

RETENTION AND DEGREE COMPLETION: A
QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF
STUDY ABROAD ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENTS

By

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Abstract: This study analyzed the impacts of participation in short-term study abroad programs at Oklahoma community colleges through a quantitative research design. Student retention and degree completion are concerns for all types of higher education institutions, but U.S. community colleges experience an even greater struggle to retain students from freshman to sophomore year than four-year institutions (Braxton, 2013; Fike & Fike, 2008; Cohen, 1996). Research shows that participants in study abroad at four-year institutions are better retained and more likely to complete a degree than students who do not participate in study abroad (Hamir, 2011; Posey, 2003; Sutton & Rubin, 2010). The purpose of this study was to determine if similar outcomes for retention and degree completion are true for U.S. community college students who participate in study abroad programs. First, descriptive statistics were utilized to evaluate demographics of study abroad participants and non-participants. Second, two Chi-Square Tests of Independence were used to identify impacts of study abroad participation on retention and degree completion. Results indicated a significant relationship between community college study abroad participation with both retention and degree completion. It was concluded that students who participate in community college study abroad programs are more likely to be retained and complete a degree. Study abroad could serve as a strategy for U.S. community colleges to boost retention and degree completion rates given thoughtful consideration of common barriers such as lack of institutional funding, limited resources, and negative student perceptions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Study abroad is an international academic experience in which college students physically travel outside of the United States to engage in scholarly studies and activities in a foreign country (McKeown, 2009). Nationally, study abroad participation has continually increased, with significant growth in the early 2000s (IIE, 2017). Although the rate of growth has slowed since 2016, study abroad continues to capture the attention of college students.

Large institutions have offered study abroad programs to college students for decades, and program impacts at four-year institutions are widely researched. Scholars highlight the impacts of study abroad, including increased self-confidence, a heightened sense of self, an awareness and commitment to the welfare of others, enhanced interest in academic study, growth in tolerance and cultural sensitivity, and clearer direction in career and academic pursuits (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). From surveying study abroad webpages of various four-year institutions, it is clear higher education dedicates both time and resources designing intricate programs to fit the academic and developmental needs of undergraduates.

Historically, study abroad opportunities existed primarily at four-year institutions and related research on impacts also focused on four-year campus programs. However,

many contemporary U.S. community colleges now offer study abroad opportunities that complement institutional curriculum. The U.S. community college seeks to meet the needs of the community it serves (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Institutional curriculum supports the local workforce, and many U.S. community colleges recognize the increased demands of a global economy, even on a local level.

Although research on study abroad participation at the community college level is limited, a few scholars have found study abroad participation specifically at the community college level is linked to positive outcomes (Raby & Malveaux, 2019; Raby & Valeau, 2016; Zhang, 2011). Those studies also highlight the unique challenges that community colleges face in terms of internationalization and study abroad (Raby & Malveaux, 2016; Raby & Valeau, 2016). Rosalind Raby, whose work primarily focuses on California community colleges, has contributed significant research on study abroad participation at community colleges. Raby's work is cited frequently throughout my study. Despite Raby's substantial contributions, further research is required to determine the validity of student outcomes of study abroad applicable to other states and/or the U.S. community college system as a whole.

Community colleges grant access to a large population of students who may be unable to attend a four-year institution due to academic performance or cost of attendance. Community colleges are becoming a popular choice for reasons of affordability and quality of education. As of 2019, approximately 40% of U.S. college students are enrolled at community colleges (American Higher Education Alliance, 2019). Previous studies, primarily Raby's work, are instrumental in documenting the outcomes of study abroad at community colleges. This study sought to expand upon previous findings by examining impacts of study abroad on community college students in a new region of the U.S.

To date, the limited research evaluating the impacts of study abroad on community college students often ends with recommendations for further studies. In the article, “Community College Study Abroad: Implications for Student Success,” the authors emphasized the notion that with the development of study abroad programs come the responsibility to research and evaluate the impacts and outcomes (Raby et al., 2013). Although long-term study abroad opportunities are limited to four-year institutions in Oklahoma, several of Oklahoma’s community colleges offer short-term study abroad programs with a number of diverse destinations.

The intended focus of this research study was to determine impacts of short-term, community college study abroad programs on Oklahoma students. This study utilized descriptive statistics to understand demographics of students studying abroad at Oklahoma community colleges. Additionally, this study utilized a Chi-Square Test of Independence to better understand community college study abroad participation and its impact on retention and degree completion.

Personal Insights

My own participation in study abroad programs through my local community college were the initial influence for this research topic. Prior to starting as a traditional first-year student at a university, I took concurrent classes through my local community college. My professor introduced the college’s study abroad opportunities in class. Shortly after, I joined a group of 20 participants on a three-week tour of Costa Rica and earned a Biology credit. Although I attended Oklahoma State University the following semester, at various points during my undergraduate degree, I returned to the community college to participate in three additional study abroad programs.

Reflecting on those experiences led me to question how study abroad impacts community college students in ways that may differ from four-year university students. I observed diversity at the community college that was not reflective of the diversity at my university. Community colleges are a common choice for non-traditional college students. Age range, socioeconomic background, race/ethnicity, and academic preparedness are only a few characteristics that possessed a greater variation than they did in my university classrooms. The diversity I observed on campus at the community college was reflected in study abroad participation as well, leading me to question if this non-traditional population of students experienced unique impacts of study abroad.

Study abroad and international education are not central focuses of my current career. I chose to work in higher education because of my collegiate experience and how it has impacted and continues to impact my life. I am immensely grateful for higher education. I am a first-generation student from rural Oklahoma. I always had plans to attend college, but I never dreamed higher education would grant me the opportunity to travel to 48 countries. This opportunity was entirely possible through an Oklahoma community college. Just as it is for many others, college was a significant developmental period for me. My time abroad had a profound influence on my worldview both academically and personally. It exposed me to a gut-wrenching awareness of my privilege that guides my attitude and decisions daily. My current career focuses on workforce and economic development, which requires extensive data collection and data analyses. I enjoy my current role behind the scenes that brings to light the impact of higher education. Regardless of my role, improving student experience and outcomes will always be my central focus. I still hope that my future in higher education holds an interactive role with global education.

Statement of Problem

Student retention is a significant concern for all types of institutions, and the correlation between study abroad and retention and degree completion at four-year institutions has been widely studied. Studies show participants in study abroad at four-year institutions are better retained and more likely to complete a degree than non-participants (Hamir, 2011; Posey, 2003; Sutton & Rubin, 2010).

However, U.S. community colleges experience an even greater struggle to retain students from freshman to sophomore year than four-year institutions (Braxton, 2013; Cohen, 1996; Fike & Fike 2008). Numerous factors contribute to low retention at community colleges, including, but not limited to, insufficient academic preparedness, educational costs, lack of curriculum structure and development, and low faculty engagement. The inability to retain students results in lower degree completion rates (Braxton, 2013). Student retention has a significant impact on institutional ability to meet their mission. While four-year institutions commonly use study abroad as a tool for retention, study abroad opportunities at community colleges are less common (Green, 2007), though increasing. A deeper understanding of study abroad at community colleges may show that study abroad is similarly correlated with freshman to sophomore retention and degree completion, thus offering community colleges an additional tool for student success.

Purpose

This study implemented a quantitative research design that evaluated student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants. Additionally, this study evaluated the relationship between Oklahoma community college study abroad

participation with retention and degree completion. This study utilized descriptive statistics and a Chi-Square analysis to examine the identified variables.

Research Questions

After a review of the literature focusing on study abroad at community colleges, the following research questions and hypotheses were formed to address the knowledge gap and to guide this study:

RQ1: What are student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major?

RQ2. Is there a significant difference in retention from first to second year for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?

H₀: There is no significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

H_a: There is a significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants

RQ3. Is there a significant difference in degree completion for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?

H₀: There is no significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants

H_a: There is a significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants

Method Overview

This study employed the epistemology of objectivism, an approach rooted in natural science to define an objective outcome (Creswell, 2018). This epistemology views research

as a process of making claims, conducting research, and re-evaluating those claims, with the potential of abandoning claims to build a stronger foundation for future research. Data serves as evidence to shape knowledge and further understand the problem (Creswell, 2018). The theoretical perspective for the study was post-positivism.

The primary goal of this study was to measure and evaluate study abroad participation at community colleges. This study collected descriptive statistics on student demographics of study abroad participants at community colleges. In addition, this study determined if a relationship exists between study abroad participation at community colleges with retention as well as degree completion. Descriptive statistics included an evaluation of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major. This study utilized a quantitative methodological approach. A Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to evaluate the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention and degree completion. A more detailed description of epistemology and research approach is outlined in Chapter Three.

Significance of Study

Significance of the research refers to the relative importance of the conducted study (Leavy, 2017) and will be discussed in the areas of research and practice.

Research

Numerous studies report the impact of study abroad at four-year institutions. Many of those studies reference the impacts of study abroad on retention and degree completion. This study is not a direct replica of a study conducted at a four-year institution, however, it does represent similarities in testing the significance of relationships between identified variables of study abroad participation and retention and degree completion. What makes this study unique is the population. The population consists entirely of community college students, a

rare feature for studies analyzing the impact of study abroad. The underrepresented population brought value and significance to the study. This study aimed to fill a void of limited research and to inspire future studies. It is evident through program offerings that community colleges value student participation in study abroad, but further research is necessary to develop the outcomes and impacts of study abroad on community college students, specifically on retention and degree completion.

Practice

Study abroad participation among community colleges has substantially increased (IIE, 2017). Significant value stems from understanding impacts of programs where students are increasingly participating. In addition, the pressing concept of globalization continues to demand the attention of higher education in the United States. The 2006 Joint Statement issued by the American Association of Community Colleges (AAC) and Association for Community College Trustees (ACCT) emphasized the importance of global education for community college students. The statement further alluded that community college leaders are obligated to host initiatives intended to advance global competencies (American Higher Education Alliance, 2019). The statement issued is likely a response to the initiatives for internationalization developed at larger institutions. Earlier sections recognized that many Oklahoma community colleges incorporated a global aspect into the institution's mission statement. Community colleges recognize the need for internationalization. Given that 40% of U.S. college students are enrolled at community colleges, this sizeable population plays a significant role in internationalization efforts for U.S. higher education as a whole (American Higher Education Alliance, 2019). Research examining the impact of study abroad on

community college students can serve as an informant to aid in developing institutional strategies to meet global initiatives.

Operational Definitions

The following section details the defining criteria for commonly used key terms in this research. The definitions below apply to the selected terms throughout this study.

Community College: Community college refers to a two-year institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Community colleges were popularly known as junior colleges until the 1970s before the term community college became more commonly used.

Degree Completion: A degree earned by completing the required credit hours at an institution of higher education.

Globalization: Globalization is a continuous uncontrollable force with multifaceted social impacts that transcend national borders (Raby & Valeau, 2009). Globalization encourages integration of systems and relationships that develop beyond the nation. The force is a complex and dynamic phenomenon and difficult to define.

Globalization drives technological advances and policy changes in many sectors, including higher education. Globalization poses a challenge for higher education, especially in the realm of community college, driving policy and initiatives to ensure students are engaged global citizens (Raby & Valeau, 2009).

Higher Education: An institution offering postsecondary education through universities, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and institutes of technology (NCES, 2016).

Internationalization: Internationalization refers to the efforts and initiatives developed in response to globalization (Raby & Valeau, 2009). Internationalization is the action taken to better adjust to the force of globalization. Internationalization is essential to understanding the dynamics of globalization. For example, in higher education, examples of internationalization may be international partnerships, inclusion of foreign faculty and staff, or established study abroad and exchange programs (Raby & Valeau, 2009).

Non-Traditional Student: Non-traditional students are defined by one or more of the following characteristics: low socioeconomic status, students of color, first-generation students, working full-time, academically under-prepared, and/or an adult (Ross-Gordon, 2011). Although adult status is granted socially at the age of 18, higher education defines adult students as being over the age of 24 (Soares et al., 2017).

Open Admission: A policy adopted by many community colleges that are not selective, allowing all students who have earned a high school diploma or the equivalent to enroll (AACC, 2017). This policy does not require a minimum grade point average or standardized test score to be admitted.

Retention: Students who enroll and continue their enrollment from one semester to the following semester (Goltra, 2018). For this study, retention was measured from first to second year.

Short-Term Study Abroad: A study abroad program with a duration of eight weeks or less; offered in summer, winter, or spring term (Malveax & Raby, 2019).

Study Abroad: An international academic experience that results in progress toward and academic degree at a student's home institution (Malveaux & Raby, 2019). This does not include the pursuit of a full academic degree earned at a foreign institution.

Traditional Student: A student who enters higher education directly after high school completion, at approximately 18 years of age, and who studies continuously at a full-time credit bearing status for four years or until degree completion. Traditional students are typically from families with experience in higher education (Laing et al., 2005).

Assumptions

As a researcher, my own participation in study abroad influenced my perceptions and interpretations of this study. As a participant in multiple short-term study abroad opportunities through an Oklahoma community college, I assumed study abroad participation would have a substantial positive impact on community college students, like it did for me. Due to lack of resources, most Oklahoma community colleges do not have full-time staff members dedicated to study abroad coordination. Instead, faculty members are tasked with managing study abroad coordination for student groups on top of their full-time course load. Lack of resources can impact record keeping and other administrative tasks. It is my assumption that institutional data accurately reflects study abroad participation at Oklahoma community colleges.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I introduces the research study. Chapter II presents a review of the literature associated with this study incorporating four broad areas: globalization and internationalization in higher education, the U.S. community college, problems U.S.

community colleges commonly face, and the U.S. community college study abroad programs and participation. Chapter III details the research approach and methodology of this study including design, research questions, population and sampling, analysis, and variables. Chapter IV reports the results of the data analysis. Finally, Chapter V offers insight, discussion, and implications of the findings as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to facilitate a better understanding of study abroad participation at community colleges and the related literature. The literature review begins by detailing the difference between globalization and internationalization, followed by a deeper explanation of internationalization within the context of higher education and the community college. Once the contexts of globalization and internationalization are established, this literature review covers the details of study abroad at the community college including characteristics of study abroad at community colleges, barriers, benefits, and case studies that demonstrate the impact of study abroad on community colleges.

As previously mentioned, literature and research on study abroad programs at four-year institutions are abundant. However, literature and research regarding study abroad specifically at community colleges are limited. Rosalind Raby, the Director at California Colleges for International Education, has produced many publications on international education at the community college level. Raby's work highlights internationalization, globalization, and study abroad at community colleges. Raby and Gregory Malveaux's 2019 book, *Study Abroad Opportunities for Community College Students and Strategies for Global Learning*, sets a strong foundation for the continuation

of research on study abroad at community colleges by countering the prevailing belief that education abroad practices are the same regardless of institutional type. Due to Raby's work on study abroad at the community college, her publications are cited frequently.

Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education

Globalization and internationalization deeply intertwine. Globalization is a force and internationalization is a response to the force of globalization. This is especially true for higher education institutions. Globalization and internationalization are profoundly affecting the landscape and culture of higher education (Knight, 2019).

Globalization: The Force

Globalization affects the world socially, politically, economically, and academically. Whether society is conscious or unconscious of globalization, it is part of daily life. Because globalization crosses many realms, scholars find the definition of globalization challenging. Scholars Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann (2006) sought to develop a broad concept to define globalization.

