

UNDERSTANDING HOW AGRICULTURAL
COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS IDENTIFY
CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AFTER A SHORT-TERM
STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

By

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Abstract: Global competency is a growing quality for many students going into the work force. Study abroad is one way students increase their global competency. In the communications field, global competency is important for students to learn about different cultures and audiences. The purpose of this research was to determine if short-term study abroad programs in a college of agricultural help agricultural communications students identify and compare the characteristics, according to Hofstede's four dimensions of culture, of the culture they studied and their native culture. Objectives of the study included to understand how these students identify Hofstede's four dimensions of culture in other culture after studying abroad, determine the ability of agricultural communications student to connect differences in their native culture to other cultures studied, describe the agricultural communications students who participate in study-abroad courses, and identify agricultural communications students' motivation to participate in a short-term study abroad program. A focus group session was used to satisfy the research objectives. The results indicated agricultural communications students noticed the four dimensions of culture, as well as the differences between their native culture and the culture studied. The main differences they found were language and sense of safety. All the participants were female. Students' motivation for study abroad consisted mainly of the department offering the trip and the trip cost. Recommendations for future research include to broaden the focus group to other agricultural communications programs.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

“A globally competent person must be able to identify cultural differences to compete globally, collaborate across cultures, and effectively participate in both social and business settings in other countries” (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006, p. 283). For true *global competence* to be reached, students must feel more confident in their skills to handle situations dealing with more cultural diversity and identify how a certain culture interacts in comparison to their native culture (Hunter et al., 2006; Rice, Foster, Miller-Foster, & Barrick, 2014).

Global competence is becoming a highly sought-after skill for students with a college degree (Harder et al., 2015). To advance students in their global competence and help them be more competitive upon graduation, many universities have established international dimension credits (Cheung & Chan, 2010). Some universities require students to complete an international dimension credit to graduate. Students use their international dimension credit to gain global competence needed in their professional and personal lives (Stebbleton, Soria, & Cherney., 2013; Harder et al., 2015). This credit can

be attained through traditional courses on campus, online courses, or study abroad programs. Although students can gain sufficient credit through traditional and online courses, they do not retain a significant amount of global knowledge through the traditional or online course methods (Moriba & Edwards, 2013).

About 275,000 undergraduate students in the United States study abroad during their degree program (Institute of International Education, 2016). Of the 275,000 students, about 60% of them choose *short-term study abroad programs* that are summer programs, eight weeks or less, as opposed to mid-length or long-term study abroad programs (Institute of International Education, 2016).

When interviewing employers, Harder et al. (2015) found study abroad stands out on a student's résumé. Having an understanding of diverse cultures and developing global skills and knowledge were stated as being necessary for employment (Harder et al., 2015). The majority of these interviewees said having a study abroad experience was a consideration when hiring for their company (Harder et al., 2015).

Students who study abroad also have better intercultural communications skills than those who don't participate in a study abroad program (Williams, 2005). Covert (2014) found during study abroad programs in Chile, students grow in their communication skills and tolerance of a different culture. Greenfield, Davis and Fedor (2012) found study abroad programs increased self-rated skills. These skills include cultural sensitivity, comparison and contrast of different cultures' freedoms, patience with people of other cultures, and understanding how an individual is influenced in different settings to interact with other people (Greenfield, Davis, & Fedor, 2012).

Through study abroad programs, students have gained self-assessed global competence in handling situations, interacting with diverse cultures, and growing as a person; however, students also need to be able to identify the different characteristics of a particular culture and compare them with their native culture (Rice et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2013; Stebleton et al., 2013). Doing so helps students learn more about global trade, environmental issues, diverse religions, agricultural practices, and their native culture's international position (Stebleton et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2013). *Cultural dimensions* are able to help educational systems and university educators prepare students for the globalized economy that is more competitive than ever before by increasing their global competence. (Cheung & Chan, 2010).

Hofstede (1983) identified four cultural dimensions that describe fundamental problems in any society, whether it be the employees and employers belonging to a business or the government and constituents of a country. "Hofstede argued that many national differences in work-related values, beliefs, norms, and self-descriptions, as well as many societal variables, could be largely explained in terms of their statistical and conceptual associations with four major dimensions of national culture" (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011, p. 11).

Before Hofstede's work on cultural characteristics, many researchers treated culture as a single variable, meaning they treated each culture as one concept instead of describing each culture in various ways so they can be compared in a more in-depth way (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). However, Hofstede's dimensions are not limited to cross-cultural research, but open to all international research (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

Hofstede (1983) collected 116,000 questionnaires completed in 50 countries and 3 regions at 2 different times. These questionnaires were “about the work-related value patterns of matched samples of industrial employees” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 46). Hofstede’s dimensions were supported on the national level by variables that connected across nations instead of individuals (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). “Hofstede’s cultural dimensions could be considered to be important elements affecting the process of education that seeks to meet the needs of a competitive economy” (Cheung & Chan, 2010, p. 533).

Problem

Research has been conducted to measure students’ self-assessed global competency (Chang et al., 2013; Greenfield, Davis, & Fedor, 2012; Holoviak, Verney, Winter, & Holoviak, 2011; Moriba, Edwards, Robinson, Cartmell, & Henneberry, 2012; Rice et al., 2014; Smith, Smith, Robbins, Eash, & Walker, 2013). However, a gap in research lies with understanding students’ level of cultural knowledge after their participation in short-term study abroad programs. Further research is needed to measure if and how short-term agricultural study abroad programs are effective in increasing students’ global competence, especially in areas of comparing cultures and identifying cultural dimensions.

These skills and competencies can be measured in numerous ways, such as questionnaires, reflective journals, pretest-posttests, and *focus groups*. However, “Focus groups not only give us access to certain kinds of qualitative phenomena that are poorly studied with other methods, but also represent an important tool for breaking down methodological barriers (Morgan & Spanish, 1984, p. 254).” Few studies have used the

focus group approach when researching short-term study abroad programs and global competencies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if short-term study abroad programs in a college of agriculture help agricultural communications students identify and compare the characteristics, according to Hofstede's four dimensions of culture, of the culture where they studied and their native culture.

Research Issues

The following research issues were developed to guide this study in its entirety:

1. Determine agricultural communications students' motivation to participate in a short-term study abroad program.
2. Describe agricultural communications students' ability to connect differences in their native culture to other cultures.
3. Determine agricultural communications students' global competence based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions after short-term study abroad experiences in the Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Thailand.

Limitations of the Proposed Research

The sample did not include study-abroad programs longer than two weeks or outside the college of agriculture. The only respondents were female agricultural communications students. All study abroad programs with an enrolled agricultural communications student were represented except one.

Key Terms

Artifacts: Journals, social media posts, or blog posts collected from focus group participants to aid in data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)

Cultural Dimensions: Relating to the Hofstede's four dimensions of culture, power distance index, uncertainty avoidance index, masculinity versus femininity, and collectivism versus individualism (Hofstede, 1983)

Focus Group: qualitative research method that used open-ended, follow-up, and probing questions to scratch below the surface of participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors to understand motivations, feelings and reactions (Poindexter & McCombs, 2000, p.240)

Global Competency: How well an individual learns a new environment in a new culture, how flexible one is in the situations presented, and their reflection on that particular culture after the experience (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006)

Short-term Study Abroad Program: Any study abroad program a student is engaged in for eight weeks or less (Institute of International Education, 2016). For this study, all short-term study abroad programs were two weeks or less.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“America’s future depends upon our ability to develop a citizen base that is globally competent” (American Council on Education, 1998). Global competency, as defined for this study, is how well you learn a new environment in a new culture, how flexible you are in the situations presented, and your reflection on that particular culture after your experience (Hunter et al., 2006).

More people need to understand the structures of other cultures and how citizens in those cultures think to truly know how their actions impact different cultures, especially in the agricultural sector (American Council on Education, 1998). All College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources majors at Oklahoma State University require students to satisfy an international dimension credit to graduate (Oklahoma State University, 2017). For students to gain the most global competency, educators must know the most efficient way for students to attain this knowledge (Zhao, 2010).

As global competency includes a vast amount of knowledge and skills, this study will explore one brick of the global competency wall. This study focused on understanding agricultural communications students’ global competence levels based on

Hofstede's four dimensions of culture. This literature review analyzed Hofstede's four dimensions of cultural differences as a framework for this study and uses literature to show how international experiences influence students and impact their global competency.

Global Competency

Though not one solid definition of global competence has been agreed upon, many scholars have researched and found their own definitions when relating to students' global mindedness and ability to interpret cultural differences (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Hunter et al., 2006; Schejbal & Irvine, 2009; Willard, 2009). Ron Moffatt, director of the San Diego State University International Student Center, stated, "A global-ready graduate is a person with a grasp of global systems, global issues, the dynamics of how things are interrelated and interconnected in the world, and how society best address global issues" (Williard, 2009, p. 1). Darla K. Deardorff, director of Duke University's International Education Administrators Association, said global competency is when students have "skills to listen, observe and evaluate, analyze, interpret, and relate" to another culture (Williard, 2009, p. 1). Carol Conway, director of the Southern Global Strategies Council, described global competency as

the ability to be fluent in at least one other language, such as Spanish or Mandarin; fluency with e-commerce and the Internet; a well-versed knowledge of geography; and, maybe most important, some knowledge of the political and cultural history of one or two countries or regions outside of Western Europe. (Willard, 2009, p. 1)

All these definitions explain a part of global competency, but the essence of it has yet to have a standard definition (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Hunter et al., 2006; Schejbal & Irvine, 2009; Willard, 2009). Global competence is referred to in many different terms like multiculturalism, communicative competence, cross-cultural awareness, cultural competence, intercultural competence, and many more (Fantini, 2009). However, it is important to define what global competency means because of the increasing priority of intercultural and global competency research and the role of these competencies in America's future because of the rising diversity rate in our society (Deardorff, 2011).

Because of the global competence span, each aspect can be grown and tailored to specify a particular section of global competence depending on the context of research (Deardorff, 2011). A large part of being global competent is recognizing how another culture receives messages, what they hold valuable, and being aware of the differences between one's culture and another (Deardoff, 2006). Global competent students need to learn how to understand values, beliefs, ideas and worldviews of our multicultural world through listening and observing while using their critical and comparative thinking skills to incorporate their newfound knowledge into their own culture (Schejbal & Irvine, 2009; Deardoff, 2006).

Benefits of Global Competence

It is vital for students graduating in agricultural fields to know more about agricultural systems around the world (Moore, Ingram & Dhital, 1996; Moriba et al., 2012). Students need to recognize how all societies, politics, history, economics, and environments are connected (Hunter et al., 2006). International courses increase students'

awareness of how international issues and globalization influence the agricultural industry as a whole (Moriba, et al., 2012).

