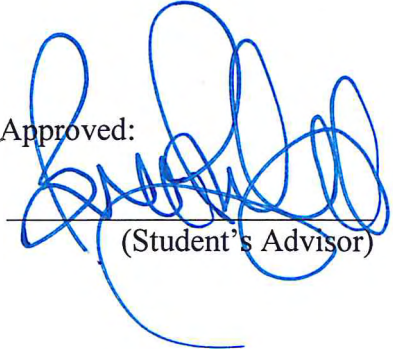


The Effects of Short-term, Faculty-led Study Abroad on Intercultural Awareness

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## Abstract

This study followed thirteen college students through a three-credit college course on Comparative Politics, which included eight days abroad during spring break. The students traveled to Nicaragua where they conducted interviews, visited historical sites, as well as governmental and educational institutions. The goal of this study was to determine if a short-term, faculty-led program increased intercultural awareness in students. Classroom observations of the student's pre and post trip were recorded to examine the overall student participation in the class. A pre and post trip survey was created to measure the knowledge and opinions of the students. The survey consisted of forty-three questions: Eight demographic questions, thirty-two Likert scale knowledge-based questions, and three free-response questions. The survey was administered two days before departure and the day after return electronically via email utilizing *Qualtrics* survey software. Field observations of the students during the abroad portion of the trip were recorded daily and were used in conjunction with the qualitative data collected via the survey. During the trip, the students verbally expressed their re-evaluation of international relations perspectives, personal values, and priorities, as well as, the realization of opportunity and privilege provided to them in the United States. The results show a sizable increase of change and perception in the knowledge of the visited country's politics, people, and culture. This paper argues that short-term faculty-led programs do increase intercultural awareness and prove to be impactful in the students understanding and appreciation of cultures other than their own.

## **Introduction**

The importance of intercultural awareness can be seen in its absence, commonly known as ethnocentrism. An ethnocentric state of mind believes that one's own culture is the center of the world or is superior to that of others. According to Jingzhu Zhang (2014), there are three levels of ethnocentric thought: denial, defense, and minimization. The deepest of these is denial in which people that are isolated from cultures other than their own deliberately ignore the existence of other cultural values and beliefs. Those in the defensive level acknowledge the existence of other cultures but believe that their culture is superior. The last level is minimization, in which one focuses only on the similarities between one's own and another culture, but does not see the others' overall cultural framework as legitimate.

Intercultural awareness, also referred to as intercultural competence, is a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that facilitate effective cross-cultural communication, and appropriate interactions with others. Aronson, Venable, Sieveking and Miller (2005) argue that to become interculturally aware, one must obtain knowledge of how culture affects the beliefs and behaviors of others, and how he or she shapes the emphasis of sociopolitical, environmental, and economic decisions. However, to openly accept cultural differences, one must also be aware of their own values, attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors, and the impact those have on others. When one is aware of one's cultural characteristics and biases, one can effectively analyze the cross-cultural interactions and experiences they have, and develop a deeper understanding of the issues created by cultural differences (Tuleja, 2008).

The ever-increasing interconnectedness between countries in a globalized world requires cross-culture interactions throughout one's daily life and at work. College students will be entering careers in which they will be assisting those of other cultures, or working for companies

with international interests. Thus, intercultural awareness is imperative for college graduates as they try to be competitive in a globalized workforce. To better prepare students, higher education institutions are incorporating international learning objectives into course requirements and providing study abroad opportunities to meet those goals (Medina Lopez-Portillo, 2004).

The study abroad experience can be the perfect vehicle to foster intercultural awareness within students, as they are more often than not transplanted into a different culture for a period of time. There is debate amongst researchers about the length of time required to obtain the desired intercultural learning outcome. Some argue that it could take as long as two years to acquire a new outlook on the world (Medina Lopez-Portillo, 2004). Whereas others state a short-term experience of immersion in a foreign culture can foster a new awareness of one's own culture as well as the complexities of cultural differences (Tuleja, 2008). However, little research has examined the changes undergone by students over short-term study abroad experiences.

