

4-2012

# An Exploratory Study of Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Study Abroad for Students with Disabilities

Melissa Jean Kutsche  
*Grand Valley State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kutsche, Melissa Jean, "An Exploratory Study of Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Study Abroad for Students with Disabilities" (2012). *Masters Theses*. 14.  
<http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/14>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research and Creative Practice at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gvsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gvsu.edu).

An Exploratory Study of Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Study Abroad  
for Students with Disabilities

Melissa Jean Kutsche

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Education

College of Education

April 2012

## Acknowledgments

This final work was made possible by the support and encouragement of many family, friends, and colleagues. I extend my great gratitude especially to Dr. Mary Bair for being an advocate for me since the inception of this idea, and for being a wonderful advisor during the entire process. I also thank Dr. Carol Sánchez and Dr. Sherie Williams for being available to give professional input, guidance, and support. Finally, I give much love and appreciation to my husband, Kyle Kutsche, for his understanding and encouragement during the many challenges I faced in the process of completing my research.

Melissa Jean Kutsche

## Abstract

Although roughly 11% of college students identify as students with disabilities, in 2009 only 3.6% of students who studied abroad were students with disabilities. Due to the lack of research on the topic, little is known about the reasons for this underrepresentation. In this exploratory study, qualitative data analysis was used to analyze responses to an open-ended survey distributed to 749 students with disabilities at a Midwestern university. Responses from 28 students indicate that students with disabilities perceive various benefits and barriers to study abroad, and that demographic characteristics such as type of disability, age, and marital status are not significantly related to whether the reported barriers are disability-related or not. Findings summarizing the perceptions that college students with disabilities have regarding benefits and barriers to study abroad will be of particular interest to student affairs practitioners working in both disability support and international education.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v

### Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement.....	1
Importance and Rationale of Study.....	2
Background of the Study .....	3
Statement of Purpose .....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Design, Data Collection, and Analysis.....	6
Definition of Key Terms.....	7
Delimitations of the Study.....	8
Limitations.....	8
Organization of the Thesis.....	8

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction.....	10
Theoretical Framework.....	10
Synthesis of Research Literature.....	13
Summary.....	20
Conclusion.....	21

## Chapter Three: Research Design

Introduction.....	22
Design of the Study.....	22
Participants/Subjects.....	23
Instrumentation.....	24
Data Collection.....	26
Data Analysis.....	26
Summary.....	29

## Chapter Four: Results

Introduction.....	30
Institutional Context.....	30

Findings.....33

Summary.....43

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Summary of the Study.....45

Conclusion.....46

Discussion.....48

Recommendations.....50

References.....53

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Instrument.....57

Appendix B: HRRC Approval Form .....59

Appendix C: Data Form.....61

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

It is widely accepted that countries must increase interaction with other peoples of the world in order to situate themselves in a growing global community (Doyle et al., 2009). As this internationalization increases, the importance of providing college students with opportunities to participate in international academic opportunities also increases (Brux & Fry, 2010). Study abroad programs are one way for students to have such global interactions. As the number of students studying abroad has continued to increase, students with disabilities have been underrepresented in foreign study programs (Bollag, 2003; Matthews, Hameister, & Hosley, 1998). This underrepresentation of students with disabilities is demonstrated by the fact that while approximately 11% of college students report disabilities, only 3.6% of college students studying abroad from 2008-2009 identified as students with disabilities (Institute of International Education, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Many factors affect students' intent to study abroad. These factors can include the students' background and traits they possess, such as socio-economic status (SES), habitus, and cultural capital (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009), with cultural capital and habitus being defined as the values, beliefs, attitudes, resources, and tools that individuals have that can both influence decisions and provide access to education. Salisbury et al. reported students from low SES with low cultural capital and low first-year capital would have a predicted probability of intent to study abroad of 3

In contrast, students from high SES with high cultural capital and first-year capital have a predicted probability of intent to study abroad of 85%. The authors emphasized the importance of the relationship among these factors, and that their findings indicate that these factors can override any interest students may have in studying abroad.

Another factor influencing the intent to go abroad is a perception of barriers to participation in international education. Postsecondary students have perceptions of barriers that lead them to believe that studying abroad is difficult, and these perceived barriers affect their intent to study abroad (Brux & Fry 2009; Sánchez, Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006). The perception of barriers to study abroad is one of the factors that have led to a continuing underrepresentation of students with disabilities in study abroad programs (Matthews, Hameister, & Hosley, 1998). While Matthews et al. laid a foundation for studying the perceptions held by students with disabilities regarding study abroad, they clearly identified the need for more research. According to them, there is a gap in our knowledge regarding this issue, and little is known about perceived barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities, how they compare to those perceived by students who do not disclose disabilities, or how perceived barriers may differ for students with different types of disabilities (Matthews et al., 1998).

### **Importance of the Problem and Rationale for Study**

Like their peers, students with disabilities are interested in studying abroad, and they want to go abroad primarily due to the cultural benefits (Hameister, Matthews, Hosley, & Groff, 1999). Research has shown that study abroad programs not only offer advantages to the general student population, but that students with disabilities in particular benefit socially and academically by participating in study abroad programs;

short-term study abroad programs specifically increased intellectual and social curiosity, knowledge and skill, normalization, independence, and self-confidence in students with learning disabilities (Shames & Alden, 2005). Students with disabilities who studied abroad claimed that they experienced increases in confidence, stronger communication and problem-solving skills, and a broader awareness of their own abilities (Hameister et al., 1999). When students with disabilities have perceptions of barriers to studying abroad, they may choose not to participate (Matthews et al., 1998). Students with disabilities who choose not to participate in study abroad programs may be missing out on the cultural, developmental, and academic benefits offered by study abroad programs, including the intellectual and developmental benefits delineated by Shames and Alden (2005).

Research on the benefits and barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities will also be helpful to student affairs personnel. This information will enable practitioners such as disability support coordinators, study abroad program coordinators, and academic advisors to provide better support to students with disabilities as they decide whether or not to study abroad. Without a knowledge of students' perceptions of benefits and barriers to study abroad, it is difficult to design, implement, and recommend programs to students. Furthermore, insights into the issue might also facilitate the creation of programs with specific accommodations for students with disabilities and to better marketing schemes for such programs.

### **Background of the Problem**

Gaff (2004) stated that when it comes to education, faculty members often cite the importance of experiences with diversity and intercultural skills as part of a well-rounded

education for undergraduate students. Study abroad programs offer opportunities for students not only to travel to new places, but to learn about new cultures and languages. Study abroad programs provide opportunities for students to further develop their identities while also increasing involvement with other peoples, cultures, and economies around the world (Doyle et al., 2009; Shames & Alden, 2005). Such programs can provide opportunities for students to live with families in another country, be immersed in a new language, and see things about which they had previously only read.

According to NAFSA (2009), the United States aims to increase participation in study abroad programs by 500% between 2008 and 2018. From 2009-2010, 270,604 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit, demonstrating a 3.9% increase from the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2011). Even though more college students are studying abroad, students with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in foreign study programs (Bollag, 2003; Matthews et al., 1998). While 11% of college students have identified themselves as students with disabilities, only 3.6% of the college students studying abroad from 2008 to 2009 were a part of this group (Institute of International Education, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). According to Matthews et al., the existing underrepresentation of students with disabilities in study abroad programs is caused in part by students' perceptions of barriers to study abroad. Postsecondary students have perceptions of barriers that lead them to believe that studying abroad would be difficult, and that these perceived barriers affect their intent to study abroad (Brux & Fry 2009; Sánchez, Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006). These barriers include language differences, money, time, work and family commitments, ethnocentric attitudes, language

barriers, lack of programs within declared majors, and study abroad program requirements (Brux & Fry, 2009; Marcum, 2001).

Perceived barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities have not been the subject of much empirical research. The primary investigator utilized Education Research Complete and ERIC databases to locate empirical studies related to this issue. Boolean searches were done utilizing various combinations of the terms “study abroad,” “international study,” “disability,” “college students,” “barriers,” “benefits,” and “obstacles.” Only one study (Matthews et al., 1998) was found that directly addressed the barriers to study abroad perceived by students with disabilities.

Although little research relating specifically to students with disabilities and study abroad was located, similar research has been done with multicultural students. Brux and Fry (2009) enumerated some of the barriers specific to students from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, because this research was conducted on only 29 students, the results are not necessarily applicable to other groups or institutions. Because this research cannot be generalized to students with disabilities, and because the work that has been done is scarce and outdated, learning more about this issue is imperative in order to provide current, accurate information for study abroad program coordinators and disability support service providers at institutions or higher education. An understanding of the barriers that students with disabilities perceive is needed to guide not only program creation and implementation, but the pre-departure planning that students do with the guidance of these professionals.

## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to describe perceptions that college students with disabilities have regarding benefits and barriers to study abroad. Since there has been very little empirical research done on this subject, this study aims to contribute to the knowledge base about barriers and benefits to study abroad for students with disabilities, and may be of particular interest to student affairs practitioners working in both disability support services and international education at midsize public institutions in the Midwest. Undergraduate and graduate students who have disclosed disabilities to the university were surveyed about their perceptions of study abroad.

## **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions: What benefits and barriers to study abroad are perceived by college students with disabilities? How do perceived benefits and barriers to study abroad vary depending on the type of disability and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, and area of study? According to students with disabilities, what accommodations are needed in order for them to consider studying abroad?

## **Design, Data Collection, and Analysis**

**Location, subjects, sampling.** This study was conducted at a large public university in the Midwest. Students who have disclosed disabilities to the university's disability support office on campus were surveyed using an online survey. Participation was voluntary.

**Data collection and instruments.** Data was gathered through an online survey. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix A. In addition to collecting survey data,

institutional data was gathered from the university's international center and disability support office regarding the number of programs available to students, how many students from the institution study abroad annually, and how many of the students who study abroad are identified as students with disabilities.

**Data analysis.** The principal investigator analyzed survey responses utilizing qualitative analysis, specifically the constant comparative method of coding, for open-ended items. Descriptive statistics were used for closed-ended items. Additionally, crosstabs were used to compare perceived barriers and benefits by disability and other demographic characteristics.

**Permissions Needed.** Approval from the IRB at the participating institution was obtained before the study was conducted. The study was approved under exempt status and given file number 12-99-H.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Students with disabilities.** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 defines an individual with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment” (para. 2). For the purpose of this study, “students with disabilities” will refer to postsecondary students for whom the above definition is true, and who have also identified themselves with the university's Disability Support Resources office.

**Study abroad.** McClellan and Stringer (2009) stated that “an academic study abroad program is one that is usually sponsored by an academic department, offered and taught by the faculty and bearing academic credit” (p. 128).

## **Delimitations of the Study**

This study explored perceptions of benefits and barriers to study abroad for college students with disabilities, including both graduate and undergraduate students. This study did not take into account the barriers perceived by students who do not identify as students with disabilities. The perceptions of students who have not registered with the institution's disability support office were not investigated in this study.

## **Limitations**

While 64 students started the survey, only 28 students completed the survey in its entirety. It is possible that the electronic format was not intuitive and therefore students were unsure of how to navigate it properly or how to correctly submit answers. The information included with the link to the study informed students that the study was about students with disabilities and study abroad, so students may have felt that they had to mention disability-related factors when discussing barriers to study abroad. If the initial email message had not informed students that the study was specifically studying students with disabilities, it is possible that disability would not have been as salient in the students' responses.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This introductory chapter is the first of five chapters outlining the study. Chapter Two gives a theoretical framework for the study and provide an in-depth review of current literature related to the topic of the study. Chapter Three outlines the research design and method. Chapter Four provides the data analysis and results of the study. Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings and provides recommendations for future

research and implications for practice. The survey instrument and Institutional Review Board approval information can be found in Appendices A and B.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter describes the theoretical framework and a review of research that guided this study. Interpretivism is discussed as a theoretical lens for examining students' perceptions, followed by a discussion of Laura Perna's (2006) student college choice construct as a means by which the effect of student perceptions on student choice to study abroad can be viewed. A review of related literature follows. This literature review discusses recent research in regard to college students with disabilities, study abroad, perceived and actual benefits to study abroad, and perceived barriers to study abroad. The chapter concludes with a summary of research findings.

### Theoretical Framework

**The interpretivist perspective.** Interpretivism is a paradigm through which reality or a particular phenomenon is viewed as personally constructed by individuals based on their own perceptions. The interpretivist theoretical perspective asserts that "we can only experience the world through our personal perceptions, which are coloured by our preconceptions and beliefs" (Nudzor, 2009, p. 117). Under this framework, there is no one shared reality; individuals each have their own sense of truth and reality based upon the beliefs and experiences that shape their perceptions of the people and world around them.

Because personal meaning and experience affect the realities of individuals, research performed through this paradigm places a high value on perceptions. Such research does not aim to explain phenomena, as many studies under the positivist paradigm do, but instead seeks to understand phenomena (O'Donoghue, 2006). In the

current study, the interpretivist approach influenced the focus on students' perceptions of barriers to study abroad. These perceptions represent students' perspectives on the concept of barriers to study abroad. Such perspectives are a keystone of the interpretivist approach to research, in which these perspectives allow research subjects to describe phenomena on their own terms using their own words (O'Donoghue, 2006).

**Student choice construct.** Laura Perna (2006) proposed a model for student college choice, which included four contextual layers in which decisions regarding college choice are made. These layers provide contexts that exist inside each other. For example, habitus, the first layer identified by Perna, resides within the second layer, which is school and community. Perna describes habitus as one's demographic characteristics, cultural capital, and social capital. Cultural capital is comprised of an individual's cultural knowledge and value of college attainment, while social capital is defined by information about college and assistance with the college process. Perna's second layer, the school and community context, takes into account access to resources, types of resources, and structural support and barriers. Perna identified the third layer as higher education, which includes the recruitment strategy of the institution, marketing, location, and characteristics of the individual institutions. According to Perna, the final contextual layer includes social, economic, and policy influences, which refer specifically to student demographics, economic characteristics, and public policy. Demographic characteristics in this layer could be gender and race, while socioeconomic status is an example of how economics might influence decision-making in this layer. School or district-wide policies regarding the roles of teachers, counselors, and administrators provide an example of a policy in this layer. Within these four contextual layers, the

demand for education and supply of resources lead to expected benefits and costs of college. These expected benefits and costs eventually lead to a choice of college (Perna).

Although Perna's (2006) conceptual model is focused on access college choice, it has been used to examine other student choices. Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella (2008) extended the student choice construct and general college student choice theory to the field of study abroad education. Their work showed that the student choice construct reaches beyond decisions to enroll and persist in college, and can also be related to other higher education decisions, such as that to participate in study abroad. Their study of students' decision to study abroad presented a dynamic relationship among socio-economic status, students' capital accumulation before and during college, and the intent to study abroad. For example, students with a low socioeconomic status and low cultural and social capital were estimated to have a probability of intent to study abroad of 0.31 (Salisbury et al.). In comparison, Salisbury et al. reported that a student with a high socioeconomic status and high levels of capital are predicted to have a probability of intent to study abroad of 0.85. Furthermore, Salisbury et al. noted that differences in socioeconomic status were not necessarily mitigated by capital accumulation enough to change the probability of intent to study abroad. Therefore, while this model suggests a complex interplay of various factors, it also implies that socioeconomic status is a very influential factor in students' intent to go abroad.

Status as a student with a disability could affect the four contexts of the student choice proposed by Perna (2006). For example, in the habitus layer, status as a person with a disability places these students in a different demographic category. In the second layer, school and community context, structural support provided by the school or

structural barriers at the school could be different for students with disabilities who have different needs than students who do not have a disability. In the higher education context, the way the school markets study abroad or the culture of that school and its attitudes toward disability could affect students' decision-making. Finally, public policy in regard to disability would affect persons with disabilities differently than people who have not disclosed disabilities, and may therefore influence decisions regarding study abroad. Perna's model explains student choice based on the interaction of the four contexts, including the presence of structural barriers, along with perceived benefits. The current study relies on the idea that differences exist for students with disabilities in these four layered contexts, and therefore their perceived benefits and barriers to study abroad would also be different than those of other students.

### **Synthesis of Research Literature**

This section will discuss past research that relates to the current study. First, basic information about disability is discussed, followed by a definition of study abroad, benefits of study abroad, perception of benefits to study abroad, benefits of study abroad for students with disabilities, and perceived barriers to study abroad.

**Disability on campus.** The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are federal legislation that protect persons with disabilities from discrimination and uphold their civil rights (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). The ADA and the new paradigm of disability that it embodies have issued a profound challenge to American disability law and policy. This paradigm has raised the issues of creating a truly inclusive society; providing the same opportunities in employment, education, housing, health care, and public transportation provided for people with

disabilities as for the nondisabled; discussing equal rights and special needs in order to providing equal access (Heyer, 2007). The legal implications of the ADA and the new paradigm it provides have prompted changes on college campuses. Institutions of higher education are now required by law to provide reasonable accommodations for students so they can access materials and resources (Getzel, 2008). Colleges and universities have responded to this obligation by creating disability support services offices, through which students can request accommodations.

Even with legally mandated accommodations and support available, there is a lack of retention and persistence in college for students with disabilities (Getzel, 2008). Getzel argued that one of the contributing factors to low retention and persistence levels is the fact that students with disabilities must adapt to a system that is completely novel to them when they enter college. Getzel asserted that the postsecondary process for requesting accommodations, providing the necessary paperwork, and approaching faculty individually is very different from what students often experience in earlier grades. According to Getzel, students generally work together with their parents and teachers when they are in primary or secondary school, but once they reach college, they are expected to independently seek out accommodations and disclose their disability to support professionals and faculty. This process of disclosure can be daunting for students, and many choose not to disclose (Getzel).