Global competency helps students compete globally, communicate across cultures, and participate in social and business settings in other cultures (Hunter et al., 2006). Hunter et al. (2006) found young adults can learn this by attending a higher education institute, but also in more informal ways. Various forms of international experiences significantly influence global competency (Crowne, 2015). Students who study abroad, even short term, have a personally perceived increase in global competency (Rice et al., 2014; Lumkes, Hallett, & Vallade, 2012). This helps students gain knowledge of international sensitivities and global awareness (Chang et al., 2013).

Smith, Smith, Robbins, Eash, and Walker (2013) found students perceived themselves to have greater knowledge of global issues, cultural awareness, and cross-cultural communication skills after their international experience. Students gained knowledge about the country and culture they studied, but they felt the most beneficial part of their study abroad was the gain in global competence (Potts, 2015).

Displaying Global Competence

In addition to attaining certain skillsets through international experiences, students should be able to demonstrate these skills in their everyday lives (Bennett, 1986). As Zhu (2014) stated,

the practical nature of the field of intercultural communication makes it imperative for intercultural scholars, consultants, educators, and students to ground academic discussions in the context of practical concerns, to balance

conceptual complexity and applicability in real-life and to embrace a problem-solving approach in dealing with real-life issues. (p. 197)

In 2013, the British Council put together a Culture at Work Report, which showed how more than 350 global employers define and evaluate intercultural skills. These employers belong to nine different countries: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Jordan, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Employers said they measure global competence in their potential employees by their “ability to understand different cultural contexts and viewpoints” (p. 3), respect for others, and how open they are to new ideas and viewpoints (British Council, 2013). Employees demonstrate these skills specifically by their ability to “work within diverse teams,” “bring in new clients,” and represent the brand of their company well (British Council, 2013, p. 3).

The British Council (2013) also found while it is unusual for companies to actually screen for intercultural skills, employers do “actively observe candidate [behavior] in order to identify attributes closely associated with these skills (British Council, 2013, p. 3).” Potential employees further demonstrate global competence skills by showing “strong communication skills,” “speaking a foreign language,” and “showing cultural sensitivity” (British Council, 2013, p. 3).

Williams (2005) found intercultural communication skills are demonstrated by flexibility and open-mindedness, perceptual acuity, resourcefulness and ability to deal with stress, and personal autonomy. People who are flexible and have an open mind “enjoy interacting with people who think differently from themselves and spending time in new and unfamiliar surroundings” (Williams, 2005, p. 360). Perceptual acuity

indicates how sensitive or not sensitive an individual is to verbal and nonverbal messages and their relationships with others in general (Williams, 2005). Williams (2005) described resourcefulness and ability to deal with stress as a person who “is resourceful and able to deal with stressful feelings in a constructive way and can cope with ambiguity and bounce back from emotional setbacks” (Williams, 2005, p. 360). Williams (2005) went on to say:

Personal autonomy refers to individuals’ abilities to maintain their personal beliefs and values when challenged in a new culture. People with personal autonomy have a strong sense of self and do not need to rely on cues from their surroundings to make decisions or form their identity. (p. 361)

Benefits of International Experiences in the Communications Field

Although there is a lack of research in the agricultural communications discipline related to students’ international experiences, research has been conducted on how international experiences affect communications students. There is a need for agricultural communicators who are more globally competent than those with only general communications degrees (Moore et al., 1996). Moore et al., (1996) found students in an agricultural college have greater knowledge of international agriculture than those who were in communications. Thus, students hired by agricultural companies to fulfill communications positions need more international agricultural education than those in communications and arts colleges are receiving (Moore et al., 1996).

Employees who possess global competency skills are more apt to move up faster in their career (Harder et al., 2015). Students who have study abroad experiences are able to adapt easier and be more flexible in any given situation, which is why employers take

into account these experiences (Harder et al., 2015). Employers may not specifically include international experiences on recruitment criteria, but the maturity and communication skills attained through study abroad programs help employees achieve the high standard of performance expected by employers (Potts, 2015). Students' leadership and interpersonal communication skills, which can be increased through international experiences, make them more marketable to potential employers (Harder et al., 2015).

Being able to work with a diverse group of people is very important in the work place (Potts, 2015). These enhanced intercultural communication skills help their capability to engage with others, which students can transfer to their professional environment (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, McMillen, 2009). Marketing students can use these skills specifically to be a more competent employee in a multicultural marketplace (Clarke et al., 2009). International experiences have shown growth in students' soft skills, such as relationship building, written, and verbal skills, which makes them more marketable to potential employees (Harder et al., 2015).

Cheung and Chan (2010) discussed the importance of educating students to be more globally competent so they will be more competitive employees in the long run. Employers see students who have the experience of interacting with natives on their study abroad programs as more vendible (Crowne, 2013). Also, the increased number of international experiences someone has, the more impressive they are to potential employers, because this can cause a greater openness to diversity (Clarke et al., 2009; Crowne, 2013).

When choosing between a potential employee who has an international experience, and one who doesn't, employers will normally choose the one who has one (Harder et al., 2015). Study abroad experiences, as well as learning a second language, help job-seeking students be wanted more by transnational corporations, international aid and development organizations, and potential placement abroad because of the implied skills on their résumé (Hunter et al., 2006; Chang et al., 2013). "As it becomes increasingly important for marketing students to maintain a global perspective, the [study abroad program] experience may cultivate a greater overall student appreciation of the international issues that affect international markets" (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 177).

Students perceive certain personal and professional rewards through international experiences (Chang et al., 2013). Potts (2015) found students who study abroad had higher levels of motivation and passion for their career. These participants also said the maturity and communication skills learned during their study abroad experience helped them attain their first job (Potts, 2015). "Improved communication and interpersonal skills and increased maturity of graduates who studied internationally may lead them to perform better in a job interview" (Potts, 2015, p. 450).

Many take the opportunity to study abroad and learn a second language with the goal to reach a higher playing field in their career than those who have not had these experiences (Hunter et al., 2006). Being able to study abroad gives students the passion to learn a foreign language and grow their communication skills, such as cross-cultural understanding and international awareness (Schejbal & Irvine, 2009). In Smith et al.'s (2013) research, students reported they were able to handle unfamiliar situations better, appreciate peoples' differences, and communicate better with people from other cultures

after their international experience. Also, students who participate in study abroad programs have higher GPAs, which help them become more competitive when pursuing a career (Holoviak, Verney, Winter, & Holoviak, 2011).

Incorporating International Curriculum

These perceived benefits of global competence are gained through international experiences. The number and type of international experiences impact how a student's life is enriched (Crowne, 2015). Traditionally in agricultural courses, international class credit is gained through three different methods: in-class traditional courses, online international classes, and study abroad programs (Moriba & Edwards, 2013).

A study of agricultural students at two land-grant institutions resulted showed participants in a 10-day study abroad course to South Korea increased their global competence (Rice et al., 2014). When comparing students' global competency gains through a short-term study abroad course versus a face-to-face, traditional class, Greenfield et al. (2012) found no statistical difference in baseline levels of global competency. However, the researchers did find students who studied abroad gained more in self-rated skills. Greenfield et al. (2012) found students who participated in both short-term study abroad programs and traditional, on-campus classes gain in global competencies following their experiences.

Students studying different cultures in on-campus classes report increased understanding, awareness, knowledge of global issues, and are inspired to pursue a career in an international field (Greenfield et al., 2012). A challenge of traditional courses is some educators don't know how to effectively implement globalization in their teaching (Zhao, 2010). Online learning is done strictly through educational technology between the

student and professor (Moriba & Edwards, 2013). Wright (2008) found students in online classes may have better subject knowledge prior to the course, but when compared to in-class students, their growth in the subject matter was significantly lower.

In Morgan and King's (2013) study, students perceived their global competency increased from their in-class course. However, research shows students do not retain a significant amount of global knowledge through the traditional or online course methods (Moriba & Edwards, 2013). A census study of agricultural students found no statistical differences in attitude toward the learning environment between students satisfying their international dimension credit through an online class or traditional, face-to-face class (Moriba & Edwards, 2013). Moriba and Edwards (2013) also found no significant difference in international awareness and general global competency of these two groups.

Short-term Study Abroad Programs

Studying abroad is one of the most popular delivery methods for satisfying an international dimension requirement (Stebbleton et al., 2013). Satisfying an international dimension credit through a hands-on study abroad program helps students develop language skills and identify social and cultural factors (Rice et al., 2014). Studying abroad increases students' cultural sensitivity and confidence in working with a more diverse group of people (Greenfield et al., 2012).

Researchers showed students claim international experiences enriched their lives by providing the opportunity to live in another country or culture (Chang et al., 2013). People who have travelled outside the United States have different perspectives because of the diversity of culture they have experienced (Harder et al., 2015). Short-term study abroad programs “are worthwhile educational endeavors that have significant self-

perceived impacts on students' intellectual and personal lives" (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004).

Rice et al. (2014) found students who participated in these programs showed an increase in their awareness of agriculture, culture, and how that country's history impacts their culture (Rice et al., 2014). Studying abroad gives students more appreciation for different cultures, a more open mind toward new perspectives, and self-improvement (Rice et al., 2014). However, finances limit many students from having the opportunity for these experiences (Chang et al., 2013). Other factors prohibiting students' participation are housing concerns and language barriers (Rice et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2013).

Multiple positive outcomes have been found for students who satisfy their international dimension credit through study abroad programs. A greater increase in intercultural communication skills, knowledge of different countries, and greater cross-cultural skills were found in students who study abroad (Clarke et al., 2009; Parsons, 2010; Williams, 2005). These students came back with "attitudes, perceptions and behaviors that were more internationally aware, open, curious, and cooperative," indicating students distinguished the differences of other cultures versus their own (Parsons, 2010, p. 328). Global mindedness of students also increased after their study abroad program, which led to them being more open to diversity (Clarke et al., 2009). Students who embrace the study abroad experience find themselves more competent, amicable, sensitive of other cultures, and open to intercultural relationships (Clarke et al., 2009).

Despite these benefits, most students do not participate in study abroad programs, or only participate once (Institute of International Education, 2011; Moore, Williams, Boyd, & Elbert, 2011). Of the students who do participate, most are female (Chang et al., 2013; Institute of International Education, 2011). Also, according to Change et al. (2013) and the Institute of International Education (2011), the majority of students participating in a short-term study abroad program are undergraduates.