Cost tends to be the most prohibitive factor for most students when considering studying abroad for the traditional semester or full year experience. Short-term study abroad experiences are eight weeks or less and have become increasingly popular as they tend to be more practical for most students (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). Short-term programs are less expensive and are often scheduled during breaks in the school year allowing students to go abroad over winter or summer break and maintain their normal course schedules when they return. While more practical time and money wise, short-term programs are still too costly for some students who struggle to pay for their regular college tuition.

Short-term, faculty-led study abroad consist of a college course taught by a faculty member of a college with an 8-12-day study abroad trip incorporated into the class. The trip not only immerses the student into a different culture but also enables further and deeper exploration

of the course topic. By having a professor and students travel together, the college can utilize group rates in the organization of the trip, thus allowing the course to be offered at more affordable price to students. This also makes a trip abroad more accessible than traveling on one's own with the added benefit of furthering one's education. But can such a short trip increase intercultural awareness and foster a new view of the world within a student?

Faculty-led trips rely heavily on the knowledge and expertise of the professor to guide the students through their experience abroad. Not only the professor's knowledge in subject matter and travel experience, but also in the culture and the country. The author argues that a professor with native ties to a country can provide a more educational and insightful experience than that of a professor who is also a fellow tourist. A non-native professor can be an expert in their field and skillfully showcase their subject matter while abroad, but will lack personal narrative and context. Whereas a native professor can reveal personal insight and a deeper understanding of the local customs, language, cuisines, people, and history; therefore, providing students an in-depth immersion in the day-to-day culture of the host country and an intimate understanding of its history.

This research was conducted on a Comparative Politics course with a short-term faculty-led trip to Nicaragua. This trip was the second time the college and the Professor offered this course. The author took this course and study abroad the previous year to the study, which was the inspiration for this research. The study abroad trip was eight days long and took place over the college's scheduled spring break and was led by a professor native to Nicaragua. Before the trip, the students learned about the field of Comparative Politics in a classroom setting and participated in interviews during the trip to gather information to complete a case study as the final project for the course. Because of the professor's ties to the country, he could arrange an

array of interviews with people of varying social status and political affiliation. The students were able to interview members of cooperatives, business owners, political activists, and government officials to gather insight into the culture, politics, and history of Nicaraguans, with additional time spent visiting heritage sites to instill a contextual understanding to the historical events they were learning.

In planning the trip, the professor facilitated the collaboration with Panorama Service Expeditions (PSE), a local non-governmental organization (NGO) that works with underdeveloped communities in Nicaragua to assist them in attaining basic services for the people. During the trip, the students visited a community to help better understand the ways of the people and to participate in service learning. They toured the village and worked with school aged children, teaching them words and phrases in English, Microsoft Office programs on the computer, and how to play baseball.

As part of their experience, the students visited The Polytechnic University of Nicaragua and toured the college, attended lectures, and participated in cultural exchanges with the English, and Political Science students. The professor, chaperone, Panorama guides, and bilingual students facilitated translation throughout the trip for the non-Spanish speaking students.

This paper examines the results of a study conducted on a short-term, faculty-led course and the effects on intercultural awareness amongst participants. The class consisted of thirteen students of varying age, academic achievement, and ethnic background. Classroom observations were used to record the effects of the abroad experience on classroom participation and student interaction. Pre and post-trip surveys were administered to collect knowledge acquisition and opinion changes after the trip. Field observations were made throughout the study abroad experience to record topics of conversation, reactions, and daily reflections of the students.

## **Methods**

### *Classroom Observations*

Observations were made twelve times throughout the semester; five times before the trip and seven times post trip. Data was collected on aspects of classroom participation including cell phone usage, contribution to discussions, visible attentiveness to the professor, note taking during lecture, and conversing with classmates. The observations were recorded six times on a spreadsheet using hash marks in the varying areas from the back of the classroom.

### *Presurvey and Post survey*

This study utilized a pre-trip and post-trip survey to collect quantitative data. The survey was comprised of eight demographic questions, thirty-two Likert scale questions, and three free-response questions. The free response questions addressed comparisons between the United States and Nicaraguan cultures and ideals as seen by the student. The Likert scale questions created by the researcher largely focused on the student's knowledge of Nicaragua and were based on the researcher's experience from previous participation in the study abroad experience. The questions were broken into the following five categories: political climate and government, economic and living conditions, beliefs and culture of Nicaraguans, heritage and indigenous rights, and sustainability and beautification. With the last six of the Likert scale questions measuring the student's opinions on factors of international relations which were derived from Helfant's *Survey of opinions and beliefs about international relations* (Kalunian, 1997). The possible responses to the Likert scale questions were: Completely agree, Slightly agree, Don't know, Slightly disagree, and Completely disagree. The survey was electronically distributed to the participant's emails via *Qualtrics* survey software. With the pre-survey distributed a few days



before the departure to Nicaragua and the post-survey released the day after the participants returned home.

### *Field Observations*

The study abroad trip was observed by the researcher beginning at the time of departure from the college until the return to the college. The researcher participated in the trip along with the students and attended all meals, interviews, sightseeing excursions, events, and nightly group reflections. Notes were written in a journal throughout the day during the time of transportation about reactions to historical sites, political events, interviews, tours, and general topics of conversations after excursions. In the evening, after dinner, the group had a time of reflection about the events and experiences of the day. During this reflection time, students were individually asked about the high and low points of their day and asked to answer questions about the events of the day. Notes were taken on the answers to these prompts in a journal. The researcher chose not to use a voice recorder during this time as to not make the students feel uncomfortable and to foster an environment in which they could freely express thoughts and feelings.

### *Participants*

The participants were students in a two-year state college's Political Science course that included an eight-day faculty-led study abroad trip to Nicaragua over the college's scheduled spring break. Thirteen participants were sent the survey; of those, twelve completed both surveys. The participants had varying traits and consisted of seven males and six females. All students were white with four being Hispanic, three of which were foreign born. Two of the thirteen students had not previously left the country, of the eleven that had been abroad, eight stated they had previously traveled to underdeveloped countries, leaving three that had not. Of



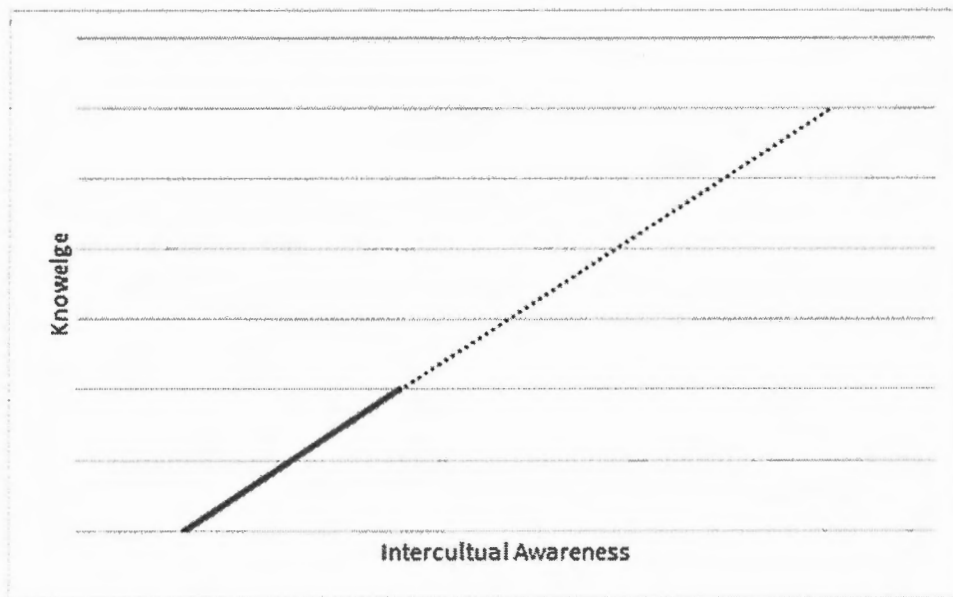
the eight that had traveled to an underdeveloped country, two reported having participated in service or mission work while abroad. The number of college credits completed was close to evenly split, with three students having completed 16-30 credits, three having complete 31-45 credits, four having completed 46-59 credits, and three having completed 60+ credits. This course was the first Political Science course taken by four of the students, whereas six had previously completed one other Political Science course, and three students had taken two or more Political Science courses. Ten of the students reported being members of the college's honors scholar program. All surveys were submitted electronically, and participants' responses remained anonymous to the researcher.