In Stoudmann and Al-Rodhan's (2006) article "Definitions of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview and Proposed Definition," the scholars defined the concept as, "a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities." Although this definition seems vague, it constructs a definition for globalization without limitations. Globalization is not limited to a period, space, national border, or region. Globalization transmits knowledge, shares information, and advances communication as part of a global process.

The definition provided by Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann (2006) indicates the vast impacts that occur through globalization.

Globalization and Higher Education

Higher Education is one of the many sectors subject to globalization.

Globalization influences culture, policy, and practice in higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Changes in policy and practice impact strategic planning for colleges and universities internationally. Globalization is an uncontrollable force, encouraging and sometimes forcing flexibility and adaptability on college faculty and administration. In the last decade of the 20th century, globalization became an increasingly influential force due to substantial developments in information technology (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Colleges and universities are encouraged to operate and collaborate internationally. Peter Magrath (2000) expressed the modern university is characterized by an interconnectedness across political and economic constructs heavily influenced by information technology. The interconnectedness of universities has generated a global multicultural value, and institutions are adjusting to an enhanced global environment. Magrath (2000) encouraged higher education to seize the opportunities globalization presents. Although Stoudmann and Al-Rodhan (2006) conceptually defined globalization as a process, Magrath (2000) defined globalization as an era. The globalization era is a component of the 21st century environment that influences society whether wanted or unwanted (Magrath, 2000). While definitions may differ, both studies alluded to the idea that globalization is part of our current world; whether it be a process or an era, higher education must adjust to the demands of globalization.

Internationalization: The Response

To reiterate, internationalization is a response to globalization. Globalization refers to the economic and academic trends that are the inevitable reality of the 21st century (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Although the forces of globalization are outside of higher education's control, institutions have the opportunity to develop and improve their responses to globalization through internationalization. Internationalization includes policies and practices incorporated by institutions to acclimate to the global environment (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalization policies and practices are vast and vary from one institution to another. Internationalization may include enhanced curriculum with international content and perspectives, cross-border collaboration with overseas institutions, exchange programs, and study abroad.

In the last two decades, internationalization became a focal point for institutions of higher education. Prominent organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the World Bank, national governments, and the European Union named internationalization as a top priority. This led higher education to follow suit, adding strategies of internationalization as high priority on their agenda. Internationalization is a key change agent in higher education in the developed world with its influence invading developing societies as well.

Evidence of Internationalization in Higher Education

Evidence of internationalization includes the growing use of the English language in academia, increasing mobility of students, staff, and faculty, as well as development of course offerings, course curriculum, and course delivery methods (Thondhlana et al.,

2020). Mobility of students, staff, and faculty has been partially influenced by international institutional partnerships that facilitate relationships between many stakeholders in higher education.

The Expansion of English. The use of the English language has drastically expanded, serving as the dominant language to encourage international collaboration, research, and development. Many universities have mandated teaching English in countries where English is not the national language, with the purpose of encouraging and facilitating international collaboration. Although the widespread use of English in academia is evidence of internationalization, some scholars refute the notion that English should be the language of academia, claiming it restricts multicultural practices and creates a strong barrier between students who speak English and students who do not (Marlina, 2013). Regardless of challenges, the widespread use of English in academia represents global institutional efforts to exchange ideas and collaborate.

Student, Faculty, and Staff Mobility. The decade from 2010-2020 demonstrated a 100% increase in international students. The increase in the international student population stimulated the development of open articulation programs, branch campuses, and online delivery (Thondhlana et al., 2020). Although the Trump Administration instigated some fear for international student populations in the United States, higher education continues to extend efforts to support international student populations. International student enrollment numbers have consistently risen over the recent decade. As internationalization mobilized students, institutions made space for international student populations by implementing new initiatives to meet the needs of the population. Institutions expanded articulation methods and learned how to articulate international

credits to accept and apply to student degree credits. International credits are more readily transferrable, making degree completion increasingly attainable for internationally mobile students.

Many institutions dedicate significant resources to aid international students in the transition from their home country (Ammigan & Perez-Encinas, 2018). Colleges and universities have established offices to help students in acclimating to campus life. International offices assist students with visas and immigration, articulation and transfer credits, community engagement, and provide support for students (Ammigan & Perez-Encinas, 2018).

International Institutional Partnerships. Establishing partnerships serves as an avenue to mobilize faculty and staff by facilitating research collaboration, student exchange, and a formal platform for sharing ideas (Schwille, 2016). International institutional partnerships require significant efforts and resources from each participating institution. Partnerships are possible through adequate funding, strategic planning, and establishing relationships between valuable stakeholders at each participating institution (Schwille, 2016). International partnerships represent the early efforts of internationalization, with many institutions forming partnerships in the 1980s. Although internationalization was not yet a focal point for institutional efforts in the 1980s, scholars recognized fragments of strategies toward internationalization (Schwille, 2016).

Course Curriculum and Delivery Methods. Faculty and administrators are making conscious decisions to alter their course offerings in a way that incorporates international components. Along with curriculum changes, institutions are adjusting their course delivery formats to expand access of course curriculum. As the needs of

international students evolve, institutions respond to changes in effort to serve students. COVID-19 demonstrated a new level of flexibility and adaptability for U.S. institutions. Institutions responded by abruptly adjusting course delivery methods to ensure that international students could continue their education without interruption. Although some international students remain on campus, many chose to stay home due to their ability to take courses 100% online. This allows students to continue their education and persist to degree completion. The institutional efforts put forth to transition course delivery methods represents a continued dedication to international students and internationalization, despite the lingering disruption of COVID-19.

Impacts of Internationalization: Global Competition

The United States is not alone in focusing institutional efforts towards internationalization. Although the decade from 2010-2020 demonstrated a consistent increase in international students coming to the United States to pursue higher education, international student recruitment is becoming increasingly competitive. In terms of quality of education, the U.S. has served as a world leader in higher education since 1920. Since 1920, enrollment at colleges and universities has exponentially increased for domestic students. Shortly after, the quality of higher education in the U.S. attracted international attention, thus increasing enrollment for international students.

In Clark Kerr's (1994) book, *Troubled Times for American Higher Education: The 1990s and Beyond*, the scholar claims that for the U.S. to remain the prominent leader in higher education, the U.S. must emphasize high standards for student and faculty selection to ensure production of leading researchers. Additionally, the Federal Government should provide substantial support to ensure the U.S. continues to lead

(Kerr, 1994). As the growth of enrollment slows and stabilizes, international competitors are making themselves known. Although the future is difficult to predict, Kerr (1994) was correct: higher education has become increasingly competitive.

Although it has been more than 26 years since the publication of Kerr's (1994) book, the issue of the U.S. remaining a world leader is a current issue. In 2019, Jane Knight expanded on Kerr's idea and stated that internationalization is changing the landscape of higher education. The vast transmission of knowledge encourages new developments globally, thus enhancing competition (Knight, 2019). Higher education is a global commodity, with many countries offering enticing programs for international students at an affordable, competitive cost.

Since 2007, the International Association of Universities (IAU) has conducted a survey every three years. The survey gathers key institutional data with the intention of identifying world leaders in higher education and distributes worldwide to senior academic leaders. A primary survey question asks respondents to rank the top three rationales for internationalization from the following list: 1) increase competitiveness (scientific, technological, economic), 2) promote international solidarity and cooperation, 3) develop strategic alliances (political, cultural, academic, trade), 4) strengthen education export industry, 5) build a country's resource capacity) 6) further cultural awareness and understanding, and 7) contribute to regional priorities and integration. The survey results from 2010 indicate that the top rationale driving internationalization of higher education is increased competitiveness. A close second result indicates many institutions identified, as a primary rationale, the development of strategic alliances—

political, cultural, academic, and trade (Knight, 2019; Portnoi, L. et al., 2010). Results revealed senior administrators are feeling significant pressure to compete globally.

The global rankings of world leaders in the higher education system has grown more complex and problematic in the last five years (Horn et al., 2007; Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007). Few scholars predicted the intensity of global competition, even just 20 years ago.

China is an excellent example of a country who, beginning in the 1990s, strategically planned to improve the landscape of their higher education system. Today, Chinese culture emphasizes the importance of higher education and the pivotal role it plays in the economy. The government continues to drive change through policy initiating massification and development of their higher education system. Within a short timeframe, these policies have resulted in a drastic increase in enrollment and rapid enhancement of the nation's top universities (Portnoi, L. et al., 2010). China's policies developed in the 1990s represent a strategic move to improve higher education and establish China as a global player in academia. Since the 1990s, China has certainly made itself known as an international competitor in higher education by maintaining quality education at an affordable cost. The government's investment in education demonstrates significant progress for Chinese institutions. Although China has taken steps forward, university leaders are aware they must continue the momentum to remain a competitor (Portnoi, L. et al., 2010).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is another example of a country dedicating substantial efforts to develop their higher education system. Since the discovery of oil in the 1960s, the UAE ranks as one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East. The UAE

uses this wealth as a vehicle to achieve greater economic development. Similar to China, the development of the infrastructure of the UAE's higher education system is recent. Higher education in the UAE has become a hub for internationalization by having the highest number of international branch campuses.

Through policy administration, the UAE continues to improve its higher education system, making remarkable global improvements from 2011 to 2016. The UAE is committed to moving forward, with plans to continue investing in science, technology, research and development. The government believes greater financial contributions will increase enrollment rates, build a better relationship between higher education and local industry, and sharpen their competitive edge. The UAE's 10-year strategic plan outlines the details of the investment in education to support the growth of higher education domestically and internationally. The higher education system in the UAE consists of primarily private institutions. The UAE's commitment to expansion is evident in both public and private institutions by offering education at an affordable cost. With only three public universities, the UAE is able to offer free tuition fees for nationals and expatriates. As the rapid expansion of higher education in the UAE continues through public, private, and branch institutions, the UAE strives to offer quality education while maintaining and growing the quantity of students, both domestic and international (Ashour, 2016).

Internationalization of Higher Education and The Community College

Higher education that ends at a nation's borders is no longer adequate. To produce quality graduates, higher education systems must prepare graduates to work in a global economy. Globally, higher education shares a consensus that undergraduates must be equipped with skills to thrive in both the local and global economies. As the world

continues to globalize and interconnect, community colleges are also implementing strategies to internationalize. This is a directional shift for community colleges.

Historically, the focus of the community college was solely on the local level. Although the local market continues to be a focal point, U.S. community colleges recognize the need to internationalize institutional efforts as the world becomes increasingly interdependent, even on a local level. Community colleges are instituting programs and policies to prepare undergraduates to live and succeed in a global and multicultural economy.

Community colleges in the U.S. enroll approximately 40% of first-year students, thus, community colleges must play a substantial role in furthering internationalization in the U.S. higher education system (American Higher Education Alliance, 2019; Green, 2007). The emphasis on global learning has been abundantly clear through policy, research, and development for institutions of higher education in the United States, but the collection of data displaying institutional policies and practices focus on four-year institutions with minimal contribution from community colleges. Considering community colleges hold a substantial portion of first-year students, it is increasingly important to include and analyze community college data as well as data from four-year institutions. Failing to include data from community colleges leaves an incomplete picture of internationalization within U.S. higher education.

Assessing Internationalization at Community Colleges

Although leaders in the community college network, like the AACJC, have emphasized the importance of internationalization for over 43 years, many community colleges have yet to operationalize internationalization. Understanding how community

colleges are internationalizing their institutions is crucial to meet the challenges of the evolving global and local economy and the communities that students will serve (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Strategic internationalization includes internationalized curriculum (Raby, 2007), study abroad (Metzger 2006; Raby & Malveaux 2019), international partnerships (Treat & Hartenstine, 2013), and recruitment of international students (Green & Siaya 2005; Fitzner 2007).

In 2001, ACE developed an empirical survey tool to evaluate internationalization, including both two-year and four-year institutions. The analysis shed light on institutions that are highly active and those that are less active in internationalization strategies. The survey features seven components of internationalization: stated institutional commitment, academic requirements, organizational structure, funding, communication structure, faculty opportunities, and student opportunities. The ACE survey captures a sample from 233 community colleges. The results indicate community colleges are less active in internationalization than four-year institutions. Community colleges are less likely to seek funding for internationalization efforts, incorporate internationally based courses in their core curriculum, require foreign language credits, or offer study abroad programs in comparison to four-year institutions. However, community colleges were more likely to host faculty and staff trainings and workshops focusing on internationalization (Green, 2007).

Upon further analysis of survey results, an internationalization score was created using a five-point scale: zero, low, medium, medium-high, and high (Green & Siaya, 2005). Sixty-one percent of community colleges scored low in overall internationalization, with no community colleges scoring high. It is evident that, though

internationalization is discussed as a priority for higher education as a whole, community college leaders are struggling to implement successful initiatives to enhance internationalization at their institutions. Green's (2007) study, utilizing the ACE survey, brought significant insight to internationalization at community colleges, leading to the identification of the fundamental barriers to internationalization that community colleges face.

Developing an all-purpose instrument measuring internationalization is challenging considering internationalization is a multifaceted concept. A number of instruments exist to measure internationalization for four-year institutions, but most do not account for the unique characteristics of community colleges, and may be inadequate as a blanket instrument.

In 2012, Community Colleges for International Development (CCID) developed a scale for individual community colleges to measure internationalization efforts and identify strengths and weaknesses. The development of the Community College Internationalization Index (CCII) in 2017 allowed for measuring internationalization specifically at the community college level and serves as a valuable tool for measuring effectiveness of community college internationalization efforts (Copeland et al., 2017). The assessment further serves community colleges by assessing progress. The scale is a tool for community college leaders to assess their present status, develop new strategies, and measure progress as they pursue new goals and achievements (Bisonette, 2017). The scale offers administrative support by building a profile that establishes strengths and opportunities that can aid in establishing a clear pursuit toward new institutional goal (Bisonette, 2017).

A 2017 study conducted by Susan Bissonette surveyed community college presidents' perceptions of internationalization actions, the desirability and feasibility of internationalization actions, and the overall importance of internationalization. The survey presents 23 actions of internationalization, requesting college presidents respond by identifying the actions that their institution takes. The survey results demonstrate that 85% of U.S. community colleges offer courses with international content. Of the respondents, 83% of community colleges actively enroll international students, 73.8% offer ESL (English as a second language) courses, 66.3% are hiring faculty and staff born outside of the U.S., 54.3% are offering and marketing international activities on their campuses, and 51.7% are establishing systems to support study abroad. Less common internationalization actions within the survey include requiring a foreign language proficiency for graduation, establishing awards for internationalization efforts, requiring international activities through coursework or culturally diverse service learning or study abroad, and offering opportunities for faculty to increase foreign language skills.

Although the concept of internationalization incorporates a multitude of characteristics, Bissonette's (2017) assessment offers insight to the extent of internationalization at community colleges. The survey asked the community college presidents to indicate the level of importance internationalization carried at their institution on a four-point scale of unimportant to very important. Responses reveal that 34.1% feel internationalization very important, 46% feel it is somewhat important, 16.8% feel it is not very important, and only 3.1% feel it is unimportant (Bissonette, 2017).

Evidence of Internationalization at Community Colleges

An estimated 21% of community colleges have strategized a plan of institutional internationalization in comparison to 55% of four-year institutions (Copeland et al., 2017). Regardless, as international education continues to grow, however, community colleges are taking strides to internationalize curriculum through strategies taking place both on and off campus. On campus strategies for internationalization include: the diversification of modern language programs, use of international student experience for improved international literacy, infusion of international perspectives into lesson plans and course activities, introduction of international course content, focusing on systematic implementation and change with longstanding support for the inclusion of international curriculum (Copeland et al., 2017). Systematic change requires intentional on-campus reform for curriculum that applies to course content, academic programs, majors, associate degrees, and general education requirements. Successful systematic change requires a holistic effort from the entire campus.

