve a large number of considerations, increasing study abroad participation being just one of them. There is not one particular solution or recommendation that can move an institution from being considered ‘local’ to being ‘global’. However, each academic inquiry into the determinants of intent to study abroad is an important step in a more international direction.

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Appendix A
Result Tables

Table A1

Descriptive Statistics

	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intent	8.00	39.00	24.57	6.91	-0.21	-0.50
SSS	2.00	10.00	5.46	1.69	0.07	-0.44
Ambiguity	29.00	68.00	50.49	7.47	-0.30	0.26

Note: SSS means Subjective Social Status.

Table A2

Intercorrelation Matrix

	Intent	SSS	Ambiguity
Intent	____	.075	-.203*
SSS	.075	____	-.186*
Ambiguity	-.203*	-.186*	____

Note: SSS means Subjective Social Status.

* $p < 0.05$ level.

Table A3

Regression Model

Variable	Unstand Coeff B	Stand Coeff Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	32.80		6.75	.00
SSS	.16	.39	.45	.65
Ambiguity	-.18	.08	-.20	.03

Note: SSS means Subjective Social Status.

Appendix B
Intent to Study Abroad Scale

1) Using the scale below, rate you strongly you intend to participate in a study abroad program.

1	2	3	4	5
Do Not Intend				Strongly Intend

*2) In general, how interested are you in participating in a 4- to 6-week SUMMER EXCHANGE program, where you would take several classes for USF credit (taught in English) at a university located in a foreign country?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Interested	A little Interested	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested	Extremely Interested

*3) In general, how interested are you in participating in a SEMESTER ABROAD program, where you would take five classes (taught in English) and spend a semester at a university located in a foreign country?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Interested	A little Interested	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested	Extremely Interested

4) In general, how interested are you in participating in a STUDY ABROAD program, where you would take language classes to learn a foreign language in a foreign country?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Interested	A little Interested	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested	Extremely Interested

*Indicates original scale items

5) How important do you think international experiences are for you to fulfill your goals?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Important	A little Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important

6) How important are the ACADEMIC COMPONENTS of a study abroad trip in your decision to participate in a study abroad program?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Important	A little Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important

7) How important are the CULTURAL IMMERSION COMPONENTS of a study abroad trip in your decision to participate in a study abroad program?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Important	A little Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important

8) How important is participating in a STUDY ABROAD program to completing your degree program?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very Important	A little Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important

Appendix C
Modified MacAuthur Scale of Subjective Social Status

Here is a ladder. There are ten rungs in total from the bottom to the top.

Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in the United States. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off – those who have the most money, the most education and the most respected jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off – who have the least money, the least education, and the least respected jobs or no jobs.

The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to the people at the very top; the lower you are the closer you are to the people at the very bottom.

If you consider your current situation and compare it with all other people in the United States, where would you place yourself on this ladder? Please indicate it by selecting the rung number you chose: