Asian American Students:

Study Abroad
Participation, Perspectives and Experiences

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Chapter 1:
Introduction

"Do you think people will be unfriendly to me in Italy because I'm Asian?" asked one of my students as she looked at me with fear and worry in her eyes. I struggled for the right words to alleviate her anxieties without undermining the importance of being aware of diversity issues overseas. The question, triggered by a statement she had read in her pre-departure handbook that addressed the possibility of racism while overseas, forced me to reflect upon my own experiences abroad as an Asian American. I questioned how relevant my experiences as a first-generation Vietnamese American abroad would be to her experience as a third generation Chinese American. Ever since I first studied abroad, I have pondered how my experience overseas compared to that of other Asian Americans and other students of color. Now as a study abroad adviser, this question has become even more important to attend to. Through completing this study, I hope to find a way to address some of the concerns and challenges that students such as the one above encounter when considering or preparing for a study abroad experience.

As the number of study abroad participants grows, statistics indicate that not all students participate in this opportunity equally. Professionals in the field have identified "underrepresented" groups, and in the last ten to fifteen years more efforts have been made to increase their enrollment as more colleges and universities adopt multiculturalism and diversity issues in their mission. In this study, a group is considered underrepresented in study abroad if the ratio of enrollment in study abroad is lower than the ratio of enrollment in higher educational institutions. Underrepresented study abroad participants include students of color, students with disabilities, gay/lesbian/bi-

sexual/transgender (GLBT) students, lower-income students, men, non-traditional students (older students, students with families), students from less educated families, and students majoring in non-liberal arts fields such as engineering and health sciences (Cole, 1991; Council on International Educational Exchange, 1991).

According to current national study abroad statistics, among the students of color, there is one group that is only slightly underrepresented. The Institute for International Education [IIE] releases annual data on national study abroad participation in a report entitled Open Doors (2000), and the National Center for Educational Statistics (2000) releases national data about the participation of Asian American students in higher education. Table 1.1 below compares the participation patterns of Asian American students in study abroad and in higher education. The difference in participation of Asian Americans in study abroad and in higher education varied only from 0.7% to 1.3% for the three years shown below.

Table 1.1

Academic Year	National % of Asian American Study Abroad Participants	National % of Asian American undergraduate students
1995-96	5.1%	5.8%
1996-97	5.0%	6.0%
1997-98	4.8%	6.1%
1998-99	4.4%	N/A
1999-2000	7.95%	N/A

Thus, while Asian Americans are still considered an ethnic "minority" when referring to their overall population and enrollment in US higher educational institutions,

they are only slightly underrepresented in study abroad. Unfortunately, data is not available from further back to document whether in the past Asian Americans may have been more noticeably underrepresented in study abroad, which might explain the widely held perception of their underrepresented status. At the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, the base of this study, Asian Americans are in fact becoming more underrepresented as the overall study abroad numbers increase. In the1997-98 academic year, the enrollment of Asian American undergraduates made up 7.24% of the student body (Van Voorhis, 1997), and the number who studied abroad made up 8.6% of study abroad participants (Cumming, 2001). In 1998-99, the percentage of Asian American participants dropped to 5.5% while the overall Asian American undergraduate enrollment increased to 8.2%, and in 1999-2000, the percentage of Asian American study abroad percentage dropped again to 4.4% while the total undergraduate population decreased slightly to 7.95% (Office of Statistical Analysis, 2001).

The differences in representation discussed above may partially be attributed to the unique concentration of particular Asian ethnic groups at the University of Minnesota, which do not parallel national distributions of Asian Americans in higher education. If this hypothesis is true, it further supports the need to examine Asian Americans not just as a whole, but the many distinct ethnic groups that it includes. The scarcity of research about Asian Americans and study abroad, particularly that which examines patterns of participation among different Asian American communities, has led to the development of this study. This study aims to reflect the diversity and complexity of the Asian American community in the context of study abroad participation. It will attempt to identify issues and attributes common across members of this ethnic group,

while at the same time highlighting its multidimensional and heterogeneous character, all of which may affect their decisions about study abroad and their experiences overseas.

As with any other ethnic group, myths and stereotypes abound about Asian Americans. Dubbed the "model minority," Asian Americans in higher education have inspired an entire body of research. Researchers and educators have more recently acknowledged the complexity of this community, and have begun to counter these stereotypes. The most significant findings show that not all Asian Americans are succeeding in education (Hsia, 1988; Park & Chi, 1999, Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993), and that differences in ethnic background and immigration history make the Asian American population more heterogeneous than previously believed (Chan, 1991; Kandelwal, 1998; Takaki, 1989; Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993; Wong, 1998). J. Scott Van Der Meid provides in his 1999 thesis a thorough summary of research on Asian Americans in higher education. In addition to touching upon the "model minority" myth and the difficulty in generalizing Asian Americans due to ethnic subgroups, he offers some clarity about how immigration waves have divided the Asian American community:

> Asian immigration to this country came in two very distinct waves. From 1849, the beginning of the California Gold Rush, to the Immigration Act of 1924, which cut off immigration from Asian countries, more than one million people entered the U.S., including peoples from China, Japan, India and the Philippines. The second wave of immigration occurred between 1965 and 1985 when the peoples of Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and others came to the U.S. The first group came primarily for economic reasons while the second wave saw more forced immigration from war-torn homelands. These separate waves of immigration have created a semi-divided Asian American community in which some Asian American families are more established in the U.S. than others. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Indian families have been here several generations now and are more assimilated into U.S. culture than recent refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. As a result, different socio-economic levels exist within a very heterogeneous community. (p. 3)

The combination of these factors may have an impact on the way Asian Americans perceive and experience study abroad, and is the basis of this paper.

Although the national statistics do not reflect that Asian Americans as a whole are highly underrepresented in study abroad, it is still helpful to examine the literature about other students of color who are more acutely underrepresented, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and American Indians. Review of these areas of research may reveal similarities and differences across groups for a more complete understanding of underrepresented groups, and how specific Asian American communities may share many similarities with other underrepresented groups. Literature about Asian Americans in higher education and their immigration and adaptation to the U.S. culture can also provide insights to the Asian American attitudes toward and experience with study abroad.

There is little research available about students of color and study abroad. Most of the research literature about minorities and study abroad focuses specifically on African American students. The Council on International Educational Exchange [CIEE] has published several reports on this topic, as well as a brochure addressing how to increase the enrollment of underrepresented ethnic minorities in study abroad programs. One of the reports, Minorities and Overseas Studies Programs: Correlates of Differential Participation (1991), examines the factors leading to lower participation of minorities in study abroad programs at Michigan State University (where the majority of ethnic minority students are African American) in the form of a survey. Black Students and Overseas Programs: Broadening the Base of Participation (1991), another document

published by CIEE, is a collection of conference papers on African American students and international educational exchange programs. Topics explored include student testimonials of their experiences abroad as Black Americans; strategies used by particular colleges to encourage their minority students to participate in international educational exchange programs; redesigning programs to fit minority students' special needs; and barriers that African American students face in study abroad programs.

The only existing research thus far about Asian American students and study abroad is Van Der Meid's Asian Americans: Factors influencing the decision to study abroad (1999). Van Der Meid's nation-wide research identifies factors that are most salient in influencing Asian American students' decisions to study abroad or to remain on campus. It is this important piece of research that has allowed this study's findings to be compared on a national level. The survey portion of this study has in fact been modeled after Van Der Meid's survey. Carroll's study (1996) also examines the participation of students of color in study abroad, and includes Asian Americans as a separate group for examination.

Other non-research documents about students of color abroad offer additional insights helpful in comparing across minority groups. Furumoto of the University of Pennsylvania compiled Diversity of Experiences: Voices of PENN Abroad Participants (1999) and Jamison of Brown University compiled Diversity Issues in Study Abroad (2001), both of which bring together quotes of students from various ethnic backgrounds to share their experiences abroad. In addition to the CIEE papers, there are a number of short articles written about African Americans, encouraging African Americans to study abroad (Transitions Abroad 1998, 1999). Anthologies such as Elaine Lee's Go Girl!

The Black Woman's Book of Travel and Adventure document African Americans' struggles and discoveries while overseas. The author has also included excerpts and reports of the participant survey results from a former University of Minnesota program of which she was a participant, the Office for Minority and Special Student Affairs[OMSSA] Summer Institute, that encouraged minority students to study abroad.

Purpose

This paper aims to expand the body of knowledge about Asian American students of color and study abroad. It will examine factors influencing study abroad participation among Asian American students, as well as improve our understanding of the experiences of Asian Americans who have studied abroad. Sharing this knowledge of what students experience while overseas may help in reducing one or more factors that hinder participation and consequently encourage more interest in this opportunity. Although the purpose of this study is not to generalize all Asian Americans' experiences and perspectives on study abroad, it will seek to identify trends, patterns or general cultural influences that are common to the members of this community as a whole, or portions of the community who share a common immigration or ethnic background. This paper has a particular emphasis on exploring generational and cultural factors that may affect participation in overseas study. This research hopes to identify at least some commonalities among Asian Americans, as diverse as this group may be, in their experiences and perceptions relating to study abroad. At the same time, it will reveal a different way of looking at study abroad through the multiple lenses of the Asian

American student community at the University of Minnesota, and hopefully be applied to Asian American students beyond the campus.

Research Questions

It is well known among the study abroad professional community that finances and academic fit are the two most frequently cited barriers to studying abroad for U.S. college students. There may also be a number of barriers that are not as frequently discussed or are not as widely known because they only affect certain student communities. This study will examine some of these factors in the context of the Asian American student community. It aims to explore:

What factors influencing the decision whether or not to study abroad are particularly salient to the Asian American student community at the University of Minnesota?

In addition to identifying the factors that affect Asian American students' participation in study abroad, this study will further analyze these factors to answer the following questions:

Do some factors impact certain communities of Asian Americans more than others?

What is the profile of the typical University of Minnesota Asian American student who studies abroad, and one who does not?

The underlying hypothesis of this study is that Asian Americans are more likely to cite culturally based reasons that affect their decisions against studying abroad than the other previously studied groups (African Americans and non-Hispanic White Americans).

Rationale

Results from this study can provide some practical knowledge for study abroad professionals to better serve all students, particularly through awareness of differences that exist between how students perceive and experience study abroad. One contribution is the gap it fills in international educational research literature. There is little existing research about students of color and study abroad, and even less about Asian Americans abroad. Because the majority of existing literature focuses primarily on one ethnic group—African Americans—it is not representative of all ethnic minorities. The findings may be used to misinterpret the experiences of the other ethnic groups not included in these studies. This study will broaden the perspective to include a more in-depth understanding of Asian American students and add a new dimension to the existing research about students of color. In the realm of general study abroad research, it will contribute to a more complete picture of how individuals may benefit from studying abroad.

Professionals can use this knowledge in two ways. Knowledge of how decisions are made about studying abroad can help study abroad professionals' efforts to more effectively attract students of color by making their approach more inclusive and salient to particular populations. One approach does not work for all groups, so the information from this study could suggest new ways for international educators to promote study abroad, focusing on different aspects of study abroad, tailored to the target group. An example of this type of marketing strategy are the Global Seminars at the University of Minnesota, short-term study abroad options designed to appeal specifically to freshmen by highlighting concerns that first year students have (relationship with a professor, small

class size, exploring a major). Not only will it help change the actual promotional strategies, but the findings can also help program providers make effective changes in programs offered in order to attract a wider variety of participants through adjusting features such as program length, content, location, and price range.

Increasing and supporting the participation of students of color who study abroad, as well as increasing the diversity of this group to include more variety in ethnic backgrounds, can hopefully change the media-perpetuated image of Americans in other countries. A more diverse representation of Americans abroad may expand the concept of what an American is to the host country nationals. Currently, most study abroad participants from the U.S. are White females, many of whom are from middle to upper class families, portraying an inaccurate image of Americans to other countries (Cole, 1991). It even portrays a skewed image to fellow U.S. nationals. If students of color are not well represented in study abroad, it will reinforce the belief that study abroad is an opportunity for the White and the rich—a luxury that few ethnic minorities can afford.

International educators may also use the findings to better prepare students for their sojourn abroad, and to continue to offer support during and after the program. Better understanding of the students can help study abroad advisers provide more sensitive and informative advising, and directly address the concerns of students of color. This will help students form a more realistic expectation of what the experience in the target culture will be like. Information from this and similar studies may also provide a base upon which to create student-oriented support materials specifically for students of color and reducing the overly general feeling that students get from currently available materials. Although study abroad pre-departure handbooks such as those provided by

CIEE and the Institute for the International Education of Students [IES] (2000) provide some good general issues for students of color to consider while abroad, there is a lack of available resources that address these issues more in depth. Program providers are beginning to realize the importance of making specific information available, as reflected by CIEE's latest edition (Fall 2001) of their Vietnam pre-departure handbook that includes a special note to Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese) students planning to study in Vietnam.

This and other research about students of color, students with disabilities, and GLBT students strive to "bridge the gap" between multicultural and international education. Multicultural education aims to address issues such as righting wrongs, having a voice, and sharing privilege, and the leaders are typically people of color. International education's leaders tend to be White, and its agenda tends to consist of acquiring a global vision, and making the world a better place (Bennett, J. & Bennett, M., 1994; Birkel, 1994; Carter, 1991). In the past, the two disciplines were seen as two separate spheres. With more people of color involved in international affairs, the spheres have overlapped, and are continuing to share more common space, as there is increasing realization that both international and multicultural education share a common mission of intercultural understanding and appreciation of difference (Bennett, J. & Bennett, M. 1994). As with other disciplines, the lack of people of color as role models in the international arena sends the message that they do not have any business or place being in it. Many ethnic minorities feel (or are pressured by their peers to believe) that their main responsibilities and concerns should remain with domestic diversity issues. There is a perception that internationalism is for the elite, which to many equals wealthy White

people who already have what they need in terms of equality and respect domestically, and thus have the "luxury" and energy to focus their efforts outward, beyond the national border (Noronha, 1992). It is hoped that this paper will highlight benefits of study abroad that are meaningful to Asian American students and other students of color. With international experience gained from an overseas experience, these students may gain new skills and knowledge to deal with issues of multiculturalism back in their home country, and feel an equal obligation to, and a role in, both arenas.

Minorities, too, can benefit from increased understanding of aspects of various cultures abroad to help themselves and others understand the characteristic behaviors and thoughts of domestic minority groups (Bennett, J. & Bennett, M. 1994). Many people, including minorities, assume that all people of color are naturally interculturally sensitive (Bennett, M., 1993), simply because they have had to live with two or more cultural identities. The same false assumption is made of people who have lived or studied abroad. Someone who has studied abroad may benefit from an understanding of domestic multicultural issues, and students of color may benefit from an international perspective of cultural differences.

In line with the mission of the Black/Multicultural Professionals in International Education [B/MPIE], the completion of this project may hopefully encourage other people of color to become involved in international education. The researcher has certainly witnessed the importance of her role as an adviser to the students of color at the University of Minnesota who study abroad. As international educators, the blending of these fields can help create new versions of well-known developmental models, such as Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity, and the culture shock model. This expanded

understanding of the nuances in students' study abroad experiences gives study abroad professionals tools to better prepare students for their study abroad experience.

Methodology

A questionnaire of multiple choice and open-ended questions was distributed to 500 randomly chosen Asian American (self-identified) undergraduate students of post-sophomore status at the University of Minnesota. This survey was used to determine what factors influenced the students' decision to study abroad or to remain on the home campus. The survey also was a starting point to learn about students' experiences abroad as students of color and/or as Asian Americans.

Next, nine of the Asian American University students who returned the survey were interviewed. These interviews probed for more detailed explanations of the challenges that Asian Americans face while studying abroad and to learn how these students have dealt with the challenges. For the students who did not study abroad, the interview allowed the researcher to obtain more in-depth explanations for their decision not to participate in an overseas study program.

Organization

The following chapter consists of a review of the literature about the participation of students of color in study abroad and related research about Asian Americans in education and cultural values. The next chapter discusses the research methods used, including questionnaires and interviews with Asian American students, followed by a

chapter explaining the findings. Chapter Five discusses conclusions and implications for future research as well as practical applications of the study's findings.

Chapter 2:
Literature Review

Although the combined topic of Asian Americans and study abroad can seem limited in focus, and not provide many options or sources for a literature review, there is an abundance of related research and other writings that can provide some much needed background on this oftentimes misunderstood population of students. In particular, literature about Asian American cultural values and adaptation issues as well as their participation and performance in higher education provide a foundation for understanding their decisions regarding study abroad. The body of literature about students of color and study abroad is helpful in providing additional insights about the concerns and experiences of ethnic minorities, whether as a comparison or to draw parallels.

The author has decided not to include research or writings about other underrepresented groups and study abroad, including students with disabilities and gay/lesbian/bi-sexual and transgender [GLBT] students. GLBT issues tend to be very different in nature from those of students of color, being that a number of their issues are not visible, whereas ethnic minority students do not have the choice of hiding their ethnicity when abroad. Students with physical disabilities may face similar challenges of inaccurate assumptions and discrimination based on how they look, and GLBT students may face discrimination when host nationals learn of their sexual orientation, but in general the discrimination revolves around very different types of issues. Insights about the difficulties these groups of students experience could be helpful in understanding the barriers that ethnic minorities face in studying abroad, but these will not be discussed in this particular study.

The Asian American Experience in the U.S.

This discussion of Asian Americans is difficult to do precisely, because the definition of Asian American can be fairly fluid. Most discussions of Asian Americans refer to those of East and Southeast Asian origin (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai, Cambodian, and Hmong). Some also include Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Indian. However, one Indian student interviewed by Nesheim and Smalkowski (1996) did not identify as Asian American. Blank and Slipp (1994) echo this perspective, arguing that Indians have a different racial and religious background. They are grouped with Asians due to their geographic location, but have less in common with the Southeast and East Asians. In fact, up until 1980, the U.S. Census grouped Asian Indians as Caucasian (Lee, 1998). For the purposes of this study, however, the researcher will include Indian Americans in this study's definition of Asian American, as many Indian Americans self-identify as Asian American, and indeed share in many of the cultural characteristics. They are now also grouped with Asian and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. Census and in University of Minnesota ethnic background statistics.

Another challenge in researching Asian Americans is that the variation of the ethnic subgroups make generalizations difficult. In fact, according to the Population Reference Bureau, Asian Americans are the most diverse racial minority group, made up of 11 different ethnic groups (Martin & Midgley, 1999). Much of this variation appears in the form of distinct cultural beliefs, traditions, and religion. Differences in generation in the U.S. are also thought to have a great impact on the diversity of Asian Americans. The longer-established Asian Americans (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and some Filipino)

have more in common with one another in terms of educational profile than with the more recent immigrants from Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia (Hsia, 1988; Wong, 1998). Even within the newer refugee-turned-immigrant population, there are two distinct waves. The first wave arrived prior to 1976, and was comprised of mostly Vietnamese with more education and marketable skills than the second wave of Vietnamese boat people, Laotians, Cambodians and Hmong who were less educated and lacked industrial skills (Wong, 1998).

Regardless of ethnic origin and immigration history, many non-adopted Asian Americans maintain a strong ethnic affiliation and do share a number of cultural tendencies to varying degrees (Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993). These common cultural characteristics include a collectivistic orientation; respect for parental authority; and a high emphasis on education. Among the newly arrived Asian Americans, clearly defined gender expectations is also a common cultural attribute.

The collectivistic orientation, as defined by Kluckhohn (1961), is perhaps most apparent in Asian Americans' high regard for family. Many live in multigenerational households. The pooling together of economic resources of Vietnamese American household members reinforces the importance of family unity of interests (Kibria, 1993). The traditional Asian family structure idealizes and encourages interdependence in parent-child relationships rather than self-reliance and independence (Kibria, 1993; Leadership for Asian Pacifics, Inc. [LEAP], 1997; Pedersen, 1997). Thus, the pursuit of study abroad may be seen as a selfish endeavor, as it fosters the development of independence and individualism, and from the Asian parents' perspective does not seem to offer direct benefits to the family unit. This may be especially relevant to recent

immigrants in "survival mode" whose primary concern is establishing themselves in the new country (Van Der Meid, 1999). Study abroad would disrupt the system by taking away an important family member for an extended period of time. Being accustomed to having family nearby, Asian American parents (particularly those of Southeast Asian origin) may also worry about how their child will survive without that support network (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993; Van Der Meid, 1999).

Deference to parental or other elders' authority may also have an impact on Asian Americans' decision to study abroad. Because children (even adult children) are expected to obey parents and other authority figures such as teachers, children are consequently not encouraged to question and think critically (Kibria, 1993; LEAP 1997). Asian American children tend to be reluctant to rebel, for fear of upsetting parents and bringing shame to the their family. Thus, if the parents are not supportive of study abroad, Asian American children may be more reluctant to push their wishes any further and just remain on campus to maintain harmony within the family.

New immigrant parents may also be stricter than U.S.-born parents, often not allowing their children to date until after finishing high school or college. (Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993). This strictness is especially apparent in gender expectations, particularly of females. Many Asian American parents do not allow their daughters to stay in the residence halls because they would be too far from parental supervision. For Vietnamese Americans, the maintenance of the sexual reputations of young women in the family remain important, and is closely monitored by the community. Even women who came to the U.S. without close family members made sure to find guardians who could protect their sexual reputations (Kibria, 1993). Those who did come to the U.S. with

their parents were closely under their supervision to ensure against sexual promiscuity. Many Vietnamese blame the rise in premarital sexual activity among the urban youth in Vietnam (and subsequent increase in abortions) to the unsupervised after-school activities set up by the Communist government who encouraged children to distrust their parents' advice (Kibria, 1999). Studying abroad, to many Vietnamese parents, would thus be the ultimate example of unsupervised activities for their daughters. Smetanka (2000) reveals similar protective attitudes of the Hmong culture, quoting a student who informed that "Some Hmong parents are so protective of their daughters that they won't let them study on campus at night" (A10). This is understandable reasoning, given that in traditional Hmong culture, if a boy takes a girl out and does not bring her home before a designated time (usually by evening), the daughter is disowned by her parents and has little other choice than to marry the boy. Vang Lee, Coordinator of the Asian/Pacific American Learning Resource Center at the University of Minnesota, explains that due to this tradition, one often sees many young (fourteen- or fifteen-year-old) girls already married. This cultural mindset, more common among recent immigrants, may help explain why some Asian American females do not study abroad.

The high value placed on education is perhaps the most widely shared cultural value among Asian Americans, and has remained the strongest from generation to generation. Unfortunately, studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that this emphasis on education is declining among the younger and more established generations (Blank & Slipp, 1994; Melting Pot Discussion in Washington Post, 1998; Smetanka, 2000). Not only is education emphasized as the key to success, respect, and equality in America, but Asian American students are also encouraged to find the safest and most direct routes to

success. This means that faster graduation, majoring in "safe" subjects such as the sciences and business, and taking only the necessary courses to graduate are encouraged by parents, while non-academic extra-curricular activities are given low priority (LEAP, 1997). Data showing that more Asian Americans attend college full-time than any other ethnic group may support this "direct route" focus to higher education (Huang, 1998; Lee, 1998). Some students are even exempt from household chores and forbidden to work for fear that it will interfere with schoolwork (Diamond, 1988). Students are pressured by guilt of how much their parents sacrificed so that their children could obtain a top-quality U.S. education, so they must always feel indebted to their parents and obey their wishes (Diamond, 1988). From this aspect of Asian American culture, it is easier to see how study abroad can be seen as "extra-curricular" and as a "distraction" to a student's academic progress.

Many studies and articles have attempted to explain, explore, document or refute the myth of Asian American success in higher education and in the workplace. In 1997, 42% of Asian Americans ages 25 and older had college or professional degrees, compared to 25% of non-Hispanic Whites (Lee, 1998). Overall, Asian Americans' incomes tend also to be higher than other ethnic groups, including non-Hispanic Whites. At the same time, many new refugees such as Lao, Cambodian and Hmong, can barely earn enough to stay above the poverty line (Lee, 1998; Wong, 1998). 1990 U.S. Census data indicate that 6-10% of Japanese, Filipino and Asian Indians lived in poverty, compared to 25% of Vietnamese, 42% of Cambodian, and 63% of Hmong immigrants (Paisano, 1993). Per capita income of Japanese Americans in 1990 was nearly eight times higher than Hmong Americans (Paisano, 1993). In 1990, nearly two thirds of

Cambodian, Hmong and Lao immigrant adults did not have a high school education. Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants also had a high percentage of adults without a high school education. In contrast, only 13 % of Japanese Americans did not complete high school. 1990 statistics show that only 4% of Hmong 25 and older had at least a bachelor's degree, and currently, an estimated 66% of Hmong who enrolled at the University of Minnesota do not graduate, although most were successful in high school (Smetanka, 2000).

Studies such as those referenced above show that on the surface, the Asian American population is more successful than other minority groups in the U.S. Upon closer examination, it reveals a great disparity among the ethnic subgroups. The high visibility of the more successful (and well-established) Asian Americans have placed the less successful subgroups at a disadvantage, since their needs are likely to be ignored on the assumption that they do not need any special assistance (Chan, 1991; Van Der Meid, 1999). This feeling of psychological isolation and the perception of being ignored results in many Asian American students failing or dropping out of school (Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993).

For the Hmong in America, cultural values often counter educational success, despite the culture's high regard for education (Chan, 1994). Females are encouraged to marry at a young age, children are expected to carry out full responsibilities at home (cooking, cleaning, caring for siblings) while staying on top of their coursework, and children are expected to help older relatives with tasks such as paperwork or translating (Nesheim & Smalkowski, 1996; Smetanka, 2000). Like many other new Asian immigrant groups, the community does not promote success in females. Oftentimes the

male child's education and career goals take priority over a female child's, and the eldest child is burdened with more responsibilities to help the family (LEAP, 1997; Nesheim, 1996).