Off-campus, initiatives focus primarily on education abroad efforts. Community colleges experience unique barriers to study abroad in comparison to four-year institutions. Strategies to overcoming barriers to study abroad participation is essential to successfully internationalize off-campus curriculum. In addition to study abroad, other efforts off-campus can include work exchanges, international service, foreign internships, and volunteer programs (Raby, 2007).

Barriers to Community College Internationalization

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) has developed policies and guidelines to better support internationalization efforts at two-year

colleges (McRaven & Somers, 2017). Although efforts for internationalization at the community college level have expanded, an overwhelming number of community colleges continue to experience difficulty operationalizing internationalization strategies (Unangst & Barone, 2019). As previously discussed, the purpose of internationalizing higher education is to ensure graduates and future generations are equipped with necessary skills and characteristics to operate successfully in an increasingly globalized workforce. For this reason, international efforts are increasingly important on any given campus, regardless of whether the institution is two-year or four-year.

Unangst and Barone (2019) identified why community colleges may experience difficulty operationalizing internationalization strategies. Barriers include lack of financial resources, irrelevance of internationalization from administrator perspectives, and the idea that internationalization is already implemented and needs no further attention. Many community colleges have limited financial resources to optimize internationalization efforts (Unangst & Barone, 2019). Unlike many four-year institutions, community colleges do not have financial resources to hire administrative staff for study abroad, such as communication, recruiting, marketing, risk management, etc. Although globalization is changing local communities and job functions, some community college leaders feel internationalization is irrelevant to their organization (Bisonette, 2017), holding to the aging notion that community college graduates should solely prepare for the local workforce, even though local economics are also influenced by international factors (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Lastly, some community college leaders simply feel internationalization efforts are a checklist item that can simply be marked off the list after implementing a number of initiatives. Internationalization strategies are ever

evolving, and like Rosalind Raby (2007) stated, systematic change requires holistic efforts from the entire campus.

Support from leadership is vital to the success of internationalization (Boggs & Irwin, 2007). Internationalization efforts should be documented with evidence through metrics thoughtfully adopted or created by institutional leaders. Institutional leaders should develop benchmarks and goals for their institutional faculty and staff. To understand the most effective internationalization strategies, community colleges must first critically analyze the state of internationalization at their institutions. Each analysis would be unique to the institution, and the results serve as a departure point to develop benchmarks and institutional goals. Community college leaders must invest in internationalization and adopt metrics to measure institutional internationalization efforts to remain relevant, accountable, and understand and improve the development of skilled graduates who are equipped to perform successfully in global and local workforce (Raby & Valeau, 2016).

Study Abroad at Community Colleges

Participation in study abroad programs at community colleges maintains consistent growth (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). The impact of globalization and the need for community colleges to internationalize have been central topics of conversation at the community college level. Many community colleges are incorporating study abroad into academic programs as strategy to internationalize. Although leaders in the community college network, like the AACJC, have emphasized the importance of internationalization for over 43 years, the majority of community colleges have yet to operationalize internationalization. Disregarding the need to implement internationalization could

negatively impact community colleges. Understanding internationalization at community colleges is crucial to meet the challenges of the evolving global and local economy and the communities that students serve (Raby & Valeau, 2016).

Study abroad is a form of internationalization that equips students with skills to serve the global and local economies. In addition, student participation links to student success (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Community college study abroad offers numerous benefits. Community colleges attract non-traditional students, thus they tend to provide access to study abroad to older students, minorities, and low-income students (Raby & Malveaux, 2019).

Community colleges have recognized an ongoing struggle with retention and degree completion. Research from the California Community College Student Outcomes Abroad Research Project (CCCSOAR) linked community college study abroad participation to improved retention and degree completion. For retention, student participants are retained at a 91% rate in comparison to 57.7% for the general population. Overall graduation rates are 47.1% for participants and 15.4% for the general student population (Raby & Valeaux, 2016). From this study, it is evident that the differences in retention and graduation rates for participants versus non-participants are substantial.

History of Study Abroad at Community Colleges

Community colleges have offered education abroad programs since 1969 (Raby, 2007). International education was deemed an important competency for community college students by the AACJC 43 years ago and continues to be a topic of discussion today (McRaven & Somers, 2017). The first community college study abroad programs were offered through Rockland community college in New York and Glendale

community college in California (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). The growth of study abroad participation at community colleges is proof that community college students will study abroad when given the opportunity. From the 2007-2008 academic year to the 2016-2017 academic year, community colleges offering study abroad grew from 85 colleges to 141 colleges. Since 2003, 15 of the top 20 ranked community colleges have consistently sent more than 100 students abroad each academic year, with the exception of the 2016-2017 academic year (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Still, in comparison to four-year institutions, community colleges send a minute number of students abroad. While students from community colleges have traveled abroad for decades, research is limited. In 2019, Rosalind Latiner Raby and Gregory Malveaux published the first book on community college education abroad.

Policy for Study Abroad at Community College

In 1977, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) board developed policy guidelines for future strategies on internationalizing community college. The AACC acted as a bridge for communication between community colleges and colleges abroad and as the United States representative at international conferences to open communication lines.

September 11, 2001 had a profound worldwide impact. Shortly after the terrorist attack, the American Association of Community Colleges (2001) issued a statement on international education,

... the citizenry must be prepared to engage in worldwide activities related to education, business, industry, and social interaction. To ensure the survival and

well-being of our communities, it is imperative that community colleges develop a globally and multi-culturally competent citizenry.

In 2006, the sentiments on international education continued with an emphasis on global citizenry and the need for community colleges to equip students with skills. The Association of Community College Trustees (AACT; 2006) claimed community colleges played a vital role in developing global competencies for students of higher education.

Globalization and technological advances encourage community colleges to develop a response. Although community college organizations have voiced concerns of student awareness of internationalization, many community colleges continue to struggle to develop cohesive strategies, policies, and goals to enhance internationalization at their institutions. In developing policy, many community colleges face challenges in institutional commitment, structure, curriculum development, faculty policy and practice, student mobility, and collaboration and partnering (McRaven & Somers, 2017). Lack of institutional policy weakens institutional internationalization strategies.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders include students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, members of the community, and the federal government. All stakeholders are essential to the overall success of study abroad programs (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). At community colleges, faculty play a key role in coordinating study abroad programs, applying curriculum, and marketing programs. Faculty are crucial to study abroad at community colleges because few community colleges have offices or administrators dedicated to study abroad coordination. Staff and administrators also play a key role in marketing study abroad at community colleges. Staff and administrators are responsible for ensuring student

accounts are adequately prepared for study abroad, such as financial aid and enrollment. Connections to the local community provide opportunities for financial support and play a role in marketing. Finally, students are the vital stakeholder for study abroad at community colleges. Students are those enrolling in credit bearing courses and participating in the programs. Student opinion of their study abroad experience plays a key role in marketing for future study abroad participants, as students are likely to come home and share details of their experience with family and friends. In addition to primary stakeholders, parents also play a key role in study abroad. Although the average age of community college students is older, parents often remain an influential factor in student experience and choice to participate in study abroad. Another important stakeholder is the federal government. The federal government has been a longstanding support for study abroad through the U.S. Congress who approved Senator Paul Simon's Study Abroad Foundation Act (2007). The goal of the act is to reach one million students studying abroad. The established U.S. Department of State, Study Abroad office (Raby & Malveaux, 2019), supports this goal.

The Simon Program

The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act seeks to increase participation in study abroad through higher education. As previously mentioned, employers claim graduates lack the skills necessary to function successfully in the workplace. The Simon Program believes study abroad is an avenue to prepare students to enter the workforce. The law would authorize federal study abroad grant program incentives to colleges and universities. The grants would increase overall participation and diversity of students studying abroad, encourage non-traditional study abroad

locations, and strengthen the commitment of colleges and universities to offer study abroad opportunities to undergraduates. A number of professional organizations that believe study abroad would contribute significantly to the U.S. economy support the Simon Act (NAFSA, 2019).

The NAFSA (2019) argued this legislation offers college students the opportunity to develop global competencies. It enables institutions to fund programs and offers incentives for colleges and universities to implement global education. The basis of this legislation recognizes the positive impacts of study abroad at four-year institutions. If U.S. community colleges also demonstrated consistent positive impacts, non-traditional community college students could increase and diversify participation in study abroad. Legislation like The Simon Program could offer community colleges the opportunity to enhance global education and help students achieve global competencies.

Community College Study Abroad versus Four-Year College Study Abroad

In the 2015-2016 academic year, 325,339 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit (IIE, 2017). Although community college study abroad participation is steadily increasing, in the same academic year, only 6,900 of study abroad participants were community college students (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Considering community colleges in the United States host 52% of first-year students, the number of study abroad participants is astronomically low in comparison to four-year institutions. For the 2018-2019 academic year, approximately 10% of U.S. undergraduate students studied abroad (IIE, 2019). Again, though progress continues, only a small portion of those students belonged to community colleges.

Although a prevailing assumption is that practices for study abroad are similar regardless of institutional type, research on community college study abroad is limited. Community colleges are unique in a number of instances, for example: reduced financial costs, open access, multiple missions, guided programs and stackable credentials (such as certificate programs), career and workforce specific education programs, emphasis on funding that is directly linked to student performance and assessment, accountability and transparency, faculty credentials, and limited funding (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). These unique community college characteristics have implications on study abroad that require community colleges to navigate pathways that differ from four-year institutions.

Similarities: Benefits of Study Abroad

The benefits of study abroad are numerous, and research documenting the benefits of study abroad programs at four-year institutions is substantial. Study abroad experiences support national security and foreign policy initiatives, benefitting the United States politically. An abroad experience can have a humanitarian impact that shapes perspective and builds characteristics of global citizenry. Socially, it facilitates friendships that can lead to partnerships. Educationally, research shows concrete evidence of benefits of study abroad for students (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Student participation has facilitated cross-cultural sensitivity, enhanced global competency, a greater interest in international affairs, and a more developed global perspective (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Kitsantas, 2004; Zhang, 2011). A survey conducted by the Institute for the International Education of Students, including 3,700 alumni study abroad students, concluded study abroad participation had a positive impact on career goals, cultural understanding, and personal growth (Zhang, 2011). Research on both community colleges and four-year

institutions has recorded links to student success like improved retention and degree completion, career and academic benefits, and intellectual development (Earnest, 2003; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Juhasz & Walker, 1987; Kitsantas, 2004; Raby & Malveaux, 2019; Zhang, 2011).

Specific similarities of study abroad benefits shared by four-year institutions and community colleges are detailed in following sections. As a reminder, minimal research exists regarding outcomes of study abroad at community colleges; therefore, continuation of research is vital to bring validity to these claims. Considering community colleges enroll approximately half of undergraduate students in higher education (Green, 2007; Zhang, 2011), community colleges are key players in preparing global citizens and further internationalization in the U.S. higher education system (Zhang, 2011). Four-year institutions cannot be solely responsible for these efforts. Again, study abroad is a prominent strategy for internationalization; therefore, the outcomes of study abroad at community colleges are increasingly important to understand.

Similarities: Career and Academic Benefits

Students who study abroad perform better academically, are more likely to complete a degree, gain employment quicker, and often earn higher salaries than those who do not participate in study abroad (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Raby & Malveaux, 2019; Raby & Valeau, 2016). Not only does student participation demonstrate a higher rate of retention and degree completion, but students also report a clearer direction in career and academic pursuits (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Clarity in direction makes degree completion and career goals feasible and attainable. This enhances career development by giving students a competitive advantage in a globalized economy. Competition in the job market

is increasingly globalizing. Study abroad participation gives experience and increases competitiveness as students enter the job market (Zhang, 2011).

Similarities: Intellectual Development Benefits

Intellectually, students who study abroad grow in maturity, increase their self-confidence, have a better understanding and awareness of themselves, and enhance their ability to critically analyze and evaluate their own culture in an unbiased manner. In addition, students enhance their self-development by improving their self-efficacy and self-esteem. Students participating in study abroad report a greater sense of self, improved conflict resolution skills, increased tolerance and understanding of others, strengthened communication, and problem-solving skills (Earnest, 2003). Management of self requires a greater sense of self. A separate study measuring study abroad outcomes reported 96% of participants demonstrated increased self-confidence, 97% demonstrated increased maturity, and 95% reported the experience had a lasting impact on their worldview (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

A study conducted by Kauffmann and Kuh (1984) found students participating in education abroad reported improved self-confidence after completing their abroad experience. A few years later, a study by Juhasz and Walker (1987) found students experienced greater self-understanding upon their return. Students who participate in study abroad are not only able to learn more about the world around them but uncover a deeper understanding of self. In the study, “Encountering an American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity” by Nandine Dolby (2004), the sentiment that students discover a deeper sense of self was echoed. These intellectual characteristics, or soft-skills, are highly desirable by employers and increasingly pursued by the global

economy. Development of soft-skills creates adaptable, independent, interculturally competent, curious, critical thinking, communicative, understanding, and collaborative groups (Raby & Malveaux, 2019).

Differences: Limited Research

To reiterate, though study abroad programs at community colleges have existed since 1967 (Raby, 2007), though limited research exists for community college study abroad participation in comparison to four-year institutions. In the recent decade, the Institute of International Education (IIE) began including pieces of data on community college study abroad in their extensive collection of study abroad data for all of higher education. This collection of data is a useful tool for the few scholars who research study abroad at community colleges. The IIE data consistently demonstrates a low percentage of community college participants for study abroad. While IIE data is informative, it is not a comprehensive resource for study abroad participation for community college students. In comparison, universities have an abundance of research and literature on university efforts for study abroad, as well as extensive research on student outcomes. This research serves as evidence of internationalization efforts and aids in determining benchmarks and goals for the future.

Differences: Institutional Resources and Structure

Community colleges face distinct challenges in fully supporting study abroad programs (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Consistently decreasing state and federal funding contribute to making programs like study abroad difficult to sustain. In a report, “Expanding Education Abroad at U.S. Community Colleges,” 53% of respondents noted

budget cuts and limited resources were monumental obstacles (McMurtrie, 2008). In addition, 35% reported a lack of institutional support was a barrier (McMurtrie, 2008).

Institutional structure refers to the systematic organization and the distribution of available resources to support any given program. Although size of administration and budgets vary from one institution to another, many four-year institutions have established offices and budgets wholly allocated to study abroad (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). As mentioned, community colleges rarely have access to working budgets and administrative staff solely for study abroad coordination (McMurtrie, 2008; Raby & Malveaux, 2019).

Differences: Admissions and Access

Open admission is one of the most prominent differences between community colleges and four-year institutions. Universities are traditionally more selective than community colleges, requiring minimum GPA or standardized test scores. Community colleges are open access, requiring no minimum GPA or standardized test score for admission. Instead, community colleges require a high school diploma or equivalent. This open-access policy pertains to study abroad participation as well (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Often, students with low GPA who choose to participate in study abroad programs gain high levels of success in terms of retention, completion, and advancing beyond remedial studies (Raby et al., 2014).