Original Framework

Hofstede's (1983) four dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity (Hofstede, 1983). They are used to explain a culture's structure, motivations of people within a particular culture, and the issues people and organizations face in that culture (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) based his study on 40 countries, with 50 participants from each country. The study utilized a questionnaire, with each question having a certain score composed of three different components. Following this step, Hofstede (1983) grouped questionnaire items according to ecological dimensions, which were based on the theoretical significance and how they corresponded statistically. Each country was assigned an index in each of the four dimensions. Hofstede (1983) derived these dimensions for cultures, not the individuals within those cultures. A vital strength to Hofstede's four dimensions is its adaptability to present times (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

The power distance index is how people perceive people in a higher social status make decisions solely on their own and people who are afraid to disagree with these in higher ranks (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) also included the power index to differentiate people who either prefer superiors to make decisions with or without

consulting subordinates. The power index tells how distant superiors make themselves from their subordinates (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) found people were more dependent in cultures with a great power distance. On the other side of the spectrum, cultures with a low power distance prefer superiors to consult with subordinates before making decisions and lean more toward independence (Hofstede, 1983). In a higher power distance culture, human inequality is a problem (Hofstede, 1983). He also found that in these types of cultures it is difficult for people to move out of the social class they were born into.

The uncertainty avoidance index was made from factors on the questionnaire that dealt with how often and the ways people avoid uncertainty in their lives (Hofstede, 1983). These factors included asking participants about their nervousness at work, if they felt comfortable breaking the rules, and the timeline of their job at that particular company. People who experience a greater uncertainty avoidance index have higher anxiety levels (Hofstede, 1983). Higher anxiety levels show people in a certain culture are more afraid of the consequences of taking risks or breaking rules than those in a lower uncertainty avoidance culture (Hofstede, 1983). A problem with the uncertainty avoidance index is the inevitability of death, and the uncertainty of how it will occur (Hofstede, 1983).

To rate a culture on their individualism or collectivism scale, Hofstede (1983) used scores, ranging from *utmost importance* to *very little or no importance*, on 14 questions relating to the worth they place on their desirable living situation, salary, cooperation, training, benefits, recognition, physical conditions, freedom, employment security, advancement, relationship with their manager, use of skills, and personal time.

Participants were factored into a country's individualism versus collectivism and masculinity versus femininity score (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) found cultures with higher individualism scores put less value on training, skills, physical conditions, and benefits while putting more value on personal lives, freedom, and challenges. People in cultures with a more individual score treat people more as an individual than as part of a group (Hofstede, 1983). However, people on the collectivism index tend to treat people more as a group they are a part of (Hofstede, 1983). The problems with an individualist culture are people are more self-goal oriented than group-goal oriented (Hofstede, 1983).

The last dimension, masculinity versus femininity, shows how much importance a society puts on salary, advancement, and recognition (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede's (1983) research shows while men and women roles in the work force may differ, countries also can be labeled masculine or feminine by what values they emphasize. "Masculinity-femininity is about a stress on ego versus a stress on relationship with others, regardless of group ties" (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 146). Masculine cultures tend to be more direct and goal-oriented, while feminine cultures are modest and face-saving (Hofstede, 1983). The problem with masculinity in a culture is that women and men already have assumed roles in society, which can result in sexism (Hofstede, 1983).

Hofstede's (1983) goal when forming these four dimensions was to create a framework that could be used when developing hypotheses in international organizational studies. Hofstede's theory shows how cultures can be grouped in individual dimensions (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede's model is easy to understand, making it usable to predict certain outcomes of societies (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede's (1983) dimensions relate to fundamental problems of society, which each society should find its

own answer to. Right now, educating future generations to have more knowledge of globalization is the fundamental problem educator's should find a solution to (Zhao, 2010). Using Hofstede's theory as a conceptual framework aids in explaining how students perceive cultures by how they communicate with each other, and will set boundaries for students' perceptions of different cultures (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

Updated Framework

As the cultural dimensions continued to be studied, evidence showed the need for two additional cultural dimensions, long term versus short term orientation and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede, 2011; Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

The fifth dimension explains how much a culture ties to its past (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001). "The basic societal problem that the new dimension seemed to address was the focus of people's efforts: on the future or the present or the past" (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011, p. 13). Short term orientation societies prefer established ideas and behaviors, while long term orientation cultures encourage modern ideas and behaviors to prepare for the future (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001.). Societies high in this dimension view their best has already come and gone; the characteristics of the culture stay steady (Hofstede, 2011). Long term orientation societies strive to learn new ideas from other countries and take a relative approach to good and evil in situations (Hofstede, 2011).

Indulgence versus restraint measures how happy or positive people in the cultures are (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). Indulgent societies allow the people to make decisions based on how happy that decision will make them (Hofstede, 2011). People are in charge of their own lives and proclaim to be happy in an indulgent society (Hofstede, 2011). Restraint cultures enforce harsh social norms, resulting in fewer happy citizens

(Hofstede, 2011). These societies place a lower value on people's leisure and freedom of speech (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede (2011) shows restraint societies' citizens feel they are not in control of their own lives.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in the Czech Republic, New Zealand and Thailand

In this study, three short-term study abroad programs were represented: Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Thailand.

Power Distance Index

The Czech Republic has a high power distance score, resulting in a hierarchical society (Hofstede et al., 2010). Everyone has a place in society, but no one questions it (Hofstede et al., 2010). Hierarchy is seen as necessary; subordinates expect to be controlled rather than acting self-sufficiently (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001).

In contrast with the Czech Republic, New Zealand scores low in this dimension (Hofstede et al., 2010). With a low power distance index, hierarchy is established for convenience; instead of superiors relying only on their opinions, they ask for opinions of others (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001). Employees and managers consult with each other frequently and casually (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Thailand was found to have a high power distance score (Hofstede et al., 2010). In these societies, inequalities are accepted, and a strict pecking order is observed (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2010). Loyalty and respect are given to superiors with the expectation of protection and guidance (Hofstede et al., 2010). Paternalistic management occurs as a result, with attitudes toward leaders being formal (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

According to Hofstede (2010), the Czech Republic tries to avoid uncertainty at all cost. These countries prefer rigid rules and minimal change (Hofstede et al., 2010). In these cultures, people prefer to work over handouts, and modern ideas may not be accepted (Hofstede et al. 2010). “Safety or security is likely to prevail over other needs where uncertainty avoidance is strong” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 215).

However, New Zealand’s score of an intermediate 49 on the uncertainty avoidance index shows no preference (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Likewise, Thailand slightly shows an uncertainty avoidance preference for this dimension (Hofstede et al., 2010). These societies’ main priority is to control everything in order to minimize the unpredictable (Hofstede et al., 2010). Because of this, change does not come easy to the society (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Individualism versus Collectivism

The Czech Republic is an individualist society (Hofstede et al., 2010). This means “ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 92). In these countries, people have plenty of opportunity for personal time, and work challenges you so you “can get a personal sense of accomplishment” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 92).

Again, New Zealand is an individualist culture like the Czech Republic (Hofstede, et al., 2010). While at work, employees are expected to be self-starters, not relying on their boss’s direct order for everything, and show ingenuity (Hofstede et al., 2010). This results in promotions being based on past performance rather than politics (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Thailand’s score of 20 shows it is very collectivist (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Because people in collectivist societies depend on the *in-group*, citizens of Thailand value loyalty in exchange for safety (Hofstede et al., 2010). The group one is born into is the one they stay in (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Masculinity versus Femininity

According to Hofstede et al. (2010), the Czech Republic is categorized as a masculine country. In a masculine society people “live in order to work,” superiors are expected to make firm decisions, and justice is a priority (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 167). Competition, performance, and conflicts are settled by opposing each other instead of having a common goal (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001).

New Zealand is also a masculine country (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). In this society, gender roles are established (Hofstede et al., 2010). “Women shop for food, men for cars” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 164). Also, in these countries “there is a feeling that conflicts should be resolved by a good fight: ‘Let the best man win’” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 166).

However, in contrast to the other two countries studied, Thailand is considered a feminine country (Hofstede et al., 2010). They rank lowest among the Asian countries in masculinity (Hofstede et al., 2010). Instead of conflict being solved by fighting, people of Thailand try to avoid violence (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Understanding the idea of globalization and world history is pertinent to becoming globally competent (Hunter et al., 2006). Hunter et al. (2006) defines global competency as striving to understand another culture’s norms and expectations then using this information to communicate, interact and work effectively outside one’s comfort zone. Rice et al. (2014) stated students should only really be considered globally

competent if they interacted with natives from the culture they visited. Students should reflect on their experience and work to integrate their new outlooks into their everyday lives (Rice et. al., 2014).

International studies are important to expand the database available to researchers, but also so people can be more aware of the perspectives and ways of life different than their own (Hofstede, 1983). One of the American Association for Agricultural Education's (2016) research priority areas is a sufficient, scientific, and professional workforce that addresses the challenges of the 21st century. "Graduates need to be exposed to and experience international perspectives to fully understand the connected nature of agriculture and be better prepared to address critical demands placed upon our agricultural systems" (AAAE, 2016, p. 30).

Summary

By studying short-term study abroad programs, characteristics of effective international dimension courses can be attained. Cheung and Chan (2010) found Hofstede's cultural dimensions predict and explain how universities transfer global knowledge to students. Although the majority of studies have used Hofstede's work with a survey method, this study will dig deeper into how students gain global competency on short-term study abroad programs based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions through a focus group. Students have self-assessed their global competency, but what they notice about the culture around them has not been studied. Using this framework and research, this study will fill the gap of how students identify and compare characteristics of a culture so they are more globally competent.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research methods used for this study to fulfill the purpose and research objectives. In this chapter are seven sections: Introduction, which includes the purpose and research objectives of the study and focus group dynamics; Setting and Participants; Procedures and Analysis; Ethical Considerations, which includes reflexivity of the study; Quality of Qualitative Research; and Institutional Review Board.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if and how agricultural communications students who participate in short-term study abroad programs identify and compare characteristics of the culture they studied and their native culture. This research used Hofstede's four dimensions of culture to identify cultural characteristics. While there are currently six cultural dimensions, the original framework only contained four. I chose to focus on the original framework for this study. The results of this study can be used to improve information and activities in short-term study abroad programs for students to gain the maximum amount of global competence.

Four research issues guided this study:

1. Determine agricultural communications students' motivation to participate in a short-term study abroad program.
2. Describe agricultural communications students' ability connect differences in their native culture to other cultures studied.
3. Determine agricultural communications students' global competence based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions after short-term study abroad experiences in the Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Thailand.

Although Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions have been used in quantitative research many times, a qualitative design was selected to ascertain how students identify the cultural dimensions after participating in short-term study abroad programs. This method allowed content analysis through in-depth explanations in a focus group. This study focused only on the four major dimensions because many cultural characteristics, norms, beliefs, behaviors, and values can be explained through the four major dimensions of culture (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

I used a focus group to determine how participants' global competency was affected based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The focus groups also helped explain how students compared the cultures they studied with American culture.