### *Analytic Strategy*

This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to correlate the results with the student's reports and observations of how the experience affected their intercultural awareness. The researcher created the survey questions to measure how the student's overall knowledge of the country changed from pre to post trip as well as how knowledge of the country affected personal opinions of international relation policies. However, the small sample size did not allow for the use of the Chi-Square Test of demographic segregation. Due to these restraints, the researcher analyzed the change in the answers to the individual questions by comparing the amount of the "don't know" responses from the pre-survey to those in post survey. By creating the free response questions, the students were given the opportunity to express their thoughts and feeling about the experience in an anonymous setting. Those responses could then be compared to the observational notes from the trip to check for continuity in the student's public expressions during the trip. The classroom observations were used to see if, and how, the trip changed the student's classroom participation.

## *Variables*

Based on the data, the researcher argues that there is a positive correlation between the increase in knowledge and intercultural awareness. As participants' knowledge increases, the more inter-culturally aware they will become. If studying abroad can significantly increase knowledge, it will, therefore, accelerate the rate in which a student becomes inter-culturally competent.



## **Study Abroad at Florida SouthWestern State College**

Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) President Jeffery Allbritten, revised the mission and strategic initiative for the college in 2013. “The mission of Florida SouthWestern State College is to inspire learning; prepare a diverse population for creative and responsible participation in a global society; and serve as a leader for intellectual, economic, and cultural awareness in the community.” (“The Florida Southwestern State College Mission,” n.d.). One of the strategic steps put in place to foster this mission was to “expand international education.”. The college created The Center for International Education (CIE) in 2013 to facilitate the expansion of study abroad opportunities offered at the college.

The CIE has a mission that furthers the college mission and helps ensure that the trips planned will benefit both the faculty and the students. “The mission of the Center for International Education (CIE) is to support cultural awareness, global citizenship, and an appreciation of varied global perspectives through curricular and co-curricular experiences...” (“Center for International Education Mission,” n.d.). Before the creation of the CIE, one faculty-led course had studied abroad in 2010. In addition to semester study abroad, undergraduate research trips, and service learning trips, the CIE has helped facilitate seven faculty-led international study abroad trips, and two faculty-led domestic study trips since its creation. These activities are guided by the objective of helping students to think critically about various perspectives and better prepare them to participate in a global society.

At FSW students can study or intern abroad for a semester or year-long program which is a more independent form of study abroad than the short-term faculty-led trips, as the student lives in a foreign country while attending classes. However, there is limited course transferability for courses that will fill the FSW degree requirements because of the college’s small degree offerings. Therefore, students wishing to study abroad for longer periods of time would need to take their courses abroad as electives. Not all students have enough room in their degree path or the financial means to accommodate the experience without the academic credit. While short-term, faculty-led trips are not as long or as independent, the CIE helps professors offer study abroad trips that are tied to courses that can be used towards the student’s degree completion while still providing them an experience abroad. In the future, FSW hopes to offer the opportunity for students to take FSW courses and complete FSW degrees abroad at partner colleges and satellite campuses (E. Deluca, personal communication, June 1, 2017).