Differences: Non-Traditional Students

Community colleges are and have been committed to providing opportunity for students who represent a broader socioeconomic, ethnic, and vocational diversity in the United States (Zhang, 2011). Another characteristic of community colleges that sets them apart from four-year institutions is that enrollment can extend to underrepresented student

groups, who are more likely to attend community college than a four-year institution (Raby & Malveaux, 2019; Zhang, 2011). The benefits of study abroad are not exclusive to traditional student types but can also be beneficial to first-generation students, immigrant students, and other minority student groups. Community colleges send more diverse students abroad than four-year institutions (Zhang, 2011).

One or more of the following characteristics define non-traditional students: low socioeconomic status, students of color, first-generation students, working full-time, academically under-prepared, and being an adult (Ross-Gordon, 2011). Community college is a popular route for non-traditional students (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Students who enroll at community colleges represent diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status (Raby, 2008). The average age of community college students is much higher than the average at traditional four-year institutions. The average student age at community colleges is 28. Higher education considers students over the age of 24 to be adult learners (Bergman, 2020). This is important consideration because adult learners have unique educational routes.

Study abroad is an edifying experience that can reap substantial benefits for all higher education students (Zhang, 2011). Non-traditional student types may require additional planning and preparation to create programs tailored to fit their needs. In response to those needs, community colleges have intentionally designed study abroad programs specific to their diverse population of students. For many community colleges, this means offering short-term programs for students who may be unable to participate in a long-term study abroad program (Johns, 2011). Although discussion has centered on whether short-term programs are as beneficial as longer study abroad programs (Frost,

2007; McKeown, 2009), study abroad experiences are valuable to community college students regardless of duration (Zhang, 2011). Experiences abroad can be coupled with education taking place at the home campus to generate significant learning outcomes.

Differences: Barriers to Study Abroad at Community Colleges

Participation in study abroad at community colleges continues to grow, but less than 0.01% of community college students participate in study abroad (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). As mentioned previously, community college students encounter unique impediments in contrast to students attending four-year institutions. A study conducted by Coast Community College District, the Center for Global Education, and CCIE demonstrated that while 70% of students reported that finances hindered their ability to study abroad, finances alone were not the sole reason for not participating. Family and work obligations were also reported, but again, would not eliminate their chances of study abroad. According to the survey, the primary reason for not studying abroad was that many community colleges do not offer education abroad opportunities or institutions do not adequately inform students about opportunities available (Raby, 2007).

Students face barriers beyond those that are institutional. Cultural background, family support, and lack of financial support are beyond the institution and specific to students (Sanchez et al., 2006; Twombly et al., 2012). Additional barriers at the institutional level were lack of staff, budget, and limited institutional support. Both institutional barriers and student barriers contribute to the assumption that non-traditional student types do not wish to participate in study abroad.

Raby (2019) counteracts barrier literature in her book, *Study Abroad Opportunities for Community College Students and Strategies for Global Learning*. Raby

stated barriers should not be the reason to limit the choices of non-traditional students. Limiting opportunity at community colleges threatens the institutional mission by linking low expectations to lack of success (Raby, 2018).

A 2020 study by Halley Sutton called on community college to minimize the barriers students face in study abroad. Instead of stating barriers that may contribute to stereotypes and building false narratives, it is imperative that researchers identify barriers rather than minimize them. Cost is a major barrier to study abroad for all students in higher education, but that barrier may be even greater for community college students. However, cost is not the only barrier facing students when considering study abroad. First, students who have not extensively traveled internationally may host internal fear about what exists outside of the United States (Sutton, 2020). Fear can translate to prejudice. Hosting sessions with information about the host country and giving students the opportunity to ask questions helps to eliminate this barrier. Second, students fear racial discrimination, particularly students of color (Sutton, 2020). Students feel they may experience discrimination when visiting another country due to ethnic background, religion, or sexual orientation. Faculty and administrators may help to eliminate this barrier through information and preparation. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure students feel safe and welcome throughout their abroad experience. Third, students at community college lack information. Research has shown that many community college students do not participate in study abroad simply because they are uninformed (Sutton, 2020). Some research shows that lack of information is a greater barrier than cost (Raby, 2019). Community colleges should introduce and inform non-traditional students about study abroad opportunities. Finally, students lack awareness of

the benefits. Many community college students have never traveled outside of their hometown or state. International travel has never been a consideration. Explaining the benefits of and illustrating a realistic portrayal of what travel abroad helps minimize this barrier (Sutton, 2020).

Existing stereotypes surrounding non-traditional students are rarely accurate. Non-traditional students are exceptional in that research shows they invest in education, can balance work and school, have family support, and participate in college-sponsored programs (Gonzalez et al., 2013; Levin et al., 2017; Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). Barrier literature has guided policy and practice at community colleges by limiting opportunities for non-traditional students. Community colleges serve all students, and it is critical to identify barriers to participation in study abroad but also understand that student populations are constantly changing and evolving (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Policies can be created to counteract barriers and support student success. Community college administrators should equip their institutions with tools for opportunity instead of reinforcing stereotypes that create barriers. When opportunities are strategically limited, administrators unintentionally reinforce inequities (Sutton, 2020).

Global Does Not Oppose Local

Community colleges often focus academic programs on careers that meet needs in the local community. One of the primary reasons community colleges do not internationalize is that local funding sources must provide for students within a specified geographical region (Raby & Valeau, 2016). This leads to the assumption that global knowledge does not serve as a priority for local students. This idea erroneously positions global and local as two separate entities that do not intertwine.

Scholars have recognized that many community colleges are struggling to internationalize in comparison to four-year institutions. An estimated 21% of community colleges have strategized a plan of institutional internationalization in comparison to 55% of four-year institutions (Copeland et al., 2017). In an additional study conducted by Green and Siaya (2005), 61% of community colleges scored low in overall internationalization, with no community colleges scoring high. This survey demonstrated a devastating disparity in internationalization between community colleges and four-year institutions. However, many stakeholders in community colleges have voiced the importance of internationalization. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) has developed policies and guidelines to better support internationalization efforts at two-year colleges (McRaven & Somers, 2017). Green (2007) explained,

given the local roots and focus of community colleges, it is not surprising that institutional leaders, board members, and community members may not value global learning as much as the more immediate tasks of workforce development and teaching basic skills.

Raby and Valeau (2016) argued internationalization does not only broaden the mission of community college, but it is a vital characteristic that facilitates the holistic community college mission. Raby and Valeau used many historical missions of the community college to support her arguments. Community colleges were created to produce international citizenry (Zook, 1947), to respond to global economic flows (Cohen & Brawer, 1996), to support first-generation and immigrant populations (Karabel, 1972), to respond to world dependencies, and to determine innovative solutions (Gleazer, 1975).

Raby and Valeau (2016) clarifies that for more than six decades, internationalization has been a central topic at the community college level. Although the term may be new, the idea of internationalization has been a long-standing discussion for higher education and community college.

Internationalization has been a long-standing mission for community colleges. Despite that mission, many community colleges have not responded with internationalization efforts. Raby and Valeau (2016) believed the slow internationalization of community colleges may be due to the belief that global opposes local. For the majority of community colleges, a foundational shift still needs to occur that encourages international literacy as the central component that simultaneously recognizes the need to aid their ever-changing local community (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Leaders must strategize and implement benchmarks and goals to ensure that change occurs.

Community College Study Abroad Program Types and Destinations

As previously mentioned, study abroad opportunities at community colleges are largely short-term programs. The opportunities for a semester abroad or exchange program are limited. However, community colleges have established partnership exchanges between community colleges and international universities for long-term abroad experiences. Faculty-led programs are popular on community college campuses. Raby, estimates that 99.9% of community college study abroad opportunities offered through California Colleges for International Education are faculty-led (Sutton, 2020). Faculty-led programs are the most common study abroad opportunities for community college study abroad nationwide (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). On faculty-led programs,

U.S. faculty create a standalone course specifically for an abroad experience. Once the experience concludes, faculty members award course credit.

Destination

Program destinations for study abroad continue expanding. Western Europe is a popular host for many community college study abroad programs. In 2017, ILE reported among the top five for community college programs are Costa Rica, Cuba, and Mexico. Depending on the destination, learning outcomes may vary.

Scholars are posing ongoing discussions of where community college students should study. Some scholars claimed any foreign place enables learning, while others feel that non-European locations should be a popular destination to emphasize equity in experience (Raby & Malveaux, 2019). Others hesitate on the choice of developing countries to avoid the colonialist view of “visiting natives,” which can create a dangerous narrative where poverty tourism can reinforce false stereotypes of both students and natives (Johns, 2011). Overall, the goal is to equalize location context where students and locals can find liberation through learning together, rather than developing a colonialization construct (Raby & Malveaux, 2019).

California Community College Student Outcomes Abroad Research Project

Now that we have reviewed literature on internationalization and study abroad at the community college level, it is important to highlight a few examples of community colleges that are acting to internationalize their institution through study abroad. The California Community College Student Outcomes Abroad Research Project (CCC SOAR) is an analysis conducted through a multivariate regression on both participants and non-participants of study abroad to determine if study abroad participation impacts

student success (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Since the completion of this research project, additional studies have been replicated enhancing the significance of the study and adding to the growing body of literature on study abroad at community colleges (Raby & Malveaux, 2019).

Theories such as Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement, Tinto's (2010) Theory of Academic and Social Integration, and Pascarella's (1985) Model for Assessing Chang support the claim student engagement increases the potential to achieve learning goals that result in positive outcomes (Raby & Valeau, 2016). The CCC SOAR was executed with these theories in mind using study abroad as a form of student engagement and high-impact practice. Research shows community college students benefit from an abroad experience in terms of academic knowledge (Amani, 2011), personal skills and development of self for students of color (Willis, 2012), and an increased sense of intercultural awareness (Arden-Ogle, 2009). Literature described study abroad as an opportunity of a lifetime for community college students (Drexler & Campbell 2011; Raby & Malveaux, 2019).

The CCC SOAR asked the question, "Is student participation in study abroad associated with increased markers of student success?" The study sampled all first-time students from 16 California community college districts, which included 36 institutions (Raby & Valeau, 2016). The sample included 476,708 students, with 1906 students that participated in study abroad. The remainder of participants were not study abroad participants. Results indicated study abroad served as a contributing factor to community college student success (Raby & Valeau, 2016). The descriptive statistics showed study abroad participants at community colleges are pre-dominantly women, much like

participants at four-year institutions. Eighty percent of students were between the age of 20 to 30, with 8% of participants 55 or older. Forty-two percent were an average of 28 years old (Raby & Valeau, 2016).

The CCC SOAR showed study abroad participants of the study abroad programs demonstrated college level English proficiency at an 88.2% rate in comparison to 58.1% of the general student population (Raby & Valeau, 2016). For college-level Math proficiency, 67.9% of study abroad participants were proficient in comparison to 32.7% of the general student population. The CCC SOAR found study abroad participants were 47% more likely to transfer to a four-year institution than non-participants. In breaking this down further, Hispanic students that participated in study abroad are 54% more likely to transfer to a four-year institution. In terms of degree completion, students who participated earned a degree or certificate at a rate 1.35 times higher than non-participants did. Hispanic students were two times more likely (Raby & Valeau, 2016). At one institution, 55% of students completed a degree or certificate within three years in comparison to 14% of the general student population. For retention, student participants were retained at a 91% rate in comparison to 57.7% for the general student population. Overall graduation rates are 47.1% for participants and 15.4% for general student population (Raby & Valeaux, 2016).

Data from the CCC SOAR demonstrate a range of benefits for community college students (Raby & Valeau, 2016). The Community College Completion Report details a commitment by six community college organizations to work towards improving student retention and degree completion by 2020. The report does not detail study abroad as strategy, but findings from studies like CCC SOAR and replicated studies by New Jersey

Community colleges show that community college study abroad participation can positively impact retention and degree completion (Raby & Valeau, 2016).

Raby and Valeau (2016) emphasized, global is not opposite of local. Local communities are also required to adjust to globalization, requiring a skilled workforce with a global mindset. Study abroad equips students with international proficiencies and aids in a greater sense of self for participants (Raby & Valeau, 2016). Study abroad experiences are a beneficial regardless of academic or career endeavors.

Summary

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to identify demographics of study abroad students at Oklahoma community colleges. Additionally, this study assessed the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention and degree completion. Chapter II serves as a review of the literature relative to the research topic, covering globalization and internationalization in higher education as well as internationalization at the community college level. This chapter covered a detailed overview of the literature regarding study abroad participation at community colleges including history, policy, similarities, and differences between study abroad at community colleges and four-year institutions. Finally, the chapter concluded with case studies contributing to the literature and discussion of how study abroad participation affects community college students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Although the demographics of students participating in study abroad at four-year institutions are well researched, minimal data are collected on student populations studying abroad at community colleges. Because community colleges are an attractive option for non-traditional students, student populations are diverse; however, we do not know how that diversity may, or may not, be represented in study abroad participation. Nor do we know the impact community college study abroad experiences may have on student retention and completion. This study addressed these issues specific to the state of Oklahoma. The following sections include a detailed overview of research design, population, sample, site, data collection, and data analysis.

Purpose

This study implemented a quantitative research design to evaluate student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants. Additionally, this study evaluated the relationship between Oklahoma community college study abroad participation with retention and degree completion. This study utilized descriptive statistics and Chi-Square analysis to examine the identified variables.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity and major?

RQ2. Is there a significant difference in retention from freshman to sophomore year for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?

H₀: There is no significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

H_a: There is a significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

RQ3. Is there a significant difference in degree completion for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?

H₀: There is no significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

H_a: There is a significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

Research Design

The following section details the research perspective that guided the research design and methodology of this study.

Research Perspective

This research design employed the epistemology objectivism. Epistemology refers to the philosophical worldview held by the researcher, which influences the

practice of the research (Creswell, 2018). This worldview represents a traditional form of research. Fundamentally, objectivism focuses on the causes that determine a given outcome. The determined relationship(s) between causes and outcomes bring light to a greater understanding of the problem. The view is reductive in nature, evaluating causation of identified phenomena to narrow the scope of the problem (Creswell, 2018). The knowledge gained utilizes an objective lens to observe the stated problem. Research guided by objectivism is a process of making claims, conducting research, re-evaluating those claims, and potentially abandoning claims to build a stronger foundation for future research. Data serve as evidence to shape knowledge, but merely functions as empirical support and does not establish absolute truth (Creswell, 2018)

Objectivism was the most appropriate epistemology for this research design because this view holds that causes determine effects or outcomes. This study examined how community college study abroad participation may impact students. The quantitative research design narrows the scope of how student demographics influence study abroad choices and how study abroad potentially impacts community college students in relation to retention and degree completion. The results generated from this study are not absolute; rather they offer evidence to support a claim on how study abroad programs at Oklahoma community colleges may be impacting undergraduates in relation to retention and degree completion.

Theory

Application of theory enables a lens for new insight. Theoretical frameworks are tools used to bring greater depth and understanding of a phenomenon. In quantitative research, theories are engaged as reason to deductively predict an outcome on how

identified variables relate to one another (Leavy, 2017). This study applied two lenses of theory: Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1985) and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure (1993).

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement

The primary principle of Astin's (1985) Theory of Student Involvement explains that students involved in co-curricular activities contribute to desirable outcomes for institutions of higher education. The theory incorporates three elements: the students' input, the environment, and outcomes. Student input refers to the quality and quantity of which a student is engaged at their institution. Since 1985, researchers have continued to study the correlation between student involvement and student success, producing similar results.