It is clear from the above statistics and cultural insights that to claim that Asians are successful in higher education is an oversimplification. The number of Asian Americans struggling to succeed in higher education are far too great for it to be an accurate generalization. Hsia (1988) explains how such great variations in educational attainment of Asian Americans have arisen: "The disparities in educational levels among Asian Americans are the result of historic, structural and cultural differences among groups. Each wave of Asian immigrants has landed at a different period in American history. They arrived with different educational backgrounds that reflected the forces that drove them from their native lands and drew them to America." (p. 15) Hsia's statement points out the importance of the historical conditions in addition to cultural factors in discussing the variance in levels of educational attainment among Asian Americans. The examples noted above illustrate the importance of acknowledging the subgroup variations among Asian Americans when undertaking a study such as this one. For the purposes of this study, references will be made about Asian Americans but it is not expected that they will apply to all. The assertions the author makes will most likely only apply to certain groups. Although these findings may only apply to some segments of the population, it still merits discussion as it is a factor that is salient to many members of the Asian American community.

Students of Color and Study Abroad

As mentioned earlier, the literature about students of color and study abroad is scarce. Most research focuses on African Americans, perhaps because there is the most disparity between their representation in higher education and in study abroad (12.1% versus 2.8%, respectively, in 1993-94. (Rubin, 1995 in Carroll, 1996). The existing research also focuses heavily on the *factors* that influence the participation of students of color because of their general underrepresentation in study abroad.

The only study that compares all four major U.S. ethnic minority groups (African American, Asian American, Chicano/Latino, and American Indian) and non-Hispanic White Americans is Carroll's Participation of Historically Underrepresented Students in Study Abroad Programs (1996). Carroll's multi-ethnic study explores interest in and perceived barriers to study abroad, and is important in that it allows for a comparison across groups, including the White majority. The study found that overall, financial concerns were the most frequently reported barrier, followed by timely graduation and lack of general information about study abroad (p. 1, abstract). Carroll points out that certain factors that may discourage Caucasian students from studying abroad are often of greater concern to underrepresented students. In line with this statement, Carroll's findings did not reveal any "new" barriers among the minority students—just varying degrees of importance or saliency.

Carroll's survey results indicated that African American and Chicano/Latino students were much more interested in studying in a country that reflects their ethnic heritage (52.9% and 51.9% respectively, compared to 15.4% of Asian Americans. The study also suggested that African American students were much more likely to hesitate to

study abroad due to concerns about their ethnicity and nationality. In terms of ethnicity, 42% of African Americans, 7.7% of Asian Americans, 7.4% of Chicano/Latino, 8.3% of American Indian, and 5.8% of Caucasian students expressed concern. Similar patterns existed for nationality concerns, with 47.4% of African Americans, 11.5% of Asian Americans, 14.3% of Chicano/Latino, 16.7% of American Indian, and 11.5% of White students concerned about nationality (p. 3, Data Analysis). From this study, it may appear that fear of racism and concern about their nationality abroad is not a widely perceived barrier among the Asian American student community.

Another significant finding in Carroll's study suggests the possible relationship between interest in study abroad and the possibility that one's family would not be supportive of the student to study abroad. 12.5% of respondents interested in study abroad cited their family would not encourage them to study abroad, whereas to 37% of those not interested in study abroad felt their parents would not be supportive. This data suggests that family support is important in fostering interest in study abroad. In the case of Asian Americans, one might apply this rationale together with the cultural attribute of high respect for parental authority to hypothesize that parental support is highly influential in students' consideration of study abroad. Although Carroll acknowledges the importance of separating minorities into subgroups for more accurate analysis, the uneven response rate to her survey made it difficult to generalize her findings (52% of the White students responded, compared to a response rate of only 12-28% among the minority groups). Carroll attributes this to possible lack of interest in the subject. The low response rate may also be due to a higher rate of apathy, or the perception that study abroad does not apply to them.

Hembroff and Rusz's 1993 study also identifies factors leading to lower participation of minority students in study abroad, basing their study at Michigan State University. The survey found that African American students were significantly more likely than White and other minority students to indicate lack of finances, concern about language and cultural differences, lack of faculty/adviser support, and fear of discrimination as barriers to studying abroad. Other minorities were twice as likely than African American and White respondents to indicate the need to work and lack of family support as a contributing factor. The study also investigated attrition rates as a factor in study abroad participation among African Americans, who had the highest attrition rates of the groups compared in the study. Hembroff and Rusz never explain why all the other minority groups are grouped together in the study, thus it is difficult to interpret the results to determine if any of the barriers are particularly applicable to the Asian American student population. Although the authors do mention that the study focuses primarily on African Americans (possibly because there are more African Americans than any other ethnic group at Michigan State University), they do the other minority groups an injustice by grouping them all together.

Carter's article (1991) highlights additional barriers that minority students face, including program site availability, minority role models in the international education field, and family support, again with particular emphasis on African American students. Carter asserts that by not having sites outside of Europe, it sends the message that the cultural origins and identities of minority students are not important. Having minority role models in international education help students feel that their constraints are understood and their efforts are supported. The author also mentions that many minority

parents do not see the value of an international experience to their student's education, and worry about their child being far away from a support base in case he or she experiences racial discrimination. In addition, Carter cites a study done at Northeastern University that shows only a "fraction" of minority respondents cited family, social, or university constraints to studying abroad, but does not indicate if certain minority subgroups tended to cite these constraints more than others. This lack of detail about the specific nature of the familial and social constraints in the Northeastern University study downplays its importance in understanding the barriers to study abroad. Although few students mentioned the relevance of these constraints, it still merits further exploration in order to gain a complete understanding of the spectrum of barriers certain ethnic minorities encounter.

In her opening address of the 43rd International Conference on International Education (1991), Cole offers an important consideration for those who research students of color or any other group of students. While she realizes that all minorities share some factors about study abroad participation, she admits more research needs to be done about individual groups before she can speak confidently about those similarities. Thus, from her experiences as an African American in the U.S. and her studies abroad, she focuses on African Americans abroad, being careful not to speak for all. Consistent with Carter, Hembroff and Rusz, Cole identifies the four most significant barriers to study abroad for Black students: finances, faculty and staff support, fear of discrimination, and lack of family and community support.

CIEE acknowledges all of the barriers mentioned above, and offered some solutions in a brochure entitled Increasing the Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Study

Abroad (1991), targeted at study abroad professionals. Major areas of action included in the brochure are: funding (scholarships), reassurance and promotion (support that study abroad is for minorities, too), and widening the choice and availability of programs (expand sites to include more non-European sites, and include shorter and less expensive programs). Drawing upon the findings from various research, this document offers an example of how a better understanding of barriers can be used constructively to improve the current participation levels of students of color.

Van Der Meid's study (1999) is the only known study to date that specifically addresses the participation of Asian American students in study abroad. He begins by addressing the misperception that Asian American students are underrepresented in study abroad, citing that they participated in overseas programs (5.1%) "nearly as much as" they were enrolled in higher education (6.0%) in 1995-96. (p.2) He also reaffirms the importance of using caution when generalizing Asian Americans, since they are such an ethnically and socio-economically diverse group spanning several generations in the U.S.

He begins with a discussion about influencing factors for the general student population (including finances, lack of knowledge about study abroad and foreign languages, concern about how study abroad fits into curriculum, and limited support services on campus). He then discusses the African American population, again highlighting finances, fear of discrimination, and fear of being in an unknown area with no support network as major reasons salient to the African American population.

Van Der Meid's web-based questionnaire divided respondents into Asian Americans who have studied abroad, and those who have not. The results revealed that Asian Americans participate in study abroad for the same reasons as the general

population, including the desire to learn a new culture and improve language skills. The respondents' field of study or family make-up did not appear to be a highly influential factor, although gender was. The Asian American community showed similar patterns of gender imbalance as the general population, with male Asian Americans being even less represented than males in the general study abroad population. Van Der Meid found that Asian Americans were far less likely to hear about study abroad from their peers than non-Hispanic Whites, and were not as concerned about encountering racism abroad as Black students were, which was consistent with Carroll's study. Van Der Meid identified finances and the fear of studying abroad not fitting into their academic program as the most influential barriers in Asian American students' decisions regarding study abroad, and that lack of family support ranked lowest as a factor.

The results of this study suggest that the length of residing in the U.S. was not a factor. Both groups of respondents (Study Abroad and Non-Study Abroad) had similar ratios of representation by generation, contradicting the assumption that many Asian Americans do not study abroad because a large percentage of the students are from newly arrived families. Van Der Meid does however state later that the profile of his respondents tended to reflect primarily the more established and socio-economically successful ethnic Asian groups, such as the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Americans. He acknowledged that his study could not be applied to the general Asian American population because the ethnic distribution of his respondents did not parallel that of Asian Americans in the U.S. Other data from the study showed that Vietnamese and Filipino Americans were the least likely to study abroad among his respondents, which is consistent with the belief that the newer ethnic groups in the U.S. may show greater

reluctance for their children to study abroad when the family's focus is on getting established. He noted that findings for the Vietnamese students, who had immigrated to the U.S. less than 30 years ago, supports the hypothesis that length of residency in the U.S. affects study abroad participation. However, he did not offer a possible explanation for the Filipino Americans who have a longer, but more mixed, immigration history. It appears that although some of the data in this study did not support it, Van Der Meid seems to maintain the strong possibility of a connection between length of residency in the U.S. and study abroad participation. This study will consider this a possible factor, and explore more in depth how recent immigration may affect study abroad decisions.

There are several drawbacks to Van Der Meid's method of data collection. By placing the survey on the web and soliciting responses via the internet, the sampling was not random—anyone who wanted to complete the survey could. The author did address the potential criticisms of using an entirely web-based survey, arguing that the vast majority of college students are proficient in using computers and navigating the world wide web. However, he did not address the fact that many do not readily have access to computers for leisure activities (such as completing surveys), especially in dormitories or labs where computers are designated strictly for completing coursework. Many still do not own a computer with internet access at home. The results of this study demonstrated this unevenness in sampling in which the respondents did not include enough diversity in ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The respondents were mostly middle-class and attended private four-year institutions, were Japanese or Chinese American, and included few respondents representing the more recent immigrant and refugee groups such as the Hmong or Lao.

Van Der Meid's study indicated a much higher percentage of students interested in sites in Asian countries than the Asian Americans surveyed by Carroll. However, Van Der Meid's sampling method of contacting Asian American student organizations listed on the web, whose members are likely to be pre-dispositioned to having a strong identity with and interest in their cultural heritage, was more likely to yield respondents interested in studying in a country reflecting their heritage.

Van Der Meid's study paves the way for further research about the way Asian Americans perceive and experience study abroad, and in doing so provides more in-depth information to make comparisons across ethnic minority groups about the factors influencing study abroad participation. It provides a profile of the longer-established Asian Americans (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and some Filipino Americans), and serves as a beginning in the analysis of the diversity of Asian Americans. This study reinforces the importance of taking into consideration the individual ethnic subgroups and immigration history when studying Asian Americans. Van Der Meid examined many factors that may influence Asian Americans' decisions to study abroad. Although the results of this particular study indicate that some factors do not have a strong impact (e.g., generation, family support), it is possible that if the study were replicated under different conditions with a different segment of the Asian American population, these factors may become more significant.

The actual experiences of Asian Americans who study abroad have not been explored in depth. As mentioned earlier, most research on students of color and study abroad focuses on factors of participation. What students actually experience while abroad, as with study abroad outcomes, may be harder to measure quantitatively. The

only information available is through students' accounts of their experience, though one must be cautious in using participants' interpretations of events and perceptions. Though not necessarily "scientific" in approach, these essays, journal articles, and interviews provide some insights into how a student of color's experience abroad may differ from the general population.

As with the factors influencing study abroad participation, most writings about students of color abroad have centered around the African American experience abroad. Upon analysis of these writings, several interrelated themes have emerged: racism, exoticism, identity issues, and heritage-seeking.

Racism is perhaps the most anticipated experience among African Americans. Many students report receiving negative, harassing comments and blatant racial discrimination, such as being refused accommodation based on skin color (Ganz, 1991, Sanders 2000). However, in some cases, the fears of racism can be unfounded, causing unnecessary anxiety, as in Shirvington's warm reception in Korea despite her White colleagues' "warnings" of racism in Asia (1997). For several students, finding a local Black community helped give them the support they needed while abroad (Dungy, 1991; Tucker, 1991). Organizations such as Voices of Change, based in Spain, also provide support to students who encounter racism while abroad (Sanders, 2000).

African American students also report being viewed as "exotic" when they are in countries without a large Black population. The students receive curious stares, requests to touch their hair and skin, and "pick-up lines" from people who, for example, "have never kissed a colored girl before." (Ganz, 1991; Tucker, 1991). This type of attention is not always received negatively by the participants. Some realized that the stares and

comments were out of pure curiosity, and even admiration of her "Africanness" (Shirvington, 1997). Another woman remarked:

> They were entranced by my hair, the color of my skin, my speech, and the way I moved. It was a startling type of attention, so different from the charged emotional attitudes that a person of color in the U.S. comes to expect. I was taken off guard. Yet there was something liberating about this attention. It took me a while to figure out the feeling of liberation came from being viewed particularly rather than categorically and it was most likely to occur when I was far from America. (Jefferson, 1997, p. 270)

These experiences give students a positive view of themselves, instilling pride in their heritage and their difference.

Sojourning abroad has led many African Americans to reflect on their identity both as Americans and as African Americans. When students of color go abroad, many are seen by locals as simply "Americans" (not as a "hyphenated" American), which to most is a liberating feeling (Blake, 1997; Carew, 1993; Lazard, 1997). Removed from the American stereotypes of Black Americans, students feel they can be themselves and can be known individually. Some students may feel hurt that the African part of their identity is not acknowledged. Unfortunately, the negative stereotypes of Black Americans have also traveled across national borders and students find themselves experiencing prejudice based on images of "violent Black American males." (McFarlin, 1998) Students often find themselves feeling the "duty" or pressure to be the involuntary spokesperson and represent all Black Americans, having to correct commonly held opinions about Blacks (Ganz, 1991; McGruder, 1997; Tucker, 1991). For some, the frustration is explaining that North Americans aren't all White (Hoff, 2000). One student commented that despite the sometimes "insane" questions asked about African Americans, "for once in my life I was grateful to present myself and my race as I wanted

to. I returned from studying abroad feeling more positive about my identity and who I was" (Hoff, 2000). In addition, the students may gain a feeling of empowerment by going to non-predominantly White countries and seeing people of color in positions of power (Dungy, 1991) and become conscious of the larger communities of Africans around the world.

The last common theme among African Americans who study abroad is heritage-seeking through studying in predominantly Black countries, particularly to Africa. Hayes' article (1996) explains that going to Africa is a nostalgic idea for Black students, but many experience a rude awakening upon arrival because they have the wrong idea about where they are going. Much to their surprise, to many students, going to Africa is not a homecoming. Jefferson (1997) reports this feeling of disappointment in the students she accompanied to Ghana, who had high expectations of connecting with the Africans and that their African hosts would embrace their Black American visitors. Instead, they were seen as any other foreigner, regardless of whether or not they shared the same skin color. "In Africa," Jefferson noted, "a common skin coloring was apparently not enough to establish kinship, while back in the States a difference in skin coloring was more than enough to negate kinship." (p. 272) Another author felt ridiculed by an African bellhop, who laughed at how Black Americans try to dress in African clothes and celebrate African holidays without really understanding the cultural values of what it means to be African, and therefore he did not consider them to be true "African Americans" (Perry, 1997). On the other hand, others feel welcomed and are able to connect intimately with local Africans because of their African heritage (Angelou, 1997; McFarlin, 1998).

For Asian Americans, many of these themes are also expressed in students' comments about their time abroad. Although some Asian Americans did encounter racism while abroad (Sanders, 2000), many more have reported there is generally not as much animosity toward Asians overseas, in comparison to Blacks or Arabs (Hoff, 2000). This may be due to Asian Americans being less visible in worldwide media; or that the "model minority" stereotype has also traveled overseas; or that the culture has its own "model minority" stereotype of Asian immigrants. Some students even experience reverse racism, where they are able to avoid foreigner discrimination because they are able to blend in more easily, and even get lower prices when shopping than other foreigners (usually in Asian countries) (Furumoto, 1999; Office for Minority & Special Student Affairs, 1994).

The notion of being visible or invisible in certain cultures (Paige, 1996) can have a profound impact on a student's experience overseas, and is often reported by Asian American study abroad participants. In some countries, particularly in Europe, Asians are a novelty and females especially receive unwanted sexual advances. However, in countries with large Asian populations, Asian American students have felt ignored and that they are not much of a novelty or as interesting as White, Black, or Hispanic-American students, even when the hosts are aware that they are Americans (Hoff, 2000). An Indian American student in Japan noticed that Americans had a high level of status, but as a colored American, he did not have as much status. (Hoff, 2000) Some are not even considered "real" Americans because of the host culture's narrow view that Americans are either as White or Black, with nothing in between. (Hoff, 2000) Another

student was not as welcomed in English teaching jobs because it was assumed he could not speak English as well as the "native" White Americans (Van Der Meid, 1999, p. 63).

Similar to African American students, Asian Americans also wrestle with their dual identities while abroad. The lack of acknowledgement by their hosts that they are truly Americans, or that they have a dual Asian and American identity, can make students feel even more marginalized (Bennett, J., 1993). Most Asian Americans are not as far removed from their culture of origin as the majority of African Americans, and many do still identify with their Asian roots. The students who visit sites reflecting their ethnic heritage experience a mixture of positive feelings (because they can blend in easily and not be a "spectacle") and discomfort (because they feel they do not have an excuse for their ignorance of the host culture and their ethnicity) (Furumoto, 1999). Because they look like the host nationals, they are treated like the locals and are expected to behave and think accordingly, putting them in an uncomfortable position (Furumoto, 1999). Like African Americans, being in another country can also help Asian Americans feel positively about their identity by seeing Asian people in the media and in important social and political positions (Office for Minority & Special Student Affairs, 1994).

One additional factor that may affect an Asian American's study abroad experience is prior intercultural experience. Paige (1993) asserts that those with prior intercultural experience have developed coping strategies and intercultural communication skills that help in the initial stages when abroad. Because few of the Asian Americans in the sources cited above mention their difficulties in cultural adaptation while abroad, one might assume that they tend to adapt more easily than the general population. Most Asian Americans are recent immigrants—70% are post 1970

immigrants (Lee, 1998)—and thus one can assume that many have had the experience adapting to a new culture in the U.S., or have acted as cultural brokers in helping their older relatives adapt. Of course, since there is no way to measure severity of culture shock, it is difficult to document whether or not Asian Americans experience less culture shock than other ethnic groups when studying abroad.

Having a background in Asian cultural values, the Asian American experience in higher education, and the participation of students of color in study abroad will be helpful in understanding the particular concerns of Asian Americans regarding study abroad. The next chapter will discuss the methodology of this study, taking into consideration the issues discussed above in effort to better understand Asian Americans' perspectives on international educational experiences.

Chapter 3:
Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology used for this study, including a discussion of the working terminology; research methods used; study population and setting; instrument design; data collection and analysis techniques; and reliability and validity of the study.

Operational Definitions of Key Concepts (Terminology)

This study of Asian Americans and study abroad uses terminology mostly from the fields of international education and multicultural studies. Some of the terminology, although familiar, may not be interpreted consistently among all readers, and thus some clarification is necessary. Although *study abroad* is widely agreed upon among international education professionals, the author will provide a definition for the sake of clarity. This study will refer to *study abroad* as any academic program of any length completed outside of one's home country (namely, the U.S., as all study participants are U.S. residents). The author has made one exception to this definition, which will be explained in the following chapter.

On the other hand, there are numerous interpretations of *Asian American*, as discussed earlier in the literature review. This study will use the term *Asian American* to include Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, Cambodian, Filipino, Asian Indian, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi descent. This definition is consistent with that used by the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as the University of Minnesota's Institutional Research and Reporting department. This study also includes Asian Americans adopted by non-Asian American families, but in some

cases their responses will not be included in the analyses, as their particular situation may not apply to certain concepts.

References to other minority groups may also be confusing. This study will use the terms *African American* and *Black* interchangeably (as both are currently acceptable to the African American community) to signify Americans of non-Hispanic African descent. *Chicano/Latino* and *Hispanic American* are also used to refer to Americans of Mexican or Latin American heritage. *American Indian* will include indigenous Americans as well as Alaskan natives. *Caucasian* , *White*, or *non-Hispanic White* will refer to Americans of primarily European heritage. As sources vary on the most accepted forms of reference to ethnicity, this study uses a more open approach to ethnic description.

The study will often refer to ethnic groups within the Asian American communities in their compound form (e.g., Vietnamese American), but occasionally only by their Asian ethnicity (e.g., Hmong) as it is less cumbersome in some situations when discussing many ethnicities at once. Since many Asian Americans often describe themselves simply as Hmong, Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean, it is currently considered acceptable to refer to these groups as such. Students who have one Asian parent and one White parent will be referred to in this study as *Amerasian*.

Based on the descriptions above, *student of color* or *ethnic minority* students are students who self-identify as African American, Asian American, Chicano/Latino, or American Indian. It is important to note that *underrepresented* is not synonymous with *minority*, as in this study these are two different concepts. A student can be an *ethnic minority* without being *underrepresented*, as in the case of some Asian Americans. Thus,

in this study, *under-representation* in study abroad will be used to refer to a case where the enrollment of students in study abroad is less then the enrollment ratio in higher education. [Carroll's study introduces the concept of *"historically" underrepresented*, which may apply to Asian Americans in study abroad who may have been more underrepresented in the past, but nevertheless still experience some of the challenges similar to other groups who are currently underrepresented.]

Characterization of the Research

This study uses a multi-method approach, combining elements of quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative portion, consisting of the survey, adds scope and breadth to the study, and produces data that can be generalized. The qualitative component consists of a set of interviews of the survey respondents, which provides in-depth clarification and expansion of the survey responses. This research utilizes the two-phase design as described by Cresswell (1990, p. 177) and Strauss & Corbin (1998), using first a quantitative approach to analyze the survey results and search for significant trends, then using a qualitative approach to find themes in the open-ended survey responses and interviews.

By combining both methods, the study is able to identify factors that influence Asian American students' participation in study abroad, examine the extent of influence of these factors and to explore the complexity of the reasons behind the responses given. This multi-method approach was chosen due to the nature of the research questions. In addition to inquiring about the distribution of the factors influencing participation (quantitative), this study aims to acquire more details about the variation of experiences

of students abroad and the reasons behind their decisions (qualitative). [Qualitative analysis allows the researcher to make use of a significant part of the data, which is in the form of open-ended survey responses and interviews, as well as non-technical literature for the literature review (articles, reports, etc.).] The qualitative data, as pointed out by Patton (1990), may also be used to validate the results of the quantitative data. Van Der Meid's and Carroll's studies, which used a primarily quantitative approach, found some factors to be more significant than others. In doing so, they overlooked the importance of further understanding the "less significant" factors and how they impact a student's decision regarding study abroad. Although not statistically significant, some of these factors may be uniquely found among Asian American students. Qualititive research upholds that regardless of level of distribution, the mere existence of variation is significant.

This study is primarily exploratory in nature. It searches for factors that may discourage participation of Asian Americans in study abroad, and for themes in the experiences of participants. It is a partial replication of Van Der Meid's Factors Influencing Asian Americans' Decisions to Study Abroad, but conducted on a local scale with a different Asian American student population. The majority of the survey questions were based on these found in the Van Der Meid survey, with slightly altered wording and additional questions designed to focus on the influence of a student's cultural, family, and immigration background on his or her participation (or non-participation) in study abroad. For example, this study includes more questions about the student's home environment, including (perceived) parents' level of strictness and degree of cultural maintenance in the home. The questions inquiring about the reasons for

attending the university and the reasons for deciding not to study abroad come directly from Van Der Meid's survey. However, the University of Minnesota version contains additional choices designed to test the hypothesis of cultural reasons playing a role in students' academic decisions, such as the importance of being close to home; cultural appropriateness of studying abroad; and fear of having to go through cultural adjustment again.

Context of the Study

The University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus is a public, four-year land-grant university. Asian Americans are the largest ethnic minority group on campus, comprising approximately 7% of the student population, followed by African Americans, who make up about 3% of the campus student population. (These figures are taken from an average of the past four academic years, from 1996 through 2000.) Most of the Asian American students are children of recent immigrant parents, or are themselves immigrants, including Vietnamese and Hmong. Vang Lee, Director of the Asian Pacific American Learning Resource Center (APALRC), estimates that of the approximately 1000 undergraduate Asian American University of Minnesota Twin Cities students who are registered with the center, nearly 50% are Vietnamese, and approximately 30% are Hmong (2001, May). Chinese, Korean, Lao, Cambodian make up most of the remaining 20% of the students they advise. Lee suspects there are many more Chinese American students on campus, but they have not registered with the center.

Study abroad ethnicity statistics from the Global Campus Study Abroad Office at the University of Minnesota show a gradual decline in the percentage of Asian American

participants over the last three years. In 1997-98, Asian Americans comprised 8.6% of the University's study abroad participants (and were not underrepresented). In 1998-99, Asian Americans only made up 5.5% of participants, and in 1999-2000 only 4.1% of the study abroad participants were Asian Americans. Therefore, it can be interpreted that Asian Americans are currently underrepresented in study abroad at the University of Minnesota.