In addition to the challenges associated with navigating a new system and learning how to appropriately disclose disabilities in order to receive accommodations, college students with disabilities face other challenges and barriers on campus. Denhart (2008) found that college students with disabilities outlined several different barriers to

their access to higher education. These barriers were an excessive workload, being misunderstood, difficulty with organizing concepts for reading and writing, trouble with written and oral comprehension, difficulty with verbal communication, and having a different way of thinking than non-labeled peers.

**Defining study abroad.** Study abroad programs can be defined as “educational programs that take place outside the geographical frontiers of the students’ country of origin” (Smith & Mitry, 2008, p. 237). Other defining characteristics of study abroad programs include being taught by faculty, sponsored by an academic department or institution, and providing opportunities for students to earn academic credit (McClellan & Stringer, 2009).

**Benefits of study abroad.** Study abroad has been described as “an educationally enriching and potentially life-changing experience” (National Survey of Student Engagement, NSSE, 2007, p. 16). Research has shown that study abroad has academic, social, and developmental benefits for student participants (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Chickering & Braskamp, 2009; NSSE, 2007). Chickering and Braskamp surveyed approximately 500 college students before and after they studied abroad during the 2008-2009 school year, and they found student progress in several areas, particularly in the growth of their knowledge base. Additionally, students in the study showed significant improvements in the amount of social interactions they had with unlike others, respecting and accepting different cultural perspectives, improving emotional confidence in complex living situations, development of identity and purpose, and in understanding what is true. NSSE reported similar benefits, showing that students who study abroad frequently demonstrate an increased understanding of other cultures and languages,

widen their view of world affairs, and develop in the area of self-understanding. Study abroad is considered a high impact experience by the NSSE. High impact experiences are defined by the NSSE as educational practices that demand the devotion of time by students, provide interaction with faculty and peers, include diverse experiences, offer frequent feedback, demonstrate how learning can be applied to various contexts, and takes place as part of a carefully planned, challenging curriculum.

According to the NSSE (2008), students who study abroad are more frequently involve themselves in “educationally purposeful” activities after returning to their home campus (p. 17). In addition to these gains, study abroad participants also utilized “deep learning approaches” after they had returned to their homes campuses (NSSE, p. 17). These students also tend to report getting more out of their college experience than their peers who did not study abroad.

**Student perception of benefits of study abroad.** Benefits perceived by students may be as important as the benefits that have been supported by prior research, as these perceived benefits are often the basis of student decisions about study abroad. Students in a New Zealand study placed a great deal of emphasis on the “new experience” aspect of study abroad. Doyle et al. (2009) reported the most important perceived benefit to be exposure to different cultures and languages, in addition to the opportunity to investigate opportunities to live and work abroad. Students also anticipated the benefits of being able to include the experience on their curriculum vitae, being immersed in another language, studying new subjects unavailable in New Zealand, and pursuing sport or other cultural interests (Doyle et al., 2009). Although the students interviewed had not actually participated in a study abroad experience, the significance of some of the perceived

benefits are important when considering the positive effects a study abroad program could have on students, and why it is important that all students have the opportunity to study abroad.

Students' motivations for studying abroad can shed light on their perceived benefits of participating in international study. According to a cross-cultural study by Sánchez, Fornerino, and Zhang (2006), American, French, and Chinese students demonstrated a great deal of similarity in their motivations for studying abroad, including a search for liberty/pleasure and a desire to improve one's social situation. These reported motivations elucidate specifically what students value about the opportunity to engage in international education. The research indicates that students are motivated to study abroad by novel experiences, and those novel experiences contribute directly to student growth and development, at least for students with AD/HD and/or LD (Doyle et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2006; Shames & Alden, 2005).

Perceived benefits of study abroad carry a theme of seeking novelty. This quest for novelty includes, for example, a search for new experiences and hoping to gain new cultural and linguistic insight while abroad (Doyle et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2006; Shames & Alden, 2005). Students see value in the "newness" of study abroad, and this novelty has been shown to positively affect at least one subpopulation of students (Shames & Alden, 2005).

**Benefits of study abroad for students with disabilities.** Study abroad programs can notably improve students' formal education experience in addition to expanding their opportunities for future employment (Smith & Mitry, 2008). Shames and Alden (2005) investigated the effect of study abroad on students with learning disabilities (LD) and/or

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). They found that students with LD and/or AD/HD who participated in short-term study abroad programs had positive cognitive, affective, and identity changes. According to Shames and Alden, these changes included increased intellectual and social curiosity, increased knowledge and skill, increased normalization, increased independence and self-confidence. These changes were attributed to the novelty and intensity of the students' programs (Shames & Alden, 2005). Shames and Alden reported that novelty, reported as a benefit of study abroad by Doyle et al. (2009) and Sánchez et al. (2006), was shown to positively affect students with LD and/or AD/HD by improving cognitive development and making learning more pleasurable for students.

**Perceived barriers to study abroad.** Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009) noted that little empirical research has been done on the factors that affect students' plans to study abroad. However, several studies have investigated students' perceptions of barriers to study abroad. These studies explored perceived barriers to study abroad for different student subpopulations: racial minority students (Brux & Fry, 2009), students with disabilities (Matthews et al., 1998), and international students (Doyle et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2006). Among the different populations studied, there were many common barriers to study abroad. The barrier most often cited was the cost of study abroad (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Matthews et al., 1998; Sánchez et al., 2006). Students from many different backgrounds were concerned about how they will finance study abroad programs. Another common barrier was family; connections and obligations to families were constraints when considering whether-or-not to travel abroad (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2006). Many students saw studying

in a country where a language other than English is spoken would be a perceived barrier (Brux and Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009). Aside from concern about cost, family, and language requirements, several other barriers and constraints were mentioned in the studies. These less often-cited barriers included lack of confidence, grade eligibility, concerns about adding time to one's tenure in college, fitting study abroad into their schedules, and general psychological and social concerns (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Sanchez et al., 2006). These barriers to student participation show that students have academic and personal concerns when considering whether-or-not to study abroad. Additionally, some of these barriers (e.g., time in college, scheduling) may be tied to the more commonly-cited barriers, such as finances.

Not all findings about barriers were consistent. Lack of knowledge was reported as a barrier to participation by Matthews et al. (1998) and Doyle et al. (2009). However, Brux and Fry (2009) found that overall, multicultural students were well-informed about study abroad programs and encouraged by their instructors to take advantage of such opportunities. This finding demonstrates well the need to continue research in the area of barriers to participation in study abroad programs. It suggests that different student populations may be better-informed of their institutions than others, or perhaps that different institutions inform students to a different extent.

Students perceived other population-specific barriers to study abroad in addition to lack of knowledge. For example, Brux and Fry (2009) reported that students from racial minority groups mentioned concerns about racism as a constraint to their participation in a study abroad program. Matthews et al. (1998) found that students with disabilities ranked lack of available assistive devices/services as one of the top three areas

of highest concern regarding study abroad. These population-specific perceived constraints highlight the importance of investigating the barriers perceived by student subpopulations, as they may differ from their peers' in other subgroups. Because few studies have investigated the perceptions of barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities, their perceptions are essentially unknown.

### **Summary**

Interpretivism suggests that individuals have unique realities based on their experiences and perceptions. From this theoretical perspective, the perceived benefits and barriers to study abroad could be unique for students with disabilities. The student choice construct (Perna, 2006) and its application to study abroad provides a basic lens through which these unique barriers and benefits to study abroad that are identified by students with disabilities can be viewed. Perna suggests that these perceived benefits and barriers do interact with students' cultural and social capital in the decision to go abroad. While many benefits to study abroad have been identified, including academic, social, and developmental benefits (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Chickering & Braskamp, 2009; NSSE, 2007), there are also barriers to student participation in study abroad programs. The most commonly cited barriers were cost, family, and language (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Matthews et al., 1998; Sánchez et al., 2006).

Students with disabilities face unique challenges in higher education, including challenges associated with disclosing disabilities in order to gain access to academic accommodations (Getzel, 2008). These unique challenges extend into the world of study abroad as well. Matthews et al. (1998) also identified a lack of assistive devices and services as one barrier specific to students with disabilities. This knowledge supports the

importance placed on providing opportunities for students with disabilities to study abroad. A better understanding of perceived barriers specific to students with disabilities is needed in order to better serve students.

## **Conclusion**

While Matthews et al. (1998) began to explore the barriers to study abroad that specifically affects students with disabilities, no other empirical studies could be found that directly addressed this topic. Understanding that students with disabilities face unique challenges within higher education, and that little empirical research has been done in this area, this study aims to address the gap in knowledge regarding barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities. By investigating the benefits and barriers that students with disabilities perceive in regard to study abroad, an appreciation for individual perceptions is taken with the interpretivist approach. The importance of these perceptions is further explored with Laura Perna's (2006) student choice construct and its application to the decision to study abroad.