Tinto's Theory of Student Departure

Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure relates to this study in terms of retention. Tinto described student retention as a primary concern for higher education. The theory states that the more students integrate into their college environment, the more likely the student will be retained and persist to graduation. Tinto (1993) argued that instead of blaming the student, institutions must take responsibility for implementing effective action and programs to increase student retention.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative methodological approach. Quantitative research identifies variables that refer to a characteristic or attribute of an individual or an organization. These variables are measured to observe and identify patterns of the organizations in the study. The quantitative approach is most appropriate for this study as

it considers study abroad participation and how it impacts retention and degree completion at Oklahoma community colleges.

For the purpose of institutional assessment, most institutions collect and retain detailed student data, typically managed by institutional research offices. Institutional research offices collect, analyze, and deliver data as necessary for institutional benchmarking, required reporting to the State Regents for Higher Education, to maintain accreditation, etc. It is these institutional data that provided the data necessary for this study.

Population and Sampling

The population and sample described below intend to represent a generalizable population of community college study abroad students. However, the population in this study was restricted to community colleges in the state of Oklahoma.

Population

This study required all participants to have been enrolled at an Oklahoma community college. In addition, this study required that all participants were degree seeking. Data were requested for both participants in community college study abroad programs and non-participants for effective comparison. The relationship between community college study abroad participation was evaluated in regard to both retention and degree completion.

Although sources do not directly report the number of U.S. community college students participating in study abroad programs, the national population is estimated between 2,489 and 7,105 students. The minimum of this range stems from the data collected from the top 20 community colleges that reported the number of students sent

abroad, and the maximum of 7,105 is allotted to Malveaux and Raby (2019) who reported that 11.5% of community colleges offer education abroad to a total of 7,105 students (2019).

In the state of Oklahoma, comparable to national trends, opportunities at community colleges are limited to short-term experiences. The population of this study was defined by the following criteria:

- a)** Enrolled at an Oklahoma community college in credit bearing course(s). A formal request was made to each community college Institutional Research office to include all students who enrolled in, and completed, a credit bearing short-term study abroad program course. Some community college study abroad programs are open for community participation. Community participants have the option to earn course credit, or participate in the program without earning course credit. For the purpose of this study, data collection only consisted of degree-seeking study abroad participants earning course credit through the community college study abroad program.
- b)** Enrolled at an Oklahoma community college in the 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, or 2018-2019 academic year. The listed academic years were chosen to allow for an adequate number of participants in the study abroad participant sample to conduct a Chi-Square Test of Independence, as Chi-Square statistics are sensitive to sample size. It was also chosen to ensure that students had adequate time to complete a degree.

- c) Student was degree seeking. Students only enrolled in the study-abroad program for course credit, but are not declared as degree seeking, are not included in the data set.
- d) Enrolled in a short-term study abroad experience and completed the program. Students who did not complete the short-term study abroad program at a community college are not included in the study, regardless of reason.

Sample

The study sample was collected from pre-existing data requested from community college sites that coordinate study abroad programs. This study included a sample of 649 study abroad participants and 499 non-participants. Additionally, a single stage sample design was used.

A single stage sampling procedure is the most practical when the researcher has defined criteria (Creswell, 2019). Considering the students of this study meet specified criteria, single stage sampling is best practice. Based on the listed criteria, the sample was chosen randomly. The sample does not represent an equal distribution according to any of the chosen variables. For example, this study does not include an equal number of students in the participant and non-participant category, equal numbers from each community college site, or an equal number of men and women. The sample was random. Random sampling refers to a sampling procedure where each individual in the population has equal probability of being selected (Creswell, 2018). In this study, random sampling ensures the sample represents the population, minimizing the possibility of skewed results.

Sites

The research sites for this study included three Oklahoma community colleges that actively offered and coordinated study abroad programs. Two of the community colleges included in this study were from the two major metropolitan areas in Oklahoma, Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The third site included in this study is located in a rural part of the state. The third site includes two branch campuses located in more urban areas but does not include any campus locations in metropolitan area.

Outsourced study abroad programs are marketed to the community college student population but are not hosted or coordinated by the college itself. For the purpose of this study, only Oklahoma community colleges that coordinate study abroad programs in-house were used for data collection.

Prior to requesting pre-existing data from each site, an IRB was completed through Oklahoma State University. If required, site-specific IRBs were completed prior to requesting data from each institution. A request to access data related to factors in this study were made to each institutional research office in accordance with the site's specific procedures.

Once all approvals were met, institutional research offices were asked to provide a list of names and birthdays for all study abroad participants. Once a complete list of names and birthdays were collected from institutional research offices at the community college, a request was sent to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to provide the additional variables required to complete this study. The State Regents were able to match all names of participants provided by community college sites. Through a coordinated records match, the additional variables collected included gender, age, major,

admission type, degree seeking status, credit hours completed, and degree completion status.

Variables

Table 1 outlines the research questions, independent variables, dependent variables, and analysis. All variables were sourced from institutional data submitted to the State Regents. Research question one and two evaluate the relationship between community college study abroad participation and two categorical variables (retention and degree completion). The categories for retention are “retained” or “not retained.” This study measured retention between the first and second year. Students retained were those who enrolled and completed classes their second year. Students were considered “not retained” if they did not enroll or complete any credits in their second year. Degree completion was also a categorical variable consisting of two categories “degree complete” or “degree incomplete.” Students with a completed degree or certificate of any kind are categorized as “degree complete.” Students with incomplete degrees or no degree posted are categorized as “degree incomplete.”

Table 1*Variable Table*

Research Question	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Analysis
RQ1. What are student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity and major?	Community College Study Abroad Participation	Gender: Categorical Age: Discrete Race/Ethnicity: Categorical Major: Categorical	Descriptive Statistics
RQ2. Is there a significant difference in retention from first to second year for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?	Participation in study abroad: Categorical Category 1: Study Abroad Participant Category 2: Non-Participant	Retention: Categorical Category 1: Students retained from first to second year Category 2: Students not retained from first to second year	Chi-Square: Test of Independence
RQ3. Is there a significant difference in degree completion for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?	Participation in study abroad: Categorical Category 1: Study Abroad Participant Category 2: Non-Participant	Degree completion: Categorical Category 1: Students with an earned degree Category 2: Students without an earned degree	Chi Square: Test of Independence

The dependent variables for research question number three includes gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major. Gender is a categorical variable and was coded as female (1) and male (2). Because the Oklahoma State Regents require institutions to categorize students as male or female, additional categories for gender are not included in this study. Age is a discrete variable. Race/ethnicity consists of multiple categories. This study included all races/ethnicities reported by each student. All majors reported by each student are included in this study.

Research Procedures

Two research procedures were used to analyze this data set: descriptive statistics and a Chi-Square Test of Independence. The first analysis used descriptive statistics to identify characteristics of study abroad students at Oklahoma community colleges. The second research analysis used a Chi-Square Test of Independence to better understand the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention as well as degree completion.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provide a summarization of characteristics for the data set. This summarization was used to better understand and identify common characteristics of students participating in study abroad at Oklahoma community colleges. All data summarizing gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major are presented in table form.

Chi-Square Test of Independence

The Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to analyze research questions numbers one and two. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was chosen because each question tests whether the distribution of observed frequencies of two categorical

variables are distributed as expected. To reiterate, research question number one evaluated the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention. Research question one observed the frequencies of retention in the categories of retained from first to second year or not retained from first to second year. Research question two evaluated the relationship between study abroad participation and degree completion. Research question two observed the frequencies of degree completion in the categories of degree complete or degree incomplete. In this study, research questions one and two are assessing the relationship between community college study abroad participation and non-participation in relation to two categorical variables (retention and degree completion); therefore, the Chi-Square Test of Independence was the most fitting analysis for the research questions. Information about each variable can be viewed in Table 1.

Analysis of data for research questions one and two followed the five steps for Chi-Square hypothesis testing. Steps one and two are already complete, and steps three through five are further outlined in Chapter four. Step one establishes a research question. Step two determines both a null and alternative hypothesis for each question. Research questions and hypotheses can be found in the “Research Questions and Hypotheses” section above. Step three determines the confidence level and level of significance (α). Step four calculates the observed test statistic value. Finally, step five draws a statistical research conclusion.

Post-Hoc Analysis

After completing steps one through five for Chi-Square hypothesis testing, a post-hoc analysis was conducted for measures of association. The tests used to determine the

Measures of Association were Phi Coefficient and Cramer's V. The Phi Coefficient and Cramer's V are used in a Chi-Square test to quantify the strength of the relationship between variables. For this study, measures of association were calculated to determine the strength of the relationship between community college study abroad participation and both retention and degree completion.

Data Analysis and Presentation

SPSS was used to analyze the data. First, descriptive statistics were generated for each variable evaluating the characters of community college study abroad participants. Characteristics include gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major. Frequency tables were created as well as other visual displays of data. Each table and visual display of data contributed to a greater understanding of the characteristics of community college study abroad participants.

After descriptive statistics were generated, SPSS was used to analyze community college study abroad participation first in relation to retention followed by degree completion. As previously indicated, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to conduct the analysis on retention and degree completion. Data were entered for retention and degree completion numerically coded as categorical variables. A frequency table was generated to observe frequencies of retention and degree completion among community college study abroad participants. Next, variables were input to generate Chi-square statistics as well as Phi and Cramer's V measures of association.

Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency in measuring what was originally intended to be measured. To maintain consistency, the same data request was sent to each site. Collected

data were evaluated to ensure that each site provided all necessary data. After the records match coordinated through the State Regents, each record was checked to ensure all data elements were available. From there, the data were copied/entered into SPSS, using the same coding/numeric measurement for each variable.

Ethical Considerations

Because this study only utilized pre-existing data, there are few ethical considerations necessary. Because names of students were initially requested, extended measures were taken to ensure confidentiality. After the records match was completed by the Oklahoma State Regents, names of students were removed from the data set and are no longer stored. No identifying information was included in this study. Throughout the record matching process, all data stored were on a password-protected computer and in password-protected files. Data were not and will not be accessible to the public.

Chapter Summary

Study abroad at four-year institutions are widely researched, but research on the impact of study abroad participation at the community college level is limited. Community colleges are a popular choice, hosting approximately 50% of first-year students (American Higher Education Alliance, 2019). Community colleges play a substantial role in the higher education system; therefore, it is increasingly important to understand the student outcomes of community college programs. The purpose of this study was to utilize a quantitative research design to evaluate characteristics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants with descriptive statistics. Additionally, this study evaluated the relationship between Oklahoma community college study abroad participation with retention and degree completion through a Chi-Square analysis. After

completing a Chi-Square analysis, post-hoc analyses were conducted for measures of association with Phi Coefficient and Cramer's V to quantify the strength of the relationship between variables.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Beginning with a revisit to the research questions, Chapter IV presents the analysis of the study data and results. First, the characteristics of the sample are presented. Next, outcomes of analysis are presented using the study research questions as a guide, including demographics of participants (descriptive statistics), the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention, and the relationship between community college study abroad participation and degree completion. Then, additional Chi-Square Tests of Independence determined if other variables outside of community college study abroad participation (gender and age group) included in the study have an impact on retention and degree completion. The final section provides a summary of all results.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The primary goal of this research was to examine the relationship between community college study abroad participation, retention, and degree completion.

RQ1: What are student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity and major?

RQ2. Is there a significant difference in retention from freshman to sophomore year for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?

H₀: There is no significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

H_a: There is a significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

RQ3. Is there a significant difference in degree completion for Oklahoma community college study abroad participants versus non-participants?

H₀: There is no significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

H_a: There is a significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants.

Sample Characteristics

At the conclusion of data collection on August 19, 2022, the total sample size was 1149. Of the sample, 649 were study abroad participants. The remaining 499 did not participate in study abroad, but were declared as degree-seeking students. All Oklahoma community colleges included had institutionally-developed study abroad programs. Institutions that offer study abroad opportunities through third party vendors were not included in the study. Table 2 shows that the sample was categorized into two groups 1) study abroad participants or 2) non-participants.

Table 2

Community College Study Abroad Participation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Participant	649	56.5	56.5	56.5
	Non-Participant	499	43.4	43.5	100.0
	Total	1148	99.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.1		
Total		1149	100.0		

Demographics of Community College Study Abroad Participants

The first research question addressed student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and major. To holistically review research question one, this section breaks down each demographic variable and compare to alternative populations.

Gender

In examining the distribution of gender across the sample of study abroad participants in Table 3, the data showed that the vast majority of students participating in study abroad were women. Out of the 649 study abroad participants, 74.9% were women and 25.1% were men. Of the remaining 499 non-participants, 65.7% were women and 34.3% were men. In comparing the distribution of gender from the participant sample to the non-participant sample, the percentage in men in the non-participant category is larger than the participant sample. Although the non-participant sample still hosts a heavy distribution of women, gender is more evenly distributed in the non-participant sample than the participant sample.

Table 3

Gender and Participation Crosstabulation

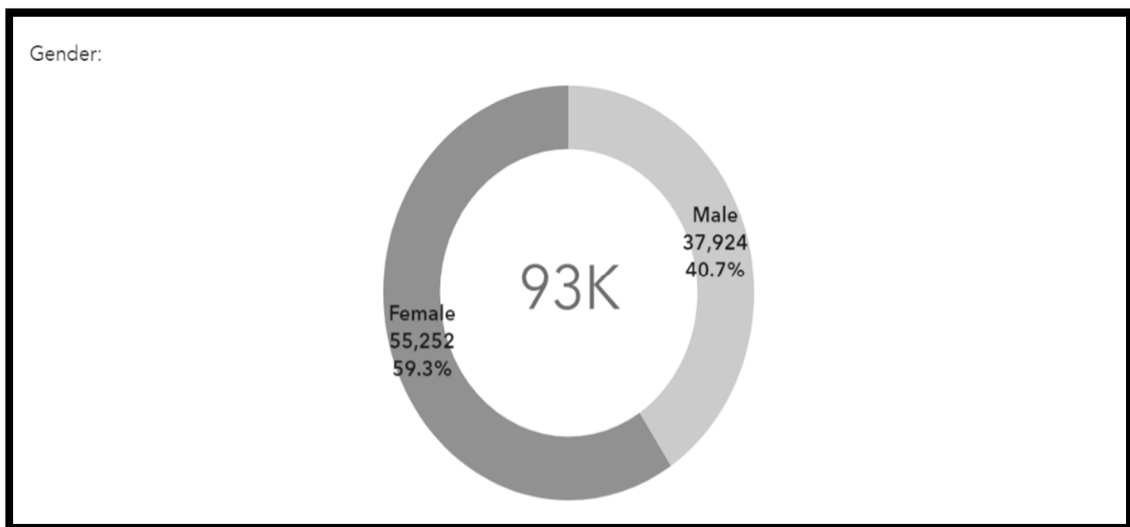
			Study Abroad Participation		Total
			Participant	Non-Participant	
Gender	W	Count	486	328	814
		% within Participation	74.9%	65.7%	70.9%
	M	Count	163	171	334
		% within Participation	25.1%	34.3%	29.1%
Total		Count	649	499	1148
		% within Participation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note. W=women, M=men

Using annual headcounts from the 2016-2017 academic year, as represented by Figure 1, Oklahoma’s community colleges reported approximately 93,000 enrollments. Of those enrollments, gender at Oklahoma’s community colleges was comprised of 59.3% women and 40.7% men. In comparing this to the sample, the non-participant sample reflects a comparable distribution of gender to the Oklahoma community college population as a whole, while the participant sample was pre-dominantly women.