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) there are many advantages to using focus groups rather than other forms of research. Because focus groups allow the researcher to directly interact with participants, more in-depth data can be collected by clarification through responses, follow up questions, and pointed questions (Stewart &

Shamdasani, 2015). Further information can be had through observation of nonverbal responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

The open response format of a focus group provides an opportunity to obtain large and rich amounts of data in the respondents' own words. The researcher can obtain deeper levels of meaning, make important connections, and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning. (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 45)

By being able to interact with each other, respondents may reveal important facts or data that might not have been exposed through individual interviews, surveys, or other research methods (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

There are many elements to make a focus group successful, but each focus group is specialized to its own purpose (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). "Group outcomes are the consequences of individual actions" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 18).

Conducting of useful focus group research is ensuring enough similarity among group members to facilitate the identification of enough common ground for a meaningful conversation while ensuring there is enough diversity to reveal differing perspectives and ideas and generate some creative tension. In focus group interviewing, the key to success is making the group dynamic work in service of the goals and objectives of the research. (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 19)

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2015), for the focus group to have the best result it is better for participants to know each other or be familiar with each other so they are more comfortable openly sharing their ideas, views, and opinions. For the focus group to be effective, 8 to 12 individuals should participate (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). A

focus group is more apt to have various views and ideas if a diversity of age, physical characteristics, and personality are present (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) showed participants' experiences and attitudes greatly affect group cohesiveness.

Another dynamic of a focus group is the environmental factors (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). "The seating arrangement and general proximity of participants can affect the ability of participants to talk freely and openly about issues of interest" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 30). The physical environment should "serve to focus the attention of the group on the topic of discussion" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 31).

Thick Description

To have a transferable qualitative study, an ample amount of information about the background of a study and procedures of a study needs to be given (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way this happens is through a "thick description" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125; Tracy, 2010). If the description is sufficient, the audience will be able to draw their own conclusions from the study by sensing elements shown to them rather than told to them (Tracy, 2010). This is done through "in-depth illustration that explicated culturally situated meanings and abundant concrete detail" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843).

Setting

Two focus group sessions were conducted with eight total participants. The participants met in 439 Agricultural Hall for the first focus group and 450 Agricultural Hall for the second focus group. During the first focus group, four 60"x24"x30" tables were pushed together in the center of the room, conference style, and in the second focus

group two tables were arranged the same way. The students sat around the tables facing each other. There was no structured seating arrangement; participants sat wherever they chose. With these spatial arrangements, chances of an individual or group of students to dominate the conversation and others to be left out are decreased (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). The first focus group met August 30, 2016, at 5:30 p.m. [This was during the first month of school after the summer all students took part in their study abroad program.] The second focus group met March 21, 2017, at 12 p.m. because this was the only other time participants were available. In the middle of the table were two recording devices, an iPhone and a professional recorder. At the end of the table, a laptop was set up to record visually and audibly.

Participants

This study included agricultural communications students satisfying their international dimension credit through a short-term study abroad program in Oklahoma State University's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Participants were agricultural communications majors at Oklahoma State University, ranging from freshman to graduate students in the field of study. Respondents may have had more than one international experience. The sample contained all females. Participants were 18 years of age or older.

To participate in this study, students had to have participated in a study abroad program in the Summer 2016 semester. The program could be no longer than two weeks. Students did not know they would have the opportunity to participate in the study before going on the trip.

Eight students volunteered to participate in the study. One student's hometown was Howard, South Dakota, a rural town with less than 1,000 people. One student was from Wichita Falls, Texas, a population of almost 105,000. Two students were from very rural Oklahoma, towns with 1,000 people or less. Three students' hometowns in Oklahoma had a population of 2,000-3,000, and one student is from Guthrie, Oklahoma, a town with almost 11,000 people.

Participants studied two programs from the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership, the Czech Republic and Thailand, and one program from the Department of Animal Science, a beef tour of New Zealand. One student who participated in the beef tour experience had been to Australia and New Zealand during a previous short-term study abroad program, with the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership.

Each experience had a different structure. In the Czech Republic, students stayed at a university in Prague for the duration of the program. They had daily excursions either to learn about the Czech Republic's agricultural industry, history, or economy. Some days consisted of lectures by university professors on different Czech Republic topics. In New Zealand, students studied the beef industry from the North Island to the South Island. They experienced a New Zealand beef expo and toured different bull facilities. Also, they toured a kiwi farm. During this experience, students stayed in groups of three or four with a native New Zealand family for a weekend. In Thailand, students moved around every three to four days. They experienced the inner city in Bangkok, very rural villages, and the beach. During this program, students experienced the educational

systems and agricultural industry. Other parts of their itinerary included cultural encounters.

Students who volunteered for this study participated in an approximately one-hour semi-structured focus group. At the end of the focus group, students were asked to provide links to social media and final papers turned in for a course. *Artifacts* were used to support and triangulate the findings for this study.

Data Collection

While most research based on Hofstede's four dimensions has employed a survey research method, this study explained how students' identified and compared cultural characteristics according to Hofstede's four dimensions of culture through a semi-structured focus group. The goal of the study was to gain deeper knowledge about this subject than a survey would allow (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Poindexter & McCombs, 2000). According to Poindexter and McCombs (2000), "...a focus group is a qualitative research method that uses open-ended, follow-up, and probing questions to scratch below the surface of a small group of participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors to understand motivations, feelings, and reactions" (p. 240). The focus group used questions solidified by the researcher and committee, with the freedom to ask follow-up questions during the interview (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

Questions were formed from Hofstede's (1983) dimension descriptions and indexes. A committee of agricultural communications and agricultural education faculty, who have led short-term study abroad experiences, and I developed the focus group questions. More general questions were asked early in the focus group while more specific questions were later in the session to establish a comfortable environment and

initially put participants at ease (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). All participants convened in the focus group together for approximately one hour. The focus group was video recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Initially, a consent form was distributed and signed by participants. When it was signed, I collected the forms and made sure all were appropriate. The focus group was conducted with a funnel approach, asking general questions first and more specific questions pertaining to the research objectives afterward (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Six open-ended primary questions were asked to get general information regarding the study abroad programs (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). After each question, students discussed their opinions and recalled stories pertaining to the subject of the question. I moved on to different questions when the discussion ended. Follow up questions were asked when needed. The six general questions were:

1. What was your overall impression of your experience?
2. Why did you decide to study abroad?
3. Describe the culture you studied.
4. What were your biggest challenges while studying abroad?
5. What were major differences in the culture studied and America?
6. Would you participate in this experience again? Why or why not?

After the conclusion of the demographic questions, more specific, secondary questions pertaining to Hofstede's cultural dimensions were asked to participants to clarify their observation of the culture studied (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Again, I only moved on to the next question after the discussion concluded. Follow up questions were asked when needed. The secondary questions were as follows:

1. What kind of government does the country have?
2. What was the crime rate? Did you feel secure when out and about?
3. Describe physical characteristics of natives.
4. Describe the atmosphere.
5. What did the culture place value on? (family, social life, work, etc.)
6. How were you perceived as tourists? Did they group you into Americans or treat you as individuals?
7. What roles did men and women play in society?
8. How did advertising appeal to the public?

Data Analysis

I transcribed each focus group session into a Microsoft Word document. Specific individuals were not identified in analyzed data but were assigned a number. To identify popular themes, NVivo software was used to code the transcription. In vivo coding and concept coding were both used in the first cycle of coding, with help from NVivo software. In vivo coding was used to voice participants' own words about their study abroad program (Saldaña, 2013). This is an inquiry-based holistic approach (Saldaña, 2013). Concept coding was used in conjunction with in vivo coding to help identify the more general themes of the participants' observations. The second cycle of coding was focused coding. I conducted focused coding through the lens of Hofstede's four dimensions to identify characteristics of each dimension. This helped major categories and themes arise in the data in the later stages of analysis (Saldaña, 2013). After second round coding, codes were further compressed into categories. Out of the categories, seven themes arose.

Trustworthiness

Ross and Rallis (2003) identified two questions to be considered when it comes to the trustworthiness of qualitative research. First, is the study satisfactory and competent? Second, is the study ethically conducted? Acceptable standards cannot be met if a study is done unethically (Ross & Rallis, 2003). Four essential components for qualitative research to achieve trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility was established by summative member checks by participants. In the summative member checks, I emailed each participant the transcription of the focus group for them to approve.

Transferability is the second element of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick, rich descriptions of focus group questions and responses were given. The descriptions of methods used to collect and analyze data were given in an in-depth manner. Findings were presented in detail to allow for understanding of the research for future studies.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified dependability and confirmability as the last two components of trustworthiness. Both were established by having another researcher check all transcripts against recordings of focus group sessions. I kept all raw data, including video and recording of the focus group sessions, coding and theme formation, and focus group reflection notes throughout the study to also ascertain confirmability.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the researcher being conscious of the biases brought into the study based on their values and experiences (Creswell, 2013). This is based on two parts: my

knowledge and experience with the event being studied and how that phenomenon molded my view of the encounter (Creswell, 2013).

I come from a small town in southeastern Oklahoma. During my undergraduate program at Oklahoma State University, I was introduced to study abroad programs. The opportunity to be immersed in another culture and learn about agricultural practices around the world intrigued me. When I learned one of my professors in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership was leading a two-week study abroad program to Australia and New Zealand, somewhere I'd always wanted to go, I took the opportunity. This program taught us about the agricultural industry in eastern Australia and New Zealand's North Island. During the New Zealand part of the trip, we were able to participate in homestays where groups of three or four students stayed with citizens of the country for the weekend. These people were involved in some aspect of the agriculture industry.

My first study abroad experiences sparked a passion in me. The following summer, I chose to study abroad in the Czech Republic with another faculty member of the same department. During this program, we stayed at an agricultural university in Prague, Czech Republic for the duration of the experience. Each day we either had lectures from university faculty on the Czech Republic or left for excursions exploring agriculture or the history of the Czech Republic.

Participants of the Czech Republic study abroad program were involved in the study. There were also participants who studied in New Zealand; however, the New Zealand short-term study abroad program was a beef tour through the Animal Science Department. I reviewed and read studies in this field of exploration, becoming aware of

the phases of short-term study abroad programs, particularly in agriculture. I was aware that being conscious of and avoiding existing bias is essential to the success of this study. I wrote reflective memos behind observations for data collection during the analytical process to explain codes, categories, and themes.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant was notified that participating in the study was voluntary. They were asked to sign up for the focus group on a first-come, first-serve basis. Each were asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study and be videotaped during the focus group. The consent forms described the purpose and procedures of the study, and it informed the participants that the focus group session would be videotaped. The consent form also stated findings were intended to publish.