## **Chapter 3: Research Design**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter described the literature related to study abroad and college students with disabilities. This chapter describes the design of the study, the subjects, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. A summary of the research design concludes the chapter.

### **Design of the Study**

This descriptive study set out to answer the following questions:

1. What benefits and barriers to study abroad are perceived by college students with disabilities?
2. How do perceived benefits and barriers to study abroad vary depending on the type of disability, gender, age, marital status, and area of study?
3. What accommodations are needed in order for students with disabilities to study abroad?

Past research on study abroad commonly used qualitative data gathered from individual interviews (Matthews et al., 1998; Shames & Alden, 2005) or focus group interviews (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009). Electronic surveys have also been used to study students' opinions about study abroad (Doyle et al., 2009). While this researcher originally preferred an interview method, time constraints led to the decision to utilize an electronic survey. In addition to time constraints, the researcher found an electronic survey to be appealing because it allowed for anonymity of participants. The primary investigator collected data from students with disabilities utilizing a cross-sectional survey which the primary investigator designed. The study was given exempt

status by the institution's Human Research Review Committee on February 4, 2012 and given file number 12-99-H.

### **Participants/Subjects**

**Location.** This study took place at a large public university in the Midwest. The university's student population is approximately 25,000, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2010) describes the university as primarily residential with a high transfer-in rate. The university has an international center that manages study abroad programming for the institution, as well as a disability support office that assists students with coordinating accommodations on campus. From Fall 2010 to Summer 2011, approximately 2.5% of the university's students studied abroad.

**Sampling.** The sample was a criterion-based sample (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003) drawn from all students who have disclosed disabilities to the disability support office on campus. The researcher began the sampling process by first contacting the disability support office in order to receive assistance in contacting this group of students. This population is comprised of 749 undergraduate and graduate students with various disabilities. While all of the students have registered with the university, only 629 of the students are considered active by the office because they are currently receiving accommodations from the university. The researcher chose to contact all students, both active and inactive, who have registered with the office in an attempt to include all students who might at some point receive accommodations.

**Subjects.** Only students at least 18 years of age were eligible to participate, so parental consent was not necessary. Sixty-four students began the survey; only 28 completed and submitted the survey. The sample was comprised of the 28 students who

completed the survey. Participants were free to quit taking the survey at any time or to omit survey questions if desired. Because all questions were optional, some items had fewer than 28 responses. There is no record of demographics of students with disabilities at the institution, so the participants' demographics cannot be compared to the population as a whole. The following chapter will provide detailed information on the subjects when describing the context of the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher gathered data by distributing an online survey that took students an average of 11 minutes and eight seconds to complete. Additionally, the researcher requested information about students with disabilities and study abroad from the institutional analysis office on campus. The office reported that it does not maintain data in either of these areas, and directed the primary researcher to the individual offices. Upon request, the international center provided information about the number of students who studied abroad from the university during the previous year. The disability support office provided information about the number of students it currently serves. Neither office had information specifically about how many students with disabilities study abroad each year from the university.

The survey questions were developed by the researcher. Following Matthews et al. (1998), the only empirical study of college students with disabilities and perceptions of barriers to study abroad found in the literature review, this study utilized a descriptive approach; therefore the Matthews et al. instrument was not used as a foundation for the instrument in this study. The Matthews et al. instrument was used to gather quantitative data by requiring students to rate the extent of various barriers and benefits. In this study,

because the primary researcher was seeking to understand what were the barriers and benefits of study abroad for students and not to what extent were they barriers and benefits, this approach did not seem appropriate for the current study.

The researcher included 16 questions in the survey instrument. Two of the survey questions screened participants for eligibility to participate based on age and consent. One question asked whether students had studied abroad or not. Eight of the 16 questions were open-ended. The researcher developed open ended items in order to elicit student perceptions rather than limiting choices to pre-selected options. Additionally, the researcher included five descriptive and demographical questions to be used in a crosstab analysis. The researcher pre-tested the survey in its online form with three non-students. In order to enhance the validity of the study, experts in study abroad research reviewed the survey in both its pilot and final form.

The researcher developed the questions using the research questions as a guide. First, the researcher wanted to know if the students responding had studied abroad or not, since this would affect their answers to the open-ended questions. The first open-ended question asked where students would go if they were to study abroad (or where they did go if they had already studied abroad). The researcher included this question to engage students and get them thinking about study abroad opportunities. Students who had studied abroad were asked to share the challenges they faced. Students who had not studied abroad were asked to share why. The researcher included this question in order to determine the perceived barriers to student participation in study abroad. Additional items asked about the benefits of study abroad, how the challenges related to study abroad are different for students with disabilities, and what the university and educational

institutions abroad can do to help students with disabilities face such challenges. The researcher included these questions in order to determine the benefits that students perceived to their participation in study abroad as well as how students need to be accommodated in order to go abroad. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey instrument.

### **Data Collection**

The director of the disability support office on campus sent a blind carbon copy email to 749 students who were registered with the center. The email included a brief summary of the study, along with a link to the online survey. A reminder email was sent to students after four weeks. The researcher made the survey available for a total of five weeks.

The researcher requested institutional data from the international center and disability support office about students with disabilities studying abroad and about the number of students who studied abroad from 2010-2011

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher read these responses to the open-ended items and made note of emergent codes for each item. After becoming familiar with the responses to open-ended questions, the researcher noted and recorded descriptive codes that emerged based on manifest content, or the topic of the data that was explicitly stated rather than implied (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011; Saldaña, 2011).

Similar codes were grouped into a theme. For example, the fifth survey item asked subjects to tell what they thought were the benefits of study abroad. Some of the emergent codes were new friends, a new environment, new culture, travel, trying new

things, and new perspectives. These codes were grouped together into the theme of “novelty.” The codes of growth, learning, and learning about self were grouped into the theme of “development.” The codes of firsthand experience, course credit, international education, and studying in one’s field were grouped together into the “academic” theme. Finally, career goals and networking were grouped together into the “career” theme.

For the seventh item, students stated why they had not studied abroad. Some of the codes were accessibility, visual impairment, difficulty of courses, disability, learning disability, and medical needs. From these codes, the researcher generated the theme of “disability-related barriers.” The codes of income, financial aid, debt, money, funds, and cost were grouped into the “financial barriers.” The codes of timing and freshman status were grouped into the readiness theme (i.e., students plan to study abroad but are waiting until they are ready). Three additional themes were directly taken from codes in the responses: little effort invested, few opportunities, and time.

For item eight, students explained how they thought challenges related to study abroad are different for students with disabilities. The codes generated were acceptance by others, society’s reaction, accommodations, services, resources, support, accessibility, absence of ADA, no difference, medication, medical care, prescriptions, caretakers, parents and academic status. These codes were grouped into the following themes: accommodations, medical care, acceptance, accessibility, depends on disability, and no difference.

Item nine asked what the home university could do to help students overcome challenges related to study abroad. The emergent codes were communication, dialogue, money, support, accommodations, advice, honesty, different requirements, more time,

education, flexibility, housing, transportation, scholarships, and tutors. These codes were grouped into the following themes: accommodations, money, communication, education, and flexibility.

Item ten asked what foreign (i.e., host) institutions could do to help students overcome the challenges they mentioned in item eight. The codes generated from participants were being open, dialogue, money, grants, accommodations, assistants, demonstrations, advertising, acclimation, support, awareness, acceptance, and supplies. These codes were grouped into four themes: acceptance, finances, accommodations, and information.

Finally, item eleven asked what specific accommodations would be necessary for students to study abroad. Codes generated were tutors, depends on situation, screen readers, Braille, transportation, translator, note taker, English, scholarships, medicine refrigeration, technology, housing facilities, medical facilities, family contact, and hospitals. These codes were grouped into six themes or types of accommodations: environmental (or accessibility-related), academic, financial, language-related, medical, and family-related. The themes for each item will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The researcher analyzed the remaining six survey items using descriptive statistics with the help of the university's statistical consulting center. The researcher and consultants determined frequencies for the number of students who had studied abroad and for the five demographic questions.

The codes for the question "Why have you not studied abroad?" were divided into two groups: barriers related to disability, and barriers that were not disability-related. The

statistical consultants used these two groups to generate crosstabs in order to see if variation among the reported barriers to study abroad was based on age, area of study, disability type, or marital status. Crosstabs were not generated based on gender because three categories of gender were reported (male, female, and transgender), which could be not be used in the two-by-two test needed to generate crosstabs. The chi square analysis used was Fisher's Exact Test, which essentially utilizes a contingency table to determine the significance of a relationship between different categories (Sango Otieno, personal communication, March 24, 2012). In this case, for example, is there a relationship between students from a particular age group and the type of barriers (disability-related or non-disability-related) they reported?