Figure 1

Gender at Oklahoma Community Colleges, 2016-2017



Age

Age was grouped into 10 categories that are consistent with the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting for the purpose of comparison. The categories are as follows: age under 18, 18-19, 20-21, 22-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-49, 50-64, and age 65 and over. As seen in Table 4, the sample of study abroad participants showed a larger number of participants under the age of 18 (3.2%) in comparison to the non-participant sample (0.4%). The 18-19 age group was the largest for both the participant (32.4%) and non-participant sample (29.9%). Slightly less was the 20-21 age group for participants (24.3%) and non-participant (19.6%) groups. The 50-65 age group showed a larger distribution in the participant group (3.7%) versus the non-participant group (0.6%). Overall, the distribution of age groups for the participant and non-participant group were comparable. This means, the study abroad participants at Oklahoma community colleges were generally reflective of the age groups of the whole Oklahoma community college population.

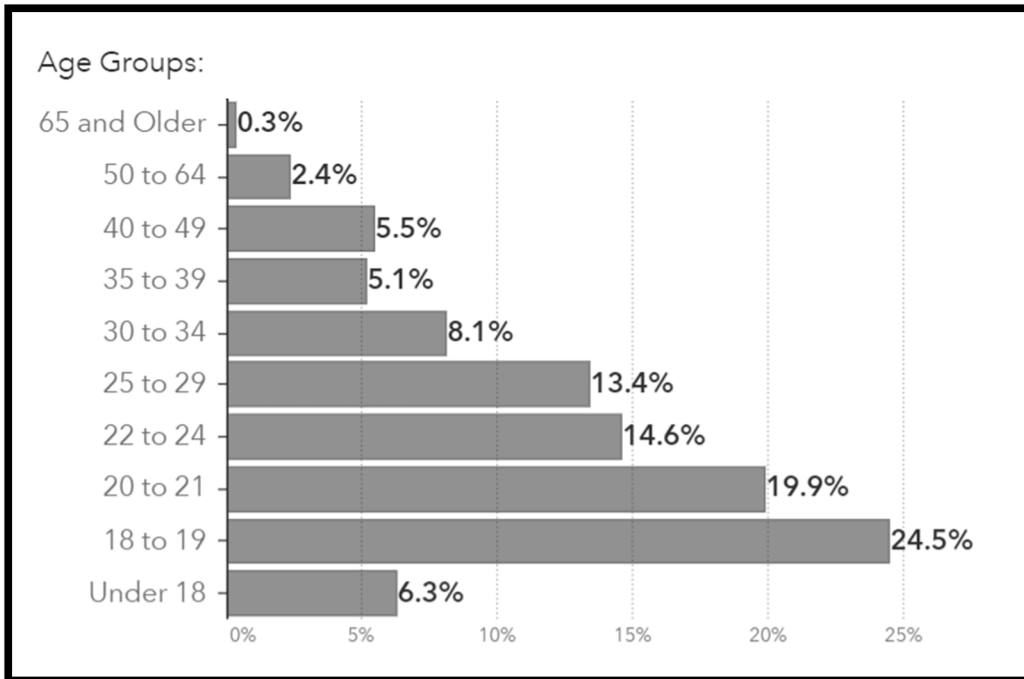
Table 4*Age and Participation Crosstabulation*

		Study Abroad Participation		
			Non-	
Age		Participant	Participant	Total
Under 18	Count	21	2	23
	% within Participation	3.2%	0.4%	2.0%
18-19	Count	210	149	359
	% within Participation	32.4%	29.9%	31.3%
20-21	Count	158	98	256
	% within Participation	24.3%	19.6%	22.3%
22-24	Count	95	42	137
	% within Participation	14.6%	8.4%	11.9%
25-29	Count	51	61	112
	% within Participation	7.9%	12.2%	9.8%
30-34	Count	40	74	114
	% within Participation	6.2%	14.8%	9.9%
35-39	Count	16	22	38
	% within Participation	2.5%	4.4%	3.3%
40-49	Count	33	47	80
	% within Participation	5.1%	9.4%	7.0%
50-64	Count	24	3	27
	% within Participation	3.7%	0.6%	2.4%
65 and Older	Count	1	1	2
	% within Participation	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Total	Count	649	499	1148
	% within Participation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In reviewing the Oklahoma State Regents Unitized Data System (UDS) of age data for the 2016-2017 for all of Oklahoma's community colleges, as seen in Figure 2, the distribution of age groups in the community college population is comparable to both the participant and non-participant sample, with only slight variation.

Figure 2

Age Groups at Oklahoma Community Colleges, 2016-2017



Race/Ethnicity

Consistent with IPEDS reporting, the categories for race/ethnicity used in this study were as follows: white/non-Hispanic, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian or Middle Eastern, American Indian or Alaskan Native, multiple, or unknown. Table 5 details the white/non-Hispanic category in the largest number for both the participant and non-participant sample, with participants at 71.6% and non-participants at 68.1%. The second largest is the American Indian or Alaskan Native group with 8% in the participant group and 10.6% in the non-participant group. The crosstabulation shows a larger difference in distribution of race/ethnicity for the Hispanic or Latino population and the Black or African American population. For the Hispanic or Latino population, there was more representation in the

participant category (7.9%) than in the non-participant category (4.6%). For the Black or African American population, there was less representation in the participant category (2.6%) than the non-participant category (8.4%).

Table 5

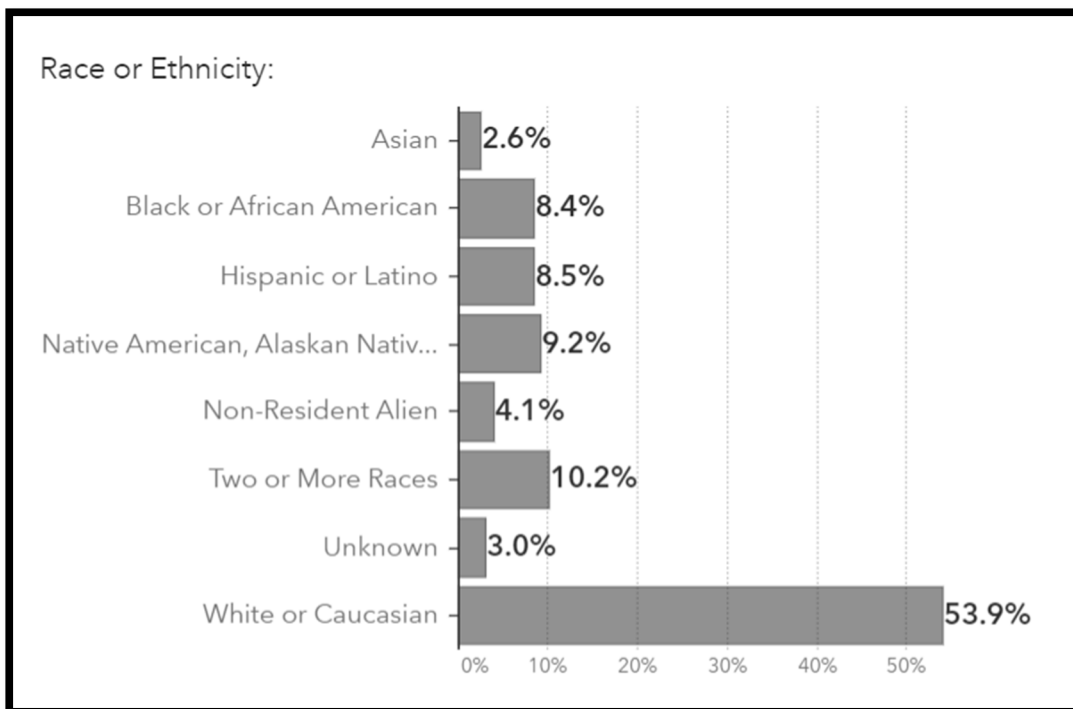
Race/Ethnicity and Participant Crosstabulation

		Study Abroad Participation		Total
Race/ Ethnicity		Participant	Non-Participant	
White Non-Hispanic	Count	465	340	805
	% within Participation	71.6%	68.1%	70.1%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Count	52	53	105
	% within Participation	8.0%	10.6%	9.1%
Hispanic or Latino	Count	51	23	74
	% within Participation	7.9%	4.6%	6.4%
Multiple	Count	40	26	66
	% within Participation	6.2%	5.2%	5.7%
Black or African American	Count	17	42	59
	% within Participation	2.6%	8.4%	5.1%
Asian, Middle Eastern	Count	15	9	24
	% within Participation	2.3%	1.8%	2.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Count	0	1	1
	% within Participation	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Total	Count	649	499	1148
	% within Participation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In comparing the sample with the entire Oklahoma community college population, Figure 3 demonstrates that study abroad participation was reflective of the race/ethnicity distribution of the entire Oklahoma community college population, with the exception of the Black or African American population. Figure 3 shows the Black or African American population (8.4%) were less represented in community college study abroad participation (2.6%).

Figure 3

Race/Ethnicity at Oklahoma Community Colleges, 2016-2017



Major

To aid in data analysis, majors were condensed into broader categories displayed in Table 6 below, which makes it difficult to compare to types of majors for the entire Oklahoma community college population. For this reason, this section compares only the

participant and non-participant samples. Overall, the distribution of majors was comparable in the participant and non-participant sample, with a couple of exceptions. The participant sample contains a larger number of foreign language majors. This could be due to the courses offered by the community college that may have influenced who chose to participate in a study abroad program. The data included in this study did not indicate if students were studying abroad in countries where the native language corresponded with their selected program of study. A less clear inconsistency is the discrepancy in undeclared majors. The non-participant sample contained a much larger percentage of undeclared majors (21%) in comparison to the participant sample (5.9%).

Table 6*Major and Community College Study Abroad Participation Crosstabulation*

		Study Abroad Participation			
		Participant	Non-Participant	Total	
Major	Aerospace & Aviation	Count	5	0	5
		% within Participation	0.8%	0.0%	0.4%
	Agriculture	Count	13	2	15
		% within Participation	2.0%	0.4%	1.3%
	Applied Technology	Count	3	3	6
		% within Participation	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%
	Art & Design	Count	32	10	42
		% within Participation	4.9%	2.0%	3.7%
	Business	Count	63	54	117
		% within Participation	9.7%	10.8%	10.2%
	Communications	Count	16	2	18
		% within Participation	2.5%	0.4%	1.6%
	Computer Science	Count	13	13	26
		% within Participation	2.0%	2.6%	2.3%
	Education	Count	30	20	50
		% within Participation	4.6%	4.0%	4.4%
	Engineering	Count	15	24	39
		% within Participation	2.3%	4.8%	3.4%
	Foreign Language	Count	41	1	42
		% within Participation	6.3%	0.2%	3.7%
	General Studies	Count	116	63	179
		% within Participation	17.9%	12.6%	15.6%
	Health Sciences	Count	72	69	141
		% within Participation	11.1%	13.8%	12.3%
	International Studies	Count	4	0	4
		% within Participation	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%
	Legal Studies	Count	9	11	20
		% within Participation	1.4%	2.2%	1.7%
	Mathematics	Count	4	1	5
		% within Participation	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%
	Nursing	Count	76	55	131
		% within Participation	11.7%	11.0%	11.4%
	Science Related Concentration	Count	24	3	27
		% within Participation	3.7%	0.6%	2.4%
	Social Science	Count	75	63	138
		% within Participation	11.6%	12.6%	12.0%
	Undeclared	Count	38	105	143
		% within Participation	5.9%	21.0%	12.5%
Total		Count	649	499	1148
		% within Participation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Community College Study Abroad Participation and Retention

The second research question for this study addressed community college study abroad participation in relation to retention. Community colleges consistently face challenges with retention. Retention in this study was defined as students continuing their enrollment from first to second year. This was determined by the number of credit hours completed by the student. According to IPEDS, students who complete 30 credit hours have completed their first year; therefore, students who earned more than 30 credit hours at their institution of record within two academic years were considered retained.

Chi-Square Test of Independence

To examine the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was utilized. This test included a 2x2 table using one degree of freedom, finding a significant relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention.

Where does the significance happen? As shown in Table 7, the Chi-Square Test of Independence had a large adjusted residual at |8.6|. With an observed frequency of 571 study abroad participants who were retained and an expected frequency of 512.2, it was concluded that community college students who participate in study abroad were more likely to be retained than those who do not study abroad; furthermore, community college students who do not participate in study abroad were less likely to be retained.

Table 7*Community College Study Abroad Participation and Retention Crosstabulation*

Study Abroad Participation		Not Retained	Retained	Total
Participant	Count	78	571	649
	Expected Count	136.8	512.2	649.0
	% within Participation	12.0%	88.0%	100.0%
	% within Retention	32.2%	63.0%	56.5%
	% of Total	6.8%	49.7%	56.5%
	Adjusted Residual	-8.6	8.6	
Non-Participant	Count	164	335	499
	Expected Count	105.2	393.8	499.0
	% within Participation	32.9%	67.1%	100.0%
	% within Retention	67.8%	37.0%	43.5%
	% of Total	14.3%	29.2%	43.5%
	Adjusted Residual	8.6	-8.6	
Total	Count	242	906	1148
	Expected Count	242.0	906.0	1148.0
	% within Participation	21.1%	78.9%	100.0%
	% within Retention	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	21.1%	78.9%	100.0%

Table 8 illustrates the concluded the Chi-Square value to be 73.696, $\chi^2(1) = 73.695$, with a p-value of .000 ($p < .05$); therefore, there was a relationship between study abroad participation and retention. In this instance, the alternative hypothesis was accepted. There was a significant difference in retention for community college study abroad participants and non-participants. Students participating in study abroad are more likely to be retained than non-participants.

Table 8*Chi Square Test of Independence: Study Abroad Participation and Retention*

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	73.695 ^a	1	.000		

Note. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 105.19.

Note. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

Measures of Association

The measure of association in a Chi-Square test quantifies the strength of the relationship between variables. As displayed in Table 9, this test utilized two measures of association, Phi and Cramer's V, to quantify the relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention. Outcomes showed Phi (ϕ) = .253 and Cramer's V = .253, meaning there was a small to moderate relationship between study abroad participation and retention. This means that, when repeating this study, significance is likely to be found; however, with a small measure of association, this cannot be used as a predictive model.

Table 9*Measures of Association*

	Value	Approximate Significance
Phi	-.253	.000
Cramer's V	.253	.000
N of Valid Cases	1148	

Community College Study Abroad Participation and Degree Completion

Research question three examined the relationship between community college study abroad participation and degree completion. In this study, degree completion was defined as a degree reported to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Unitized Data System by August 19, 2022. Once data are collected and processed by the Oklahoma State Regents, they are then reported by the State Regents to IPEDS. Considering dates of data collection, the latest degree conferred from an institution would be Spring 2022. Summer 2022 data were not yet available.

Chi-Square Test of Independence

Data related to the third research question were also examined through a Chi-Square Test of Independence and included two categorical variables: community college study abroad participation and degree completion. Students were placed into one of two categories for degree completion: degree completed or degree not completed. The Chi-Square test concluded a significant relationship between community college study abroad participation and degree completion.

Where does the significance occur? Analysis of Table 10 showed the adjusted residual was $|3.4|$ in all pairings of observed and expected frequencies. Thus, analysis showed community college students who participated in study abroad were more likely to complete a degree; conversely, community college students who did not participate in study abroad were less likely to complete a degree.