The population surveyed consists of University of Minnesota (Twin Cities campus) Asian American undergraduate students of Junior or above class standing (n=1045). For the questionnaire, a random sample of 500 students from this population was generated by the University's Office of Planning and Statistics. Nine of the survey respondents were then interviewed individually, with an effort to maintain a balance between males and females, a representation of ethnic origin, and students who have and have not studied abroad. Students of Junior or above standing were chosen because by that point in their academic career, most students will have made the decision to study abroad, whereas in comparison, many Freshmen or Sophomores may not have even considered the idea.

Instrument Development

The survey used for this study is based from a combination of Van Der Meid's 1999 web survey and, to a lesser extent, Hembroff & Rusz's 1993 survey, to which the researcher added some additional questions and modifications to inquire more specifically about cultural background influences. The interview protocol was generated

by elaborating upon some areas of the survey, and after a brief review of the survey responses.

After approval from the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Research Board, the survey and interview questions were piloted on friends and family members of the researcher to test for clarity of questions and length control, as well as for relevance of the research questions. Unfortunately, only 5 pilot subjects were used, below the researcher's ideal of ten, which resulted in few modifications prior to start of actual data collection.

Researcher's Role

The researcher's own cultural background, as well as her experiences with study abroad and as a study abroad adviser may have an influence on how some of the data is interpreted. Having a background in an Asian culture, and first-hand experience as an Asian American student studying abroad, the researcher has provided some insights to some of the data interpretation, but at the same time may also include some natural biases.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were mailed out to the sample in early October 1999, during the fourth or fifth week of the semester. The timing was crucial, because it needed to be late enough in the semester to obtain an accurate mailing address, and early enough so that students were not too busy with other academic and social commitments. Due to financial and time constraints, follow-up postcard reminders were not sent out as

originally planned. To increase the response rate, and to motivate more students who were not particularly interested in the subject to participate, the researcher offered a $50 cash prize drawing as an incentive. The surveys were briefly reviewed and minor adjustments were made to the interview protocol.

Respondents who had agreed to be interviewed were divided into two groups, study abroad and non-study abroad, to check for representation. Due to the small number of respondents who expressed interest in being interviewed, all were called or emailed to set up the interview throughout the following spring semester (2000). Some respondents who had indicated interest on the survey in being interviewed did not respond to the follow-up interview invitation, therefore the group of students interviewed was not as varied as the researcher would have preferred. Interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted in various locations on campus, including conference rooms, the researcher's office, or other offices on campus after normal work hours. Eight of the interviews were conducted within two months of one another.

Data Analysis

The completed surveys were first divided into two groups: students who have not studied abroad and students who have studied abroad. The Non-Study Abroad group was further divided into ethnic groups, including Korean adoptees, Amerasian (racially mixed Asian and Caucasian American), Indian, Chinese, Korean, Lao, Filipino, Hmong, Vietnamese, and other (ethnically mixed Asians who do not identify primarily with any group, no distinct ethnic group identified, or those who are the only ones from their ethnic group to respond). The responses were all tabulated as individual ethnic groups,

then as a composite of all ethnic groups. For the Non-Study Abroad group, there were two composite tabulations—one that included the Korean adoptees' responses, and one that did not. Because there were few responses for the Study Abroad group, responses were not analyzed by ethnic group.

For the open-ended survey questions, common themes were generated in order to group the responses into categories. Some questions had to be discarded in the final analysis because not enough responses were collected (many students skipped it), or there was too much confusion about how to respond to the question. For example, students who studied abroad were asked to identify any barriers they had encountered as they were making the decision to study abroad, but many did not seem to understand what the question was really asking. Perhaps many respondents left this question unanswered because they felt it did not apply to them, since they had succeeded in overcoming those barriers.

Interviews were transcribed during summer and fall 2000. They were then coded and categorized into themes. The analysis of the interview transcriptions searched for themes found in the survey portion, as well as new themes that may have emerged through the interview process. As few students were interviewed, the results were not used to make generalizations, but only to deepen understanding of the survey responses and illustrate various points.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

To ensure reliability, the surveys were all administered at the same time for all the students in the sample. Of course, the environment in which the student completed the

survey, as well as his or her mood or frame of mind at that particular moment may have impacted the results and were beyond the researcher's control. For the interview portion of the study, all but one interview was conducted during spring semester 2000, and one was conducted several weeks following final exams, in June 2000. Due to space availability constraints, all the interviews were not conducted in the same environment, although the majority were conducted in the researcher's office. Because of the exploratory goal of the interview, it was not as important to maintain exact uniformity in the interview environment.

To test for validity, in the interview portion, the researcher used Krueger's suggestion to paraphrase and summarize throughout and at the end of the interview to check the accuracy of the interviewer's understanding of the informant's responses. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, this was not done for all subjects.

Limitations

The exploratory nature of this study does not lend itself to being generalizable beyond the University of Minnesota. Given the small cells of ethnic groups among the respondents (most being no larger than n=13) and the overall small number of study abroad respondents (n=17), generalization even within the U of M Asian American student population would not be accurate. In addition, because the ethnic and economic profiles of the U of M respondents may not be representative of national patterns, even if the number of respondents were much greater, one must be cautious about applying the results of this study to the Asian American population of other institutions.

Chapter 4:
Summary of Data

Survey Results

Of the 500 surveys mailed out to Asian American students of third year and above status at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus (total population n=1045), 95 were returned completed. 34 of the surveys were returned to the researcher due to inaccurate addresses. Thus, the response rate of the surveys mailed to the correct address was 20.4%, and the total response rate of all surveys mailed out was 19.0%. One student of Persian origin had returned the survey, but did not meet the definition of Asian American for the purpose of this study, and thus her responses were discarded, making the number of surveys used for analysis 94. One of the respondents who indicated that she had studied abroad actually went on a National Student Exchange program to Hawaii, thus not meeting the definition of study abroad used in this study. However, because she indicated that she experienced some cultural adjustment to Hawaiian culture, and was treated differently than other American students studying with her, the researcher decided to use her responses for analysis.

Demographics

Of the 94 respondents, 81.9% (n=77) of the respondents had not studied abroad (henceforth referred to as the Non-Study Abroad, or Non-SA, group), and 18.1% had studied abroad or had concrete plans to study abroad the following term (and will be referred to as the Study Abroad, or SA, group). 73.4% of all respondents were female (n=69), and 26.6% (n=25) were male reflecting an imbalance of gender in the respondents. (The gender breakdown of the undergraduate Asian American student population at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus in Fall 1999 was 50.7%

female and 49.3% male). When divided in Study Abroad and Non-Study Abroad groups, the ratios of male and female respondents were comparable (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). The gender breakdown of the SA group more closely parallels national and University of Minnesota gender patterns. However, the uneven gender ratios of the Non-SA group suggests that either the random sample may have included many more females than males, or that the female respondents were much more likely than their male counterparts to respond to the survey.

Table 4.1

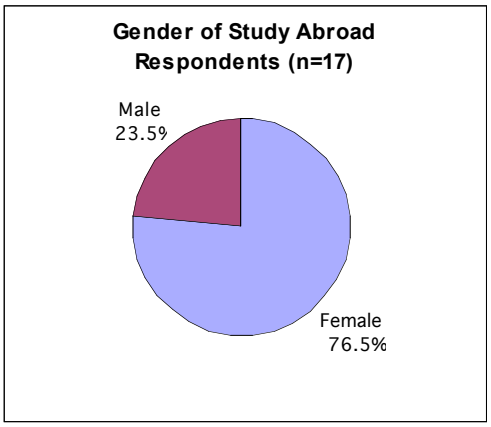
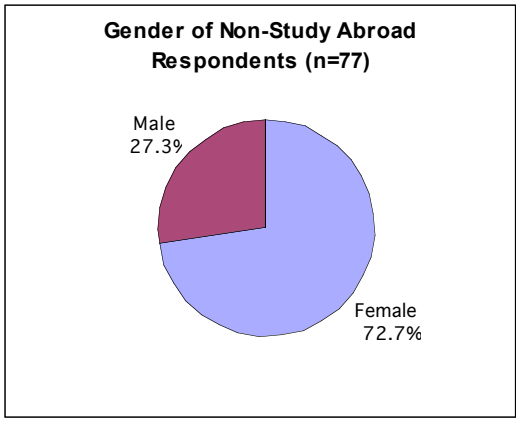


Table 4.2



A comparison of the birthplaces of the Study Abroad and Non-Study Abroad groups shows that a larger percentage of the Study Abroad group was born in the U.S. (52.9% compared to 39.0%). Adoptees also made up a larger percentage of the Asian-born respondents in the Study Abroad group (17.6%) compared to 5.2% of the Non-Study Abroad group (Table 4.3 and 4.4).

Table 4.3

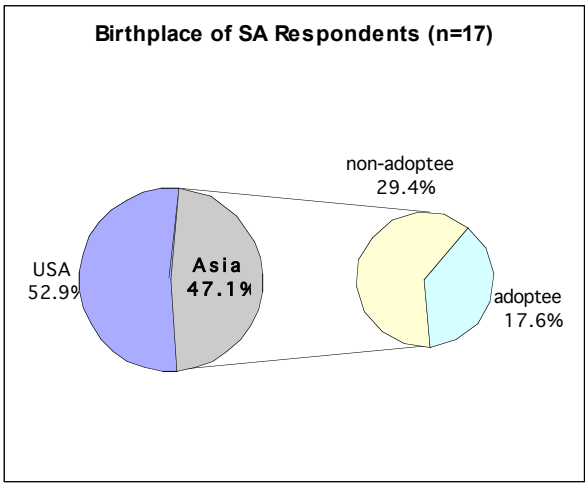
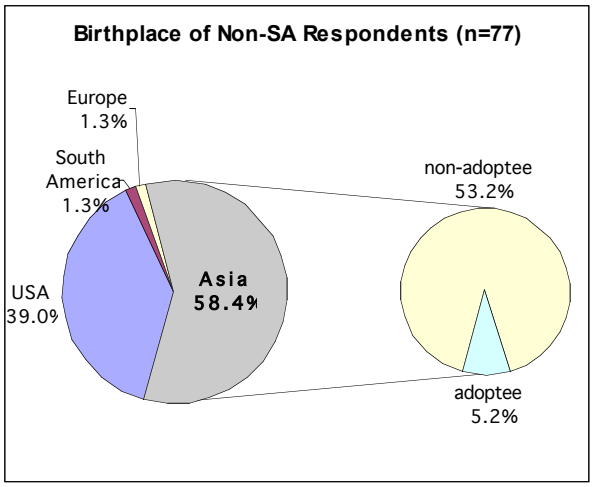
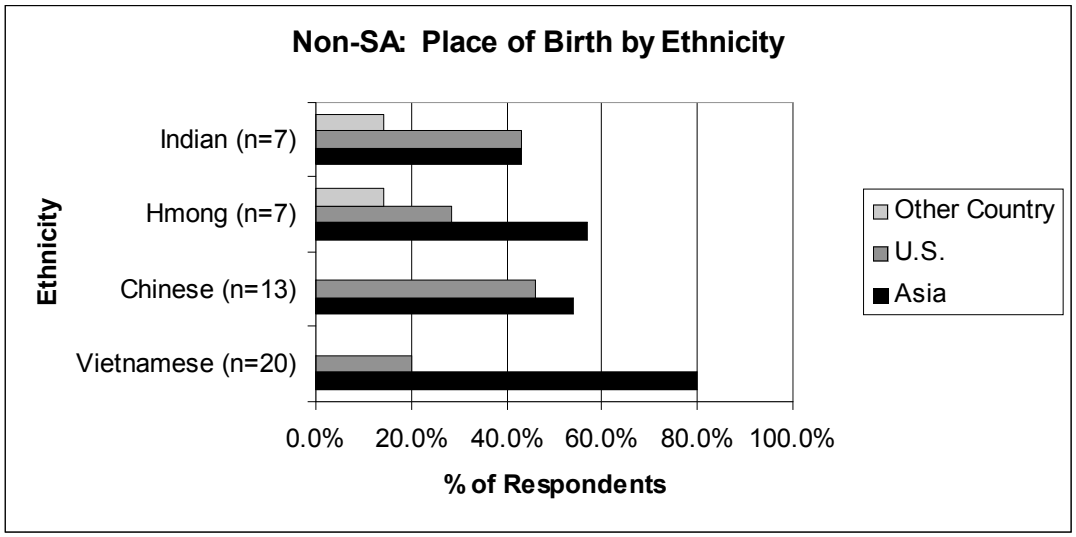


Table 4.4a



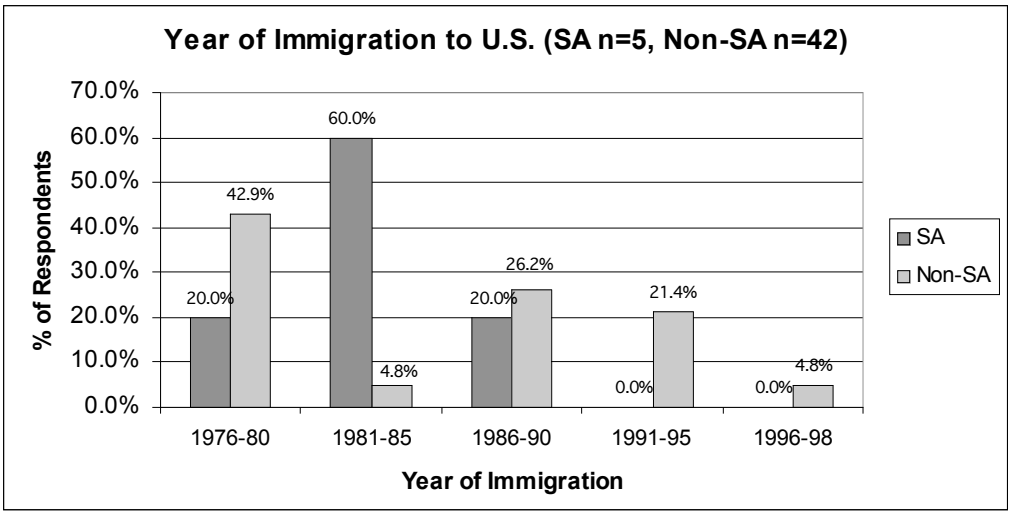
A comparison of the four largest ethnic groups of non-SA respondents showed that all groups followed similar distribution patterns of birthplace, except for the Vietnamese group, of which 80% of the respondents were born in Asia (Table 4.4b).

Table 4.4b



Of the Non-Study Abroad respondents born abroad, the greatest percentage arrived in the U.S. between 1976 and 1980, with a second wave between 1986 and 1990. The Study Abroad group respondents born abroad immigrated to the U.S. mostly between 1981 and 1985. Table 4.5 shows that the immigration dates of the Non-Study Abroad group are more spread out than the Study Abroad group.

Table 4.5



The Non-Study Abroad group is comprised of a much greater percentage of first-generation (born abroad and immigrated to the U.S.) than the Study Abroad group. The greatest percentage of study abroad students are second-generation (Tables 4.6 and 4.7). The percentages of Amerasian respondents are separated from the rest of the respondents on the table, since it is possible they could be first generation on one parent's side (Asian side), and third or fifth generation on their non-Asian parent's side. For this study, they were placed according to the Asian parent's side because it is possible that they may still be affected by the Asian parent's cultural values.

Table 4.6

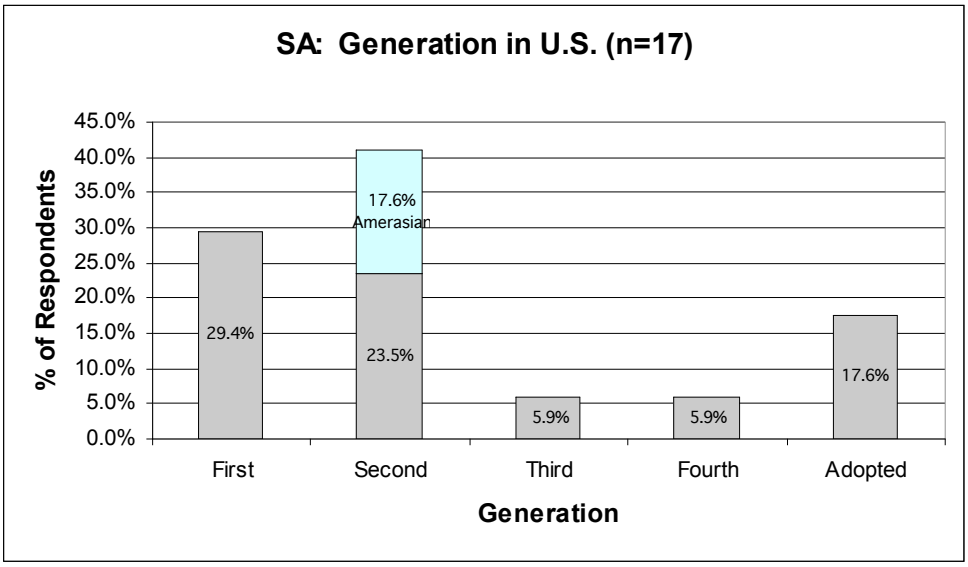
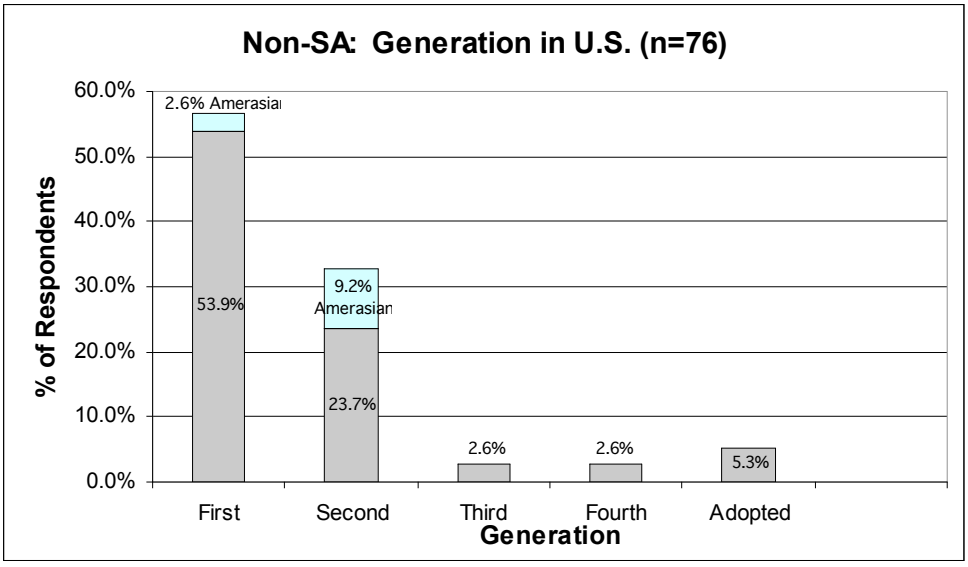


Table 4.7



Overall, the greatest number of respondents were of Vietnamese ethnic background (n=21), two of whom were Vietnamese-Chinese, but identified primarily with Vietnamese culture and were thus were grouped with the other Vietnamese respondents. One respondent chose not to reveal her ethnic background, simply stating "Asian

American." However, Vietnamese students made up a much smaller percentage of the Study Abroad group (5.9%). Amerasian, Chinese, Hmong, and Korean adoptees each comprised 17.6% of the study abroad respondents (Table 4.8). In contrast, Table 4.9 shows that Vietnamese resopndents made up the largest percentage of the Non-Study Abroad group (26.0%), followed by Chinese respondents (16.9%) and Amerasian students (11.7%).

Table 4.8

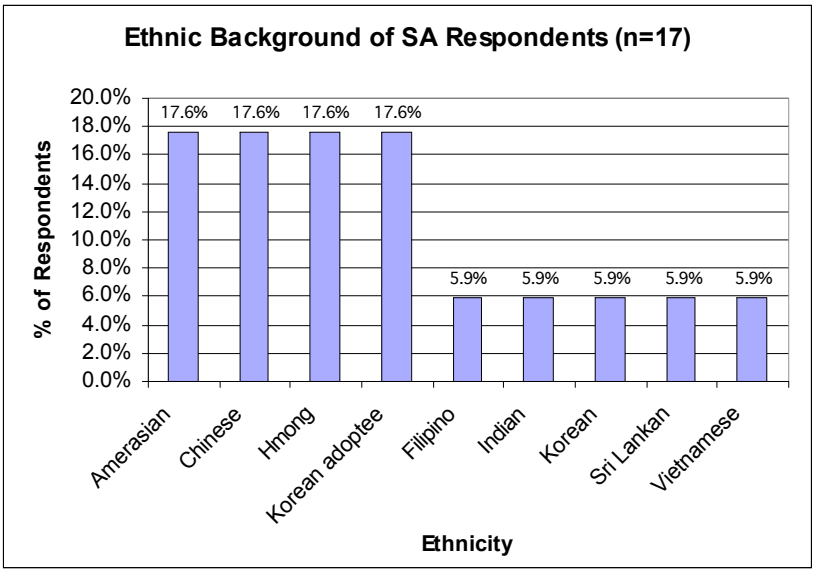
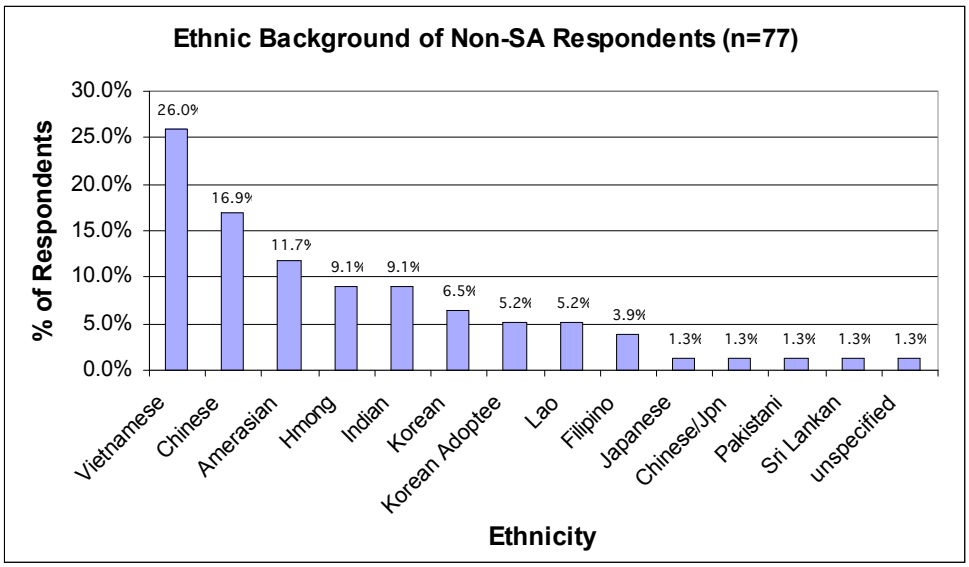
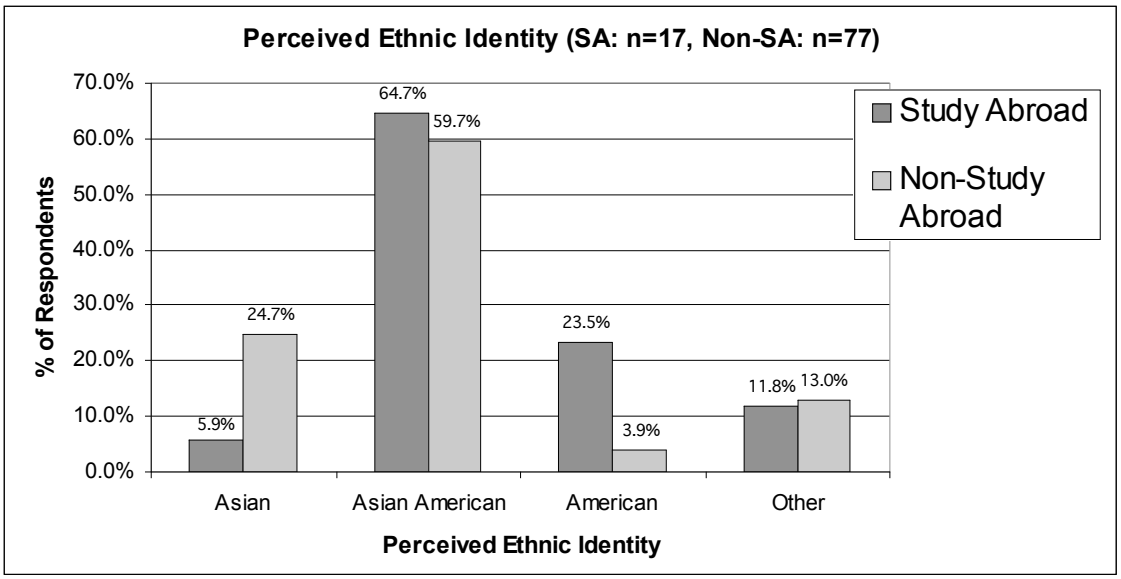


Table 4.9



When asked how they preferred to be identified, given the choices of "Asian," "Asian American," "American," or "Other," a greater percentage of the Non-Study Abroad group preferred "Asian" and a greater percentage of the Study Abroad group chose "American" (Table 4.10). One half of the respondents who chose "Other" were Indian/Sri Lankan/Pakistani American students, whose cultures are sometimes not associated with Asia. Two respondents (both of whom were Indian American) chose both "Asian American" and "Other."