## **Studying Abroad in Nicaragua**

The first study abroad class to Nicaragua traveled in March 2016 and was tied to a Comparative Politics course. I enrolled in this course with little knowledge of politics or Nicaragua, but with a desire to study abroad and learn about the world first hand. During the trip, I was able to interview and hear the life stories of Nicaraguans of varying social and political status. Those stories provided me with multiple perspectives of historical events and current political issues as well as a new insight into how events affect people differently. Not only did it bring the historical events to life for me, but it also challenged my perspectives and beliefs on political and world issues. When visiting the community of Santa Julia, I was deeply impacted by the happiness of the people. Even though they had so little, their joy at our presence was infectious. This was a much-needed reminder for me that possessions do not necessarily equate with happiness which can be hard to forget in the United States' commercial driven market.

The trip was an incredibly educational and transformative experience for me. It opened my eyes to new perspectives of thinking and expanded my global awareness which changed my life and inspired a curiosity of how study abroad affected students. After expressing my interest in researching this concept, I was given the opportunity to conduct my research on the second occurrence of the trip to Nicaragua. The itinerary for the second trip was similar to that of the first, which enabled me to draw on my personal experience in constructing my research.

## **Observational Trip to Nicaragua**

The second study abroad class to Nicaragua traveled in March 2017 for eight days. All the participants met at the college on the morning of departure and traveled together to the Miami Airport to take a nonstop flight to Managua, Nicaragua. After arriving in Nicaragua, the group was met by representatives from PSE and were then brought to see the historical Plaza de

la Revolución in Managua where the students learned the significance of the buildings and the roles of those remembered by memorials. They then continued to the arranged lodging; an old coffee plantation converted into a resort in the mountains, where the students were split into groups and assigned to cabins for the week. Once accommodations were settled, the group assembled in the dining pavilion for dinner and completed the PSE orientation before returning to their cabins for the night.

The second day, as every following day, started early with buffet style, group breakfast in the dining pavilion followed by loading into the van to travel to the day's first destination. On this day, the group traveled down the mountain to Managua, to meet with a representative of the Port Authority. Unknown to the group it was the anniversary of the death of Hugo Chavez and there was a memorial service taking place in the city center which is where they were to meet their contact. The students were able to watch the service, a subsequent political demonstration, and the parade that proceeded to a finale in the Port Authority's shopping district where they had lunch. After lunch, the group visited The Masaya Volcano National Park where they traveled to the top to view the crater of an active volcano and explored the museum containing the history of the volcano. On the way out of the park, the group visited El Coyotepe Fortress which was a political prison and torture camp used by the Somoza regime during the country's revolution. Upon returning to the resort, the group partook in dinner and a reflection of the day's experiences before retiring to bed.

Reflections were held nightly and led by a PSE leader. During the gatherings, each of the participants reflected on the high and low point of the day and questions were also asked to focus reflection of the differences between Nicaragua and the United States. The participants then shared their thoughts, feelings and answers to the questions with the group.

On the third day, the group traveled to Santa Julia, the partner community of PSE. Santa Julia is a small community located in the mountain outside of Managua and comprised of sixty-four families. It is organized by a women's cooperative and the members grow, harvest, and sell coffee as a means of income. The group toured the community and were shown the land the community owns, the school the children attended, the cemetery where the deceased are buried, a couple of the homes the families live in, how they grow their food and coffee, and the projects PSE has helped implement within the community. Once the tour concluded, the students were able to hear the testimony of a leader as well as the history of the community's development. The group then traveled into Managua for lunch and to visit the United State Embassy. At the Embassy, the group met with Foreign Service Officer Donald Emeric who talked to the group about the purpose the U.S. Embassy serves in Nicaragua which was followed by a question and answer session with the students. After leaving the Embassy, the group visited *Margarita*, the restaurant of Virginia Vigil, a childhood friend of the Professor, where she talked with the students about her experience of participating in the literacy campaign in the 1980's, being a small business owner, and her thoughts about the current political climate in Nicaragua. Upon arriving back to the resort for the evening, the group was met with entertainment in the form of artist and musician, Armando Mejía Godoy. Armando played music for the group after they finished dinner and presented some of his paintings that students had the opportunity to purchase.