Table 10*Community College Study Abroad Participation and Degree Completion Cross**Tabulation*

Study Abroad Participation		Degree Completion		Total
		No Degree	Degree	
Participant	Count	197	452	649
	Expected Count	223.9	425.1	649.0
	% within Participation	30.4%	69.6%	100.0%
	% within Degree	49.7%	60.1%	56.5%
	% of Total	17.2%	39.4%	56.5%
	Adjusted Residual	-3.4	3.4	
Non-Participant	Count	199	300	499
	Expected Count	172.1	326.9	499.0
	% within Participation	39.9%	60.1%	100.0%
	% within Degree	50.3%	39.9%	43.5%
	% of Total	17.3%	26.1%	43.5%
	Adjusted Residual	3.4	-3.4	
Total	Count	396	752	1148
	Expected Count	396.0	752.0	1148.0
	% within Participation	34.5%	65.5%	100.0%
	% within Degree	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	34.5%	65.5%	100.0%

As shown in Table 11, the test found the Chi-Square value to be 11.328 ($\chi^2(1) = 11.328$) with a p-value of .001 ($p = .001$). Because $p < .05$, the analysis indicated there was a relationship between study abroad participation and degree completion; therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted. There was a significant difference in degree completion for community college study abroad participants and non-participants. Students participating in study abroad were more likely to complete a degree than non-participants.

Table 11

Chi Square Test of Independence: Study Abroad Participation and Degree Completion

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.328 ^a	1	.001		

Note. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 172.13.

Note. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

Measures of Association

Analysis for research question three also utilized two measures of association: Phi and Cramer’s V, $\phi = .099$ and Cramer’s V = .099, as shown in Table 12. There was a very small relationship between study abroad and degree completion indicating that, although we would be likely to see significance if this study were to be repeated, this study could not be used as a predictive model.

Table 12

Measures of Association

	Value	Approximate Significance
Phi	-.099	.001
Cramer's V	.099	.001
N of Valid Cases	1148	

Conclusion

Chapter IV analyzed the results for the three research questions identified in this study. This study included a sample of 1148 degree-seeking Oklahoma community college students, 649 of the students in the sample participated in a community college study abroad program, and the remaining 499 did not participate in a study abroad

program. In analyzing the demographics of community college study abroad participants, this study found, similar to four-year study abroad students, participants are primarily women. Overall, the age groups of Oklahoma's community college study abroad participants are generally reflective of the age distribution of the entire Oklahoma community college population. Study abroad participation is primarily comprised of white/non-Hispanic students. Oklahoma community college study abroad has a larger distribution of American Indian/Alaskan Native students in comparison to the nationwide distribution. The descriptive statistics indicated a larger distribution in participation for Hispanic or Latino students than in the non-participant sample and less representation from Black or African American students. The overall distribution of majors was comparable in the participant and non-participant sample, with the exception of a larger distribution of foreign language majors in the participant sample. A less clear inconsistency is a larger representation of undeclared majors in the non-participant sample.

Research questions two and three concluded there was a significant relationship between community college study abroad participation with both retention and degree completion, the strongest relationship being with retention. The data also concluded those who participate in community college study abroad programs are more likely to be retained and complete a degree. Additional Chi-Square Tests of Independence were conducted to further assess impacts on retention and degree completion. Results indicated that gender does not have an impact on retention but does have an impact on degree completion. Additionally, age does not have a relationship with retention or degree completion.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Student retention and degree completion are prominent concerns for all institutions of higher education. Student participation in study abroad at four-year institutions has demonstrated positive student outcomes for retention and degree completion (Hamir, 2011; Posey, 2003; Sutton & Rubin, 2010). Students at community colleges in the United States are typically retained a lower rate than four-year institutions due to barriers like insufficient academic preparedness, cost, lack of curriculum structure and development, and low faculty engagement (Braxton, 2013; Cohen, 1996; Fike & Fike, 2008). Lower retention rates contribute to lower rates of degree completion.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to evaluate student demographics of Oklahoma community college study abroad participants and analyze the relationship of Oklahoma community college study abroad participation with retention and degree completion. Demographics were reported utilizing descriptive statistics, and relationship between community college study abroad participation and retention and degree completion were evaluated through a Chi-Square Test of Independence.

Prior to entering the discussion on findings, it must be acknowledged that multiple extraneous variables, in addition to those identified in this study, could also impact retention and degree completion of community college students. Although

additional variables collected in this study were explored, all possible variables could not be accounted for within the scope of this study, and should be considered in future studies. For example, factors such as socioeconomic status, mentoring/coaching, mental health, and student preparedness can have substantial impacts on retention and degree completion. Participation in study abroad at the community college level is not a guarantee of student success.

Chapter V focuses on the discussion of the results with pertinent connections to the literature. This chapter is organized into six sections: summary of findings, discussion of findings, implications for theory, recommendations for practice, suggestions for further research, and final reflections.

Summary of Results

Overall, data analysis from the years 2012-2019 concluded with the following results:

- Similar to study abroad programs at four-year institutions, participants in Oklahoma community college study abroad were primarily women.
- Age groups of Oklahoma's community college study abroad participants were generally reflective of the age distribution of the entire Oklahoma community college population.
- Study abroad participation was primarily comprised of white/non-Hispanic students.
- There was a larger representation of Hispanic or Latino students in the participant sample than the non-participant sample.

- American Indian/Alaskan Native students had a larger representation in Oklahoma community college study abroad participation. Black/African American students were underrepresented in comparison to nationwide study abroad populations.
- The distribution of majors was generally comparable in the participant and non-participant sample, with the exception of a larger distribution of foreign language majors in the participant sample, as well as a larger representation of undeclared majors in the non-participant sample.
- Participants in study abroad at Oklahoma community colleges are both more likely to be retained from first to second year and to complete a degree.

The following section discusses the results of this study and considers pertinent literature.

Discussion of Results

Research on study abroad participation at four-year institutions has highlighted numerous positive outcomes including greater rates of retention and degree completion, increased self-confidence, a heightened sense of self, an awareness and commitment to the welfare of others, enhanced interest in academic study, growth in tolerance and cultural sensitivity, and clarity in academic and career goals (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Study abroad opportunities at four-year institutions are common and far more expansive than at community colleges. Historically, the purpose of the community college was rooted in serving the local community (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Institutional curriculum was centered on the local workforce; however, many American community colleges have made note of the ever-changing global economy that impacts their local workforce and community. In 2006, a statement issued by the American Association of Community

Colleges and Association for Community College Trustees emphasized the importance of global education for community college students, alluding to the responsibility of community college leaders to host initiatives with the intention to advance global competencies of students (American Higher Education Alliance, 2019).

Considering the limited research on study abroad at community colleges, this study focused on the two factors that are of primary concern for all higher education institutions: retention and degree completion. Additionally, this study assessed the demographics of students participating at Oklahoma community colleges, seeking to understand if the students participating in study abroad are reflective of the community college population as a whole, which typically hosts a greater number of non-traditional students when compared to four-year institutions (Raby & Malveaux, 2019; Zhang, 2011).

Demographics of Community College Study Abroad Participants

Overall, the distribution of demographics from the participant to the non-participant sample were comparable in this study. Gender represented the most substantial discrepancy between the participant and non-participant sample. Moderate variations in distributions also occurred in both age groups and race/ethnicity groups.

Gender

Women represent the majority in post-secondary study abroad participation. In 2018-2019, 67.3% of students from the United States participating in study abroad programs were women/girls and 32.7% were men/boys (Institute of International Education, 2022). Many studies reported a consistent gender gap in post-secondary study abroad participation (Shirley, 2006). This disparity is not unique to study abroad in the

United States and is observed in many other countries (Di Pietro, 2021; Van Mol, 2022). According to the current study, the gender gap in study abroad is reflected at the Oklahoma community college level as well. More broadly, the literature shows, in addition to gender, student motivations to study abroad are rooted in the desire for individual growth, which is influenced by parents' education level; prior international experience; academic performance; age; socioeconomic status; and major (Cordua & Netz, 2022; Pope et al., 2014). Although research on study abroad at community colleges proves to be unique to four-year institutions, the gender gap in study abroad participation persists to community colleges.

Age

Overall, the distribution of age groups at Oklahoma community colleges were comparable for the participant and non-participant sample, with only slight variations. This leads to the conclusion that, in general, the age groups of study abroad participants at Oklahoma community colleges are generally reflective of the overall Oklahoma community college population.

Age is a rare consideration in the analysis of study abroad participation, even at four-year institutions. The breakdown of distribution of age groups is not a variable publicly available in Open Doors national study abroad data. Despite the lack of data, IIE's Generation Study Abroad, or the 100,000 Strong initiative, was launched to promote study abroad programs to younger students. Of course, with study abroad linked to numerous positive outcomes, it makes sense to pilot expanding the opportunity to younger students. In addition to data collection on age groups in study abroad being lacking, making it difficult to compare the current data, the impacts of study abroad

participation for older students are not considered in research on study abroad outcomes. This may be because study abroad participation at four-year institutions primarily consists of traditional college students between the ages of 18 to 24. Because community college populations typically host a higher percentage of non-traditional and adult students at a lower cost, study abroad participation could be more accessible for adult students at community colleges than at four-year institutions. Considering the lack of data on age groups in study abroad, these are merely possibilities that require further research to explore.

Race/Ethnicity

More research data are available on race/ethnicity than age. Recent data released by IIE confirms that greater diversity of race/ethnicity exists in study abroad at community colleges than other institutions, which is reflective of greater diversity in the general community college population as a whole. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 70% of U.S. student studying abroad at all institutional types reported they were white. In comparison, 53.9% of U.S. student studying abroad at community colleges reported they were white, with 26.8% Hispanic or Latino(a), 7.7% Black or African American, 4.1% Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 7.1% multiracial, and 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Native.

In the sample collected for Oklahoma community college study abroad, students were more reflective of the entire student population in IIE, including all institutions, with more than 70% reporting their race as white; however, the Oklahoma community college study abroad population is unique in the representation of American Indian or Alaska Native students. The participant sample was comprised of 8% students who

reported their race/ethnicity as American Indian or Alaska Native, in comparison to only 0.5% for study abroad at all institutions and 0.3% for study abroad at all U.S. community colleges. This is reflective of Oklahoma's population as the home to highest population share of American Indians in the nation.

Data confirm that study abroad participation at Oklahoma community colleges consists of predominantly white students, and further action is required to boost diversity in study abroad participation. Considering data for study abroad at community colleges represent greater diversity, community colleges could be an avenue for increasing diversity in study abroad participation across the United States.

Major Field of Study

Due to unstandardized categorization, field of study is a bit more difficult to compare to the nonparticipant population than the previous variables. While the variables already discussed have categories defined by IPEDS, the groupings of fields of study are not standardized. In reviewing Open Doors national study abroad data comparing community colleges to all institutions, STEM fields are heavily represented in study abroad at each type of institution. Beyond STEM though, community colleges show more diversity in fields of study (IIE, 2021).

As mentioned in Chapter IV, the breakdown of fields of study is comparable for study abroad participants and non-participants with only slight variations. Study abroad participants had a larger distribution of foreign language majors and non-participants had a larger distribution of undeclared majors. The larger distribution of foreign language majors is likely due to students seeking an immersive experience in a country native to their declared language. When adding fields of study that would be considered STEM,

34.2% of Oklahoma community college students who participated in study abroad majored in STEM fields. In comparing this to the 2019-2020 IIE national community college data, 26.3% of students majored in STEM fields. This study furthers the claim that STEM students across institutional types are more likely to study abroad than other fields of study.

Community College Study Abroad Participation, Retention and Degree Completion

Due to the limited research on community college study abroad participation, especially research specific to Oklahoma, the purpose of the study was to build a foundation. Retention and degree completion are primary concerns of all higher education institutions. To reiterate, retention is defined as students who enroll and continue their enrollment from one semester to the following semester (Goltra, 2018). For the purpose of this study, retention was measured from first to second year. Degree completion refers to a degree earned by completing the required credit hours at an institution of higher education. In this study, a student was counted as earning a degree if they earned a degree at an institution in the Oklahoma State-System at any level from associate to doctoral level. If institutions struggle to retain students, the struggle for degree completion will consequently follow. While retention and degree completion are connected, it is important to review the variables separately to understand how study abroad impacts institutions. Study abroad participation at Oklahoma community colleges had a positive relationship with both retention and degree completion; however, study abroad participation had a slightly stronger impact on retention than degree completion. Considering research has identified that U.S. community colleges experience a greater struggle to retain students from the first to second year than four-year institutions, study

abroad could be an avenue for community colleges to engage with students and increase retention rates (Braxton, 2013; Cohen, 1996; Fike & Fike 2008). Inevitably, low retention rates contribute to lower rates of degree completion. Considering study abroad participation contributes to higher retention rates, it is likely that increased retention increases the likelihood of degree completion.

It is evident that study abroad positively contributes to student success considering the positive relationship with both retention and degree completion for Oklahoma community college students. The positive outcomes for retention and degree completion are shared with four-year institutions nationally (Gray & Lundy, 2015; Hamir, 2011; Metzger, 2006). Metzger's (2006) study argued that study abroad is an overlooked retention strategy. Sixteen years later, study abroad programs at four-year institutions have substantially grown, and their impacts have been further researched. A 2015 study suggested internationalizing curriculum and incorporating study abroad could boost retention among minorities and underrepresented student populations at four-year institutions (Gray & Lundy, 2015). Although growing, study abroad participation at U.S. community colleges has not grown at the same rate as four-year institutions, and the research on impacts is minimal. This study further confirms that study abroad at community colleges has positive impacts on retention and degree completion, like it does at four-year institutions. Considering U.S. community colleges face greater struggles with retention, study abroad participation could be a strategy to engage students while increasing retention and degree completion rates.

Evaluation of Additional Variables

Further evaluation of additional variables collected in this study solidified the positive impacts of retention and degree completion. Although this study determined study abroad has a positive relationship with retention and degree completion, it does not confirm that study abroad participation at an Oklahoma community college is the sole contributor to student retention or degree completion. It is likely that additional variables have an impact on retention and degree completion. To evaluate this, additional Chi-Square Tests of Independence were conducted to evaluate the impacts of age groups and gender on retention and degree completion. Tests concluded that gender had no impact on retention; however, women are more likely than men to complete a degree within the group of students who participated in study abroad. Additionally, age group did not have an impact on retention or degree completion. Of the tests conducted, study abroad participation was the only variable that had a positive impact on both retention and degree completion.

Implications for Theory

This study applied two lenses of theory: Astin's (1985) Theory of Student Involvement and Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure.

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement

This study further affirms Astin's (1985) theory as it shows that study abroad participation has a positive correlation with measures of student success. In this study, study abroad participation was considered the co-curricular activity and retention and degree completion are considered measures of student success.

Tinto's Theory of Student Departure

Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure relates to this study in terms of retention. This study suggests study abroad could be an effective action and program for institutions to implement to contribute to increase rates of retention and degree completion. This requires that institutions strategically plan program funding, development, and management.

Implications for Practice

Study abroad could serve as a strategy for U.S. community colleges to boost retention and degree completion rates. This section addresses high level action-oriented agendas for U.S. community colleges to implement study abroad at their campus. As mentioned, study abroad is not a guarantee to boost retention and degree completion, and should not be utilized as sole strategy; however, it is possible that when used in conjunction with thoughtful degree programs, study abroad participation can engage community college student populations in their learning environment and increase the likelihood of retention and the follow-through to degree completion. Of course, when addressing action items, thoughtful consideration of common barriers community colleges face must be incorporated, such as lack of institutional funding, limited resources, and negative student perceptions.