Table 4.10

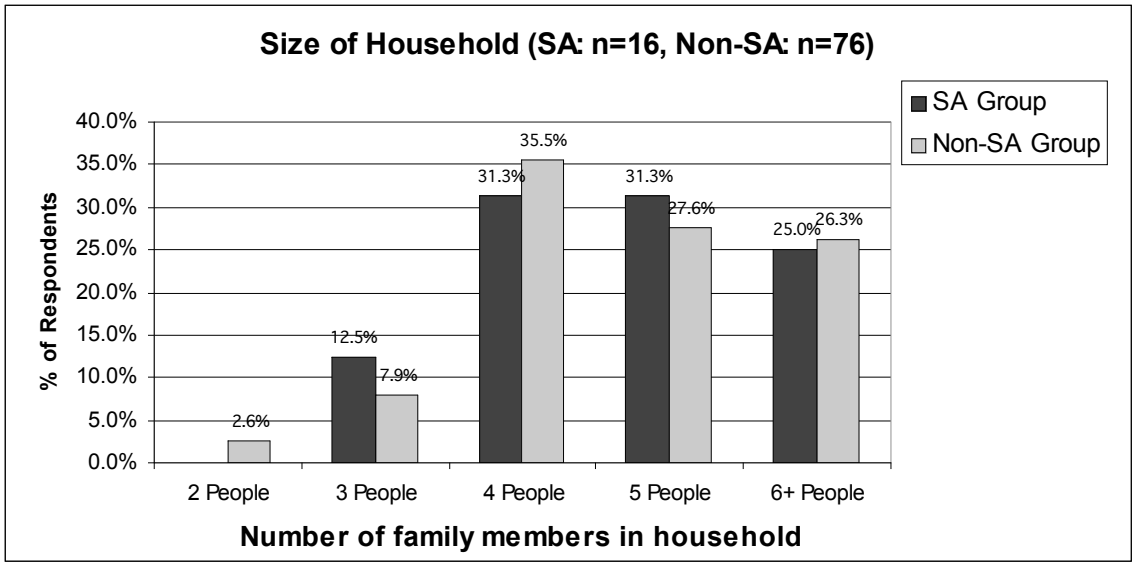


Family Background and Cultural Maintenance

This set of survey questions aims to measure the differences in family structure and level of maintenance of the Asian cultural traditions among the Asian American students who have and have not studied abroad.

The survey questions about members of the household showed similar distributions of household size in each group (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11



A comparison of language use at home showed only slight differences between the two groups (the Korean adoptees were excluded from this calculation because there is usually not a choice of using English or Korean because their adoptive parents do not speak Korean). A greater percentage of the Study Abroad group reported that both English and an Asian language were used at home (Tables 4.12 and 4.13).

Table 4.12

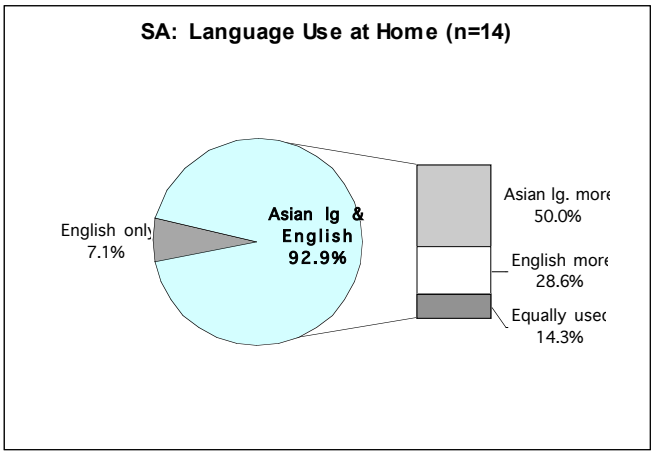
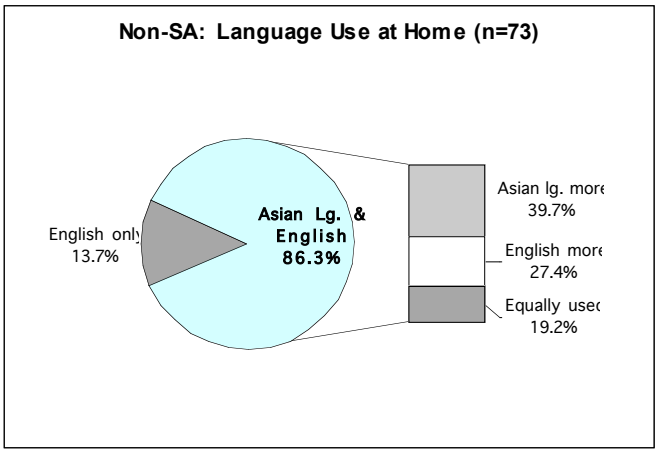


Table 4.13



A comparison of family study abroad history, illustrated by table 4.14a, showed similar patterns among both groups, with the Study Abroad group having a slightly greater percentage of family members with study abroad experience (29.4% and 26.3% respectively). A closer look at family history of study abroad in the non-SA group (divided by ethnicity) showed that the Chinese subgroup had the greatest proportion of family members who had been abroad (Table 4.14b). In the Chinese group, three of the respondents had siblings who had studied abroad, and three others had a father and/or grandfather study abroad (either to the U.S. or Japan). One Vietnamese respondent indicated that her mother, two aunts, and four great-aunts studied in France in the fifties and sixties, and her mother's three cousins studied in Australia in the seventies. The other two Vietnamese respondents whose family members studied abroad indicated that a brother and a grandfather had studied abroad. The Indian respondent who responded "yes" to this question had a father who studied abroad. Of the respondents who indicated that a family member had studied abroad, nine out of ten listed a male relative, and one respondent listed female relatives.

Table 4.14a

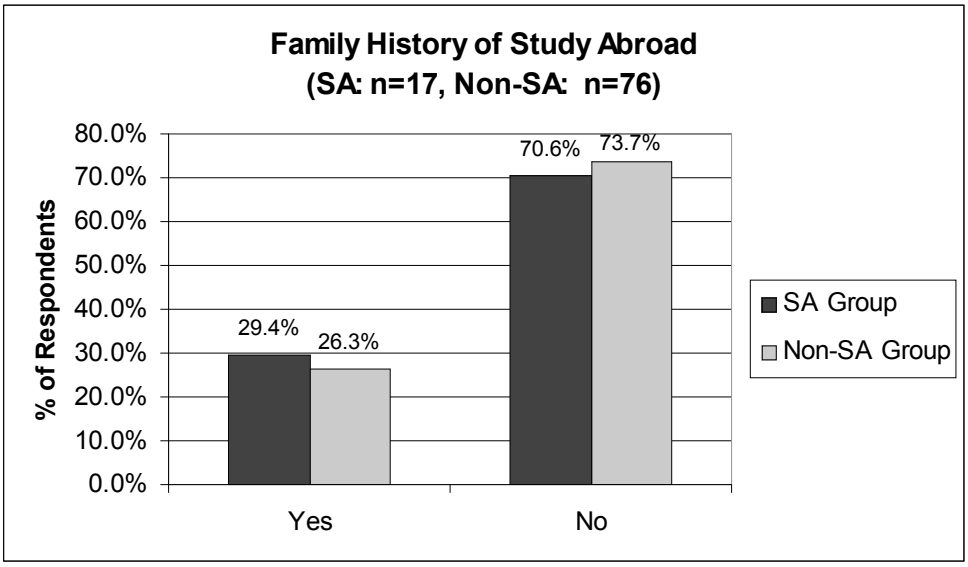
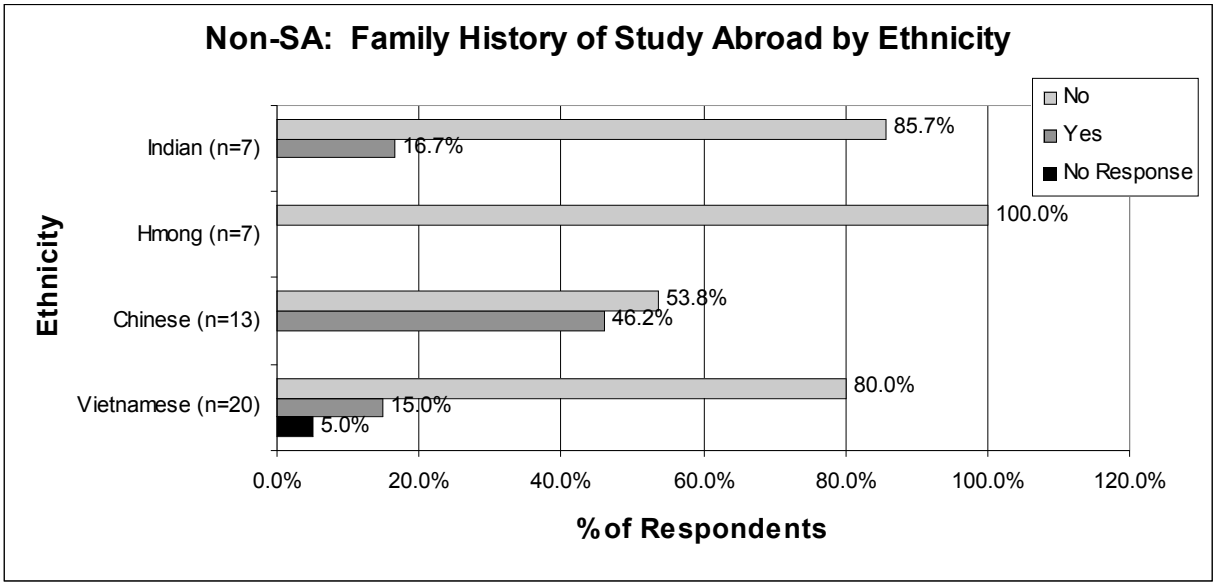


Table 4.14b



A comparison of the education level of the respondents' parents (Tables 4.15 and 4.16) showed that the parents of the Study Abroad group tended to have a higher level of education than those of the Non-Study Abroad respondents. 62.5% of the Study Abroad group's fathers and 56.3% of the mothers had at least a four-year college degree. In contrast, 48.1% of the Non-Study Abroad group's fathers and 37.7% of the mothers had at least a four-year college degree.

Table 4.15

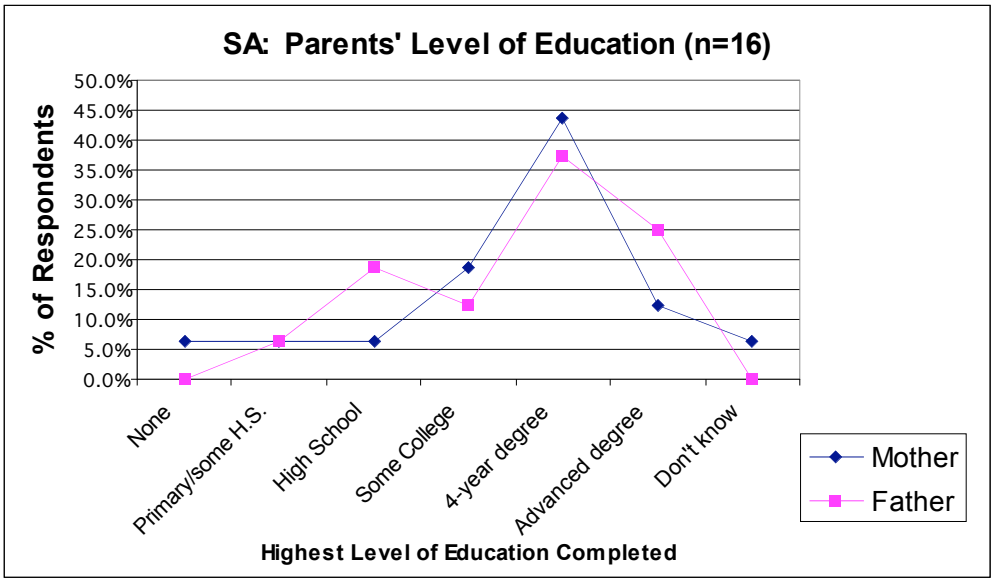
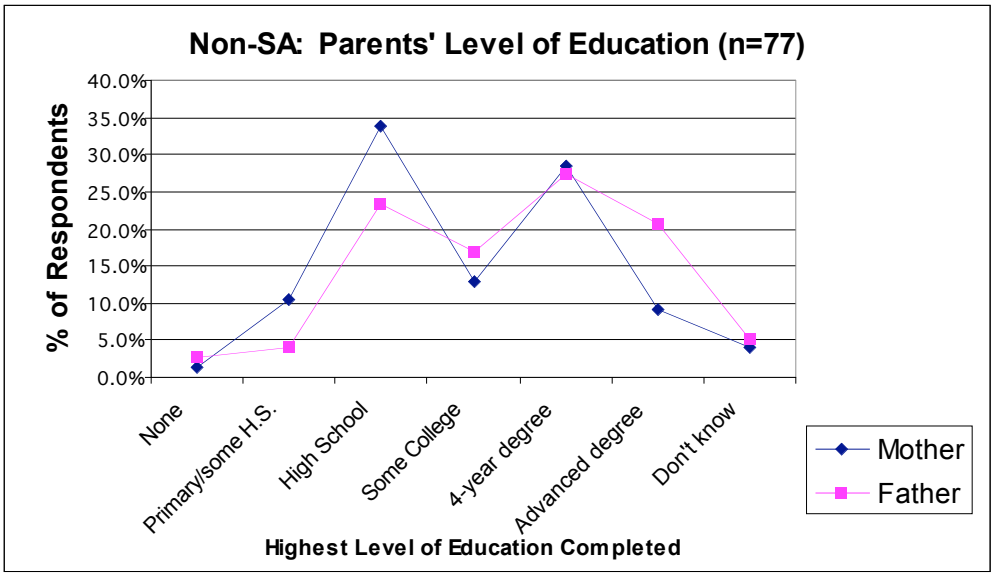


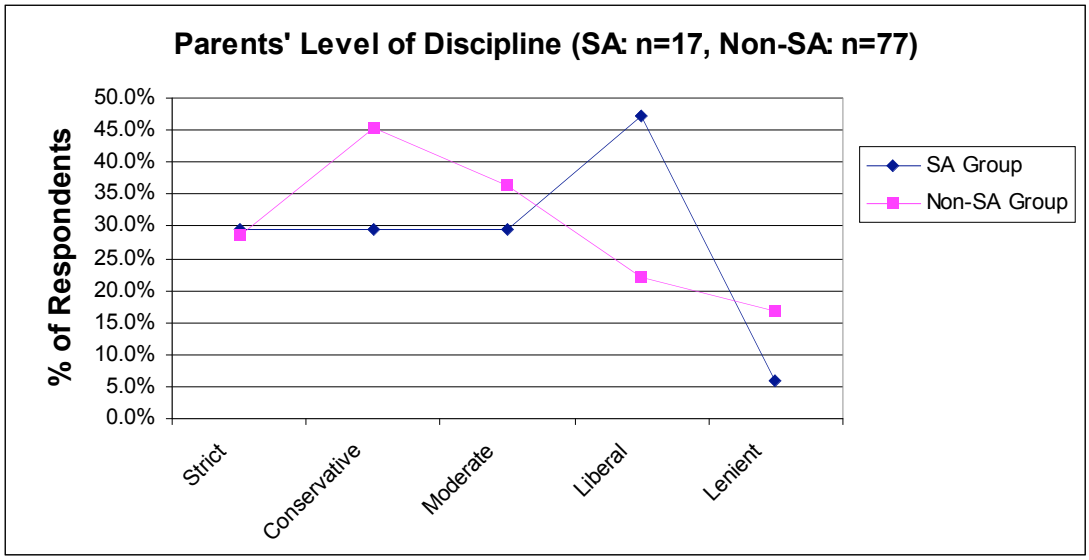
Table 4.16



The survey question that asked for a description of the respondents' parents according to level of discipline generated confusing responses, as some students marked more than one because each parent is different, or because parents vary by situation. When the number of responses were tallied, the Study Abroad group tended to rate their parents

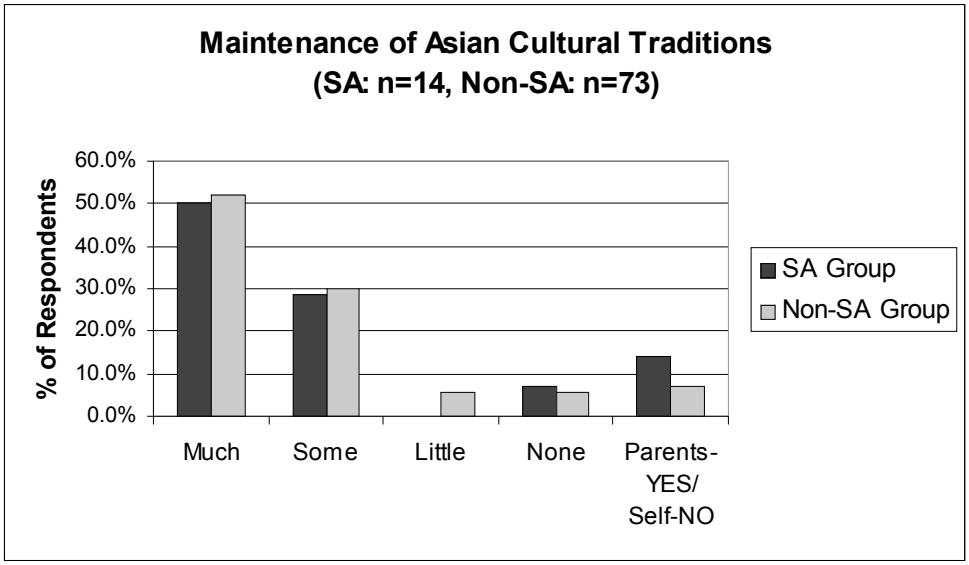
more frequently on the "liberal" end of the spectrum, while the greatest concentration of the Non-Study Abroad group's descriptions fell on the "conservative" end (Table 4.17).

Table 4.17



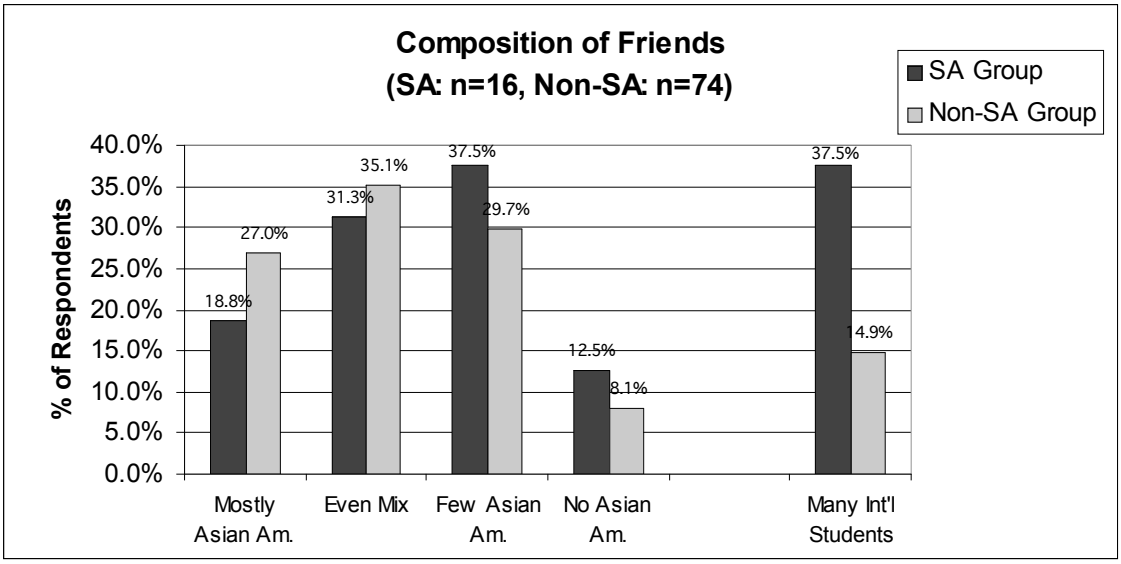
Both groups of respondents indicated similar patterns of responses when inquired about the maintenance of their ethnic traditions within their families (the adoptees were again excluded from the data calculation as their European American parents are unlikely to maintain aspects of Asian culture). Over half of the respondents in both groups indicated that their family still maintains some or much of the cultural traditions.

Table 4.18



When asked about their peers, a greater proportion of the Study Abroad group indicated that they had few Asian American friends, or none at all. Conversely, a greater proportion of Non-Study Abroad respondents indicated that they had mostly Asian American friends (Table 4.19). Although the results also showed a significant difference between the groups in terms of having international friends (37.5% of the Study Abroad group and 14.9% of the Non-Study Abroad group), it is difficult to determine whether these friendships resulted from a study abroad experience or if the international friendships had a role in influencing the students to study abroad. Thus these results cannot be analyzed objectively.

Table 4.19



Academics

The overwhelming majority of the study abroad respondents were majoring in the social sciences or arts and humanities. The Non-Study Abroad respondents' majors were more evenly distributed in comparison (Table 4.20), with social sciences also being the most popular major. The data was calculated based on the number of responses, so the percentages may add up to more than 100%, as some chose more than one major. A breakdown of the study's major ethnic groups (groups with more than 6 respondents) comprising the Non-Study Abroad group showed that Hmong and Amerasian respondents were most likely to major in the social sciences, and the Chinese respondents were more likely to major in engineering and computer sciences (Table 4.21).

Table 4.20

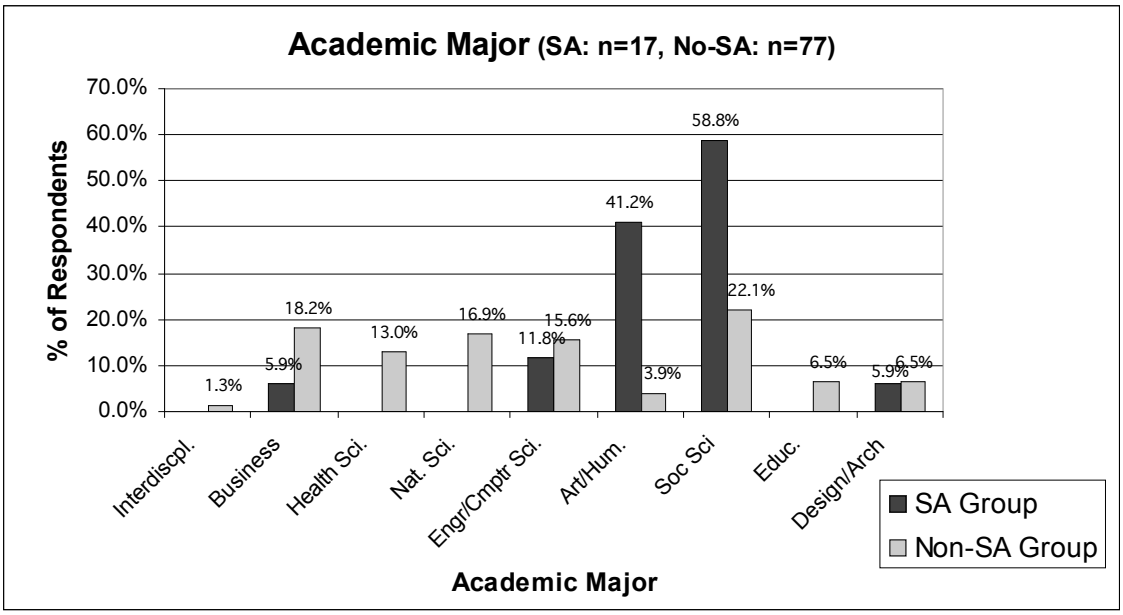
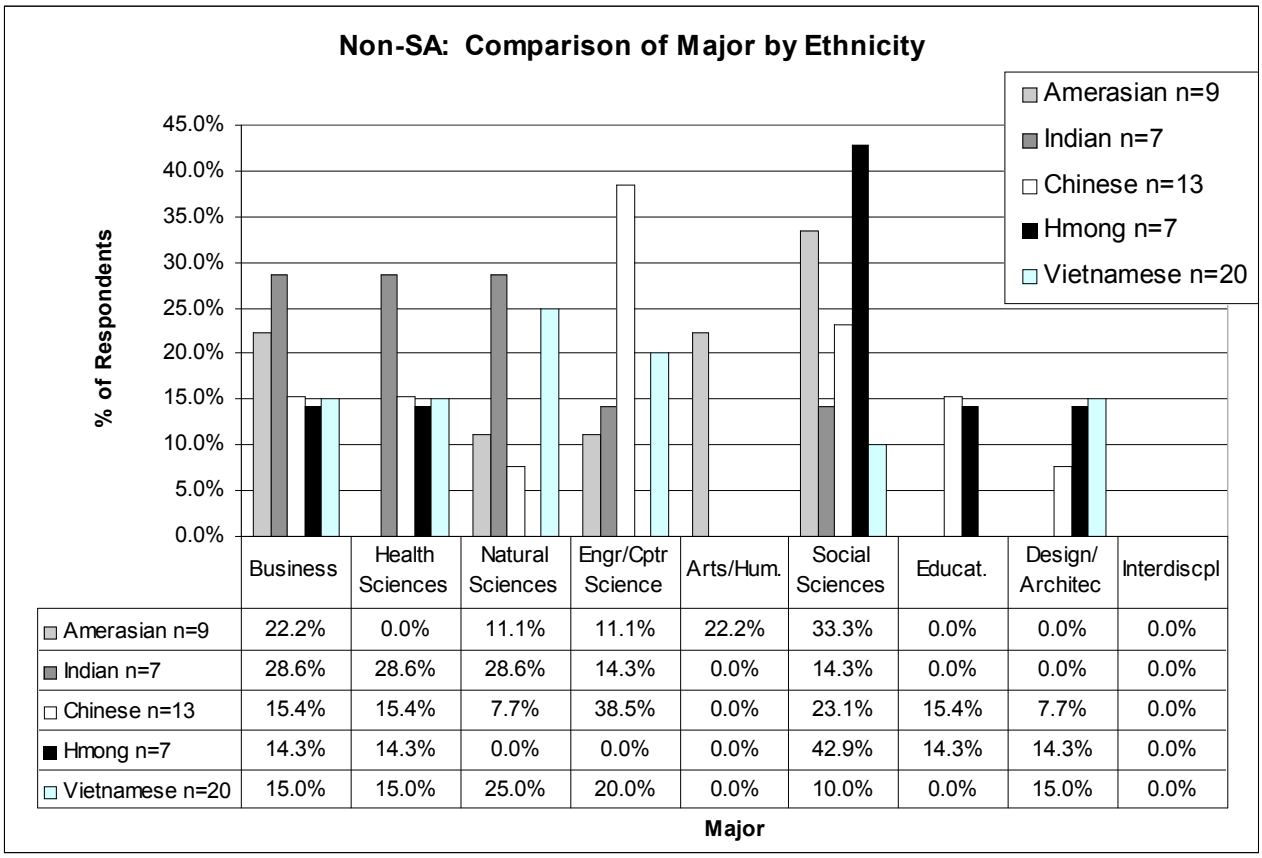