There were no known risks with this study. Perceived benefits for the participants included gaining in-depth knowledge of how students distinguish cultural characteristics and identify their native culture's international role. Understanding this will help short-term study abroad facilitators know the benefits of their program while also learning how to effectively teach their students how to identify cultural dimensions.

Quality of Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research has a long-standing history of contributing to an understanding of social structures, behaviours and cultures” (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013, p. 29). “Qualitative research can reveal the many factors that shape a programme or service, which may not be accessible through quantitative methods (e.g. history, organization and culture, personalities, political dynamics, social interaction and relationships between stake holder)” (Ritchie, et al., 2013, p. 33). Qualitative methods

can be used to explain many aspects of a program, such as describing what a program consists of and the wanted outcomes from a particular program; identifying aspects of the program that provide a successful or unsuccessful delivery; and describing the effects of a program on its participants (Ritchie et al., 2013). “Qualitative research is a contact sport, requiring some degree of immersion into individuals’ lives” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 13). Many studies have used this qualitative approach to identify students’ global competencies through international experiences (Lemmons, 2015; Riley, Bustamante, & Edmonson, 2015; Northfell & Edgar, 2014; Rahikainen & Hakkarainen, 2013; Czerwionka, Artamonoya & Barbaosa, 2015); however, they have not used a focus group combining participants from different study abroad programs or researched students’ perceptions of cultural characteristics through Hofstede’s four dimensions.

Focus groups are among the most popular used research methods for social sciences (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Conducting a focus group rather than individual interviews allowed me to see how or why participants accept or reject others’ ideas, which can stimulate more conversation between subjects and result in deeper information than an individual would provide (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). “Focus groups have become an important research tool for applied social scientists who work in program evaluation, marketing, public policy, education, the health sciences, advertising, and communications” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 39).

Institutional Review Board

All research studies requiring participation of human subjects are required to be reviewed and approved by Oklahoma State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the study can be carried out. The IRB application provided the purpose and

problem proposed in this study, a description of the subjects, a detailed description of the research methods and procedures, and benefits of this study. Also given in the application to be approved were the participant consent form, initial invitation email to population, focus group scrip, and preliminary focus group questions to be used in the identified focus group session. This study, AG-16-26, was approved by IRB on August 25, 2016.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter describes the findings from data collected from agricultural communications students' observations and perceptions of the culture they studied in their study abroad program. During the first round of coding, using in vivo and concept coding, 215 codes were found. Those codes were then condensed to 32 focused codes. Fifteen categories emerged from the codes. Seven final themes arose: how the program affected students, masculinity versus femininity, individualism versus collectivism, power distance index, uncertainty avoidance, students' motivations to study abroad, and cultural comparisons.

Findings for the First Research Issue

The first goal of this study was to identify factors that motivated agricultural students to participate in short-term study abroad programs. The price of the program, department offering the program, experience, timing of the program, size of the program, other people participating in the program, and the learning objectives of the program all influenced their interest in the program. Students said they always wanted to go and some of the places were on their bucket list.

Student 6 said, “The opportunity was so great it would have been dumb not to do it. A lot of people I knew were going so that made the process more comfortable.

Travelling is something I’ve always wanted to do” (p. 12). Student 7 said:

I’ve always wanted to go out of the country, and I never had the option to...Whenever I found out about the New Zealand one I went to, I really jumped on it because I’m so involved in the beef industry I [wanted] to go to another country and see theirs. (p. 12)

Student 8 also said her motivation for participating in a study abroad program was because she “always wanted to travel” (p. 8). Student 2 said her first study abroad experience “sparked an interest” (p. 2).

Students liked the smaller, more intimate groups rather than larger groups of people when participating in the short-term programs. Student 3 said, “I also liked how our trip was that we only had eight students, and if it was a larger group I don't know if I would have been as excited to go” (p. 2). With smaller groups, plans could change easier. Student 4 gave this example:

While we were on our trip, if we were all exhausted or at least half of the group was exhausted, and we didn’t want to go do one certain thing that night we would just vote as a group and pretty much discuss it right then and there. We changed a few things we did just because there was a small group of us, and we could all easily decide on that, and there wasn’t really any controversy with it. (p. 6)

Student 5 said, “I think if I was with a small group again I would go,” when discussing if students would participate in the program again (p. 5). Student 2 said, “I went with pretty big groups both times, and I wish I would have been in a smaller

group...I feel like in the smaller group I would get more relationships that I would even bring home” (p. 5-6).

Participants of the focus group acknowledged a big part of their decision was based on the fact this would be their last opportunity for a study abroad experience because of graduation and internships. Student 5 said, “I’ve always wanted to go on one. This was kind of my last opportunity to go on one” (p. 2). Student 4 agreed saying, “I kind of realized it might be my last opportunity...to have that kind of experience” (p. 2). The fact the Czech Republic and Thailand programs were offered through the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership influenced students to go because it was their department. Student 3 said, “One of the main reasons I chose to go to Thailand was because [my professor] was leading the trip” (p. 2). Student 5 agreed, “Also, [I decided to go] because it was from the AGCM department” (p. 2). Student 1 said, “I chose mine because it was, again, through the AGCM department” (p.2).

When asked if they would participate in a second study abroad program, Student 1 said:

Absolutely...When you travel more, I think you learn something. Even if it’s going back to the same place, you learn more every time you go. Every time you get exposure to something new, it makes you a more well rounded person. (p. 5)

Student 2 said, “I would definitely go again” (p. 5). She said, “I want to go everywhere now. I don’t have the budget, but I want to” (p. 2). Student 8 said, “If I had the means to, I would” (p. 18). Student 7 also mentioned money was a factor in not being able to study abroad a second time. She said, “I wanted to go to [the Czech Republic] this coming

summer, but because of money and stuff I couldn't do it, but I would absolutely love to" (p. 18).

Findings for the Second Research Issue

The second goal of this study was to observe if and how agricultural communications students perceive differences between American culture and the culture they studied. Some of this data was used to support Hofstede's four dimensions; however, students compared and contrasted American culture with these quotes as well.

Similar to American Culture

The main similarities to American culture students observed was New Zealand's food and Thailand's advertising tactics. They used a lot of visual media such as large graphics and pictures. Student 4 said, "I would say theirs is a lot similar to ours...in Bangkok for sure. They used the sides of buildings to do a lot of advertising, but it wasn't anything so different than here that it stood out to me" (p. 11).

Another similarity students connected was the men and women roles in the Czech Republic. Women carried out housework chores while men did more physical labor. Student 1 said, "I think [the] Czech Republic was pretty similar to here. Women were in the grocery store or walking down the street with kids. You didn't really see many women on farms, that was male dominated" (p. 10).

New Zealand's culture was described as very similar to American culture. Student 2 said, "I didn't have the language barrier, and a lot of what they do is like what we do. I mean I don't see a lot of huge differences but like the food is a lot the same" (p. 3).

Student 7 said, "I thought New Zealand was honestly a lot like America. When I first landed, for the first three days, I didn't feel like I was in another country because they are

very similar to us” (p. 13). She also noticed “their agriculture was actually a lot like ours” (p. 13). Student 7 mentioned the native Māori people of New Zealand “could relate to our Native Americans” (p. 23). She said, “They were very similar is the way they lived, just everything” (p. 23).

Different than American Culture

In the Czech Republic, media content was more for book releases instead of movie or music releases. Student 1 mentioned, “I saw...an advertisement for a horse show which also, even though we live where horses are, that’s also not super common” (p. 11). Czech citizens weren’t as aware of political issues. Student 6 said:

We had a lecture, and the guy stood up in front of the class, and he held up a newspaper. He talked about how the headline was ‘Czech Students now are Two Times Smarter than They Were 50 Years ago’ or something. It had no relevant news story behind it. There was nothing informing the public of what was going on so you were just kind of blindsided by what was really happening with your government and what’s happening with your citizens and what to prepare for and that kind of stuff. Then you come to the United States, and everything is pretty transparent in our field. We have the opportunity to be educated if we want to be...but for [the Czech Republic] it’s not an option. (p. 17)

A difference Student 8 noticed between the Czech Republic and America was “they allow dogs into a lot of places” (p. 13). She said:

Some of the stores we would go into there would just be dogs with their owners or they would sit outside and wait very patiently, and they wouldn’t bark at people, which my dogs definitely would or they’d take off. (p. 13)

Students 6 and 8 commented on the Czech Republic's late technology. Student 6 said, "They are a little bit behind us in advancements and technology" (p. 13). Student 8 mentioned, "The technology was pretty behind, too, because iPhones are not a thing over there" (p. 14). Student 8 noticed differences in vehicles:

There were no trucks. They would have delivery trucks I guess, but it was all very small cars, so really narrow roads. That was another thing that really stuck out, especially growing up here in central Oklahoma. There's trucks everywhere, and them not having them is kind of a shock, too. (p. 14)

Student 6 also noticed the difference in work ethic:

Everyone is employed. Everyone contributes to society...Free health care is available to anyone because everyone is trying to work and everyone contributes and everyone pays the taxes. Maybe America, I'm not saying communism is the answer, but the idea of you have to work to live is a good idea to embody in all your citizens. (p. 19)

Students also noticed a lower age and larger amount of people drinking, as well as the number of people who smoke in the Czech Republic. Student 8 recalled:

There was a 12-year-old at one of the restaurants with a glass of beer and it's like, what the heck? But everyone was responsible about it. You can have a glass of beer or wine or whatever you want with your meal and no one thinks any differently of you. If you have a drink with breakfast, they're like "Alright, I'll get one, too." But they don't abuse it. (p. 20)

She said, “We aren’t responsible drinking as a whole” (p. 20). Student 8 also said, “I was just blown away at how many people smoke and where they smoke. That was really strange” (p. 8).

A big difference students in the Czech Republic program noticed was how the zoos were laid out. Student 6 said:

One other thing that kind of stuck out to me, they kind of expect you and assume you’re going to...use common sense with everything because in America they have to put up big cages at the zoo so you don’t put your hand in it or they have to put up fences at national parks so you don’t fall over the rail...In Prague...it was just very, very, very natural. In the zoo...the fences were two and a half feet tall for a big animal...That’s way different. Way way different. (pp. 17-18)

Student 8 gave the example:

At the zoo, I noticed like for the mountain goats they just built separation fences down the mountain. And here, it’s we destroy the land to try to build an artificial habitat, but there it’s they use what they have. That was really interesting to me. I thought it was really cool the animals get to stay in the kind of habitat they should be in. (p. 17)

Student 7 noticed most of the coffee in New Zealand was instant. She said, “Nowhere, not even the nice places that we went, it was still instant coffee. I thought that was strange” (p. 15).