Grant Funding

Often, the most primary concern is funding study abroad programs. Community colleges face limitations in terms of funding, which often impact the ability to initiate new programs or further develop current programs. Regardless of whether study abroad already exists on campus or not, community colleges can benefit from applying for grant funding to assist in the development of study abroad programs. The federal government

supports study and research abroad for both individuals and institutions; therefore, the Department of State provides funds and other programming to assist institutions to enhance their capacity to host study abroad programs. For example, the IDEAS program is specifically geared towards increasing diversity in education abroad for U.S. students and provides grants to colleges to help them increase and diversify students who choose to participate in study abroad (World Learning Inc, 2023). Establishing funding sources is the first step in developing or advancing study abroad programs. In addition to institutional funding, many government agencies and organizations offer student scholarships for study abroad participation like Fund for Education Abroad, Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and CEA Study Abroad Scholarships. Providing resources for funding to students aids in advancing study abroad participation.

Hire Adequate Staff

Many four-year institutions are hosts to study abroad offices, comprised of multiple employees. Often, community colleges lack funding to support an entire office dedicated to study abroad. In Oklahoma, this means faculty do the heavy lifting in terms of study abroad programming. Not only do faculty design the course content, but they also coordinate travel logistics for the entire trip. In terms of study abroad participation in the state of Oklahoma, community college study abroad participation is small. In order to build more advanced study abroad programs with limited financial resources in mind, community colleges should advocate for study abroad coordinators at the state system level. Pooling financial resources to hire study abroad coordinators from a system standpoint would be a multi-faceted benefit. First, this would minimize the investment from individual institutions. Second, it provides a high-level viewpoint for program

development, enabling coordination and collaboration among institutions. Third, this would align the development of study abroad related policy among institutions. As study abroad participation grows, and further research identifies impacts of community college study abroad, community colleges can collaborate to strategically plan into the future.

Develop Programs

Staffing study abroad coordinators from a state-system standpoint could enable a council of faculty to collaborate on program development. Councils could be comprised of general education or be specific to a field of study. Once council members are established with the appropriate expertise, collaboration can begin on program development. Faculty can identify current programs and integrate study abroad into the academic program where best fit. Study abroad programs can be built for both general education purposes for students from all fields of study, as well as specified fields of study for students that have declared a major. A faculty council not only alleviates the financial burden of individual institutions but also lessens the burden on faculty members of handling all aspects of the program. Faculty councils allow institutions to share resources in terms of available faculty.

Market and Enroll Students

With funding sourced, scholarship opportunities for students identified, adequate faculty and staff, and thoughtfully designed programs, institutions should develop and execute a communications plan. The first to be notified and trained on study abroad program opportunities are campus admissions, advisement, and enrollment offices. All staff should be well-versed on the available opportunities and have the ability to communicate with students on the steps to enroll.

Next, the communications plan should disperse information to multiple stakeholders on campus and beyond. Marketing materials should highlight program destination, trip details, and scholarship sources. Marketing should be done in coordination with the state system, the communicators council, and institutional communications offices. Marketing messages should alleviate common student perceptions of study abroad by addressing common barriers to study abroad participation such as cost or time to degree completion. The ultimate goal of a strategic marketing plan is to attract student attention and enrollment. Campuses should be cognizant of the time required to plan study abroad programs and prepare and disperse marketing materials to give students plenty of time to enroll and prepare for their experience abroad.

Build Program Sustainability: Corporate Partners

While grant funding can provide support to community colleges for the initial launch of study abroad programs, grant funds cannot be a guaranteed long-term funding source. For this reason, it is important that community colleges identify stakeholders to contribute to the long-term sustainability of community college study abroad programs. Ideally, community colleges will recognize the impacts, clearly communicate the impacts to their state system, and advocate for long-term funding; however, considering the decline in funding for higher education in Oklahoma over the last several fiscal years, it is important to identify alternative funding sources.

The literature mentions the prioritization of internationalization strategies at U.S. community colleges. One of the reasons behind this priority is due to the continually globalizing economy. Globalization impacts the economy, requiring that the workforce be equipped with global and cultural competencies. Considering the requirement for these

skills, and the sentiment that a component of higher education is to train the workforce, institutions have the leverage to identify corporate partners and engage with them. Engagement with corporate partners can be acknowledged in a variety of ways. They can serve on councils for program development or commit to funding a program or scholarship at the community college. Methods of engagement can vary, but identifying stakeholders can aid in securing additional resources and funding that contribute to the sustainability of study abroad programs.

Implications for Research

Currently, research on the impacts of study abroad at community colleges is limited. To the researcher's knowledge, the primary contributor to this research is Rosalind Raby, the Director of California Colleges for International Education. Raby's research focuses on internationalization and the analysis of education abroad at the community college level. Her research population consists of California community college students. The research on study abroad at community colleges outside of California is minimal. The purpose of this study was to continue exploring the impacts of study abroad on community college students, specifically on students in Oklahoma. This study merely scratches the surface of this topic; there is ample space for research to expand beyond this study. However, this study extends Raby's work to another state through addressing a wide gap on community college study abroad, in this case, in Oklahoma. The following subsections detail the researcher's initial thoughts on future research.

Future Research

Retention and degree completion are of primary importance at higher education institutions. Again, this study merely scratches the surface, and additional studies evaluating the impacts of study abroad on retention and degree completion are necessary throughout the United States to see if additional researchers draw similar conclusions. Although retention and degree completion are of great importance, it is possible that other valuable impacts are also related to study abroad participation. Additional student outcomes should be evaluated.

Skill Identification

While this research established that a positive relationship between community college study abroad participation and degree completion exist, it does not evaluate the knowledge or skills that students acquire from study abroad participation. Study abroad can enhance skillsets beyond course content knowledge (Haddis, 2005). Future research should consider evaluating the skills acquired from study abroad participation at community colleges. This could be approached from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Impacts on Employment

Many four-year institutions evaluate the relationship between study abroad participation and employment. Colleges and universities recognize the need to equip students with cross-cultural competencies to be successful in a global economy. Skills such as interpersonal communication, leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, cultural awareness, maturity, language proficiency, and enhanced global mindset are directly applicable to the workforce, which is why many institutions offer study abroad

opportunities as a method to equip students with these skillsets (Harder et. al, 2015; Posey, 2003). Future research should consider the impacts of study abroad on employability for community college students. Employability should be considered by evaluating the relationship in terms of time to employment upon graduation, salary, and type of occupation. Additionally, research should take a quantitative approach to identify skillsets study abroad participants at the community college level obtain and, perhaps qualitatively, how those skills translate into their employment.

Minority Participation

This study analyzed the demographics of students who study abroad, but analysis on demographics of community college students who study abroad should be expanded throughout the United States. Understanding a comprehensive description of the study abroad population allows higher education institutions to understand where barriers to certain populations might exist and implement strategies to break down those barriers. Once a comprehensive picture of study abroad demographics is understood, it is easier to determine if study abroad at community colleges is a feasible avenue to boost diversity in study abroad participation. It is established that the cost of study abroad is more affordable at community college rates; therefore, with cost as a reduced barrier, community colleges could be an avenue for expanding access.

Population Comparison

As more information on study abroad at the community college is learned, more comparisons to the four-year institution can be drawn. This research can answer:

- How do impacts from study abroad at community colleges differ from four-year institutions?

- What skillsets does study abroad at community college teach? How does this skillset differ from those obtained from four-year study abroad programs?
- What impacts of study abroad are unique to the community college?
- Would study abroad at community colleges grant access to minority student populations who would otherwise be unable to participate?

Why are these comparisons important? Understanding the uniqueness of study abroad at the community college level enables strategic program development.

Community colleges serve differently than four-year institutions; therefore, there is a need to understand how programs impact the student population. When those impacts are understood, it enables strategic thinking and planning that can improve program development and yield strong student outcomes.

Limitations

This study further contributes to the literature by examining the relationship of study abroad participation and retention and degree completion for community college students, a population not widely studied in regard to impacts of study abroad, even less likely in a rural, Southern state. The purpose of this section is to explicitly state the limitations of this research. The research for this study evolved as new information was available to the researcher. Many of the limitations of this study are due to low numbers of study abroad participants at Oklahoma community colleges. Although the original intent of this study was determining whether students participating in Oklahoma community college study abroad were more likely to earn an associate degree, a more expansive dataset became available that enabled the researcher to examine if Oklahoma community college students who participate in study abroad are more likely to earn a

degree at any level (associate through doctoral) from one of Oklahoma's public, state system institutions.

Timeframe

The first item to address is the large timeframe, collecting data on participants who participated in study abroad from 2011 to 2018. This is a limitation because most commonly, researchers identify a cohort following a reasonable timeframe for graduation. Typically, for two-year institutions this is six semesters, and for four-year institutions it is often capped at six years. The reasoning behind using the 10-year timeframe is two-fold. The primary reason is that the number of study abroad participants at Oklahoma community colleges is minimal. If this study would have used a six-year timeframe, it would have eliminated hundreds of study abroad participants from the study. Chi-Square Tests of Independence are heavily influenced by sample size; therefore, having an adequate number of participants in the study was more important than the timeframe to degree completion.

The second reason for an extended timeframe was due to the nature of the research. As addressed in the literature review, community colleges have higher populations of non-traditional students who are not on the traditional path to completing a college degree. Many are working full-time, have families, or both. Non-traditional students do not always have the capacity to enroll as a full-time student. Initially, this study required full-time enrollment for participants, but after deeper consideration of the purpose, that requirement was removed and participants were included if they were degree-seeking. Because non-traditional students are not often enrolled full-time, it is

likely that their time to degree completion is longer than that of a more traditional student.

The researcher does acknowledge that those who participated in 2018 may not have had the opportunity to complete a degree; therefore, during data collection, the current enrollment status of students was checked. Of the 649 study abroad participants, only 12 students were still enrolled; therefore, it is possible that some study abroad participants are still on course to complete a degree. Considering current enrollment accounted for less than 2% of the study abroad participant sample, this is acknowledged as a limitation, but the impact on the study is likely minimal.

Out-of-State Migration and Private Colleges

The data collection process incorporated two steps. First, the researcher requested that institutions compile a list of students who participated in study abroad at their institutions. Once the researcher obtained that list, students were matched within the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Unitized Data System (UDS). This data system is inclusive of all state-system colleges but does not have data on students who left the state of Oklahoma or transferred to an out-of-state college. Additionally, the UDS system has limited data on private colleges; therefore, any degrees completed outside of the state or at an Oklahoma private institution were not accounted for. If study abroad participants or non-participants included in this study earned a degree out-of-state or at a private institution were not counted as degree earned.

Conclusion

Chapter V summarized and discussed the research findings from Chapter IV, covering the implications for theory, practice, research, and the limitations of the study.

This study determined that those participating in study abroad at Oklahoma community colleges are generally reflective of the entire Oklahoma community college population. Additionally, study abroad has a positive relationship with both retention and degree completion; therefore, study abroad at community colleges could be a potential avenue to increase rates of retention and degree completion. It could also potentially be a method to diversify participation in study abroad programs, which is historically dominated by white women. This research study is consistent with Astin's (1985) Theory of Student Involvement, stating that students being involved in co-curricular activities contributes to desirable outcomes for institutions of higher education. In accordance with Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Development, study abroad could be a method to aid students in integrating to their college environment, increasing the likelihood that students will persist to graduation.

Study abroad at community colleges has significant strides to make in terms of development. For community colleges to use study abroad as a strategy to enhance retention and degree completion, institutions must establish initial funding, hire adequate staff, curate programs, execute a marketing strategy to attract student enrollment, and identify practices to continuously sustain the programs. Due to the limited literature on study abroad at community college, there is considerable space for future research. Scholars should initially focus on understanding additional outcomes of community college study abroad participation such as skills, employment, and minority participation. After a broadened body of literature on outcomes has been established, researchers should consider comparisons of outcomes to four-year institutions. Identifying the unique impacts of community college study abroad can enhance program development and

potentially lead to greater access to study abroad participation. It is important to note that this study had limitations including an extended timeframe beyond the average time to graduation, a limited number of community college participants, and many participants that were not enrolled full-time; in addition, the dataset did not include students who earned a degree out-of-state or at a private institution.

Personal Reflection

A doctoral journey is no short feat. As my dissertation ends, I am in disbelief as I reflect on all that has changed in my own life throughout this journey. Simply put, I am overwhelmingly grateful. This dissertation is inspired by my love and appreciation for education that has given my life meaning and purpose. Study abroad played a substantial role in my education, made possible by my local community college. My international experiences opened door after door, from internships to graduate programs. Upon conclusion of my master's degree, I had visited 48 countries. As a small town, first-generation student, I could have never dreamed of these opportunities. The lessons learned during my abroad experiences are far more memorable than my time spent in the classroom. This ultimately influenced my decision to work in higher education, in hopes of creating engaging opportunities for future generations of students. It is not lost on me that purpose and career are not often aligned, and I am thankful that I am able to contribute to a mission that I whole-heartedly believe can change the trajectory of a life.

At our doctoral orientation, one wise professor recommended we hold off on as many life changes as possible throughout the duration of the program. Since that day, I have changed jobs, gotten married, changed jobs again, and had a baby. These changes shifted my perspective on so many aspects, including this dissertation. Each job change

gave me a new lens in thinking about these research questions. In my current role at the Oklahoma State Regents, I view this study from a state system perspective, as opposed to an institutional perspective, bringing greater value to the end product. As a mother, my hope is to continue influencing higher education to the best of my ability, in hopes that my children have access to opportunities that engage them in learning beyond the classroom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 01/20/2022
Application Number: IRB-22-20
Proposal Title: RETENTION AND DEGREE COMPLETION: A QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF STUDY ABROAD ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Principal Investigator: Cassidy Ladd
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Kerri Kearney
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Modification Approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Application Number: IRB-22-20
Proposal Title: RETENTION AND DEGREE COMPLETION: A QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF STUDY ABROAD ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Principal Investigator: Cassidy Ladd
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Kerri Kearney
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Study Review Level: Exempt
Modification Approval Date: 03/25/2022

The modification of the IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46. The original expiration date of the protocol has not changed.

Modifications Approved:

Modifications Approved: Adding restricted use datasets of class lists with identifiers.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved.
2. Submit a status report to the IRB when requested
3. Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
4. Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the OSU IRB and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
5. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Sincerely,

Oklahoma State University IRB
223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078
Website: <https://irb.okstate.edu/>
Ph: 405-744-3377 | Fax: 405-744-4335 | irb@okstate.edu

VITA

Cassidy Ladd- Minx

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: RETENTION AND DEGREE COMPLETION: A QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF STUDY ABROAD ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Major Field: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in International Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2014.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2012.

Experience:

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

Director of Workforce and Economic Development, July 2022-Present

Coordinator for Workforce and Economic Development, May 2021-June 2022

University of Central Oklahoma

Manager of Operations, September 2018-May 2021

Senior Admissions Counselor, April 2016 – September 2018

Adjunct Instructor, First-Year Experience, Fall 2016, 2017, and 2019

Coordinator of Student Records, April 2015-2016

Professional Memberships:

Governor's Workforce Council, Select Oklahoma, Leadership UCO