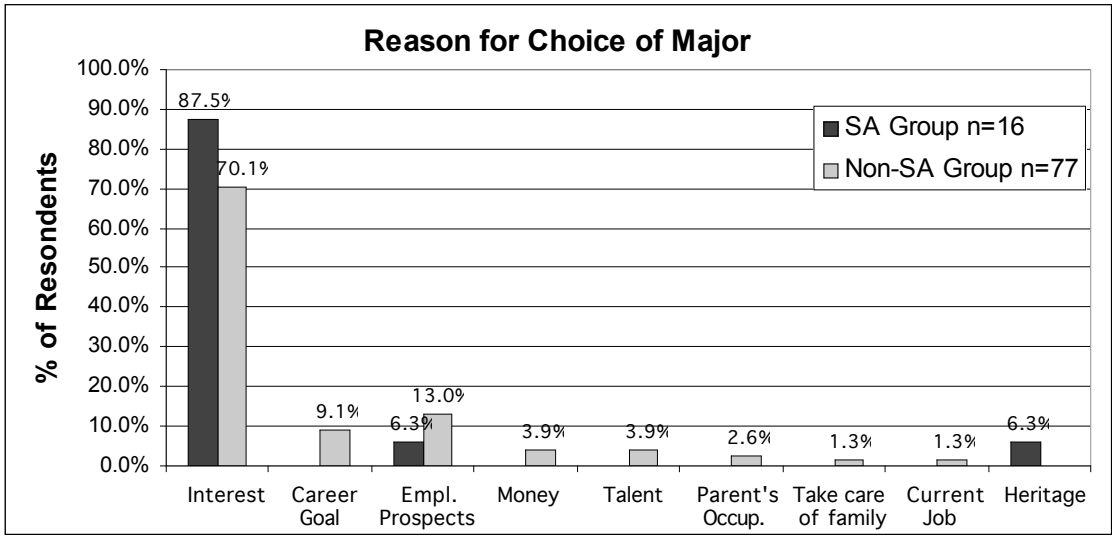
Table 4.21



	Business	Health Sciences	Natural Sciences	Engr/Cptr Science	Arts/Hum.	Social Sciences	Educat.	Design/ Architec	Interdiscpl
Amerasian n=9	22.2%	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	22.2%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Indian n=7	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Chinese n=13	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%	38.5%	0.0%	23.1%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%
Hmong n=7	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%
Vietnamese n=20	15.0%	15.0%	25.0%	20.0%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	15.0%	0.0%

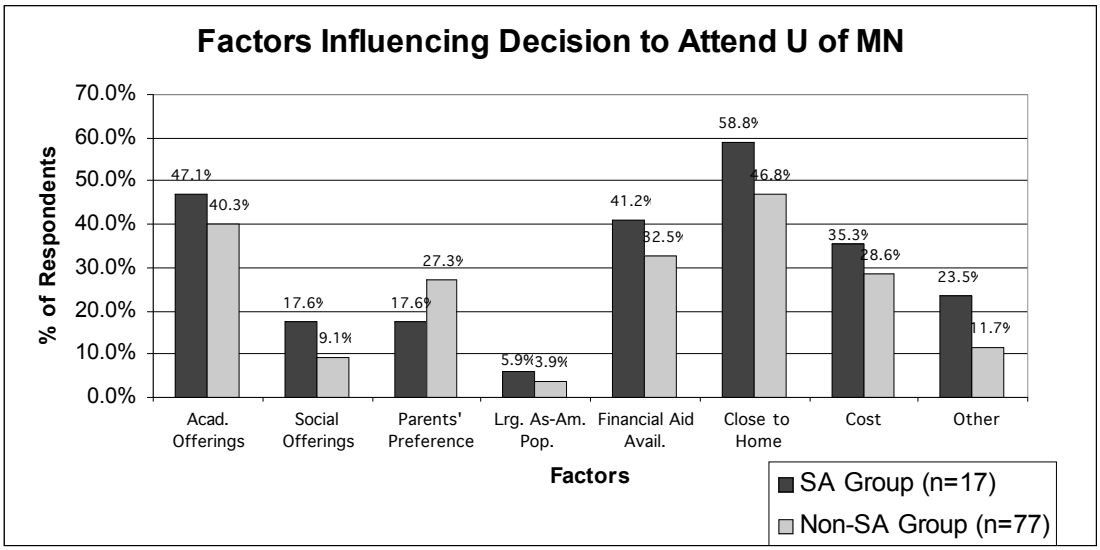
87.5% of the Study Abroad group indicated *interest* as the primary reason in choosing a major. *Interest* was also the leading reason cited by the Non-Study Abroad group (70.1%), but there were a variety of other responses as well, including career goal ("in order to become a doctor" or "because I want to go to medical school"), having "talent" in the area, or influence from their parents' occupation (Table 4.22).

Table 4.22



A comparison between groups in Table 4.23 of factors that influenced their decision to attend the University of Minnesota showed similar distributions of most responses among both groups. "Parents' preference" was cited nearly 10% more frequently by Non-Study Abroad respondents. The Study Abroad group chose "financial aid" and "close to home" almost 10% more often than the Non-Study Abroad group. However, in some cases, "parents' preference" may have meant that it was close to home, so there may be significant margin of error in the number of responses.

Table 4.23



International Interest, Attitudes, and Perspectives

Respondents were asked to list areas of the world that they would be most and least interested in visiting. The region that both groups were most inclined to visit was Asia (Table 4.24), with a slightly greater percentage of the Non-Study Abroad group expressing interest in visiting Asia. 69.6% of the Non-Study Abroad respondents who chose Asia listed a country reflecting their ethnic heritage, compared to 40% of the study abroad students who cited Asia. When asked to explain why they were interested in Asia, many explained that the cultures were "familiar" or "similar" to their own, and that they simply wanted to see where they were from. A Japanese American (Amerasian) student who was going to Latin America for her study abroad experience explained, "Although my family does not practice Japanese tradition, I am interested…My parents nor my grandparents never stressed importance on my Japanese background. As a young girl, I

was just enough different for people to notice. I was teased, but now that I am an adult I wish I had gotten to know that side of my background."

Overall, both groups of respondents showed similar patterns of interest. Australia was the only exception, with 10.4% of the Non-Study Abroad group expressing interest, while none of the Study Abroad group was interested particularly in Australia.

Table 4.24

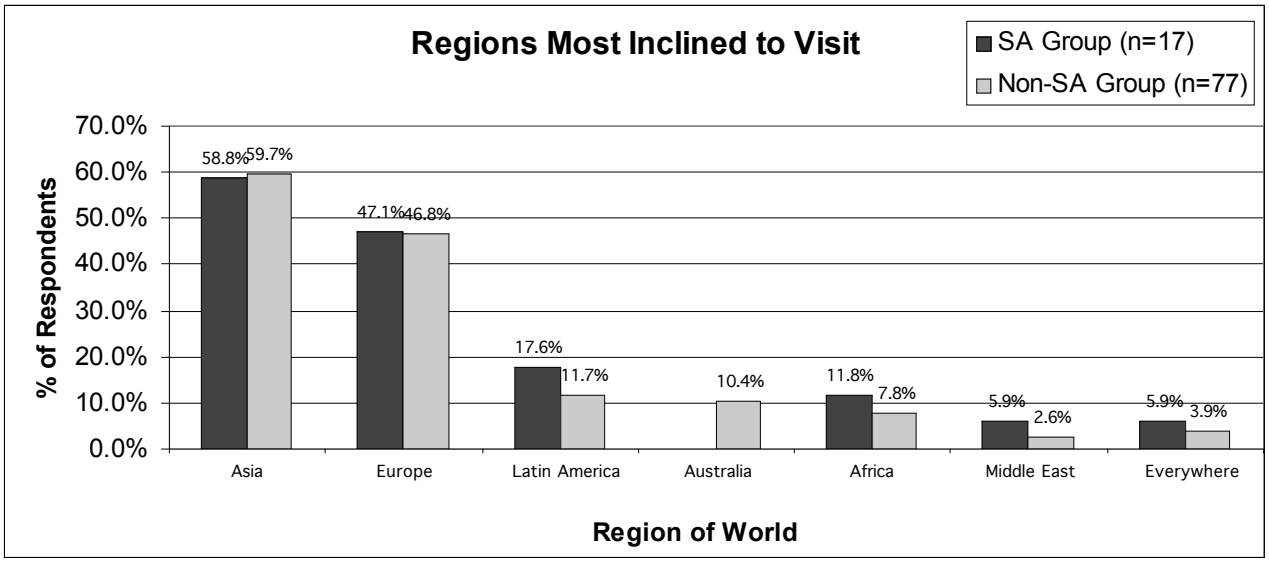


Table 4.25 shows that there was more variation between the two groups for the region that the respondents were least inclined to visit. Among the students who have studied abroad, Europe drew the most responses (41.2%), followed by the Middle East with 23.5% of the respondents. The Non-Study Abroad group was least interested in visiting Africa (16.9%, followed by the Middle East (11.7%), with Asia, Europe, and the North Pole/Antarctica tying for third (10.4%). The Hmong respondents cited the North Pole/Antarctica much more frequently did the other ethnic groups (57.1% versus 10-14%). The most often cited reasons were due to climate (too cold or too hot), safety reasons (frequent or on-going wars and terrorism), and gender structure, particularly

treatment of women in the society. Non-Study Abroad respondents also cited the following reasons specific to certain countries and regions:

> "Europe, no interest in visiting Europe. I guess too much European history in high school has put a bad taste in my mouth." (Laotian American male)

> "Least inclined to visit certain parts of Europe like Germany. There is racism and hate there." (Laotian-Chinese American female)

> "China and Japan because I'm tired of having them overshadow Korea." (Korean American female)

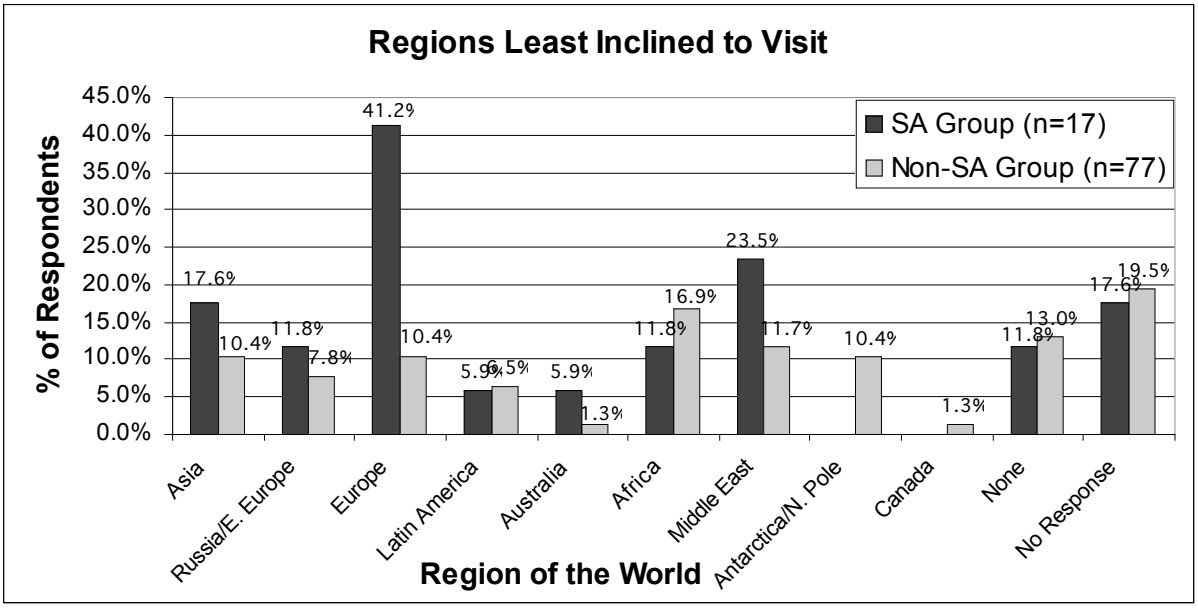
> "Indonesia: because of discrimination of Chinese." (Chinese American female)

Among the Study Abroad group, a number of students also mentioned Europe as a place where they are least inclined to visit:

> "Least: Europe—not too exciting for me—feel that it lacks culture." (Indian American female)

> "Europe—feel it's all hyped up." (Japanese-American Amerasian male)

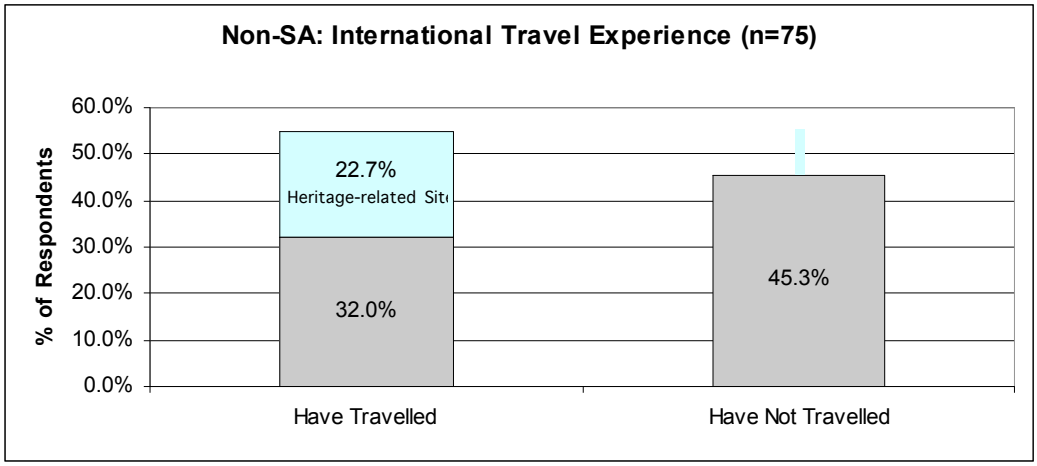
Table 4.25



Non-Study Abroad Respondents

Over half of the Non-Study Abroad respondents have had some international travel experiences (54.7%), of which 22.7% of the respondents visited a country reflecting their ethnic heritage. The same question was asked of the Study Abroad group, but it was not possible to separate travel that was completed prior to studying abroad from travel during or after the study abroad experience. The responses for this group were discarded because a comparison of the two groups could not be made about prior international travel experience and its relation to tendency to study abroad (Table 4.26).

Table 4.26



Study Abroad Awareness and Interest

75% of the respondents have actually considered or were interested in study abroad (Table 4.27), and 96.1% of the respondents were aware that study abroad opportunities available at the University of Minnesota (Table 4.28). Analyzing interest by ethnic groups, the Hmong and Indian respondents expressed most interest in study abroad, with 85.7% of the respondents of Hmong and Indian descent indicating they had considered or were interested in study abroad. 90.8% were aware that they may be able to apply their coursework abroad toward major requirements (Table 4.29), and only 69.7% of the respondents knew that financial aid is available for study abroad (Table 4.30).

Table 4.27

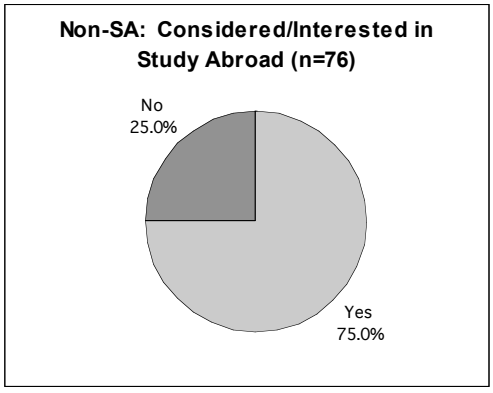


Table 4.28

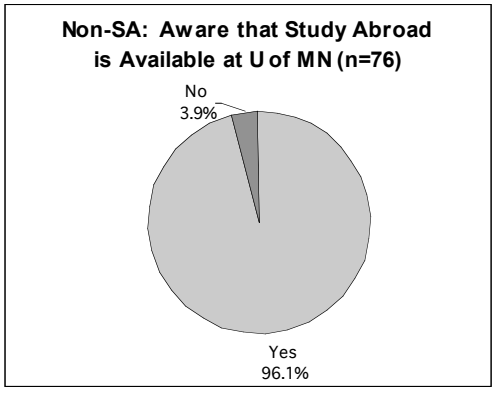


Table 4.29

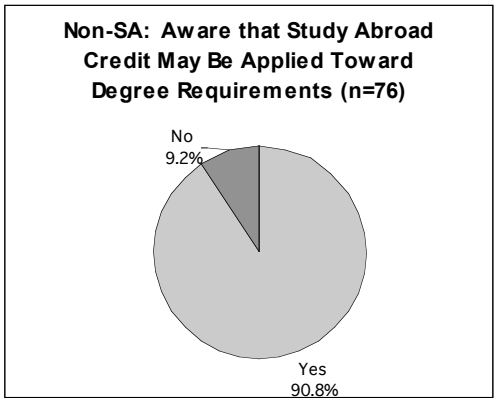
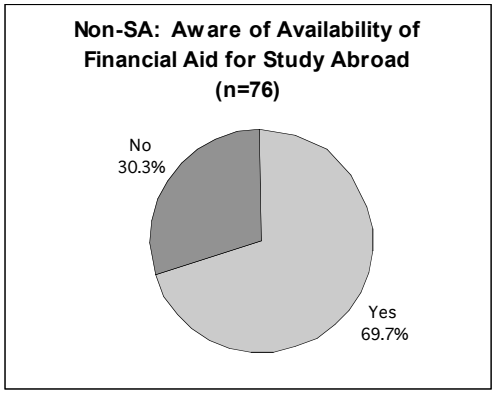


Table 4.30



Barriers to Study Abroad

The top five reasons given by the respondents for deciding not to study abroad are as follows: "cannot afford to go," "need to work to pay off school," "does not fit into academic program," "lack family support," and "too much hassle with paperwork." One can see that financially-related concerns comprise the largest percentages of the responses (Table 4.31).

Table 4.31

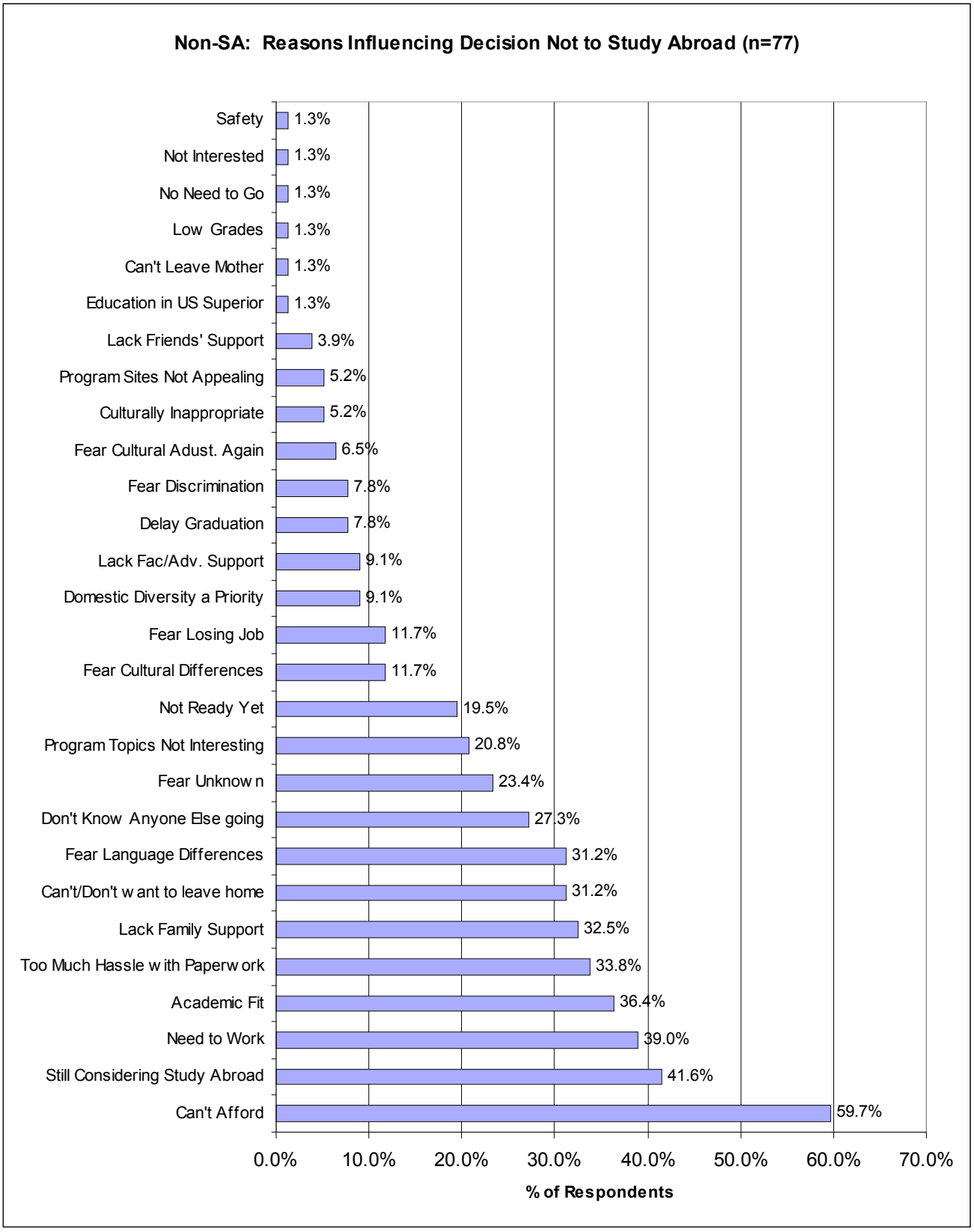

Non-SA: Reasons Influencing Decision Not to Study Abroad (n=77)
Safety 1.3%
Not Interested 1.3%
No Need to Go 1.3%
Low Grades 1.3%
Can't Leave Mother 1.3%
Education in US Superior 1.3%
Lack Friends' Support 3.9%
Program Sites Not Appealing 5.2%
Culturally Inappropriate 5.2%
Fear Cultural Adust. Again 6.5%
Fear Discrimination 7.8%
Delay Graduation 7.8%
Lack Fac/Adv. Support 9.1%
Domestic Diversity a Priority 9.1%
Fear Losing Job 11.7%
Fear Cultural Differences 11.7%
Not Ready Yet 19.5%
Program Topics Not Interesting 20.8%
Fear Unknow n 23.4%
Don't Know Anyone Else going 27.3%
Fear Language Differences 31.2%
Can't/Don't w ant to leave home 31.2%
Lack Family Support 32.5%
Too Much Hassle w ith Paperw ork 33.8%
Academic Fit 36.4%
Need to Work 39.0%
Still Considering Study Abroad 41.6%
Can't Afford 59.7%
0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0%
% of Respondents

Table 4.32 shows the ethnic breakdown of respondents (groups with four or more respondents). The Vietnamese and Indian groups indicated most frequently that lack of family support was a factor (50% and 85.7% respectively). 61.5% of the Chinese group indicated that the paperwork involved in studying abroad was a contributing factor. The Hmong respondents also cited "cannot or do not want to be away from home" more frequently than the other groups, with 57.1% of respondents choosing this reason. Only the Vietnamese, Hmong, and Chinese groups included respondents who chose "culturally inappropriate" as a reason. To the Vietnamese group (60%) and adoptee (75%) groups, the need to remain in the U.S. to work to pay for school was a also a major reason for not studying abroad. The Indian group had the most respondents who were still considering study abroad (71.4%), even though they were also the group who most frequently indicated a lack of family support (85.7%).