### **Summary**

In order to best explore perceptions that college students with disabilities have regarding benefits and barriers to study abroad, this study was conducted as a descriptive study. An electronic survey was distributed to students with the help of the university's disability support resources office. The researcher analyzed the open-ended questions for themes, from which common codes were derived. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and crosstab analysis, were used to analyze other items. Finally, the primary researcher requested information regarding the number of students who study abroad at the university from the international center and disability support office on campus to compare to the data collected.

This chapter described the design of the study. The following chapter will explain the results of the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the study design. This chapter begins with a description of the context, then describes the results of the study, followed by a discussion of the main categories of findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

### Institutional Context

Twenty-eight students participated in this study. These 28 participants were not required to answer each question, so some of the data reported is based on fewer than 28 responses. Seventeen of the participants self-identified as female. Ten self-identified as male, and one student self-identified as transgender. Eighty-nine percent ( $n = 25$ ) of the participants were single, and eleven percent ( $n = 3$ ) were married. Eighteen of the participants ranged in age from 18 to 23. The remaining 10 participants were 24 year old and older, with six students between 24 and 30 years old, two students between 30 and 40 years old, one student between 40 and 50 years old, and one student over the age of 50. A wide range of ages were represented, including traditional-age students and non-traditional students. See Table 1.

Table 1: Gender and Age of Participants

Gender	N
Female	17
Male	10
Transgender	1
Age	n
18-23	18
24+	10

Students identified their disability status, and when applicable, could identify with more than one disability. Students identified themselves as having learning disabilities (n = 10), AD/HD (n = 6), medical disabilities (n = 5), mobility or physical disabilities (n = 4), vision or blindness disabilities (n = 4), psychiatric or psychological disorders (n = 3), Autism Spectrum Disorders (n = 3), deafness or hearing disabilities (n = 2), a communication disorder, (n = 1), brain injury (n = 1), and panic/anxiety attacks (n = 1). In total, eleven types of disabilities were represented in the study. See Table 2.

Table 2: Type of Disability

Type of Disability	n
Learning Disability	10
AD/HD	6
Medical Disability	5
Blindness or Vision Disability	4
Mobility or Physical Disability	4
Psychiatric Disability or Psychological Disorder	3
Autism Spectrum Disorder	3
Deafness or Hearing Disability	2
Brain Injury	1
Communication Disorder	1
Panic Attacks/Anxiety Disorder	1

All of the university's eight academic colleges were represented. Students could select more than one college affiliation (for example, if students have two majors, a major and a minor, or are part of a secondary admission program). The university's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) was the most-represented unit with 13 of the 28 students claiming membership in this college. Four students were part of the university's College of Education, while five were members of the College of Health Professions. The remaining colleges had three or fewer representatives, including the College of

Engineering (n = 1), College of Interdisciplinary Studies (n = 3), College of Nursing (n = 2), College of Business (n = 2), and College of Community and Public Service (n = 3).

Table 3: College Affiliation

College	n
College of Liberal Arts and Science	13
College of Health Professions	5
College of Education	4
College of Interdisciplinary Studies	3
College of Community and Public Service	3
College of Business	2
College of Nursing	2
College of Engineering	1

Eleven percent (n = 3) of the participants reported having studied abroad, while the majority (n = 25) had not studied abroad at the time they filled out the survey. This means that most of the data gathered was reported by students who have not gone abroad on a study abroad program. See Table 4.

Table 4: Study Abroad Status

Studied Abroad?	n
Yes	3
No	25

Participants completed the survey electronically, and had access 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Therefore, the survey could have been taken in various environmental contexts. All students reported being 18 years of age or older before being allowed to enter the survey.

**Institutional data.** In addition to collecting data with the survey instrument, the researcher also contacted the university's institutional analysis office for general information about study abroad and students with disabilities. The institutional analysis

office reported that it does not keep records about students with disabilities or study abroad, and referred the researcher to the individual offices.

***Disability support office.*** The disability support office simply reported that that 749 students are registered with the office, and 629 are considered active due to the fact that they currently receive accommodations through the office. They did not have information about the number of students from those groups that study abroad. The office also did not provide any demographic information about students registered with the office.

***International center.*** The university's international center coordinates study abroad programs. The office reported that from Fall 2010 through Summer 2011, 611 students from the university traveled abroad. This translates into approximately 2.5% of the university's population that traveled abroad that year. The international center, like the disability support office, also does not keep a record of the number of students with disabilities who study abroad.

## **Findings**

**Preferred location for study abroad.** As an icebreaker, students were asked to share either where they studied abroad or where they would prefer to study abroad if they had the opportunity. Eighteen of the participants responded to this question with various locations. The most common locations were Europe (no specific location mentioned), China, Japan, Australia, and England. Other preferred locations were Tanzania, Russia, Italy, Africa, Spain, Norway, Denmark, El Salvador, France, Mongolia, Chile, and Ireland. Two students did not give locations, but provided criteria for where they would like to study abroad. One student said he would prefer "a hands on environment where I

could study ecological or natural resources related issues.” Another student simply said that the preferred place for study abroad would have to be somewhere warm. These varied responses provide insight to the type of programs for which students perceive the barriers and benefits they mentioned.

**Perceived benefits to study abroad.** The first research question for this study was: What benefits and barriers to study abroad are perceived by college students with disabilities? This question was addressed with two different questions. First, participants were asked to describe what they thought were the benefits to studying abroad. The responses for this item were grouped into five themes or types of benefits: novelty, development, timing, academic, and career. Novelty was mentioned by every participant in some way, making it the most frequent type of benefit. The novelty theme encompassed benefits like making new friends, exploring a new place, experiencing a new culture, trying new things, and travel. According to one participant, “Studying abroad gives you the opportunity to broaden your horizons, meet new friends, and network with students.” Another student stated that the benefits of study abroad are, “Exploring everything, opening your mind to new experiences.”

The development theme arose in three of the 25 responses. Development includes not only cognitive development, but personal development. This is exemplified through one participant’s response: “You learn more about yourself...” The timing theme encapsulates responses such as “[gaining experience out of the country is] harder to do later in life” and “while you are in college is the best time to [travel].” These responses indicate that students find study abroad a convenient way to travel during college, believing that it will be harder to travel after their time in college is done.

Another common theme was that of academic benefits. Academic benefits were described by four of the 25 students who responded to this item. Students mentioned the benefit of gaining experience in their field of study and receiving course credit while traveling abroad. One participant stated that a benefit of study abroad is “getting a firsthand look at what you’re learning about.” Another participant stated that “having an international influence on your education gives you more diversity to pull from and different experiences to ponder.” Students see study abroad as a way to enhance the learning that takes place on their home campuses with additional course credit, hands-on experience, and international influence.

The fifth theme that surfaced was career benefits, found in two of the 25 responses. “[Study abroad] will help my careers goals,” said one participant. Another mentioned the opportunity to network while abroad. Not only do students perceive academic benefits, but additional career-specific benefits of time studying abroad.

**Perceived barriers to study abroad.** In order to address the barriers aspect of the first research question, participants were asked why they have not studied abroad (which would apply to 25 of the 28 respondents), student responses fell into six themes: disability-related barriers, financial barriers, readiness, little effort invested, few opportunities, and time. Disability-related barriers were mentioned by nine of the 25 participants. “I had hoped to study abroad but due to financial struggles and uncertainty about the disability accommodations I would receive my adviser and I decided it was better for me to stay at [the home institution],” stated one student. Another disability-related barrier mentioned was society’s reaction to the student’s disability: “I was unsure how the people that lived there would respond to me.” This student had clearly

considered study abroad, but had decided not to go due to possible cultural differences regarding acceptance of disability.

Financial barriers, reported by 11 of 25 respondents, were the most commonly cited barriers. One student stated:

I do not have the financial aid nor the funds to go study abroad. I would like to avoid having to borrow any loans and furthermore I see no reason at this time to pursue studying abroad as much as I would love to in the future. I would like to complete my education by getting my diploma, debt-free if at all possible.

A financial barrier was the only type of barrier mentioned by six of the students. That means that for 24% of the participants, money is the only barrier they perceive.

Six participants said that they were waiting to study abroad until ready or that they were only freshmen students, indicating that they do plan to study abroad at some point during college. One student explicitly stated, "I am only a freshman but plan on studying abroad." Only one of these six participants also listed another barrier (money). This indicates that for 20% of the participants, readiness is the only barrier they perceive to study abroad.

Two participants reported barriers that fit into each of the categories effort, opportunities, and time. Two students stated that there were few opportunities in their majors. One of these students has declared a major in statistics; the other did not state a major. Two students also reported investing little effort into studying abroad. "I have not spent the time to look into it and am a little unsure about doing something like that being visually impaired," stated one student. Here, two types of barriers are mentioned:

disability-related and little effort invested. Finally, two students felt that they do not have adequate time to study abroad.