One aspect mentioned from the Thailand and New Zealand program was the resourcefulness of countries. Student 5 said, “They were always so resourceful with

everything. If there was one thing I learned most about them that differs quite a lot from Americans” (p. 3). When asked for an example, she replied:

We got to see how they made some of their agricultural products, and for instance, they reuse all their old and rotted fruit and turn it into charcoal. So they had different processes where they can reuse different agricultural products into something different. (p. 3)

When compared to Americans, participants felt America is one of the most wasteful countries. Student 2 said, “I feel like [America is] one of the most wasteful countries because that’s also something I realized” (p. 3).

The Thai people had “a lower standard of living than we have” (p. 5). Student 4 said:

When we were in Bangkok it stunk so bad. You could be going down the street and there would be food stands [with] just food out everywhere, but you never know how long its been out... We went to a train market, and there was just raw meat everywhere and flies, and it was hot... It was in the morning, and it was normal for them to just buy that meat and take it home. We would never do that here. (p. 4)

Another difference participants noticed was religion. Student 4 said, “Their religion is obviously different than ours, but I think just in general the amount of people who are religious... It seems like every single person was very very true to their religion” (p. 4). Student 1 noticed in the Czech Republic “a lot fewer people were involved in any religion” (p. 4).

Students who engaged in the Thailand program mentioned they had a hard time communicating to restaurant workers they wanted salad dressing, which they never were able to attain. Student 3 said, “In Thailand they don’t know the meaning of salad dressing. And when we didn’t have one of our translators with us it was a rude awakening” (p. 4).

Language was also a barrier in the Czech Republic. Student 1 said:

Learning the transportation system in Prague [was a challenge]...Some common things like, going down the escalator into the metro or to the subway you have to stay to one side then the people who are really moving fast, they go down the other side. So just those unwritten rules about the culture, figuring them out and paying attention to them [were big challenges]. (p. 4)

Student 6 and Student 8 also commented on the transportation system in the Czech Republic. Student 6 said, “Another thing I thought was kind of difficult was their transportation system because we don’t have [a metro]. It’s not a big thing in the Midwest, and that’s the only option that we had” (p. 15). Student 8 said,

[The metro] was another thing that was a culture shock, too. I’ve never used the bus here or anything...It was frightening in to me in a way because I didn’t know what I was doing. I couldn’t ask for help if I needed to. (p. 15)

Students noticed people were more kind, respectful, and welcoming than Americans. Student 2 said:

They want to show you how they live there. I feel like even sometimes we would probably [feel] guilty if we’re ever around a tourist. I don’t ever remember me

being like, “Well let me take the time to show you how to do this or this is a cool thing to do.” (p. 4)

Student 6 said, “I know that we aren’t as patient as they were with us in [the Czech Republic]” (p. 14). Student 6 continued:

They were just so kind. When we were at dinner one day a woman, like a local woman, sat down and even tried to help us figure out what we wanted to eat. [She] kind of gave us some pointers to what we wanted to say. And that kind of stuff doesn’t happen here... You don’t just find American’s sitting down at lunch with foreigners trying to explain our culture, explain our language, or like our ways of life with them. (p. 14)

Students mentioned Americans are more materialistic. Student 5 said, “They really value the things they have more than we do, but in the same sense they don’t really care about how much you have or how much you have compared to them. So they just aren’t as materialistic” (p. 5).

Student 6 said people in the Czech Republic were “just very relaxed” (p. 13). Everything in the United States just feels like time pressured, I don’t know, like a pressure cooker, and everyone’s trying to get places and reach the next thing. The Czech people are just very appreciative of their home and appreciative of the people around them... It was really cool to kind of go back in time for a little bit and appreciate the world around you and not be worried about what comes next. (p. 13)

Students noticed physical differences of a country’s natives, too. In New Zealand,

Student 7 said, “None of [the women] wore makeup. I thought that was very strange, which I don’t wear makeup very often but when you’re in America you walk around and almost everybody, all females, have makeup on” (pp. 22-23). She also mentioned, “They were very fit. I didn’t hardly see any obese people” (p. 23).

Student 6 described Czech people as “very, very fit” (p. 22). Student 6 said, “Everyone is so fit. I mean I think that is expected, especially thinking, well knowing, all Americans are obese. I was not a small girl there” (p. 22). People also dressed different. Student 8 said, “I noticed a lot of how they dressed. It’s not to impress anybody, it’s not to be fashionable, it’s to be comfortable” (p. 13). Student 6 said they dressed to be “functional” (p. 13).

Hygiene in Czech was different than what Americans are used to. Student 6 said, “I like to shower every day, a lot. I typically take long showers, and they don’t. That’s not a prominent thing in their culture at all” (p. 25). Student 8 said, “They weren’t dirty by any means, but there were people I’d come across who don’t take care of themselves as much as we do” (p. 25). The use of electricity in the Czech Republic was less than America. Student 6 said, “There’s not a lot of electricity that’s used. I mean, they don’t have air conditioning...I didn’t blow dry my hair the whole time I was there” (p. 13). Student 8 noticed it, too. “They don’t have air conditioning, yeah” (p. 13).

The homeless people in the Czech Republic were different for students, too. Student 6 said,

The homeless never begged for anything. They always offered help, and they never were asking for money, but they were like, “I can give you a tour, I can give you directions, I can give you suggestions for something,” and then you would tip

them for their guidance. They were actually working in a round about way, but they never were hassling you or bugging you just to give them money, which I thought was very admirable because you don't see that here, anywhere. (p. 16)

Students felt safer in their programs in foreign countries than they do in America, their home country.

You wouldn't ever go into a house where they have a gun or anything like that. You never have to worry about going out at night or where you stay. It doesn't really matter. I mean, I'm pretty sure I took a cab with a stranger...I would say New Zealand is legitimately safer. We never got warned about anything, they don't have any weapons. So yeah, it's safer. (Student 2, p. 4)

"Having those hosts and people who were kind of watching our backs made me feel really safe" (Student 5, p. 5).

"My favorite part of the overall experience was how safe I felt" (Student 5, p. 5).

"I felt a lot safer in Prague than I would in, say, New York City or Chicago"

(Student 1, p. 4).

I felt so safe...You don't feel safe walking around in the middle of the night in the United States anywhere, not in Stillwater, not in your hometown. It's just the way that our culture is now. But there, everyone was just so grounded. (Student 6, p. 13)

However, students who participated in the Thailand and the Czech Republic study abroad had few feelings of peril when they were warned of pickpocketing. Student 3 said, "They frequently warned us of pickpocketing...There's tons of other people around there.

It's just whether or not they're going to try to take your money" (p. 7). Student 1 said, "For us, pickpocketing was the biggest thing" (p. 7).

There were also a few differences between New Zealand agriculture and American agriculture. Student 7 said, "They don't use any antibiotics at all, for any species" (p. 13).

Everything was grassfed. They don't feed any grain so that was really weird to me because we feed all of ours grain, but it was really cool to see how, really, we all have the same goal even though we have a different way of getting to it. (p. 12) Student 7 also mentioned cattle ranches in New Zealand were "a lot larger scale" than America's, too (p. 17).

We run 450 cows, and to me, that's a lot. But you get over there and they're like "Yeah, we just have a thousand." They act like that's nothing... That's twice as much as what we have... One host family we stayed with, I think they did say they ran a thousand cows, and we were talking about death rate. They said they lose 15-20 a year, and it's not a big deal. We lose three, and it's like "Oh my gosh." That was a difference because that's pretty different than here. (p. 17)

Student 7 noticed people in New Zealand "didn't have any foot rot issues with their cattle" (p. 16). Student 7 said,

That kind of blew my mind because it's pretty wet... The reason they don't have any [foot rot] was because they breed it out of them. If they have one that gets foot rot, they just don't ever let it reproduce because it's going to give that to their offspring. We don't have a lot of foot rot issues, but if it's a wet year then we do. They save a lot of money by not having to doctor and treat [foot rot]. (p. 16)

Findings for the Third Research Issue

The third research issue of this study was to determine how agricultural communications students notice characteristics of the culture they studied pertaining to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The following constructs were outlined by Hofstede.

Power Distance Index

The power distance index describes how people respond to their authorities and how dependent on authorities the constituents are (Hofstede, 1983). Greater power distance indexes show citizens depend more on their superior, and also, there is a greater divide between social classes (Hofstede, 1983).

Student 1 thought the Czech Republic's hierarchy system was "confusing" (p. 6), while Student 6 said, "I don't know anything about their government" (p. 19). Student 8 said, "They were really well informed about our government, but not so much their own" (p. 20). "You could tell the more educated people were the more their government bothered them," Student 6 said (p. 19). Student 6 also said, "I think they still kind of have the communist mindset, especially as employees and employers... They aren't a communist country anymore" (p. 19).

In the same way, Student 2 said they didn't know about the hierarchy system in New Zealand (p. 6). Student 7 said, "In New Zealand, they didn't talk about their government" (p. 19).

Student 4 said people in Thailand "love their king, though. Love him" (p. 6). Student 3 agreed, "They are literally in love, everyone in the country is in love with the king. He's everywhere" (p. 6). However, Student 3 also commented on the divide

between government and military, “They didn’t talk about it a lot but I know there is a divide with the government and their military, and that kind of led to disputes” (p. 6).

Also, the social classes in Thailand were very distinctive. Student 5 said, “We got to see the inner city side of things, but then we got to see the very rural villages. [We saw] how they live, and [we] learned what they do to survive” (p. 2).

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

The uncertainty avoidance index tells how much or little risk citizens take in their lives (Hofstede, 1983). This includes natives’ anxiety levels and crime rates (Hofstede, 1983).

The Czech Republic’s atmosphere was described at fun. Student 1 said, “It’s intense and vibrant and colorful” (p. 8). Student 1 described the citizens as “just a little more chill” (p. 4). Student 6 replied, “I think the word ‘safe’ sums it up. It’s just very clean, very crisp, very safe” (p. 23). Student 8 said, “As a whole, I felt really safe” (p. 20). Student 6 also mentioned in Prague, they would get “lost on purpose” (p. 21). She continued, “We would take off walking and wouldn’t look at our phone or look at our map, and it would be the middle of the night” (p. 21).

Also, students in the Czech Republic didn’t notice a police presence. Student 6 said, “I didn’t hardly see [police] ever” (p. 22). Student 8 said she saw the police “maybe once” (p. 22).