Day four started with a visit to Nicaragua's National Parliament. The group learned the history of the city from a guide that walked them through the center of the complex and stopped to talk about building of importance. The group then toured the National Public Library, seeing many rooms of books, learning how news is documented, and about the constitutions of the

country. From the library, the group moved to the National Assembly Building, where they were given a presentation about the government of Nicaragua and able to witness an ongoing session, in which the group was formally acknowledged by the president of the Nicaraguan Parliament. After the visit to the National Assembly, the group traveled to Casa Conti, a luxury furniture store owned by Fabricio Conti a lifelong friend of the Professor. Fabricio talked with the students about his life story, his business of importing goods for the wealthy, and his views of the current political climate in Nicaragua. After returning to the resort and having dinner, the group had a special guest Colbert, from the partner community of PSE next to the resort. Colbert talked to the students about his life story, his involvement in Nicaragua's revolutionary war, and how PSE has helped his community.

In the morning of day five the group visited The Polytechnic University of Nicaragua (UPOLI). The students partook in a lecture about Donald Trump's presidential leadership style that the professor gave to the political science students of UPOLI. They were then given a tour, and discussed current political issues with a class of political science students. After lunch, the students led a cultural exchange as a panel answering the questions asked by the UPOLI students that were learning English. On the way back to the resort to change clothes, the group stopped at the headquarters for the association of historical combatants of the Contra, known in Spanish as ARNIC, located in the center of Managua. The Professor made arrangements to talk with a former Contra leader known as "Comandante Chaparra." During the stop one of the contra fighters took the time to share his experience of the war with the students. Once clothes were changed, the group made their way to Boquita Beach on the Pacific Ocean where they could relax while watching the sunset, before returning to the resort for the night.



On the sixth day, the group returned to UPOLI to further their interaction with the local political science students. The students from UPOLI played musical instruments, recited poems, and danced as a part of a cultural exchange. The FSW students also played music and introduced the UPOLI students to currently popular games. Together the students participated in the pop culture phenomenon known as “The Mannequin Challenge” and talked afterwards. Following the intercultural exchange, students from both colleges listened to a lecture by the FSW Professor about conducting research and three of the FSW students were able to present their topics of undergraduate research. After lunch, the group left the college and returned to ARNIC to interview and hear the story of Elida Maria Galeano, also known as “Comandante Chaparra,” an elected member of the Nicaraguan Parliament. The Comandante told them of her experience being a female leader during Nicaragua's Revolutionary War and how she is involved in politics now. The group then returned to the resort and prepared to dine at a local Italian Restaurant, Restaurante Cueva del Buzo. Coincidentally, while they were at the restaurant they were able to meet and briefly talk to Edén Pastora, a former commander during the revolution, and General Humberto Ortega, Nicaragua's military leader and brother to the president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega.

Day seven was spent working with the children of the Santa Julia Community. The students separated into three groups teaching the kids English, Baseball, and Computer Basics. At lunch time, with the help of PSE, the students served the community lunch and cleaned up afterwards. There was then a going away party in which PSE supplied a piñata for the children and dancing ensued. Once back at the resort the students were required to clean their cabins and pack as they were moving to new lodging accommodations the next morning, as well as, prepare for an evening out. For dinner, the group went to La Casa de los Mejia Godoy, where there was

also a cultural music performance that night by Carlos Mejia Godoy. After dinner, the group briefly went dancing at a local club and then returned to the resort for the last time.