**Challenges for students with disabilities.** While not explicitly asking about barriers, participants were asked to elucidate what they thought were the unique challenges for students with disabilities in relation to study abroad. This question aimed to look at barriers from a new angle. Participants were asked: In your opinion, how are the challenges faced by students who study abroad different for students with disabilities? Participant responses can be described with six themes: accommodations, medical care, acceptance, accessibility, depends on disability, and no difference. Several responses that fit the accommodations theme mentioned worry that the foreign institutions would not provide adequate support or follow the student's accommodations. Students were concerned about unpredictability with their needs while abroad: "The amount of support or accommodations available away from home is unpredictable and highly variable from place to place." While all students who study abroad may face uncertainty, for students with disabilities, this extends to their accommodations as well, which can cause worry for students. One student boldly stated: "I feel like people with disabilities avoid studying abroad completely." Accommodations-related challenges were reported by eight of the 24 students who responded to this question.

Medical care was the second most frequent theme, with five participants reporting medical-related challenges such as prescriptions, caretakers, access to medication, and quality medical care. "When studying abroad with [a disability], where one goes is greatly impacted by the hospitals and medical care in the surrounding area. Someone who does not have a disability is not limited by these factors," stated one student.

Three students reported unique challenges related to acceptance, and three students also reported challenges related to accessibility. One student's response combines both themes:

We have the extra "baggage" of dealing with people in their society reacting to us. Many societies believe that is better to leave us in an institution or that [student with disabilities] are less than a human. Also, it is very likely that most places wouldn't be handicap accessible. A lot of countries do not have laws like the ADA that enforce it.

Participants recognized that the location of specific programs can affect the challenges faced by students with disabilities.

Two students stated that the challenges faced by students with disabilities are not unique: "Most of the challenges when studying abroad are the same for people with disabilities and everyone else," stated one student. Two other students reported that the challenges would depend on one's type of disability, and were not comfortable generalizing.

**Accommodations.** This study also sought to identify what accommodations are needed in order for students with disabilities to study abroad. In order to answer this question, participants were explicitly asked what accommodations would be necessary for them to study abroad. The responses fell into six themes or types of accommodations: environmental, academic, financial, language-related, medical, and family-related. Understandably, the accommodations mentioned were varied, due to variation in the types of disabilities students have. For example, several students said they would need public transportation due to mobility disabilities. These are examples of environmental

accommodations, which accounted for five of the 24 responses. Other participants, who have auditory processing disabilities, would need to study in an English-speaking country. This is an example of a language-related accommodation, which two students reported. In addition to the many different academic accommodations needed by students, two students also mentioned the need to see and/or talk to family on a regular basis. Five students expressed the need for various medical accommodations: medical refrigeration, access to qualified hospitals, and medical supplies. Four students stated that financial accommodations would be necessary.

The most common type of accommodation reported was academic. Eight students stated that they would need various academic accommodations in order to study abroad. One student stated, “I would need tutoring and to be able to have extended time and a reader for tests.” Academic accommodations varied, seemingly based on type of disability.

**University support.** Participants were asked what their home institution can do to help students overcome the challenges specific to students with disabilities. They were also asked what foreign (i.e. host) institutions can do to help with the same challenges.

*Home institution.* The suggestions participants gave for home institutions to help with challenges to study abroad included accommodations, money, communication, education, and flexibility. Eight students gave suggested accommodations for disabilities. Some of these suggested accommodations include tutors, guaranteed support, housing and transportation, and a lighter course load. The second most frequent theme was education. Students suggested that the home university educate its staff, and that the staff educate students about their opportunities to go abroad.

The third most frequent theme was communication; participants stated that they wanted their home university to communicate with other universities, engage in dialogue, and communicate to students that it is possible to study abroad. One participant responded, “I think that more people need to know that it is possible for them to do. I think that there are a lot of students that think they do not really have a chance to study abroad...” Here, the desired communication is to let students know what is possible. Two students frequently mentioned flexibility as a way for universities to aid in their ability to overcome challenges related to study abroad: “Arrange lighter load or flexible options within study abroad programs for students who cannot match the pace of those without disabilities for one reason or another.”

Money was mentioned by three students as something their home university could provide. One student suggested, “Make available scholarships or grants for study abroad programs to people attending GVSU half time or less due to a disability.” This student brings up the notion that some students with disabilities may be part-time students due to their disability status.

The last theme that arose was flexibility. Students would like their home university to be flexible with requirements for study abroad programs: “Arrange lighter load or flexible options within study abroad programs for students who cannot match the pace of those without disabilities for one reason or another,” suggested one participant.

*Host institution.* The suggestions for host institutions were similar and related to four major themes: acceptance, finances, accommodations, and information. The main difference from the suggestions for home institutions was the category of acceptance. Five of 22 participants who responded expressed concern about being accepted in other

countries: “Be aware of different mental illnesses people can have and not to be scared of people with them.” Not only do students want foreign institutions to become educated on the topic of disability, but they seek acceptance. Students believe that even with academic and other accommodations, there may be cultural challenges depending on the place of study. Students also mentioned that simply honoring accommodations would help with the challenges they face: “[The university could] offer the same services [and] allow students who need additional time on tests, note takers, or alternative ways of learning the assistance they need.” Additionally, students would like host institutions to provide them with financial support and information about their offerings. Two students made money-related suggestions. One student stated, “Perhaps provide more financial aid, grants and scholarships for students with disabilities who want to pursue their education within a study abroad capacity.”

The most frequently stated type of suggestion was related to accommodations: 12 of 22 respondents to this item mentioned accommodations. One student simply stated that foreign institutions should, “Offer the same services [as the home university].” Students want to know that they will be accommodated if they choose to go abroad.

Finally, students suggested that host universities provide information regarding offerings and accessibility: “If the host schools could provide a way to show students what they offer before students make the final decisions to attend, it would be comforting in that I would feel more prepared for what I should be expecting.” Students also suggested that former participants could share information with prospective students, and that host universities should better publicize how accessible their campuses are for students with disabilities.

**Relationships between variables.** In addition to the four themes of barriers previously discussed, the perceived barriers mentioned by students were divided into two groups: disability-related and non-disability-related barriers. These classifications were used in a crosstab analysis in order to determine whether certain demographic characteristics were related to the types of perceived barriers reported. A chi square test of independence was used to see if there was a relationship among the categorical variables and types of barriers reported. Fisher’s Exact Test is ideal because it was designed for use with small sample sizes (in this case,  $n = 26$ , since the two students who had studied abroad were not included). A  $p$  value  $< 0.05$  would indicate a significant relationship among the variables. A  $p$  value  $>$  or equal to  $0.05$  would indicate that there is no significant relationship among the variables.

The type of disability with which each student identified was used to see if the type of barriers reported were related to disability type. See Table 5. The researcher acknowledges that the small sample size of the current study affects the significance of the data provided.

Table 5: Disability Type and Type of Barrier

Type of Disability	n	$p$ value
AD/HD	6	1.0
Blindness or Vision Disability	4	0.591
Deafness or Hearing Disability	2	1.0
Brain Injury	1	1.0
Learning Disability	10	0.418
Medical Disability	5	1.0
Mobility or Physical Disability	4	0.591
Psychiatric Disability or Psychological Disorder	3	0.529
Communication Disorder	1	0.346
Autism Spectrum Disorder	3	0.529
Panic Attacks/Anxiety Disorder	1	0.346

Separate analyses were also done for age, marital status, and college affiliation. Because Fisher’s Exact Test utilizes a 2 x 2 format, age was divided into ages 18-23 and 23 and older. Marital status was divided into married and single, and college affiliation was College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) or other college. CLAS is the largest college on campus and houses the majority of the university’s majors in the humanities and sciences. See Table 6.

Table 6: College Affiliation, Age, Marital Status, and Type of Barrier

Characteristic	<i>p</i> value
College Affiliation	0.194
Age	1.0
Marital Status	1.0

The analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant relationships between any of the categorical variables and whether the types of barriers reported were disability-related or non-disability-related.

### **Summary**

The main types of benefits identified by participants were novelty, development, timing, academic, and career. The types of barriers that students described were disability-related barriers, financial barriers, readiness, little effort invested, few opportunities, and time. There was no statistically significant relationship found between type of barrier and age, marital status, college affiliation, or disability type. Students reported various accommodations that would be necessary for them to participate in study abroad experiences. These accommodations revolved around the themes of acceptance, finances, accommodations, and information. The following chapter will explore the results further and discuss their relevance to existing literature and the theoretical

framework of the study. Recommendations for future research and professional practice will also be given.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Summary of the Study**

Even as participation in collegiate study abroad programs has increased, students with disabilities remain underrepresented in these programs (Bollag, 2003; Matthews, Hameister, & Hosley, 1998). While some research has identified barriers to study abroad for various subpopulations of college students (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2006), only one study could be found that specifically investigated barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities (Matthews et al., 1998). There is a gap in our knowledge about the perceived barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities.