Table 4.32
Perceived Study Abroad Barriers by Ethnicity

	Vietnamese (n=20)	Hmong (n=7)	Chinese (n=13)	Indian (n=7)	Korean (n=5)	Amerasian (n=9)	Adoptee (n=4)
Can't Afford	50.0%	57.1%	69.2%	57.1%	60.0%	55.6%	50.0%
Need to Work	60.0%	42.9%	30.8%	0.0%	20.0%	33.3%	75.0%
Fear Losing Job	15.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%	25.0%
Language Differ.	45.0%	42.9%	46.2%	28.6%	40.0%	0.0%	25.0%
Cultural Differ.	10.0%	14.3%	30.8%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	25.0%
Program Topics	25.0%	0.0%	38.5%	14.3%	40.0%	0.0%	25.0%
Fear Unknown	20.0%	28.6%	23.1%	28.6%	40.0%	22.2%	50.0%
Fear Discrimination	10.0%	14.3%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%
Culturally Inapprop.	5.0%	28.6%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Paperwork	25.0%	14.3%	61.5%	28.6%	40.0%	44.4%	25.0%
Can't/Don't want to leave home	25.0%	57.1%	38.5%	42.9%	40.0%	33.3%	25.0%
Domestic Diversity a Priority	10.0%	14.3%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
Academic Fit	30.0%	28.6%	53.8%	42.9%	60.0%	22.2%	50.0%
Lack Friends' Support	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lack Family Support	50.0%	14.3%	23.1%	85.7%	20.0%	11.1%	0.0%
Lack Faculty/Advis. Support	15.0%	0.0%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%
Don't Know Anyone Else going	40.0%	42.9%	30.8%	14.3%	20.0%	33.3%	25.0%
Still Considering	35.0%	57.1%	30.8%	71.4%	40.0%	33.3%	25.0%
Not Interested	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not Ready Yet	10.0%	57.1%	38.5%	28.6%	20.0%	11.1%	0.0%
Program Sites	5.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cultural Adj. Again	15.0%	0.0%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Delay Graduation	5.0%	0.0%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%
Can't Leave Mother	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Low Grades	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%
Safety	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
No Need to Go	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Educ. In US Better	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Respondents were then asked to rank the top five factors that they had cited in the previous question, with 1 being the most influential reason. Their responses for the top two reasons are shown in tables 4.33a and 4.33b, separated into the ethnic groups with four or more respondents. Most respondents indicated either the inability to afford to study abroad or the academic fit of study abroad courses to their degree program as the number reason. The ethnic breakdowns show that financially related concerns ("can't afford" and "need to work to pay off school") were the most prevalent among the Vietnamese subgroup, with 50% of the respondents choosing either one of these reasons as the number one influencing factor for their decision not to study abroad. Fifty percent of the Lao respondents also cited inability to afford study abroad as their top reason, but as there were only 4 respondents in this subgroup, it is more difficult to use this data to make any conclusions. A relatively greater proportion of the Chinese and Korean subgroup of respondents felt that academic fit was the greatest barrier to studying abroad, with 38.5% and 40% respectively ranking this reason as the number one factor.

The only ethnic groups that had a respondent list "culturally inappropriate" as the first or second most influential reason for not studying abroad were the Hmong and Vietnamese. At least one respondent in the Indian (28.6%), Chinese (15.4%) and Vietnamese (15.0%) cited "lack of family support" as one of the top two reasons, while none of the respondents of the Amerasian, Korean adoptee, Korean, Lao and Hmong subgroups ranked this reason as number one or two.

Table 4.33a

1 Ranked Reason for Decision to Not Study Abroad (by Ethnicity)

Amerasian n=9	%	Korean Adoptee n=4	%	Korean n=5	%
Can't afford	22.2%	Academic fit	25.0%	Academic fit	40.0%
Still considering study abroad	22.2%	Can't afford	25.0%	Can't afford	20.0%
Fear losing job	22.2%	Fear cultural differences	25.0%	Fear unknown	20.0%
Academic fit	11.1%	Need to work	25.0%	Not ready to go yet	20.0%
Can't/Don't want to leave home	11.1%				
No Response	11.1%				

Lao n=4	%	Hmong n=7	%	Indian n=7	%
Can't afford	50.0%	Fear unknown	28.6%	Can't afford	28.6%
Fear losing job	25.0%	Still considering study abroad	28.6%	Still considering	28.6%
Lack faculty/adviser support	25.0%	Academic fit	14.3%	Academic fit	14.3%
		Can't/don't want to leave home	14.3%	Fear unknown	14.3%
		Culturally inappropriate	14.3%	Lack family support	14.3%

Chinese n=13	%	Vietnamese n=20	%
Academic fit	38.5%	Can't afford	35.0%
Can't afford	30.8%	Need to work	15.0%
Fear unknown	7.7%	Fear unknown	15.0%
Lack family support	7.7%	Academic fit	5.0%
Need to work	7.7%	Fear language differences	5.0%
Still considering study abroad	7.7%	Fear losing job	5.0%
		Lack faculty/adviser support	5.0%
		Lack family support	5.0%
		Too much hassle w/paperwork	5.0%
		No response	5.0%

Table 4.33b

 # 2 Ranked Reason for Decision to Not Study Abroad (by Ethnicity)

Amerasian n=9	%	Korean Adoptee n=4	%	Korean n=5	%
Can't afford	33.3%	Academic fit	25.0%	Can't/don't want to leave home	20.0%
Academic fit	11.1%	Can't afford	25.0%	Don't know anyone else going	20.0%
Need to work	11.1%	Can't/don't want to leave home	25.0%	Fear language differences	20.0%
Not ready to go	11.1%	Fear losing job	25.0%	Need to work	20.0%
No Response	33.3%			Still considering study abroad	20.0%

Lao n=4	%	Hmong n=7	%	Indian n=7	%
Need to work	50.0%	Can't afford	14.3%	Can't afford	14.3%
Can't afford	25.0%	Can't/don't want to leave home	14.3%	Can't/don't want to leave home	14.3%
Can't/don't want to leave home	25.0%	Culturally inappropriate	14.3%	Fear language differences	14.3%
		Domestic diversity a priority	14.3%	Lack family support	14.3%
		Fear discrimination	14.3%	Not ready to go yet	14.3%
		Fear language differences	14.3%	Still considering study abroad	14.3%
		Still considering study abroad	14.3%	No response	14.3%

Chinese n=13	%	Vietnamese n=20	%
Can't/don't want to leave home	15.4%	Academic fit	15.0%
Fear language differences	15.4%	Need to work	15.0%
Program topics not interesting	15.4%	Can't afford	10.0%
Can't afford	7.7%	Can't/don't want to leave home	10.0%
Fear discrimination	7.7%	Lack family support	10.0%
Lack faculty/adviser support	7.7%	Program topics not interesting	10.0%
Lack family support	7.7%	Culturally inappropriate	5.0%
Still considering study abroad	7.7%	Don't know anyone else going	5.0%
Too much paperwork	7.7%	Fear cultural adjustment again	5.0%
No response	7.7%	Too much hassle w/paperwork	5.0%
		Still considering study abroad	5.0%
		No response	5.0%

Examination of all top five ranked factors revealed some differences between ethnic groups. 71.4% of the Indian respondents indicated that lack of family support was among the top five reasons. In fact, this reason was listed among the top three reasons by all the Indian respondents. 35% of the Vietnamese respondents ranked this reason within the

top five. None of the adoptees and 11.1% of the Amerasian respondents indicated lack of family support among the top five reasons.

Peers may be a major influence on whether or not certain Asian American students study abroad. 42.9% of Hmong respondents and 35% of Vietnamese respondents ranked the fact that they didn't know anyone else who was going abroad among the top five reasons for staying on campus. In contrast, only 15.4% of Chinese, 22.2% of Amerasian, 20% of Korean, and 25% of Korean adoptees cited this reason in the top five.

53.8% of the Chinese respondents and 44.4% of the Amerasian respondents felt that the hassle of paperwork was among the top five reasons they decided not to pursue an international educational experience, while only 20% of Vietnamese, 14.3% of Hmong, and 28.6% of Indian respondents ranked this reason in the top five.

Vietnamese and Chinese respondents were most concerned with language differences, with 45.0% and 38.5% of the respondents listing this concern among the top five, compared to 0% of the Amerasian, 14.3% of the Indian, and 28.5% of the Hmong respondents.

Many respondents listed "still considering study abroad" among their top five reasons, indicating that they have not yet completely ruled out studying abroad as an option. 57.1% of the Indian and Hmong and 33.3% of the Amerasian respondents consider the possibility of studying abroad among the top five, compared to only 20% of the Vietnamese and Korean respondents.

Only the Vietnamese respondents listed fear of having to go through cultural adjustment again as a reason within the top five (10%). Only the Vietnamese and Hmong

subgroups included respondents who indicated fear of discrimination among the top five reasons for not studying overseas (5% and 14.3% respectively).

When asked to describe how they thought their family (particularly parents) would react if they were to decide to study abroad, 48.0% of the respondents thought they would receive a positive or encouraging response 39.7% thought they would receive a negative or discouraging response (Table 4.34). In contrast, 3 out of the 17 respondents (17.6%) who studied abroad indicated that their family was opposed to their decision to study abroad (one Korean American, one Korean adoptee, and one Hmong American).

Table 4.34

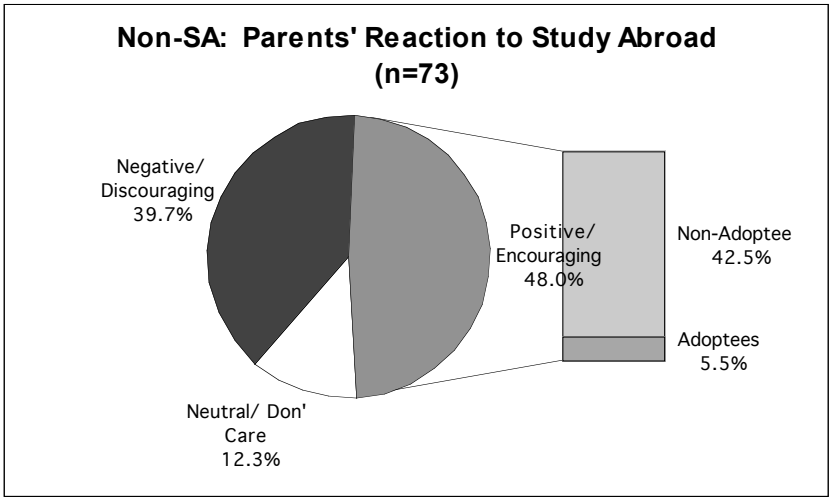
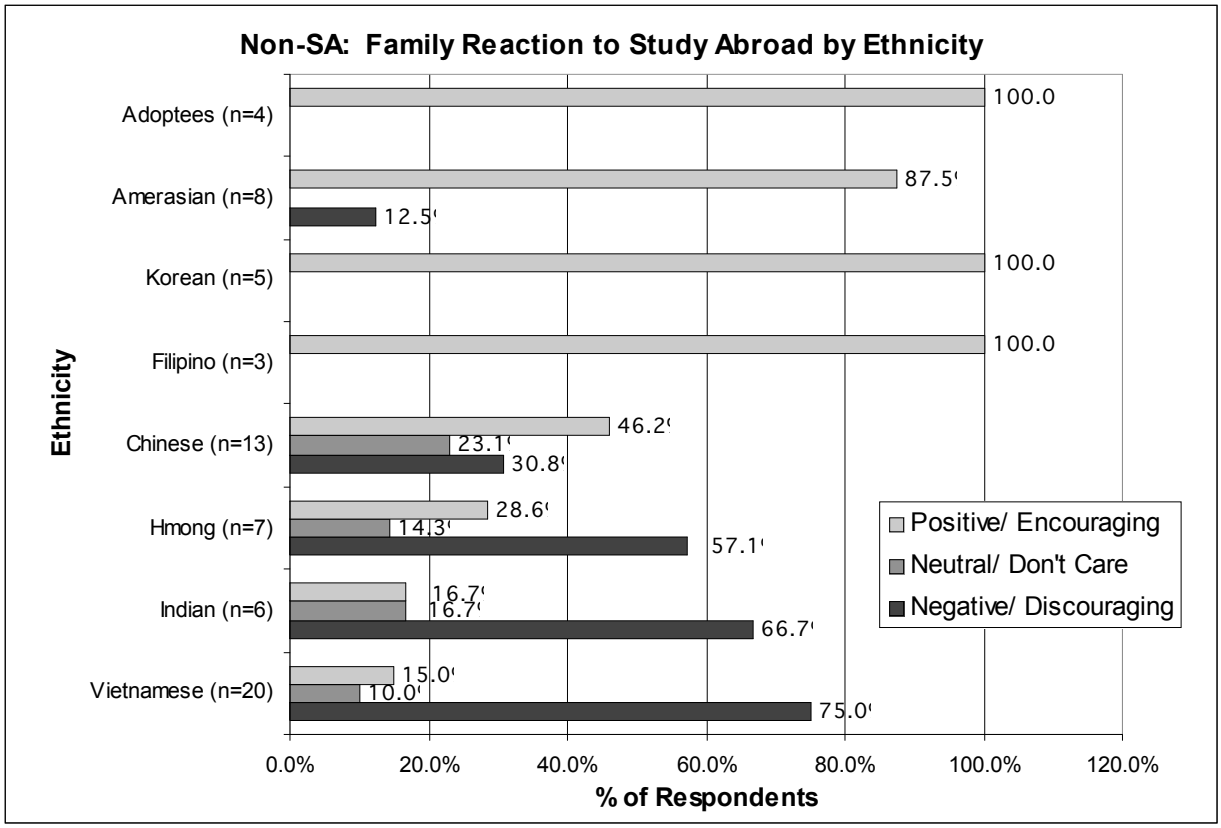


Table 4.35



When broken down into ethnic groups, there were even more variations (Table 4.35). All or nearly all of the Korean adoptee, Amerasian, Korean, and Filipino respondents indicated that their families would react positively to their decision. In contrast, the majority of Vietnamese, Indian and Hmong respondents indicated that their parents would not be happy about their decision, and even forbid them to go. When analyzed in terms of duration of residence in the U.S., the students who cited lack of family support tended to have resided in the U.S. fewer than 10 years (this is true for the Hmong, Chinese, and Indian groups). The exception to this is the Vietnamese group, in which lack of support did not seem affected by duration of residence in the U.S. Students born

in the U.S. indicated that their parents would react negatively to their decision to study abroad as commonly as those who had recently immigrated to the U.S. Respondents gave a variety of descriptions of their parents' likely reaction:

"My mom would not let me go because she is afraid to lose me." (Vietnamese male)

"They'd say, 'What the hell is the matter with you?!'" (Vietnamese male)

"My siblings would be excited and probably jealous and my parents would say 'Why do you need to go so far away when you can get the same thing at the U of MN?' They might even get mad." (Vietnamese male)

"My mom could 'freak out' because I'm a Asian girl [sic]." (Vietnamese female)

"They would be too surprised…Living in USA, as a single student is being torn between family and social life. It's a hard task for all to juggle." (Vietnamese female)

"My parents would be shocked and think that I'm 'crazy.' They want me close to them." (Vietnamese female)

"Recommend me to travel to the country rather than study there." (Vietnamese female)

"They were very reluctant to let me go for something that would not enhance my career, the family, and 'financial stability.'" (Indian female)

"Would allow it even if opposed if it would help me academically." (Indian female)

"They would say no because I am a girl and I have to be careful." (Indian female)

"I don't know, but I don't think they'd be too happy. They'd be concerned with me being in a strange country by myself." (Sri Lankan American female)

"Siblings wouldn't care except my sister. She would miss me. My nieces would also miss me. My dad is okay with it. My mom would say no." (Hmong American female)

"My parents would say no." (Hmong American female)

"I don't think they would approve." (Hmong American female)

"They would think it was a bad idea and would not support me emotionally or financially, but would allow me to go." (Hmong American female)

"They would not be happy and would try to talk me out of it." (Taiwanese Chinese American female)

Study Abroad group

The most frequently chosen study abroad site among the group of respondents in this study was Asia, with 41.2% of the responses, 42.9% of which studied in heritage-related sites (Table 4.36). Eastern Europe/Russia, Western Europe, and Latin America had the next highest number of participants. One respondent indicated that she studied in Hawaii, but as mentioned earlier, her responses were kept in this study because she indicated experiencing a significant degree of cultural adaptation while on the program. 44.4% of the respondents chose a semester program abroad, 27.8% chose academic or calendar year, and 27.8% chose summer or short-term programs (Table 4.37). 53.8% of the respondents became interested in study abroad prior to college, and 46.2% became interested while in college (Table 4.38).

Table 4.36

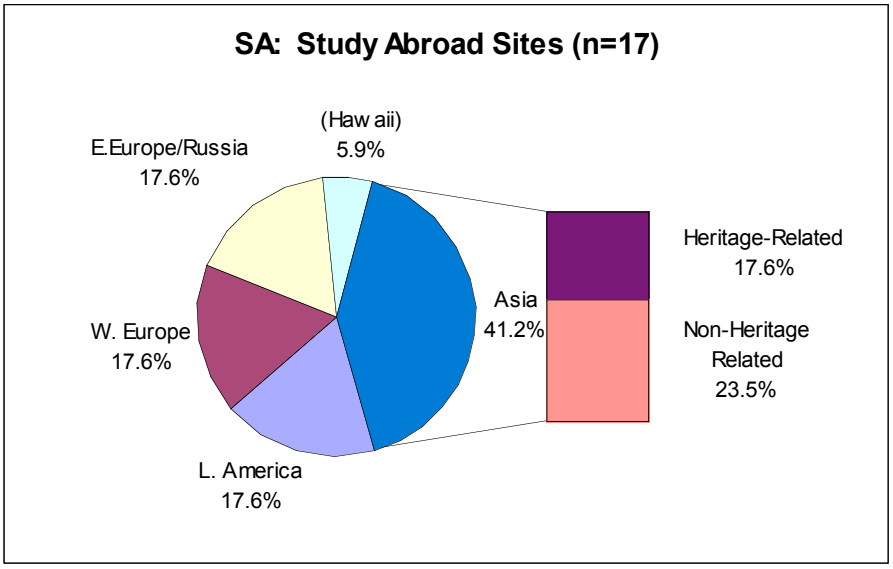


Table 4.37

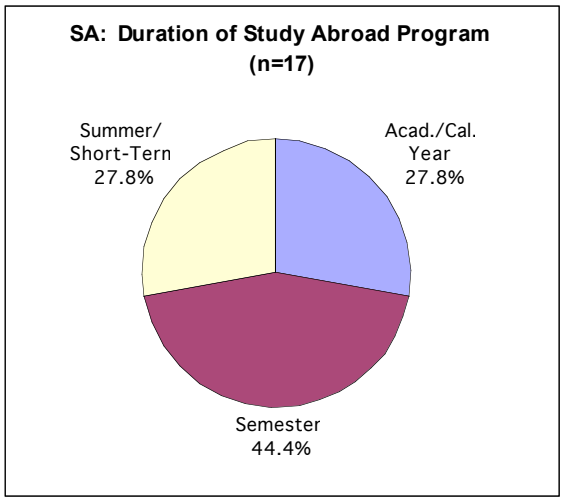
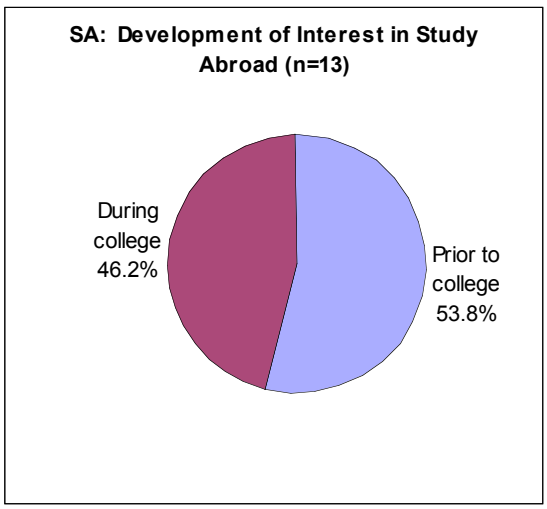
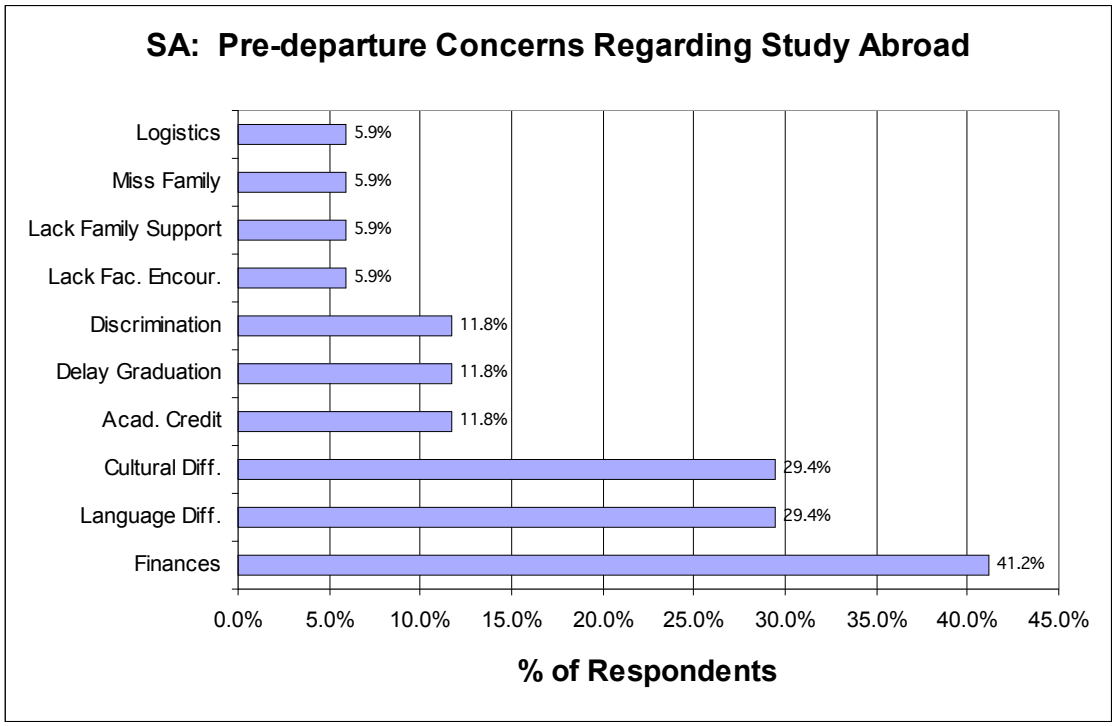


Table 4.38



The group indicated that prior to departure, over 40% were concerned about finances. The next biggest concerns were cultural and language differences (Table 4.39).

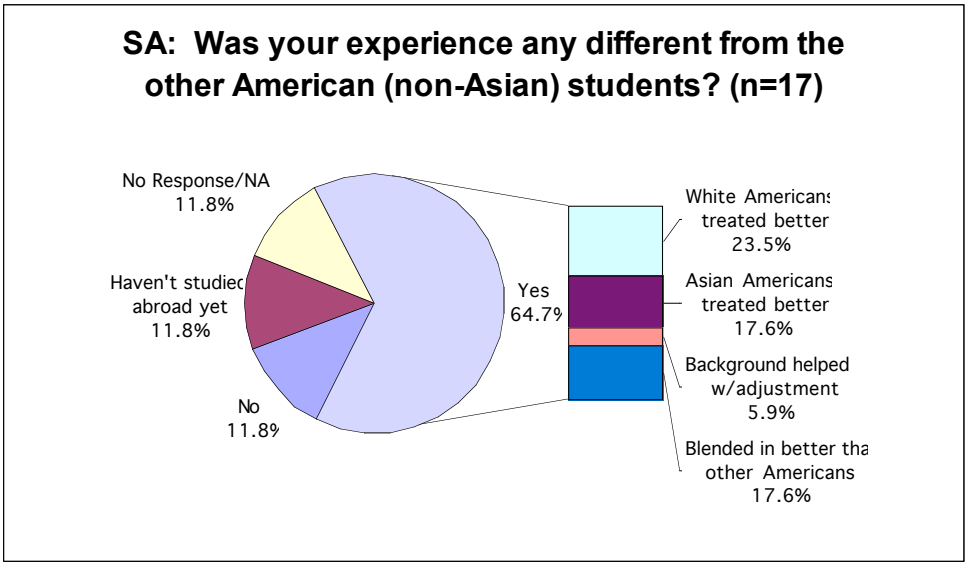
Table 4.39



63% of the respondents indicated that they perceived their experiences abroad to be different than other (non-Asian) American students studying abroad that the same site. 11.8% (n=2) could not respond because they had not studied abroad yet at the time of the survey, and 11.8% (n=2) did not respond. 11.8% indicated that their experience was no different than that of the other American students, one of which was a Korean adoptee who added, "It was similar because I am American inside and not Korean!" 23.5% of the respondents who did notice a difference indicated that White Americans were given preferential treatment, or that the host country nationals paid more attention to the White students. A Hmong-American female who studied in China reported that it was "different because they [White American students] don't look Chinese. So the Chinese people there gave them better treatment. As for me, they considered me same as everyone else." A Korean-American adoptee who studied in various parts of Latin America also observed,"I think they [non-Asian American students] were treated with more interest because they were White (sometimes). Other times people would be asking me extensive questions since I was oriental and didn't know quite what to think of an Asian girl working at a Mexican restaurant." 17.6% thought Asian Americans were treated better, because the host country nationals felt more comfortable interacting with them, even when they knew that they were not locals. A Korean-American male respondent gave an example: "Women [in Thailand] were more likely to be friends with me and ask me more questions. It was easier for them to confront foreigners if we were both Asian." One Filipino-American male respondent commented that his background made him more "open to cultural diversity." 17.6% felt like they blended in better (even

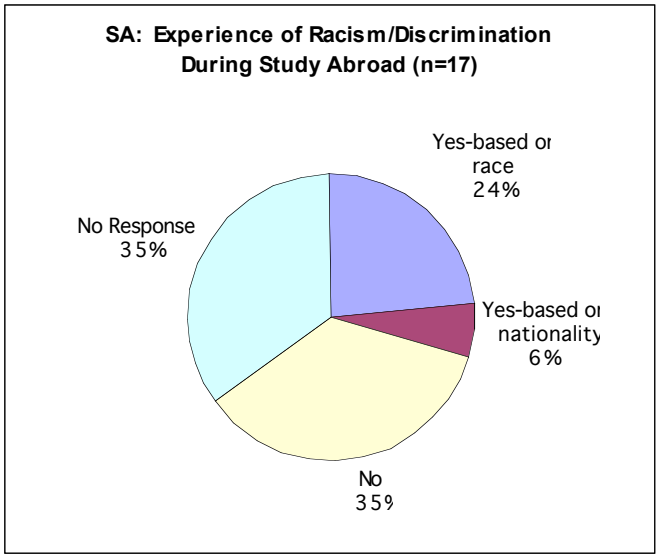
if some did not study in Asian countries), because they were less visible and thus less targeted as foreigners (Table 4.40).