Once the luggage was loaded on the morning of the eighth day, the group traveled to the town of Granada with a guide that provided historical and educational information along the way. They stopped in the town of Catarina for the view of Apoyo Lagoon and the opportunity to purchase souvenirs. After shopping, they went to the Paradiso Hostel & Restaurant for lunch and for the opportunity to swim in the lagoon. Once in Granada, they checked into their hotel for the night and the guide gave them a tour of the town which stopped at historical buildings and cathedrals and ended with dinner at a local restaurant.

The morning of the ninth day the group checked out of the hotel and traveled to the Managua airport to return to the United States. Once back in the United States, the group traveled from the Miami Airport to the FSW Thomas Edison Campus. There the students met their loved ones and returned home.

## **Findings**

### *Limitations*

- The sample size was not representative of the general Florida college student population and was also too small to perform demographic segregation tests. It can be argued that the findings possess weaker explanatory power and less depth of content than those derived from larger samples.
- The language barrier for non-Spanish speaking students could change how the experience affects them, compared to those fluent in the native language. Knowledge acquisition and impact was not measured based on language comprehension.

- There was no control group to measure how the classroom portion of the course or how the trip alone could change intercultural awareness.

### *Field Observations*

During the beginning of the trip, the students made many comments on the things they saw as different from the United States. While the topics of comments varied many were concentrated on poverty, the road infrastructure, and driving laws. The aggressive driving of the locals astonished and impressed most of the students. There was conversation and concern as to if there were laws that guided the drivers as many of the roads lacked the painted lanes and lines they were familiar with in the United States. There was also debate as to how the mail system and giving directions worked given the lack of road name signs.

The students were visibly moved when touring the Santa Julia Community and claimed to be “humbled” by having seen extreme poverty first hand. The majority of the students claimed that their “eyes were opened” to poverty and the privileges they had in the United States. They talked about how poverty is different in the United States and one student said, “I knew it would be different than what I was used to, but I was surprised at just how impoverished they are.”. They were inspired to act and talked about ways to help the people of the Santa Julia Community.

After acclimating to some of the striking differences in Nicaragua, the students’ conversations and comments focused on the happiness and welcoming nature of the Nicaraguan people, and how strong feminism was in the country. Many of the students were surprised at the powerful positions held by women in the country of which they enjoyed having the opportunity to interview and hear their stories. In contrast, the students were frustrated with the lack of transparency in the answers given by several politicians they interviewed.

After talking with their peers at UPOLI, the students started seeing similarities between Nicaragua and the United States political situations and realized how the UPOLI students had similar desires, goals, and aspirations. They enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with other Political Science students and wished for more time with the UPOLI students. After the visit to UPOLI, the students that had limited Spanish comprehension reported an increased confidence in using the Spanish they knew and had also utilized new words learned from their Spanish speaking classmates.

The children of Santa Julia made a profound impact on the students during their time volunteering and the students expressed a desire to stay longer and had a tough time saying goodbye. The students expressed concern for the children's lack of school supplies, educational future, and career opportunities. They were very grateful to have had the opportunity to interact with and teach the children. Many commented on the pure joy of the children and how surprised they were at how happy the children were, even when they had so little possessions. Several of the students claimed their time at Santa Julia was their favorite part of the trip and hoped to return as a volunteer with PSE in the future.

At the end of the trip, many of the students had a difficult time saying goodbye to the PSE guides that were with them for the trip as they had become part of the group and participated in all our meals, excursions, interviews, and events. Many of the students didn't feel ready to leave Nicaragua as they had grown quite fond of the country and its people during the week. Several of the students reported that the trip had either changed or cemented their career goals and had inspired them to help or travel more. While many of the students claimed that meeting the people and learning their history was the most impactful part of the trip.

### *Pre and Post Survey*

The individual survey questions were analyzed and showed an increase in knowledge on all questions in all categories: International Relations, Sustainability and Beautification, Heritage and Indigenous Rights, People and Culture, Economic and Living Conditions, and Political Climate and Government. With the category of heritage and indigenous rights showing the least amount of increase, which is attributed to the lack of contact with the indigenous population during the trip.