This study sought to answer the questions: what benefits and barriers to study abroad are perceived by college students with disabilities; how do perceived benefits and barriers to study abroad vary depending on the type of disability, gender, age, marital status, and area of study; and what accommodations are needed in order for students with disabilities to study abroad? For this descriptive study, the researcher utilized an electronic survey to gather data from a criterion-based sample (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003) of students with disabilities. The researcher generated codes from open-ended items and established themes based on these codes. Categorical and demographic data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, and a chi square test for independence was applied to see if these categorical data were related to the types of barriers reported by participants.

The researcher found that the benefits of study abroad perceived by students pertained to five themes: novelty, development, timing, academic, and career. Disability-related barriers, financial barriers, timing, little effort invested, few opportunities, and

time were the main categories of perceived barriers that participants reported. In the crosstab analysis, no significant relationship was found among any of the categorical variables (age, college affiliation, type of disability, and marital status) and whether the barriers reported were disability-related or non-disability-related. To date, the institution has kept no record of how many students with disabilities study abroad each year.

## **Conclusion**

The themes that arose in the content analysis of open-ended items demonstrate that students with disabilities perceive a range of both benefits and barriers to study abroad. The types of perceived benefits of participating in a study abroad program (novelty, development, timing, academic, and career) indicate that students with disabilities see value in such programs; not a single participant omitted this item on the survey. Non-participation in study abroad does not necessarily indicate that a student holds no interest in study abroad. Additionally, novelty was the most frequently reported type of benefit, which demonstrates that students believe study abroad will expose them to new people, places, experiences, and cultures.

Students also reported a range of barriers which fell into six categories: disability-related barriers, financial barriers, readiness, little effort invested, few opportunities, and time. These perceived barriers demonstrate that while students find value and can identify benefits to study abroad, they also recognize possible difficulties in participating in such programs. The barriers perceived by students with disabilities are both disability-related and non-disability related. The data support the idea that students with disabilities perceive barriers directly related to their status as a student disability; a unique experience from students who do not have disabilities. However, age, marital status,

college affiliation, and type of disability were not shown to have a significant relationship with the types of barriers that students perceived. Students with various backgrounds were likely to perceive both disability-related and non-disability related barriers. These data support the idea that there are mitigating factors that affect what students perceive regarding study abroad.

Finally, students have various unique needs in regard to the accommodations that would help them participate in a study abroad program. It is evident from the perceived barriers reported that some students view these accommodations as barriers to their participation in study abroad. Most of the common themes that arose for student accommodations probably would not surprise most people: environmental (accessibility-related) accommodations, academic accommodations, language-related accommodations, family-related accommodations, and medical accommodations. One type of accommodation that was perhaps more unexpected was financial. Although the data from this study support the idea that financial barriers are significant for students, financial accommodations may not be as common. In the context of this study, accommodations would typically be implemented due to disability status, not financial status. However, one student stated that because some students with disabilities might be more apt to be part-time students, they may not qualify for the same financial support as students who are full-time university students. This contributes support to the notion that students with disabilities have unique needs that should be researched and understood better in order to best serve this student population.

## **Discussion**

**Theoretical perspective.** This researcher investigated the perceptions of barriers and benefits of study abroad. Some of the barriers students perceive may actually exist (e.g. accessibility in some countries or the cost of specific trips). However, some of the barriers perceived by students may not actually exist and are only perceived. For example, perhaps the cost is lower than anticipated or timing in certain academic programs is truly not an issue. A view from the interpretivist lens makes it clear that whether-or-not the barriers are simply perceived or otherwise is not a matter of importance, since students will undoubtedly make decisions based on what they perceive or believe (Nudzor, 2009).

Furthermore, Laura Perna's (2006) student choice construct suggests that structural barriers influence student decisions. If a student perceives a structural barrier, whether or not it is really there, he or she may take that into account when making a decision about studying abroad. The barriers, benefits, and accommodations most important and salient to students should be taken seriously into account, because they are part of students' reality and what may ultimately affect their decision-making.

**Perceived Benefits to Study Abroad.** The common themes of perceived benefits to study abroad that arose in this study (novelty, development, timing, academic, and career) corroborate with what has been found in previous studies. The theme of novelty was reported by students in several studies (Doyle et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2006; Shames & Alden, 2005) as a perceived benefit of study abroad. It seems that regardless of the subpopulation, students seek new experiences as a direct benefit of studying abroad. Doyle et al. also stated that students viewed the opportunity to learn more about

work as a perceived benefit, which aligns with the finding in this study that career benefits are commonly perceived. Students in the current study often reported developmental benefits to study abroad, and the NSSE (2007) asserted that students who study abroad frequently demonstrate increased development and self-understanding. This supports the idea that some of the perceived benefits are actual benefits for students who travel abroad. Chickering and Braskamp (2009) also reported findings that corroborate with those from the current study. Students who studied abroad often demonstrated a greater knowledge base upon returning, supporting the idea that there are academic benefits to study abroad.

**Perceived Barriers to Study Abroad.** The data from this study support the results of Matthews et al. (1998) study that lack of assistive devices and services and financial barriers are significant perceived barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities. Although Matthews et al. reported that student responses “indicated little concern among participants regarding barriers related to disability” (p. 70), this researcher would assert that the availability of such devices and services is actually directly related to disability status, and therefore indicates that disability is a concern of students. Therefore, although reported differently, the two studies have similar findings. Additionally, the researcher found that financial barriers were often of concern to students with disabilities. Not only did Matthews et al. report the same finding for students with disabilities, but cost of study abroad was the most commonly reported barrier to participation in study abroad programs (Brux & Fry, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Matthews et al., 1998; Sánchez et al., 2006). Time and few opportunities to study abroad, common themes reported in the current study, were themes also discussed by Brux and

Fry (2009) in their study of multicultural students. Again, students from various backgrounds seem to share many of the same concerns regarding barriers to study abroad.

### **Recommendations**

The finding that students from various backgrounds share common perceptions of benefits and barriers to study abroad would indicate that the current research can inform future research and practice not only in regard to disability and study abroad, but for all students and study abroad. Nevertheless, because disability-related barriers arose prominently among the themes of barriers reported by students, the researcher's recommendations focus on the area of students with disabilities and study abroad.

**Best practices.** The researcher first suggests that institutions that sponsor study abroad programs gather data on its participants in regard to their status as students with disabilities. This data can inform both the international center and disability support office as they aim to provide accommodations for students. It can create a precedent and allow study abroad programs to plan in advance for disability-related issues that would otherwise be unforeseen. Additionally, the university would have a resource in the students with disabilities who have studied abroad, and could create a peer mentorship program that allows these students to share their experiences with other students with disabilities who may have concerns about studying abroad. This researcher acknowledges that such data would likely be self-reported by students, which may limit the extent to which such data could be collected.

In addition to communication among universities in order to ensure that students are properly accommodated, students are demanding that universities engage in more communication with students regarding opportunities to study abroad for persons with

disabilities. Such communication may even eradicate some of the perceived barriers students have. Perhaps students will not be as concerned about accessibility in other countries if they know that universities have been in communication with each other regarding this issue specifically.

**Future research.** The researcher recommends that additional research be done that further investigates barriers to study abroad for students with disabilities. Because of the low response rate with an electronic survey, the researcher recommends a qualitative interview or focus group as part of study design. Snowball sampling, in which participants suggest other participants, could be utilized in order to reach subjects that are difficult to access. The researcher also recommends that future research distinguish between graduate and undergraduate students, who may face different barriers or perceive different benefits to study abroad. Future research should compare the perceived barriers to study abroad for all students, and how they compare to those that are perceived by students with disabilities.

In the prior section about the theoretical perspective, this researcher asserted that the perceived benefits and barriers to study abroad that were reported by participants in the current study may or may not be actual benefits and barriers to study abroad. This claim lends itself to the suggestion that future research take a positivist approach and focus on the barriers that do exist for students with disabilities, rather than perceived barriers. While the perceived barriers are considered valid possible influences on student decisions to study abroad, research on what barriers actually exist might lead to the eradication of any false perceptions that students have. Such research could involve a comprehensive study of what both host and home institutions currently do to support

students with disabilities in study abroad programs, the barriers that these students might face, and the benefits current programs offer.