Table 4.40



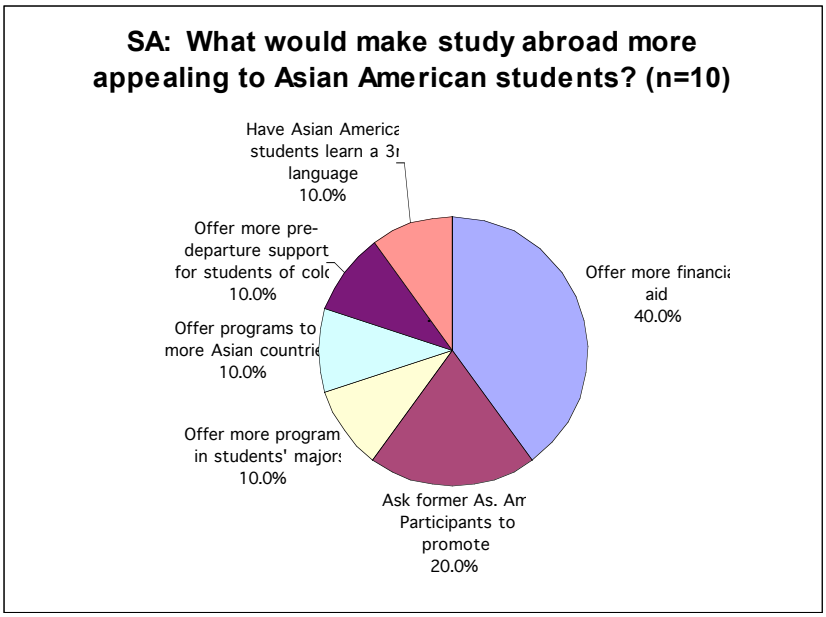
Some students also reported a small degree of racism or discrimination while abroad (Table 4.41). A Vietnamese-American student who studied in France noted that there was discrimination, "but only hostility of being American. Europeans could care less about Vietnamese status. The racism is different there. Obviously in the U.S. it is more explicit since we do not have nationality in the U.S. as Americans." The two students who visited Russia noted that there is "more acceptance of the Korean look in Russia" A Chinese-American student who studied in Hungary reported, "A little. Getting a haircut—they acted/thought that I was dirty (my hair) since I was Asian. The insisted that I wash my hair again even though I <u>just</u> washed it before I got there." The Chinese-American student who studied in Hawaii noted that "Because most of my friends were Caucasian at that time, people would not let us go to certain places because I had friends who were White." She also noticed that "Being Asian is an advantage in Hawaii."

Table 4.41



When asked what would make study abroad more appealing to Asian Americans, 40% felt that offering more financial aid would help increase interest. 20% suggested using former Asian American study abroad participants to encourage participants within their communities, and 10% suggested offering pre-departure support in the form of "special sessions just for students of color and explain things to them" (Table 4.42) One student also suggested showing students that an Asian community exists within the target culture, so that students can find a supportive community once abroad.

Table 4.42



When asked about whether their sense of cultural identity had changed as a result of their study abroad experience, over half of the respondents (n=10), reported that their sense of cultural identity was affected, and two respondents said that it did not. A Korean American adoptee female remarked that "It established my identity more in that I came to an understanding that I am Korean and not just American. I view myself as Korean American." A Vietnamese-American female respondent indicated that "It made me more confused but relieved now that I understand there is more out there. I am still searching and interested in what 'culture' means to me and to what ends." She adds that studying abroad can give Asian American students "neutral territory to explore their cultural identity." A Hmong-American female reported that "It actually made me more comfortable because there are very many Asians in Russia. I was not questioned about my ethnicity unlike here in the U.S." A Chinese-American female noted that "I am

definitely someone who was raised in the U.S. and that I have a lot to learn about myself and the Chinese."

Interview Results

The second part of the study consisted of nine interviews of a selected group of survey respondents. The interview subjects were chosen based on their willingness to be interviewed, which they indicated at the end of the survey, as well as other factors in an attempt to represent both genders and a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Effort was made to maintain a balance between those with and without study abroad experience. Some respondents who had initially expressed interest in being interviewed did not respond to a follow-up invitation to be interviewed. In the end, five study abroad past participants were interviewed, and four students who did not study abroad were interviewed. Of the Study Abroad group, there two were Hmong Americans (one male, one female), a female Korean adoptee , a Korean American male, and a Sri Lankan American female. Of the Non-Study Abroad group, there was one (Taiwanese) Chinese American female, one Indian American female, one Vietnamese American male, and one Hmong American female.

Upon coding and analysis of the interview transcriptions, the researcher identified five main themes. These include the importance of being near family; additional cultural factors that may deter participation in study abroad among Asian American students; biases of students' families or community members (toward and against) studying or visiting particular regions; level of parental involvement in the study abroad process; and identity issues abroad. The last section includes a number of isolated suggestions or points respondents have added throughout the interview that did not fit well into any of the above listed categories, but are important to highlight.

Importance of Proximity to Family

The importance placed on staying near one's family may be a plausible explanation for why many Asian American students are not interested in or cannot study abroad. Familiarity with Asian cultural values and family dynamics provides a deeper understanding of the conflicts that many Asian American students may encounter in pursuing a study abroad experience. Several interview subjects (one of whom studied abroad despite great resistance from his parents) mentioned that choosing a college was not really a "choice," but that it was the only option because it was close to home (within daily commuting distance), and/or because they had siblings who were also attending the University of Minnesota. To the parents of these students, it was important to be near one's family while going to school. One female Non-Study Abroad respondent said that she had no other option but to live at home rather than on campus, for it would cause her parents to lose face if she were to move out. When asked if she had ever contemplated living off campus, she responded:

> I want to, but it's just…it's almost as if I shouldn't do it because, first of all, because my parents live so close. They live here, and it would be kind of strange. It would almost be like losing face for them if I don't live with them, because they might think that…their friends would think that, "well, you know, maybe they don't get along," or "what is their problem?"

One Study Abroad respondent started out at the University of Minnesota Morris campus with his brother, but returned to the Twin Cities campus after his brother graduated and lived at home. He comments about his living situation while attending the Twin Cities campus:

> When I came back, I didn't really have a choice to not live with my parents but live closer to campus because I felt that it was more "cost-less" to live with my parents and also reap the benefits of home cooking, and room and board for free. Even if I

> wanted to move out, I felt that my parents wouldn't let me move out. They were not happy that I went away to school, and now that I came back, they were a little bit happier that I stayed home.

One reason that many Asian American parents want their children to stay close to home while in college is because Asian children are expected to have many roles and responsibilities at home that make it difficult for them to leave for an extended period of time. The Hmong respondents noted that females especially have responsibilities such as household chores and caring for siblings, making it hard to study abroad without feeling guilty or disrupting the family system. Some reported that parents are dependent on their children for support, such as interpretation of documents and taking care of paperwork. One Hmong respondent who did not study abroad said that she also had a responsibility to her community, so she decided to forego studying abroad to take on a leadership role to better her community. She added that she worried about her family, and wanted to be there for them in case they needed her, and thus felt that the timing wasn't right. She recalled her frustrations as a middle and high school student due to cultural restrictions placed on her.

> I've always wanted to have the freedom that all my other Caucasian friends had. To just sleep over at their house without it being a big deal, and playing sports after school. It always bothered me that I was restricted. I was really stubborn, too, as far as I can remember and I always would have to fight to get my way. And I was the only one that my mom let me stay after school to do all these things. And that was neat, and it carried over to high school. In high school, it was really rough because I wasn't home a lot, because I was playing tennis or volleyball or I was with our Asian club. It really bothered her because I wasn't home to help cook and clean and take care of my younger brothers and sisters!

In her family, her mother depended on her older siblings, especially her third eldest sister because she was the first to graduate from college, but mentions, "I didn't really take on

that role…I still feel bad." She speculates that other Hmong students wrestle with too many responsibilities at home to even think about study abroad:

> I think, too, that a lot of our Hmong students, and this may not be true, just my perception, I just think that a lot of Hmong students, there's a lot of responsibilities for them still towards their family, that it's hard to just say, "Hey, I'm going to go study abroad." The ones who are able to, they're pretty lucky. There's a lot of things that we are working on within our own families, our own community, and I think a lot of times they don't even think of studying abroad because there's more important things to think about. Things that are more real, they have to do their priorities again.

A Taiwanese American respondent described her relationship with her parents as mutally dependent:

> I feel very close to my parents, and I think that it's almost necessary. First of all, because we're the only family here. My parents depend on their children, and me and my brother, we depend on our parents a lot, especially for emotional support and stuff like that. With that comes a lot of obligations and expectations. They influenced me in a subtle way, like my decision about things.

A Sri Lankan American respondent who did study abroad mentioned that she felt her relationship with her parents is probably atypical in comparison to other Asian families in that she never felt pressured with too many responsibilities or guilt.

Male students also reported family responsibilities. A Hmong respondent said that he felt guilty that he would not be there to take on responsibilities, especially because in Hmong culture, the youngest son is expected to take care of his parents. Similarly, a Korean American respondent indicated that the ultimate responsibility falls on the son, even more so because he is the only son.

Another explanation for why Asian American parents want their children close to home is due to culture-based gender biases. Nearly all the interviewees agreed that the reaction of their parents, or people in their community, to their decision to study abroad

would depend on the gender of the child. Each respondent was asked if they were of the opposite gender, whether their parents would have reacted differently. In almost all the respondents, being female generally evoked a more protective attitude. In one situation, a Vietnamese American respondent who did not study abroad because he knew his parents would not be supportive, indicated that if he were female, the answer would have been a stronger, more definite "no." In another case, a Taiwanese American student mentioned that even though her parents would not allow her to spend a term abroad, they did allow her to travel to Latin America in high school with her on a band trip only because they knew she would be with the group the entire time. Nevertheless, they reminded her constantly to remain close to the group at all times. The respondents indicated that their parents would be more willing to allow, or in some cases, even encourage, their male children to study abroad. A Taiwanese American female student who said her parents would not allow her to study abroad thought her parents might consider or encourage it if she were male. An Indian American respondent indicated that her community tends to believe that it is in the nature of boys to explore and be independent. If she were to study abroad, she would have to remain near family members abroad, thus limiting her choice of study abroad locations.

Interestingly, the responses were consistent among both the Study Abroad and Non-Study Abroad groups. It appears that despite the non-supportive attitudes of their parents or ethnic community, the students persisted and pursued a study abroad experience.

Additional Cultural Factors that Discourage Study Abroad Participation

The respondents were asked about other factors (besides the need to remain close to home) that they encountered which may have discouraged them from studying abroad. A Vietnamese American student answered that his parents felt that the American educational system is best, so there is really no need to go elsewhere. A Korean male who studied abroad also expressed he received the same message from his parents. Another respondent mentioned that within the Hmong community, there is greater stress on obtaining a higher education first, which is already a challenge for many Hmong students to balance with traditional cultural expectations. Therefore, study abroad in particular has not quite become a focus yet. However, another Hmong student mentioned that the community is in fact making efforts to reach out and promote study abroad, even dedicating an episode of a Hmong language television show to educating the community, particularly parents, about the benefits of study abroad. All three Hmong respondents indicated that Hmong values are changing as more generations are growing up in the U.S. Two respondents who studied abroad mentioned that study abroad must be functional in order to gain the support of their parents, such as partaking in internships directly relating to a future career, and curricular integration of study abroad coursework. Among Asian American parents, there tends to be fear of the unknown and lack of understanding of what can be gained from study abroad because many of its benefits are intangible and immeasurable.

One Hmong respondent mentioned that lack of courses about Asia and Asian languages (outside of China and Japan) and study abroad programs to South and Southeast Asia have possibly contributed to little interest in studying in Asia. Courses in

these areas would serve to cultivate more interest in the region. They could increase pride in and awareness of one's ethnic heritage, hopefully resulting in students feeling encouraged to seek ways to preserve the culture. She points out that universities often make the mistake of thinking that all Asians can relate to China or Japan, and that many Hmong may feel the same way as she does. They study Chinese language and culture because it is the "next closest thing." Another Hmong respondent questioned what message schools are sending to students by not offering languages spoken by a large of group of the student population: "There are so few Southeast Asian language programs here. Had they offered Lao or Thai, I would have done that. In high school, Russian and Swahili were offered, but not the language of one third of the students! That's frustrating." She also mentioned that it is important to offer advanced level coursework in Asian programs abroad to accommodate students who are already somewhat familiar with the language or other topics of study and allow for more in-depth study of the host culture's issues. A Korean American respondent perceived that Asian Americans' own disinterest in and negative attitudes of Southeast or South Asia (looking down on the developing Asian countries) contributes to this lack of interest in studying in Asia. "Most of the Asian Americans I know don't want to study abroad in Asia," he remarked. "They all want to go to Europe. These (Southeast Asia, South Asia) are perceived as dirty, and that Bangkok is the sex capital of the world, and a lot of it has to do with how they perceive the South and Southeast Asians here and they think that it's going to be the same over there."

Several respondents agreed that the length of the program may also affect participation levels, and believed that shorter programs would be better received by

Asian parents. One respondent mentioned that because she had recently immigrated to the U.S. and has lived here for about ten years, she was just getting settled and did not want to start over again with language and cultural barriers and making new friends. Her family also follows the Buddhist belief that fate determines one's destiny, and she speculated that her parents would believe that studying abroad would not improve her chances of finding a good job or improve her situation, because it is fate that will ultimately decide her fortune. Two respondents (both Hmong) alluded to a low tolerance for debt within the community, creating more barriers and guilty feelings about taking out loans for study abroad. One Hmong respondent felt a sense guilt accepting financial help from parents or siblings, and that it was an obligation to one's family to not accept it so that the money could be used for the family's immediate needs. Thus, they are encouraged to "play it safe" and achieve their success in education the most direct and inexpensive way possible.

Cultural or Geographical Biases of Family or Community Members

When asked if there were countries or regions to which their parents or community would discourage study or travel, several students mentioned Asian countries. They listed reasons such as political conflict (for an Indian student studying in Pakistan); the unstable political situation and tension (for a Taiwanese student studying in China); fear of detainment, persecution, or discrimination due to his ethnicity in China (Hmong student); historical conflicts and negative feelings from past wars (for Hmong and Korean students visiting in Japan). A Hmong respondent elaborated:

> I have heard some talk about specific regions, but they're just saying that it's unsafe and not that they don't like the people. They would say, "In China, blah blah blah…because it's a communist country, the Chinese people might mistake you for being Chinese and they might keep you there! Or you might not come back!" Or they'll say, "Where are you going?" And I'll say, "I'm going to Japan." They'll have some bad thing like, say "You know, the Japanese back in the 1940's, they were in Southeast Asia, and they weren't very nice people," or something like that. "You might want to be careful when you go there, don't tell them that you're Hmong."

One Hmong respondent mentioned that if she were to visit Vietnam, where many of her relatives still live, she fears being accused of supporting the communist government by some members of the Twin Cities Hmong community. A Korean American respondent noted that travel to Africa may be frowned upon by the Korean community due to past racial clashes in the U.S. between African Americans and Korean Americans.

The general consensus is that study or travel within one's country of origin is often highly encouraged because the parents are more familiar with the culture and want to encourage their children to retain their cultural heritage. However, this encouragement is conditional in some cases. For example, a Taiwanese respondent indicated that her parents would allow her to study in Taiwan, but only if she remains close to family there, or if accompanied by her parents. An Indian female respondent echoed the same condition. Despite the rivalry between India and Sri Lanka, a Sri Lankan American respondent reported that study in India is still often encouraged by Sri Lankan parents, perhaps because they share many cultural similarities. A Korean American respondent indicated that among the Korean community in the U.S., there appears to be an attitude that those who go to study in Korea are not completing "serious" study, but that they are "doing it just for fun." Thus, in this case, study in one's country of origin may not be as highly respected, yet it is still encouraged to maintain the culture and cultural identity.

Parental Involvement in the Study Abroad Process

Several respondents alluded to the importance of involving their parents in the study abroad process, either directly or indirectly. One Hmong respondent indicated that it was important that his parents "granted permission" for him to study abroad, which they eventually, though reluctantly, did with the help of his older brother who served as an intermediary to convince his parents of the benefits of studying abroad. His brother explained to his parents that studying abroad would be a stepping stone to success in college and future employment, as well as to understanding the importance of his own culture through learning about another. Before he left, his brother told him, "You have my permission. You should go even if Mother or Father doesn't approve. Let me convince them throughout time and they'll understand." When asked if he would have gone regardless of his parents' decision, he said that he probably would have, but would have felt very guilty and uncomfortable from the tension he was leaving behind. He also mentioned there was a program on Hmong community television that aired several years ago that discussed study abroad and its benefits, targeting Hmong youth and their parents. The existence of this program indicates that there seems to be gradual acceptance of study abroad among the Hmong community, and a realization that it is necessary to explain in Hmong to parents and elders the importance of an international study experience. A Korean American respondent echoed this in his suggestion to better inform parents about the merits of study abroad, as well as explain more in detail what is exactly involved in studying abroad to alleviate their anxieties of the unknown. It is clear from these students' accounts that parental involvement is crucial in supporting study abroad for many Asian American students. Interestingly, both of these respondents noted

that they had met considerable resistance from their parents, but decided to study abroad despite their disapproval.

Issues of Identity Abroad

Another theme that arose from the interview portion of the study included a variety of identity-related issues for respondents who had studied abroad. Several respondents perceived a denial of their American or dual identity by their hosts while abroad, often due to ignorance rather than maliciousness. In Latin America, a Korean adoptee recalled that she was constantly referred to as "Chinita," or Chinese, to which she took offense at first but later realized that it is a cultural way of communicating affectionately. Several of the respondents noted that whenever they would say they were American, there was always a follow-up question, such as, "Yes, but where are you *really* from?"

Other Asian American respondents reported that their identity was less questioned than in the U.S. in some areas, such as in Russia and France, and that Asians or Asian-looking people seemed to be more accepted. In these situations, the students were able to choose how they presented themselves depending on the situation, often switching identities from Asian to American. A Hmong respondent who studied in Japan was surprised that there were several Japanese who knew about Hmong people, and were interested in his culture. He added that many Americans have never heard of the Hmong despite the large communities in the U.S.

The Asian American students interviewed noted positive and negative aspects of being able to blend in while they were abroad. On the positive side, they were more

easily integrated into the host culture because they were often mistaken for locals. They did not stand out, and thus were not targeted as tourists in situations such as being charged high prices. A Korean American respondent noted that the host nationals in Thailand were much more comfortable speaking with him than with the White Americans, and they expressed curiosity about what it was like being Asian in the U.S. He also felt that he was better received by the Thai because his cultural background prevented him from making culturally offensive mistakes, and they felt he was more respectful of their culture. He remarked that being in Thailand was liberating and refreshing in that he was able to see a culture that looks toward Asia and not the U.S. for its influence, such as fashion, music, and cars.

The negative aspects include feeling less important or interesting than other (White or Black) Americans. The host cultures often knew about African Americans, and even idolized Black culture as in the case of Japan, whose youth embrace rap music and urban fashion trends. Being a White American is also a novelty in many countries, especially in Latin America or Asia. One respondent mentioned that the Latin Americans associated White Americans with wealth and prosperity, thus focusing more of their attention on them. She explained her theory:

> I think that the European American students or tourists or travelers present an economic standing of greater power and greater wealth, and also of more attractiveness to Latin American countries. It's all about White privilege, I think. With being White, you associate with countries that are economically stable, that have a lot of wealth…an overall social security network system. I think that the people are always trying to become Whiter it seems, and so it seems that the Latin men of the Latin countries really seek the attention of White women who kind of give them opportunities to go up a notch in the social ladder. Not only that, but any type of White people, there's the sense of more money, "give me more" and so I thought that was given definite priority over my ethnic background.

In Japan, one Hmong respondent reported feeling subtle discrimination against other Asian students. He felt that the "American or Caucasian students are more popular, being

invited to things first, and you (the Asian American) are the second choice, third choice even. Unless you have a connection with them…" The Japanese students thought he did not speak English well, so they were not as interested in socializing with him because they thought they could not practice their English with him.

Additional Observations and Suggestions

A Hmong American respondent noted that while she was abroad, when she was showing her hosts photos of her friends in the U.S., she noticed that most of them were Asian Americans. An African American student on the same program had photos of her friends, who where almost all African American. This realization made her reflect on American race relations and she wondered how her hosts perceived the racial situation in the U.S. Another respondent noticed that there were few Asian Americans in Latin America, especially Asian women. She was shocked by the ignorance of the numerous White Americans abroad who had narrow views of who was American, not acknowledging that she was also an American. This type of reaction from her fellow expatriates made her feel "excluded from being an American, and from being a citizen of the United States."

Interview respondents suggested several ways to better support students of color studying abroad. One respondent suggested having another student of the same ethnic background go on the same program to be there for support in case of discrimination. Another respondent suggested pre-departure sessions to discuss issues that students of color may face while abroad. She emphasized the importance of honesty and straightforwardness on the part of program providers, so that students enter the country well informed of possible challenging situations. One respondent who experienced

intense racism and discrimination while abroad due to her skin color reported that now when she meets people from that particular country, she is much more reserved and careful about opening up to them. From her experience, she recommends training on-site support staff to deal with potential discrimination in addition to careful selection of culturally sensitive staff.

The wealth of information collected from these interviews has helped broaden and deepen one's understanding of the complexity of Asian Americans' struggles with the decision to study abroad, and with particular challenges once they are in the host culture. Although there were common themes that have emerged from analysis of the interviews, the details derived from these interviews illustrate the rich variety of responses and that many differences exist across, as well as within, ethnic groups.

Chapter 5:
Conclusion

This chapter begins with an analysis and discussion of the findings, first by examining how the results of the study may help answer the research questions in Chapter 1. This chapter will also discuss how the findings compare to those of related studies. The discussion will be followed by suggestions for future research on related topics, and will end with recommendations for practical application of the information gathered from the study.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Because the study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data, the results will be analyzed using both methodological frameworks. However, due to the small number of respondents, many of the conclusions made from the quantitative data cannot accurately be used to represent the general Asian American student population at the University of Minnesota. This is particularly true when discussing the Study Abroad group, which consisted of only 17 respondents. The same caution applies to creating ethnic subgroups within the Non-Study Abroad group, which consisted of between three and twenty respondents of each ethnicity. When making cross-ethnic comparisons among the Non-Study Abroad group, the subgroups with three or fewer respondents were not included. Nevertheless, groups of four to twenty are still far from the ideal number of respondents needed to make accurate conclusions. Larger-scale studies are needed to confirm the preliminary conclusions made from such data. Instead of generating theories from the data, the researcher has included in this chapter some possible explanations that must not be interpreted as a conclusion, but rather as a way of opening up discussion and

exploration of the topic. With the questionable usefulness of the quantitative data of this study, the information gathered from the qualitative data may be more useful in that its purpose is simply to explore issues relevant to this student community, regardless of whether or not the issue is statistically significant.

The first set of questions of the survey attempted to create a demographic profile of University of Minnesota Asian American students who studied abroad, and a corresponding profile of those who did not. Factors examined included gender, immigration history, ethnicity (perceived and actual), family characteristics, degree of cultural maintenance, educational choices and international attitudes. This information is intended to help identify differences between the two groups that might serve as predicting factors of likelihood to study abroad.

Because the overall gender ratio of the respondents does not match the University's gender ratio, the researcher is unable to conclude if gender is a factor affecting Asian American students' participation in study abroad. However, since general data do show that more females tend to participate in study abroad than males (females comprise approximately 65-75% of study abroad participants), the data gathered from this survey (study abroad participants) is consistent with the overall study abroad gender ratios. A comparison of length of residence in the U.S. via birthplace, generation, and immigration history (Tables 4.3 – 4.7) suggests that Asian American students whose families have a longer history in the U.S. are more likely to study abroad. Unlike Van der Meid's nation-wide study which showed that the Study Abroad group consisted of more first generation students, the data from this study show that the greatest percentage of study abroad respondents are second generation. In comparison, first-generation

respondents made up the greatest percentage of Non-Study Abroad respondents. Of the respondents not born in the U.S., those that studied abroad had lived in the U.S. for ten or more years, while 26.2% of the Non-Study Abroad group had lived in the U.S. for fewer than 10 years. It is perhaps the definition of "recent" immigration that has created the differences in data between this study and Van der Meid's study, which alludes to "recent" immigration as being fewer than thirty years, and thus did not find any correlation to length of residence in the U.S. and likelihood to of studying abroad.

Although Vietnamese American respondents made up the largest percentage of the Non-Study Abroad respondents, they were among the least represented subgroups of the Study Abroad group. Van der Meid also listed Vietnamese, along with Filipino, as the ethnic group that was least likely to study abroad. Because this study did not include many Filipino American respondents, no conclusions can be drawn about their participation levels. Otherwise, the distribution was similar between the two groups for Chinese, Hmong, and Amerasian respondents, which were most represented in both the Study Abroad and Non-Study Abroad groups. This is an area to be especially cautious in making conclusions, however, as using ethnic subdivisions increases the inaccuracy of comparisons across groups due to the low number of respondents.

A comparison of perception of ethnic identity showed that while equal percentages of both groups preferred to identify themselves as Asian American, more Non-Study Abroad respondents identified as "Asian," and more Study Abroad respondents tended to choose "American." The responses may have been affected by their study abroad experience, as many past participants, regardless of ethnicity, report feeling more "American" than they ever have during or after a study abroad experience.

Another possible explanation is the higher percentage of adoptees in the Study Abroad group, who were more likely to be raised without Asian cultural values and traditions than respondents of immigrant parents. Yet another explanation suggests that the Non-Study Abroad group consisted of more recent immigrants who primarily identify more with their Asian roots than with American culture. These factors may also explain why the Study Abroad group reported having fewer Asian American friends and why the Non-Study Abroad group reported having more Asian American friends.