Student 2 described citizens in New Zealand as “down-to-earth” and “laid back”(p. 8). She said New Zealand felt “homey” (p. 8). Student 7 said, “I honestly felt safe the whole time I was there” (p. 21). As Student 2 gave the example:

You wouldn't ever go into a house where they have a gun or anything like that. You never have to worry about going out at night or where you stay. It doesn't really matter. I mean, I'm pretty sure I took a cab with a stranger...I would say New Zealand is legitimately safer. We never got warned about anything, they don't have any weapons. So yeah, it's safer. (p. 4)

Participants noticed a carefree and fun atmosphere, with no feelings of tension or anxiety in Thailand. Student 3 said, "All the places come alive at night and all the shops open" (p. 8). Students never mentioned any disrespect or rigidity from residents. "Everyone always has a smile on their face," Student 3 said (p. 8). Students in Thailand had mixed feelings about the crime. Student 5 said, "My favorite part of the overall experience was how safe I felt" (p. 4). However, Student 3 mentioned the crowds. "There's tons of other people around there. It's just whether or not they're going to try to take your money" (p. 7).

Individualism versus Collectivism

When asked what the citizens of the Czech Republic placed value on, Student 1 said, "Social life is a big one, and family. But they do like to have a good time in [the Czech Republic]" (p. 9). However, Student 6 said, "I saw [the Czech Republic], as a whole, place value on religion, history, and work ethic. A lot" (p. 23). Student 8 agreed, but also explained religion differently saying, "But oddly enough, the religion tied more into their history, because they're one of the least religious countries, but they also valued all the churches" (p. 23). Student 6 noticed "there were crucifixions everywhere" (p. 23). "Everywhere you looked, on the side of a gas station, there would be a crucifixion," she said (p. 23).

Student 2 said people in New Zealand placed their value on “family and friends” (p. 9). However, work was a large part of their life. “They were passionate about what they did. And even in a country where the beef industry is not popular, they’re still passionate about it and believe in where it could go,” Student 2 said (p. 9). Student 7 said, “I would say family, especially when we were on the farms. It was a family operated farm. And then, if it wasn’t family, it was basically family. I would say that was the main thing they valued” (p. 23).

However, Student 3 said the Thai placed their value on “community” (p. 9). Student 5 gave this example:

They have a lot of different farmers in the area that would come into this one agricultural station and just kind of discuss what’s working in their area and what’s not working in their area and the different techniques they used...They are not looking to personally get ahead of someone else. They are looking to improve things as a whole. (p. 9)

Student 4 said Thai placed value on their family, “especially the less fortunate. They relied a lot on each other” (p. 9).

Masculinity versus Femininity

Feminine cultures place value more on being dignified and less on how to get ahead of others, while masculine cultures value personal gain above all else (Hofstede, 1983). While masculine cultures are thought of as tough, feminine cultures are nurturing and tender (Hofstede et al., 2010).

In the Czech Republic, Student 1 described the people as “very kind and welcoming” (p. 8). When asked what appeared as a priority to the people there, they said

“family” (p. 9). Men and women had very different roles in society. “Women were in the grocery store or walking down the street with kids. You didn’t really see many women on farms, that was male dominated” (p. 10).

Students 6 and 8 noted everyone in the Czech Republic depended on each other for survival. Student 6 said, “It was like you have a job, and we need you to do your job so we can continue to, not thrive, but live. We need you to do your job so we can continue to exist...I don’t think that’s competitive. I think that’s more like a joint effort” (p. 24). Student 8 said, “I didn’t see them as competitive. Not as a ‘I need to beat you,’ just as a ‘we all have to get it done’” (p. 24).

Student 6 also noticed the mentality of businesses in the Czech Republic.

I didn’t see competitiveness anywhere, really. I mean not between businesses, not between vendors. Even in the little market we went to, it wasn’t like a dog-eat-dog world, it was just a friendly, neighbor, ‘hope you get some customers, too’ kind of thing. (p. 24)

The Czech people also took care of their environment. Student 8 noted, One thing that stuck out to me was how well they take care of their things...I was constantly seeing people going around the cobblestone streets sweeping up trash. That really impressed me that they did do a really good job at taking care of stuff. (p. 17)

Student 6 noticed Czechs “really cared for their country” (p. 5). She said, “There was no litter anywhere. They cared for their livestock so much, I mean I never saw any stray dogs. All the dogs are very well mannered” (p. 5).

In New Zealand, men and women also had very different societal roles. Student 2 said, “One of the farm stays I stayed on, the wife picked us up and she was making dinner, cleaning house, and he was playing golf” (p. 2). People in New Zealand are mainly concerned with their work. Student 2 said, “They were passionate about what they did. And even in a country where the beef industry is not popular, they’re still passionate about it and believe in where it could go” (p. 9).

The competitiveness among different livestock sectors was noticed in New Zealand. Student 7 said:

The Angus people, I hate to say hated, but hated the Hereford people. They wanted nothing to do with them... We went to the New Zealand Beef Expo, and we met a Hereford breeder who had been to America..., and he was telling us about his family’s farm... I think they were primarily Hereford breeders, but his brother had bought a couple of Angus cows. But when we were talking to him at the Beef Expo, we had some magazines we had picked up, one of them was for the Angus and one of them was for the Hereford. He just starts going off about the Angus people... about how awful they were... I mean I guess there’s some competitiveness here in America but you still support the other breeds. There, they did not at all. (pp. 24-25)

In Thailand, the different roles men and women played were observed. They described men being in charge of women as a status symbol. Students said women would be doing hard labor while men supervised. Student 4 said, “When we went by a road construction, the women were digging with shovels and everything else, and the men

were just sitting there or in a truck watching them” (p. 10). Student 5 brought up another example:

I would think maybe [it was a status symbol] because when we were at the elephant camp the men were the elephant trainers. They would take our pictures and sell it at the gift shop or they would be the cashiers at the gift shop or at the restaurant...The women would be the ones walking around cleaning up the elephant poop, and it was crazy that they were the ones doing the actual hard work. (p. 10)

Student 3 said:

A good example of this would be when we were floating on one of the rivers, the women rowed the boats you had to literally row by hand, then the men would sit by on a boat that was ran by a motor. (p. 10)

Thailand people put priority on taking care of one another. Student 3 said, “They relied a lot on each other” (p. 8).

Student 3 and Student 5 both noticed the markets always lined up on the streets. Student 3 said, “All the places come alive at night and all the shops open and then everyone always has a smile on their face” (p. 9). Student 5 mentioned, “A lot of the places we were at were either markets or touristy places” (p. 7). Student 4 noticed the people in Thailand were sometimes “too friendly” (p. 2). Student 3 agreed, “especially when they try to sell you things” (p. 2).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes conclusions and implications for each research objective. It also contains recommendations for future research, practice, and discussion.

Conclusions and Implications for the First Research Issue

The first research issue of this study was to identify what factors inspired students to participate in short-term study abroad programs. The common themes identified were cost, structure of program, and program experience.

One conclusion from the research is the structure of the trip influences students' decisions to participate in short-term study abroad programs. Multiple students said because the program was offered through their education department with faculty they knew leading it and focusing on agriculture made them more apt to participate. Another part of the structure that drew students into a study abroad program was the more intimate setting of a smaller group of people going. The timing of the experience in their academic career, and the program being offered in the summer influenced students to take part in a study abroad program. This agrees with research of Chang et al. (2013), Briers, Shinn, and Nguyen, (2010), and the Institute of International Education (2011), who inferred students preferred faculty-led study abroad trips over any other type.

An additional conclusion is the experience of being immersed into another culture influences students to participate in a study abroad program. One student said they felt the driving force for going on another study abroad trip was not getting enough time the first time around. This is contingent with Chang et al. (2013) who said, “Respondents reported that international experiences enriched their overall life experiences” (p. 100).

Another conclusion from this study is students would participate in more study abroad programs if they had financial aid. This agrees with the findings of Chang et al. (2013) who concluded a higher cost of study abroad programs dissuaded involvement from students.

Conclusions and Implications for the Second Research Issue

The second research issue was to observe if and how agricultural communications students perceive differences and similarities between American culture and the culture they studied. I identified two common themes, similar to American culture and different than American culture.

Students recognized few similarities between cultures studied and American culture. The main similarities were marketing tactics and the Czech Republic’s men and women roles.

Another conclusion from this study is students do notice and compare the differences in the culture they study to their native culture. Two common differences were the language and safety. Levine & Garland (2015) noted language as among the top answers when asking students who had completed a study-abroad program what were the biggest differences in their culture studied and American culture.

The final conclusion from the second research issue is student have the ability to notice these differences show an increase in their global competence. Three top components of global competence are awareness, valuing, and understanding differences between cultures; experiencing other cultures; and knowing one's own culture (Deardorff, 2006). "These common elements stress the underlying importance of cultural awareness, both of one's own as well as others' cultures" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). "A student develops the recognition and acceptance of differences and dimensions of other cultures and an objectivity about his or her own country, as a direct result of the study abroad experience" (Miller, 1993, p. 1).

Conclusions and Implications for the Third Research Issue

The third research issue was to determine agricultural communications students' global competence based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions after short-term study abroad experiences in the Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Thailand. Students described characteristics of the four dimensions, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, power distance index, and uncertainty avoidance, through their focus group discussion.

Power Distance Index

The power distance index was described by how students noticed citizens responding to their authorities and if there was an evident divide between social classes. In cultures with a high power distance index, "hierarchy means existential inequality," "subordinates consider superiors as different from themselves" (Hofstede, 1983, p. 60).

Students in the Czech Republic noticed a disconnect between the citizens and government by the lack of political knowledge residents knew about their home country.

This conclusion agrees with Hofstede et al.'s (2010) research saying the Czech Republic has a high power distance index. However, no hard evidence of social class division was found.

Students' descriptions didn't conclude if New Zealand has a low or high power distance index. This disagrees with Hofstede et al.'s (2010) research saying New Zealand has a very low power distance index.

Participants perceived an obvious divide in Thailand socioeconomic classes, agreeing with Hofstede et al.'s (2010) contention of Thailand's high power distance index. Hofstede et al. (2010) also found Thailand accepts their superiors and social classes without justification. Students participating in this program described this as how the constituents loved their King.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

The uncertainty avoidance dimension tells how much a society tries to control the unknown (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010).

The Czech Republic prefers to avoid uncertainty through strict laws and beliefs (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, Student 1 described the atmosphere as a low uncertainty avoidance because of the citizens' attitudes and apparent ease. Also, students perceived there was no police presence in Czech.

No hard evidence being found for New Zealand's uncertainty avoidance dimension agrees with Hofstede et al.'s findings (2010) of a neutral uncertainty avoidance.

Contrary to Hofstede et al. (2010.) finding Thailand to leaning towards avoiding uncertainty, students concluded a low uncertainty avoidance dimension by describing the calm, easy-going attitudes of the natives.