## References

- Astin, A.W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), 518-529.
- Bollag, B. (2003, Nov 21). Report urges federal effort to triple numbers of students studying abroad. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 50*.
- Braskamp, L.A., Braskamp, D. C., & Merrill, K. C. (2009). Assessing progress in global learning and development of students with education abroad experiences. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 18*, 101-118.
- Brux, J.M., & Fry, B. (2009). Multicultural students in study abroad: Their interests, their issues, and their constraints. *Journal of studies in international education, 14*, 508-527. doi:10.1177/1028315309342486
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2010). Institution profile. *Carnegie Classifications*. Retrieved from <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>
- Chickering, A. & Braskamp, L.A. (2009). Developing a global perspective for personal and social responsibility. *Peer Review, 11*(4), 27-30.
- Denhart, H. (2008). Deconstructing barriers: Perceptions of students labeled with learning disabilities in higher education. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 41*(6), 483-497.
- Doyle, S., Gendall, P., Meyer, L.H., Hoek, J., Tait, C., McKenzie, L., & Loorpang, A. (2009). An investigation of factors associated with student participation in study abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14*(5), 471-490.

- Fraenkel, J.R., Wallen, N.E., & Hyun, H.H. (2011). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Gaff, J. (2004). What is a generally educated person? *Peer Review*, 7(1), 4-7.
- Getzel, E. E. (2008). Addressing the persistence and retention of students with disabilities in higher education: Incorporating key strategies and support on campus. *Exceptionality*, 16, 207-219.
- Hameister, B., Matthews, P., Hosley, N., & Groff, M.C. (1999). College students with disabilities and study abroad: Implications for international education staff. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 5(2), 81-100.
- Heyer, K. (2007). A disability lens on sociolegal research: Reading rights of inclusion from a disability studies perspective. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 32(1), 261-293.  
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4490560>
- Institute of International Education. (2010). Students with disabilities, 2008/09. *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.
- Institute of International Education. (2011). Fast facts. *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.
- Marcum, J.A. (2001). Eliminate the roadblocks. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47(36): B7-B9.
- Matthews, P.R., Hameister, B.G., & Hosley, N.S. (1998). Attitudes of college students toward study abroad: Implications for disability service providers. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 13(2), 67-77.

- McClellan, G. & Stringer, J. (Eds.) (2009). *The handbook of student affairs administration* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2007). Experiences that matter: Enhancing student learning and success. *Annual Report 2007*. Retrieved from [http://nsse.iub.edu/nsse\\_2007\\_annual\\_report/](http://nsse.iub.edu/nsse_2007_annual_report/)
- NAFSA. (2009). Simon Study Abroad Bill introduced today. *NAFSA Press Room*. Retrieved from <http://www.nafsa.org>
- Nudzor, H.P. (2009). A critical commentary on combined methods approach to researching educational and social issues. *Issues in Educational Research, 19*(20), 114-127.
- O'Donoghue, T. (2006). *Planning your qualitative research project: An introduction to interpretive research in education*. London: Routledge.
- Perna, L.W. (2006). Studying college choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. XXI, pp. 99-157). New York: Springer.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 77-108). London: Sage Publications.
- Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: Understanding qualitative research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Salisbury, M.H., Umbach, P.D., Paulsen, M.B., & Pascarella, E.T. (2008). Going global: Understanding the choice process of the intent to study abroad. *Research in Higher Education, 50*(2), 119-143. doi: 10.1007/s11162-008-9111-x

- Sánchez, C.M., Fornerino, M., & Zhang, M. (2006). Motivations and the intent to study abroad among U.S., French, and Chinese students. *Journal of Teaching in International Business, 18*(1), 27-52.
- Shames, W., & Alden, P. (2005). The impact of short-term study abroad on the identity development of college students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 11*, 1-31.
- Smith, D.E., & Mitry, D.J. (2008). Benefits of study abroad and creating opportunities: The case for short-term programs. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching, 1*(1), 236-246.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). Students reported disability status by selected characteristic. *The 2012 Statistical Abstract: Education*. Retrieved from [www.census.gov/compendia/statab/](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/)
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2005). *A Guide to Disability Rights Laws*. Retrieved from <http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor65610>
- Williamson, K. (2006). Research in constructivist frameworks using ethnographic techniques. *Library Trends 55*(1), 83-101.

## Appendix A: Survey Instrument

*You are asked to voluntarily provide specific information to this web site. You may skip any question, or stop participating at any time. The information collected will be used for the stated purposes of this research project only and will not be provided to any other party for any other reason at any time except and only if required by law. You should be aware that although the information you provide is anonymous, it is transmitted in a non-secure manner. There is a remote chance that skilled, knowledgeable persons unaffiliated with this research project could track the information you provide to the IP address of the computer from which you send it. However, your personal identity cannot be determined.*

1. Have you studied abroad? (Yes/No)
2. If you responded “Yes” to #1, where did you study abroad? If you responded “No” to #1, where would you want to study abroad if you were to go?
3. In your opinion, what are the benefits of studying abroad during college?
4. If you have studied abroad, what were some challenges you faced in going abroad? (If you have not studied abroad, skip to #5.)
5. Why have you not studied abroad?
6. In your opinion, how are the challenges faced by students who study abroad different for students with disabilities?
7. What accommodations would need to be in place for you to participate in a study abroad experience? If you have studied abroad, what, if any, accommodations did you use while abroad?

8. What can the university or others do to help students overcome the challenges you mentioned.

9. Any other comments for the researcher:

10. According to the following classifications often used by disability support services, how would you classify your disability?

(1) AD/HD

(2) Blindness or vision disability

(3) Deafness/Hearing disability

(4) Brain injury

(5) Learning disability

(6) Medical disability

(7) Mobility or physical disability

(8) Psychiatric disability/Psychological disorder

(9) Speech and language disability/Communication disorder

(10) Autism Spectrum Disorder

(10) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: HRRC Approval Form



DATE: February 4, 2012

TO: Melissa Kutsche  
FROM: Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee  
STUDY TITLE: [297131-1] An Exploratory Study of Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Study Abroad for Students with Disabilities  
REFERENCE #: 12-99-H  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
EFFECTIVE DATE: February 4, 2012  
REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of materials for this research study. The Human Research Review Committee has reviewed your submission and approved your research plan application under Exempt review, category 1-2. This approval is based on no greater than minimal risk to research participants. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

**Please note that there are no federal requirement to retain study materials for exempt studies for 3 years past the completion date of the study.**

**Please insert the standard disclaimer statement for electronic surveys that is available on our web site and provided to you below as a courtesy.**

*Disclaimer: You are asked to voluntarily provide specific information to this web site. You may skip any question, or stop participating at any time. The information collected will be used for the stated purposes of this research project only and will not be provided to any other party for any other reason at any time except and only if required by law, which is extremely rare. You should be aware that although the information you provide is anonymous, it is transmitted in a non-secure manner. A knowledgeable person may be able to identify the computer from which the information was sent, but your personal identity is not otherwise discoverable.*

**Please also insert the following sentence into your information/consent documents as appropriate. All project materials produced for participants or the public must contain this information.**

***This EXEMPT research protocol has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University. File No. 12-99-H.***

Exempt protocols do not require formal renewal. However, we do confirm on an annual basis that the research continues to meet the criteria for exemption and that there have been no significant changes in activity or key personnel. By February 4, 2013, please complete the brief **Continuing Review Application Form**, available in your IRBNet Project Designer, or from our website, [www.gvsu.edu/hrrc](http://www.gvsu.edu/hrrc), and submit this form via IRBNet.

Once study enrollment and data analysis have been concluded, please complete the ***Closed Protocol Reporting Form*** on our website, and upload a saved copy to IRBNet.

This project remains subject to the research ethics standards of HRRC policies and procedures pertaining to exempt studies.

Please note the following in order to comply with federal regulations and HRRC policy:

1. Any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the *Change in Protocol* forms for this procedure. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in key personnel, study location, participant selection process, etc.
2. All UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS and SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS to participants or other parties affected by the research must be reported to this office within two days of the event occurrence. Please use the UP/SAE Report form.
3. All instances of non-compliance or complaints regarding this study must be reported to this office in a timely manner. There are no specific forms for this report type.

If you have any questions, please contact the HRRC Office, Monday through Thursday, at (616) 331-3197 or [hrrc@gvsu.edu](mailto:hrrc@gvsu.edu). The office observes all university holidays, and does not process applications during exam week or between academic terms. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

cc:

Appendix C: GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

ED 695 Data Form

NAME: Melissa Kutsche

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult/High Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> Elem Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> SpEd Admin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSAL	<input type="checkbox"/> G/T Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> SpEd ECDD
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Child	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid & H.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> SpEd EI
<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Tech	<input type="checkbox"/> Read/Lang Arts	<input type="checkbox"/> SpEd LD
<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> School Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> TESOL

TITLE: An Exploratory Study of Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Study Abroad for Students with Disabilities

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)

SEM/YR COMPLETED: Winter 2012

Project  
 Thesis

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL

Mary Bair

Using key words or phrases, choose several ERIC descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your project. ERIC descriptors can be found online at <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=Thesaurus&nfls=false>

- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Study Abroad     | 5. International Education |
| 2. Disabilities     | 6. Barriers                |
| 3. Education        | 7.                         |
| 4. College Students | 8.                         |