The free response questions provided similar sentiments in the post survey to those observed in the field. When asked “How does the culture in the U.S. differ from that in Nicaragua?” the students described Nicaragua as having a happy culture of strong community that takes pride in their traditions and values family and religion. Compared to that of the United States which they saw as a diverse, individualistic, and competitive culture that values success and possessions.

When asked “How are U.S. Ideals different from Nicaraguan ideals?” the students stated that Nicaragua strives for gender equality and unity while valuing political participation and a good life. The students feel that in the United States freedoms, wealth, and drive for global power divide the country.

When asked “What surprised you the most about this trip?” the students stated the level of happiness of the people despite them living in poverty, the passion of the people for political participation, the level of gender equality they had achieved, and how much the trip impacted them.

### *Classroom Observations*

The classroom observations after the trip reflected an increase in overall classroom participation. The students were more likely to engage in classroom discussion, pay attention to the professor during lectures and less likely to use their cell phones during class. There was also an increase in camaraderie among the students as well as with the students and the professor.

### *Policy Implications*

Institutions of higher education should provide affordable study abroad options to students. This can be accomplished by devising short-term faculty led trips, providing subsidies for programs, or scholarships. To better provide a variety of opportunities, institutions could provide incentives to faculty who develop an approved study abroad trip that is applicable for a course in their field.

Institutions could forge partnerships with colleges abroad that they are able to pre-approve courses for direct credit transfer to the home institution. This would facilitate a more efficient application process by decreasing or eliminating the time needed for course approval. A partnership could also allow for an exchange of professors. Enabling a foreign professor to instruct a course on campus and lead a corresponding trip to his or her native country. In addition, institutions could sponsor visiting professors or foreign students to provide an insight into unfamiliar cultures from other areas of the country and world.

The opportunities should be made known to students throughout their academic career. During college orientations, students should be informed of the option to study abroad so they can plan in advance to incorporate study abroad into their degree path. Academic Advisors could be briefed about upcoming faculty-led trips at the institution to better guide students in their degree path and help them take advantage of the opportunities. In addition, college wide emails

and flyers could be used to keep students up-to-date as well as to promote new and upcoming opportunities through the year.

## **Conclusion**

Study abroad is a valuable tool for institutions to increase intercultural awareness and better prepare students for a competitive globalized workplace while continuing the learning environment. Study abroad programs help facilitate the opportunity for students to learn outside of the classroom, experience a different culture, meet new people, and utilize critical thinking. By learning about differences in culture, students will be able to better understand differences in opinion, priorities, and beliefs which will enable them to effectively integrate into a globalized world.

This study sought to determine if an eight day, short-term, faculty-led program would provide the students with an increase in intercultural awareness. In the final analysis, the qualitative data collected via the free response questions on the survey and the field observations verified the students' increase in knowledge of a different culture as shown in the quantitative survey questions. This correlation further proves that this eight-day program was sufficient to create a significant increase in intercultural awareness. This research lends new insight to the effects short-term, faculty-led programs have upon participants. However, further research is necessary to determine the full spectrum and longevity of the effects.

Future research could explore the difference in effects on participants based on fluency in the native language of the host country. A control group could be devised of students that are simultaneously taking the course on campus, but that are not participating in the trip. A future study may also involve an increased sample size of participants to enable the possibility of segregating the survey results based on demographic data. To expand qualitative data, a future



researcher could conduct formal interviews with the trip participants allowing for a more in-depth analysis of an individual student's change in intercultural awareness.

In the final analysis, the short-term, faculty-led study abroad trip provided the students with an experience that influenced future career paths, increased interest in political participation, and expanded awareness of global issues. This study showed an increase in knowledge of cultural differences positively correlated to an increase in intercultural awareness. Thus, by increasing this knowledge throughout the academic careers of students, college graduates will be equipped to work across cultural lines and through differences as a global citizen.

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