Individualism versus Collectivism

Hofstede et al. (2010) found Czech to be an individualist society, with citizens taking care of only themselves and their immediate family. However, students noticed people working together more than working against each other. Even in the markets, it was a friendly atmosphere rather than a competitive one. However, one student studying in Czech did conclude natives placed more of a value on their social life and family.

Hofstede et al. (2010) describes New Zealand as an individualist culture. In their culture, people rely more on themselves and their immediate family rather than outside people. Student 2 and Student 7 connected New Zealand's individualism to their focus on work and family. This was also supported by the competitive nature among cattle breeders.

In Thailand, students noticed the collective society because of how people looked out for each other and the lack of competition. As Hofstede (1983) said, in cultures that belong to the collectivism dimension there is "emphasis on belonging to organization" rather than "emphasis on individual initiative and achievement" (p. 62). He also states people are treated more as the group or organization they belong to rather than individuals in the society. Hofstede et al. (2010) found Thailand to be a collective country because they see themselves as a "we" than an "I." Students described Thailand as being less individual oriented and more community oriented, indicating the people of Thailand stick to their "in-group" (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Masculinity versus Femininity

Students observed the masculine and feminine roles in the culture they studied by noticing the roles men and women played in society and the priorities of people in the country. Hofstede et al. (2010) described feminine cultures as men and women being equal counterparts (p.1). However, students who studied in Thailand noticed men dominating women.

Hofstede et al. (2010) categorized New Zealand and the Czech Republic as masculine; students who studied there noticed males having more dominating roles. However, they felt the culture was not competitive, and the people more nurturing because they took care of their home, which contradicts the masculine mindset. Hofstede (1983) mentions “sex roles in society should be clearly differentiated” and “men should dominate in all settings” for a masculine culture (p. 63).

Student 2, who studied in New Zealand, noticed citizens care a lot about their work. Citizens of masculine cultures “live to work” (Hofstede, 1983, p.63). Hofstede et al. (2010) also found New Zealand to be a masculine culture. However, Student 6 and Student 8 describes the people in the Czech Republic as caring and noncompetitive, dependent on each other to live, aspects of a feminine culture (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Recommendations for Future Practice

There is a lot of research on short-term study abroad programs. However, very little has been applied to agricultural studies, and even less has been done within the agricultural communications field. Researchers should start with a brick for specific fields of study to learn more about their own study abroad programs and develop a

standard qualitative research method for gathering information from students who participate in study abroad programs.

The term global competence has several definitions when used in research (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Hunter et al., 2006; Schejbal & Irvine, 2009; Willard, 2009). The measurement of competence depends on its definition (Deardorff, 2006). Several studies have been done on how study abroad affects internal global competency, with students identifying their self-confidence in new situations, ability to act and react in new situation, and their cultural awareness increased (Chang et al., 2013; Greenfield et al., 2012; Rice et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2013). For this study, the definition included Hofstede's four dimensions to see if students noticed more characteristics of the culture. It is recommended a standard definition for global competency be agreed upon, and for it to include elements of self-awareness, cultural awareness, and global intelligence to better study how effective each study abroad program is.

In this study, students' descriptions of culture falling into Hofstede's four dimensions was varied. To learn more about students' cultural awareness through the lens of Hofstede's four dimensions, this study should be done with Hofstede's quantitative analysis. Also, to add depth, the updated framework including long-term orientation versus short-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint should be used.

Also, a lack of expected participation of specific agricultural communication students throughout all study abroad programs occurred. This resulted in an unbalance of representation from all short-term study abroad programs. It is suggested further research could be more in-depth if only a specific short-term study abroad program was studied.

All programs in this study were short-term study abroad programs. Students only see glimpses of a culture in these experiences, while long-term study abroad programs immerse students in the culture for a semester to one full calendar year (American Institute of International Education, 2016; Smith et al., 2013). For a more accurate representation of the Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Thailand, this research should be done with students who study abroad long-term.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Students identified some elements of Hofstede's four dimensions of culture. Many of their responses fit into the individualism versus collectivism, masculine versus feminism, power distance index, and uncertainty avoidance dimension themes. Perhaps the leaders of study abroad programs should help draw students' attention to the physical, socioeconomic, and political characteristics of the culture before and during the experience. This would also help students identify the differences in the culture they are immersed in and their home culture, which helps the program be more effective.

Also, students could be more apt to notice Hofstede's four dimensions in the culture they studied by being prompted. If students are educated on what the four dimensions entail before their experience, they would be more apt to notice the dimensions while abroad and not be swayed by the glimpses of short-term study abroad programs.

One improvement with this study would be more participation. Cost, structure of the study, program experience, and other participants were common motivations for students to participate in the study abroad program. Faculty and staff should use these as marketing techniques when promoting their study abroad programs throughout the

college and university. Programs should also be marketed focusing on departmental undergraduate students.

Cost also discouraged students who wanted to participate in a second study abroad program. To help with this dilemma, financial aid specifically for students to participate in multiple study abroad programs should be established.

Students mentioned the smaller groups of students on study abroad experiences as a positive. These programs should strive to give students a smaller, intimate group so the schedule could be more flexible than with a larger group.

Discussion

Through this study, agricultural communications students showed an increase in global competency by explaining differences and similarities in their native culture and cultures studied, and also by describing the cultures of their short-term study abroad program through cultural dimensions. However, agricultural communications students only described one of four of the Czech Republic's cultural dimensions and two of four of Thailand's cultural dimensions, according to Hofstede et al.'s (2010) data. In New Zealand, agricultural communications students described three of four cultural dimensions from Hofstede et al.'s (2010) analysis. The New Zealand study abroad program was the only program that included homestays for the students. Perhaps being able to experience the way of life in a culture as opposed to being on the outside looking in helps students identify cultural dimensions?

Also, the agricultural communications students were more apt to include descriptions of the cultural dimensions after being prompted. For students to be able to look for the cultural characteristics, according to Hofstede's dimensions, maybe they

need to be educated on the dimensions before their experience? Implementing these dimensions in a short-term study abroad program could result in agricultural communications students becoming even more globally competent.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, August 25, 2016
IRB Application No AG1626
Proposal Title: The impact of short-term study abroad programs on agricultural communications students' ability to identify cultural dimensions

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 8/24/2019

Principal Investigator(s):

Kristal Williams Dwayne Cartmell
448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078 Stillwater, OK 74078

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 final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. 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 submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, 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 adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

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 Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B:

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent

Protocol Title: The Impact of Short-Term Study Abroad Programs on Agricultural Communications Students' Ability to Identify Cultural Dimensions

Investigators: Kristal Williams – Graduate Student – Agricultural Communications, Oklahoma State University

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this research study.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. Your participation is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. The purpose of this study is to understand how you identify cultural characteristics while participating in a short-term study abroad program. It will provide valuable information that will be used to enhance agricultural communications practices in the future.

If you choose to participate, you will participate in one face-to-face focus group that will take approximately 1 hour. The study has two parts. The first part is a one-hour focus group about your perceptions of cultural characteristics in short-term study abroad programs and a few questions about you. Second is a collection of documents (i.e., photographs, journal entries, and social media posts). All interviews will be recorded and destroyed after the P.I. has transcribed the recording. In addition, the records of this study will be kept private. The researchers will make your name and data completely anonymous and confidential in all reports unless you consent otherwise. In any sort of report the researchers might publish, he/she will not include any information such as your name that would make it possible to identify you. All data will be grouped and summarized when reported. On all files, your name will be changed. Thus, your name will never be used in connection with data analysis or reports. You can stop at any time without penalty and you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. **It is advised you will not divulge any information given in the focus group to anyone outside of the members of the focus group.** By printing your name and signing your signature, you are acknowledging that you have consented to participate. **You are also acknowledging there are other members of the focus group who may divulge information given in the focus group.** No known risks are associated with this study. If you choose not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way.

Perceived benefits of this study include identifying how you perceive cultural characteristics of different countries. Identification of cultural characteristics will inform current and future agricultural communications students on how to better identify their audience in a different culture.

If you have general questions concerning the research study, please contact Kristal Williams via email at: kristal.williams@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Hugh Crethar, IRB Chair, 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or crethar@okstate.edu

Print Name

Signature

Okla. State Univ. IRB Approved 8-25-16 Expires 8-24-19 IRB # AG-16-26

APPENDIX C:

INVITATION FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Script (email invitation)

Good morning, my name is _____.

Today I am asking you to participate in a focus group we are doing to better understand how you identify cultural characteristics while on a short-term study abroad program. Your input will provide valuable information that will be used to help agricultural communications students identify cultural characteristics.

The data collection process has two parts. The first part is a one focus group about your study abroad experience and a few questions about you. The second part is a collection of documents (i.e., photographs, journal entries, social media posts).

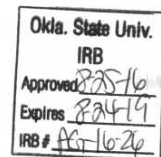
Your participation in this case study is strictly voluntary but it would be greatly appreciated by me and the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership.

In no way will your answers influence your grades.

If you are going to participate, please read the consent form carefully. If you choose to participate, you will participate in a one-hour focus group and allow document collection. You can stop at any time without penalty and you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. By printing your name and signing your signature, you are acknowledging that you have consented to participate.

If you have any questions, please ask me. The focus group will be held on August 30, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. Please let me know if you agree to participate.

Thank you for your time and attention.



APPENDIX D:

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Focus Group Protocol Kristal Williams

Demographics

Name:

Age:

College History:

Number of Times Participated in Study Abroad Programs:

Name of Study Abroad Program Participated in:

Major Guiding Questions

1. What was your overall impression of your experience?
2. Why did you decide to study abroad?
3. Describe the culture you studied.
4. What were your biggest challenges while abroad?
5. What were major differences in the culture studied and America?
6. Would you participate in this experience again? Why or why not?

Optional Questions Guided by Hofstede's four dimensions of culture

Power Distance:

1. What kind of government does the country have?
2. What was the crime rate?

Uncertainty Avoidance:

1. Describe physical characteristics of natives.
2. Describe the atmosphere.

Individualism-Collectivism:

1. What did the culture place value on? (family, social life, work, etc.)
2. How were you perceived as a tourist?

Masculinity-Femininity

1. What roles did men and women play in society?
2. How did advertising appeal to the public?

VITA

Kristal Dawn Williams

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: UNDERSTANDING HOW AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS
STUDENTS IDENTIFY CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AFTER A SHORT-
TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications with an option in Agribusiness at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2015.

Experience:

Teaching Assistant of Agricultural Communications Studies
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership,
Oklahoma State University, August 2015-Present

Undergraduate Courses Assisted: AGCM 3103 – Written Communication
in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources; AGCM 3223 – Web
Design for Agricultural Organizations; AGCM 3233 – Basic
Photography and Photo Editing for Agriculture

Website Designer

Department of Natural Resources Ecology and Management,
Oklahoma State University, January 2015-Present