The questions pertaining to family characteristics and cultural maintenance revealed that the size of one's household, home language use, degree of family maintenance of Asian cultural traditions, and previous study abroad history in the family did not appear to be a differentiating factor between the two groups. However, the breakdown by ethnicity revealed that the Chinese respondents had the highest percentage of family members who had studied abroad. Of the four groups compared, 90% (n=9) of the respondents who indicated a family member had studied abroad had listed a male family member, and 10% (n=1) indicated female family members had studied abroad. This may support the notion that traditionally (more so in the past than in the recent generations), in many Asian cultures, it is more acceptable for males than females to study abroad. The highest level of education completed by parents of the respondents did show clear differences, but this may not be unique to Asian Americans. However, among White American students, there would be few or no parents with less than a high school education, whereas a number of Asian American parents born abroad did not have the same level of educational opportunities in their native countries. Having less education

may contribute to less exposure to international issues and people, sources which often generate interest in study abroad.

The data about parents' level of strictness was based on students' perceptions and interpretations alone. Despite the confusing responses described in the previous chapter, overall, Study Abroad respondents tended to describe their parents as more liberal than Non-Study Abroad respondents, which may consequently affect answers about parents' reactions to students' decisions to study abroad, discussed later in this chapter.

Similar to national figures, among the Study Abroad respondents there was a high concentration of social science, arts and humanities majors. The Asian American Non-Study Abroad respondents' majors were evenly distributed across all majors, except for arts and humanities, where only 3.9% of the respondents indicated this as their major. This data from the comparison of major by ethnicity of the Non-Study Abroad group suggests that Vietnamese American and Indian American students tended to major in the more practical or lucrative fields (engineering, computer science, health sciences, business, natural sciences), and coincidentally were among the least represented ethnicities of the Study Abroad group. Thus this data supports the notion that many Asian Americans do not study abroad because they tend to major in fields that produce few study abroad participants (particularly the sciences). These findings are contrary to Van der Meid's data which shows Asian Americans who do not study abroad also tend to major in the same areas, in similar proportions, as those who studied abroad.

The study also explored whether a student's reasons for making educational choices, namely major and college of attendance, had any correlation with whether or not they studied abroad. The reasons the respondents gave for choosing a major were similar

in that most chose it by interest. It is unclear from the data whether the variety of responses given by the Non-Study Abroad group can be attributed to the greater number and variety of respondents, or whether the Study Abroad students are truly more motivated by their interests than Non-Study Abroad respondents. Reasons for choosing to attend the University of Minnesota were also similar between the groups. The Non-Study Abroad group more frequently reported that they were influenced by their parents' preferences. It suggests that for these students, the decisions and opinions of their parents have an important role in their education, or perhaps that these respondents did not really have a choice. As mentioned in the previous chapter, respondents who chose "close to home" could mean that it was the student's preference to be close to home, but it could also mean it was the parents' preference that the student remain close to home. Because of this ambiguity in interpretation, no conclusions can be made.

When asked where in the world they were most interested in visiting (either study or travel), the responses of the Study Abroad and Non-Study Abroad groups differed little, with Asia being the most frequently listed place they would like to visit. The two groups did differ when asked where they were least interested in visiting. The Study Abroad group listed Europe four times more often than the Non-Study Abroad group. A possible reason may be that some of these students had already been to Europe and thus were ready to visit somewhere different. It is also possible that the Asian American students who studied abroad have a different mentality and tend to prefer to go somewhere less "mainstream." The Study Abroad group was also less interested in Asia and the Middle East than the Non-Study Abroad group. Only the Non-Study Abroad group listed Antarctica or the North Pole. Not enough information was collected to

determine if Non-Study Abroad respondents used different criteria than Study Abroad respondents to answer this question, such as basing desirability on physical aspects rather than cultural or political.

The large percentage of the Non-Study Abroad respondents who indicated they had traveled internationally negates the notion that lack of international travel experience is a factor in deciding not to study abroad. As mentioned earlier, the responses from the Study Abroad group did not give sufficient information to determine whether the student's international travels were a result of the study abroad experience, or if it influenced the decision to study abroad. Three quarters of the Non-Study Abroad respondents indicated an interest in studying abroad, and nearly all knew that they could study abroad through the University of Minnesota and apply their coursework toward degree requirements. From these figures, one may conclude that lack of interest and knowledge of study abroad opportunities does not seem to be a major factor in deciding not to study abroad, and that there are other factors that may be more influential. In fact, 41% of those who did not study abroad were still considering it.

The most interesting findings of this study came from the survey question that asked Non-Study Abroad respondents to identify and rank factors that affected their decision not to study abroad. Similar to Van der Meid's findings, finances and academic fit were the two most popular reasons cited, but in the Van der Meid study academic fit was ranked highest, followed by finances. In this study, the respondents ranked finances most frequently as the top reason for not studying abroad. This difference could be due to the student populations surveyed for each study. Van der Meid's study consisted primarily of Asian American students attending private institutions, whereas the Asian

American students in this study all attend a public university. Although affordability is the most frequently reported obstacle among all students, it is difficult to assess the degree of importance Asian American students place on finances compared to other ethnic groups using this study alone. Carroll's study, which examines the five major ethnic groups in the U.S., has the potential of providing such a comparison. Unfortunately, her study only indicates that as a whole group, finances were the most influential factor among students of color, with about 60% of the respondents citing it as a concern. 59.7% of the Asian American respondents in this study cited finances as a factor. Using Carroll's data as a benchmark, Asian Americans may not be more concerned with finances than other ethnic groups.

Many respondents indicated that they could not or did not want to be away from home for an extended period of time, with 31.2% of the respondents choosing this as a factor for deciding not to study abroad. Unfortunately the survey did not ask them to differentiate between *inability* to leave and *desire* to remain at home, which are indeed two very different reasons. From comments that respondents shared throughout other parts of the survey, the researcher can conclude that a large number of the respondents who cited this reason did so because they were unable to leave due to responsibilities at home or because their parents would not permit them to do so.

The fear of language differences as a discouraging factor, though common across all ethnic groups, may have a different twist to the many Asian Americans who recently came to the U.S. These particular students remember having to learn a new language, or had witnessed their parents' struggle with the new language, and are still aiding their parents or grandparents with tasks that require English. It is plausible that many of the

students who indicated this concern did so due to real life experience and observations of these difficulties in their family's immigration experience.

Lack of family support is more important of a factor to the Asian American students in this study than those in Van der Meid's. It is possible that this difference is due to the ethnic composition of the respondents of each study. Van der Meid's study included few Southeast Asians, whereas a large percentage of the respondents for this study are first generation Southeast Asians, alluding to a possible cultural difference between ethnic groups. A closer examination of the responses, divided by ethnic subgroups, supports the notion that responses can vary greatly by ethnicity. For example, the only respondents who listed "culturally inappropriate" as an obstacle were Vietnamese, Hmong, and Chinese (Taiwanese), with over one quarter of the Hmong respondents choosing this reason. The Chinese American respondents had the most issues with the paperwork involved with studying abroad, with over 60% of respondents indicating this reason. Vietnamese and Indian respondents indicated most frequently a lack of family support, 50% and 85.7% respectively selecting this reason.

This difference between ethnic groups is especially evident in the responses describing parents' reactions to the student's decision to study abroad. Despite the different numbers of respondents in each group, there appears to be a clear dividing line between the ethnic groups that would more likely receive a negative response and those who would usually be encouraged by their parents. Examination of the students' actual responses indicate that in many cases, the reason behind the parents' reactions are based on cultural values (e.g., children need to be close to parents) and norms (e.g., females should not go abroad alone). The Vietnamese respondents indicated most often negative

reactions from parents. Coincidentally, they also had the greatest percentage of respondents who were born in Asia. This may support the notion that the newer immigrant groups may be more reluctant to encourage their children to study abroad.

The interviews also allowed the researcher to explore possible connections between parents' desire for students to live at home while attending college and their resistance in allowing students to study abroad. This was true in several of the respondents' cases, indicating that this phenomenon may help to explain some of the Asian American parents' reluctance to encourage study abroad in their children.

Also from the interviews, it appeared that shorter study abroad programs might help attract more Asian American students, more for cultural than financial reasons, as the respondents indicated that their parents or community members may be more willing to let their children participate on shorter (vacation-length) programs.

With 27.3% of respondents indicating they did not study abroad because they did not know anyone else studying there, one can see that having peers on the same program, at the same site, or simply studying abroad the same term was a fairly significant factor. Respondents who were interviewed stressed the importance of using peers to encourage study abroad, also supporting the belief that within the Asian American community, word of mouth (particularly from other Asian Americans) is plays an important role in encouraging study abroad.

When considered as a whole, the Hmong respondents appeared to have the most disparities in their responses. While they most frequently cited the cultural inappropriateness of studying abroad, listing many reasons such as family responsibilities and gender roles, they were also among the most represented in the Study Abroad group.

In the interview portion, the Hmong respondents alluded to a growing attitude within their community about study abroad that is becoming more open. Possible reasons for this change could be attributed to the efforts made within the community to encourage study abroad (perhaps due to recognition of these cultural barriers and attitudes) and the faster turnover in generation (due to earlier marriage and childbirth than other Asian American groups). This particular group further illustrates the point that even within communities with similar immigration histories, major variances can exist.

Consistent to Van der Meid's and Carroll's findings, this study also found that only a small percentage of the Asian Americans surveyed chose not to study abroad due to fear of discrimination abroad. Carroll's study also showed that Asian Americans were concerned about racial discrimination abroad only slightly more than the White Americans. Although African American students were not examined as part of this study, the studies cited in the literature review seem to suggest that Asian Americans and African Americans differ in perception of study abroad barriers, and that fear of discrimination abroad is a more salient factor for African Americans than for Asian Americans.

It is possible that these differences in perceptions exist because Asian Americans generally experience (or perceive that they experience) less overt discrimination in the U.S. than African Americans do, and so they do not carry that fear with them abroad. As mentioned earlier, stereotypes of Asian Americans that exist abroad may be more positive due to the "model minority" myth, whereas African American students abroad must confront negative images portrayed by the media. Oftentimes, because many Asian Americans have lighter skin, they are able to blend in more easily when they are abroad,

even in non-Asian countries such as Russia, and thus are less singled out. Illustrating this point is the Sri Lankan American respondent who had dark skin, and thus was mistaken as an African or a gypsy when she was in Spain. Many of the host nationals she encountered in that particular region did not believe that she was of Asian (and not of African) descent. She experienced much racism due to her darker complexion, and perceived she was treated worse than the lighter-skinned Asian American students who were abroad with her. In this particular case, the respondent had not been concerned about discrimination before (she had studied abroad three times previously), but after this particular incident, it had become much more of a concern when she meets Spanish nationals both in the U.S. and abroad.

In addition to identifying factors affecting participation, it is also important to examine the experiences of those students who made it past these obstacles to successfully partake in a study abroad opportunity. Analysis of the Study Abroad group's responses showed that nearly half of the respondents studied in Asia. Western Europe, the most common destination for all students at the University of Minnesota, was chosen by only 17.6% of the respondents. This data supports the argument that many Asian American students are in fact interested in studying in Asia, despite the limited selection of available Asian study abroad sites. Overall University of Minnesota study abroad figures indicate that during the 1999-2000 academic year, 54.9% of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities students participated on a program to Western Europe, and only 5.6% studied in East, South, and Southeast Asian countries. In 1998-99, 29% of the Asian American study abroad participants studied in Asia, compared to 6.4% of all

students choosing to study in Asia (data was unavailable for Asian American students during the 1999-00 academic year).

The majority of the respondents who studied abroad indicated that they perceived they were treated differently from other (non-Asian) Americans by the host country nationals. One of the two respondents that answered "no" was a Korean adoptee, who did not perceive herself as any different from other Americans while in the U.S, and thus felt that she was not treated any differently while abroad. This particular response reinforces the belief that if a student does not consider herself to be different, then she will not be treated differently by others. It may also depend on the host culture, as Asian Americans may be well received in some cultures and discriminated against in others. There is also a possibility that the respondent was not aware of subtle differences that another student in the same situation might notice.

One area that is not discussed often is the concept of feeling invisible or less noticed compared to White Americans, and thus feeling less important. Four of the respondents noted this, and attributed it to the host culture's conception or stereotype of a typical American. This feeling of being less important or interesting can greatly affect the degree of integration that Asian Americans are able to experience while abroad, since it may lead to lower self esteem and result in lack of confidence in meeting new people of the host culture. Students may feel disappointed in that their hosts do not show much interest in them and become discouraged in attempting to make friends with their hosts.

It is also important to note that in some cases, Asian Americans felt that they were treated better than other Americans, both of these cases being students who studied in Asia where they were welcomed with more warmth simply because they were Asian. In

one case, the Korean American respondent noticed that Koreans and Japanese were held in higher prestige than White Americans because the Korean and Japanese tourists tended to be more wealthy and generous, and so the feelings were transferred to the Korean American respondent. In the other case, the Chinese American respondent was regarded simply as a Chinese person during her stay in China, and thus accepted more readily into the culture even when they knew she was a Chinese person living abroad—it was the culture that still connected them.

Although only a small percentage of respondents expressed concern about racial discrimination abroad (7.8% of the Non-Study Abroad group, and 11.8% of the Study Abroad group), 24% of the respondents reported experiencing some form of racism during their overseas experience. One respondent noted that the discrimination she encountered was strictly based on her nationality as an American, and had nothing to do with her race. These figures reinforce the need for study abroad providers and advisers to discuss the possibility of discrimination abroad with students, and that having well-trained support staff is crucial to handle these concerns.

Implications for Future Research

As with most research, many questions are answered through this study, but many more are raised. The researcher views this study as part of a beginning in understanding the subtle differences among Asian Americans in their experiences with and perception of study abroad. It has barely begun to uncover some of the issues with which Asian American students struggle in deciding to study abroad, and while they are overseas. In discussing the implications for future research, the limitations of this study will also be implicitly noted. In many ways, the concerns of Asian Americans regarding studying

abroad are similar to those of the general population, such as finances, academics, and safety issues. However, each ethnic group may interpret or experience these obstacles in a different way. For example, to some Asian Americans, safety concerns include disease, violence, and crime like all other ethnic groups, but can also include fear of political persecution or protecting their sexual reputation while abroad .

Although this study was able to highlight some of the issues for Asian American students regarding study abroad, there needs to be more similar studies about other ethnic groups in order to make meaningful comparisons and to gain a more well-rounded perspective of these issues. It is especially important as a next step to research ethnic groups of which little information has been collected, namely the Chicano/Latino and American Indian student communities. A large-scale all-inclusive study, similar that completed by Carroll, would be extremely helpful in making more accurate comparisons, as all groups would be compared using the same methodology.

When the researcher chose to embark on this study, there was an assumption that there were many general studies in existence of the factors influencing study abroad participation, but in reality, there are few. Much of the information about these factors are actually "folklore" shared only within the study abroad professional community but not officially documented or studied in depth. As study abroad professionals are looking at ways to increase participation, these factors will need to be examined more closely to better address the barriers that students encounter when planning a study abroad experience. These general studies can serve as a foundation for more focused studies such as this one.

Due to a plethora of additional sources made available to the researcher after the data collection had already occurred, the researcher discovered more possible cultural factors through completing the second round of literature reviews that could not be tested in the survey or interview. One factor that the researcher would have liked to explore more in detail is a culture's tolerance of debt and how it may affect study abroad participation. This could add some depth to the understanding of finances as a barrier, and how some members of the Asian American community may feel less comfortable funding study abroad through large amounts of student loans. Another factor to explore is the importance of proximity to family or home while attending college, either to the students or their parents. Some of the survey questions alluded to this factor, but it seems that further investigation is needed to see if it is at all linked to study abroad participation levels. Yet another factor worth investigating in more detail is Asian American student participation in extracurricular activities and its possible relationship to study abroad participation. In many Asian cultures, parents are often not supportive of extracurricular activities because they fear it detracts from studies and domestic responsibilities. It is possible that Asian parents may view study abroad as a form of extracurricular activity and therefore frown upon their son's or daughter's participation in it.

Another area of further exploration is the phenomenon of heritage study, students who choose to study in a country reflecting their ethnic heritage, and the issues that surround this situation. Are there certain types or groups of students who tend to choose heritage study abroad programs? What do students find particularly attractive about doing such a program? How do students handle the disappointment when they are not given the "homecoming" treatment or attention that they had expected? Are there factors

that would deter a student from studying abroad in a heritage-related site, such as offering the program in an area of the country in which the students do not have family, or sites that may evoke negative feelings, such as offering a program in Hanoi (the "new" capital declared by the Communist government) for South Vietnamese students who fled the country to avoid communist persecution?

Practical Application of Findings

It is the researcher's hopes that the information gathered from this study will encourage more reflection upon what types of programs to offer in order to attract a wider (ethnic) population of students, and how to prepare and support students of color who plan to study abroad.

The variety of responses among the individual groups, whether by ethnicity, gender, or generation in the U.S. illustrates the importance of tailoring promotional and support approaches so that issues relevant to each group are addressed. This will keep students from feeling that they are being generalized, and that study abroad professionals do not truly understand their concerns. The attention paid to addressing community-specific concerns reassure students that their differences are important and acknowledged. For example, understanding that costs are a major concern for this community, and that there may be a lower tolerance for debt among certain segments of the community, will help study abroad professionals understand that this issue needs to be thoroughly addressed when discussing study abroad with these students. It also reinforces the importance of making low-cost options available, and for identifying more sources of financial aid for students.

The theme of parental consent, approval, and involvement mentioned throughout this study shows the importance of working with Asian American parents, perhaps more so than with the general student population. Because of the traditional Asian parent-child relationships, it is more important to win the support of parents and addressing their particular concerns. One possible way of getting around the fear of sending an unaccompanied daughter abroad is to suggest a family homestay, where the parents can feel reassured that there is someone in a parental role to "look after" their daughter's well-being.

As indicated by some respondents' suggestions, the University of Minnesota may wish to consider offering more Asian American and Asian studies courses on campus, especially ones that focus on countries outside of China and Japan, in order to increase interest in Asia. It is clear from the respondents comments that many Asian American students feel they cannot relate to China or Japan, and even feel "overshadowed" by these cultures, and thus it would be an insult to suggest they study in Japan or China as an "alternative."

Curriculum integration is also an important consideration in developing study abroad programs that would attract more Asian American students, as it would help to win over parents as well as the students themselves. Some of the respondents indicated that their parents would only allow them to go if they could prove it could apply directly to their majors, which were often in non-traditional study abroad fields such as the sciences or engineering. This would also attract students looking for the most "direct" route to graduation, as studying abroad would no longer be a deviation from their studies.

Finally, the insights gained from Asian American students may help study abroad professionals understand other ethnic groups that are beginning to show a mix of newly arrived immigrants and long-established citizens. Examples of groups in the Twin Cities that are becoming more heterogeneous are the African American and Chicano/Latino groups, which are changing due to the increasing Mexican and Somali population in the Twin Cities. Perhaps in the near future, more studies similar to this one will be conducted focusing on these newer immigrant groups.

In the past year alone, after data collection for this study had ceased, the researcher has noticed a gradual increase in the number of Asian American students at the University of Minnesota inquiring about study abroad. If this pattern continues, perhaps over time a cultural shift will happen, there will be more widespread interest and participation in study abroad among Asian Americans, and the issues explored in this study, centered on the impact of traditional Asian cultural values and immigration history, will be long forgotten. Thus, the timing of this study is important, because Asian American students are indeed changing rapidly. In just one generation, much of this information may no longer be easily accessed as more Asian American families become increasingly established and assimilated into U.S. culture and become further removed from their cultures of origin. Although the desired result of greater participation in study abroad may happen naturally over time, this study's findings will hopefully accelerate this change in perception of study abroad, and help make that transition smoother without a complete loss of or disregard for traditional cultural values.

Appendix B

Asian American Students and Study Abroad

Interview Protocol for:
Asian American Students Who Have Not Studied Abroad

Thank you for volunteering to take part in this study. I am conducting research to examine the factors that influence Asian American students' decisions regarding whether or not to participate in study abroad, that is, studying in a foreign country. Information from students such as yourself would be very helpful in improving study abroad programs to make them more appealing and accessible to more Asian Americans. Your perspectives are very important to the success of this study.

If you prefer, this interview will remain strictly confidential. I will not use your name or program in any publication. If you choose, you may decline to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. With your permission, this interview will be taped for more accurate transcription. Only I will have access to the tapes or any data, and I will destroy them after I have completed my thesis which will be around September 1999.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask if you have any questions.

Could you please explain to me your understanding of the purpose of this study, as well as your understanding of what the study is asking you to do?

Do you have any questions regarding this study's purpose or the interview questions?

Do you have any other questions or concerns about the study and your participation in it?

Is there anything about the study or the procedures that is unclear to you?

Do you wish to remain strictly confidential regarding your identity, or may you be quoted?

BEGIN INTERVIEW

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1. Please tell me about your experience here at the U of MN. Why did you choose to study here?
2. What are you currently studying here? Who or what has been most influential in your choice of major?
3. Could you describe to me your living situation?
4. Could you describe to me the type of people you consider as your closest friends? What do you and your friends enjoy doing for recreation?
5. Do you consider yourself a student of color? If so, what is your experience like as a student of color at the University of Minnesota?

Appendix B

FAMILY

1. Please tell me about your family. How long ago did your family immigrate to the US? Where are most of your relatives living now? Are there many close relatives who did not emigrate to the US?
2. What was that immigration experience like for you and your family?
3. Would you describe to me your relationship to your parents? (roles?)
4. How would you describe your parents with respect to being more traditional or more modern?
5. In what ways does your family preserve the cultural traditions?
6. How strongly do your parents feel about preserving your cultural heritage?
7. How do *you* feel about preserving cultural traditions?

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

1. What do you consider to be your cultural or ethnic heritage?
2. In your view, does your community encourage study abroad? Please describe the views held by your culture group regarding study abroad.

TRAVEL/INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

1. You had indicated on the survey that you have traveled to _____. Were your experiences pleasant or unpleasant?

STUDY ABROAD

1. Have you ever thought about or wanted to study abroad? When?
2. You had indicated on your survey that you decided not to study abroad because…Please tell me a little more about how these factors affected your decision.
3. Could you tell me a little more about how your family (particularly your parents) would react if you had decided to study abroad?
4. How do you think the host country nationals would perceive or react to you if you were to study abroad?
5. Would you be more inclined to study abroad if there were more short programs available? More programs to your country of origin?
6. What else would make it more appealing for you to study abroad?
7. Are there any countries or regions that your family would object to you studying in, or studying the culture of? Any countries your family would encourage you to study in? (think of past historical conflicts, relations, cultural stereotypes)
8. Is there anything else you feel I should know about your perceptions and experiences with deciding not to study abroad, or anything you would like to add about how you feel others of similar cultural background would answer?

Appendix C

Asian American Students and Study Abroad

Interview Protocol for:
Asian American Students Who Have Studied Abroad

Thank you for volunteering to take part in this study. I am conducting research to examine the factors that influence Asian American students' decisions regarding whether or not to participate in study abroad, that is, studying in a foreign country. I would also like to explore the experiences of Asian American students who have participated in a study abroad experience. Information from students such as yourself would be very helpful in improving study abroad programs to make them more appealing and accessible to more Asian Americans. Your perspectives are very important to the success of this study.

If you prefer, this interview will remain strictly confidential. I will not use your name or program in any publication. If you choose, you may decline to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. With your permission, this interview will be taped for more accurate transcription. Only I will have access to the tapes or any data, and I will destroy them after I have completed my thesis (around September 1999).

Before we begin, I'd like to ask if you have any questions.

Could you please explain to me your understanding of the purpose of this study, as well as your understanding of what the study is asking you to do?

Do you have any questions regarding this study's purpose or the interview questions?

Do you have any other questions or concerns about the study and your participation in it?

Is there anything about the study or the procedures that is unclear to you?

Do you wish to remain strictly confidential regarding your identity, or may you be quoted?

BEGIN INTERVIEW

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1. Please tell me about your experience here at the U of MN. Why did you choose to study here?
2. What are you currently studying here? Who or what has been most influential in your choice of major?
3. Could you describe to me your living situation?
4. Could you describe to me the type of people you consider as your closest friends? What do you and your friends enjoy doing for recreation?
5. Do you consider yourself a student of color? If so, what is your experience like as a student of color at the University of Minnesota?

FAMILY

1. Please tell me about your family. How long ago did your family immigrate to the US? Where are most of your relatives living now? Are there many close relatives who did not emigrate to the US?
2. What was that immigration experience like for you and your family?
3. Would you describe to me your relationship to your parents? (roles?)
4. How would you describe your parents with respect to being more traditional or more modern?
5. In what ways does your family preserve the cultural traditions?
6. How strongly do your parents feel about preserving your cultural heritage?
7. How do *you* feel about preserving cultural traditions?

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

1. What do you consider to be your cultural/ethnic heritage?
2. In your view, does your community encourage study abroad? Please describe the views held by your culture group regarding study abroad.

TRAVEL/INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

1. You had indicated on the survey that you have traveled to _____. Were your experiences pleasant or unpleasant?

STUDY ABROAD

1. Could you tell me about how you initially became interested in study abroad?
2. What were the major influences in your ultimate decision to study abroad?
3. How did your family (particularly your parents) react when you informed them of your plans to study abroad?
4. Tell me about the program you chose. Why did you choose that program and location?

5. What things stand out about your experience abroad?
6. How do you think the host country nationals perceived or described you? Were they surprised to find out you are an American?
7. How did people relate to you when you were in the host country? Did you feel it was any different from the other non-Asian Americans?

8. You had indicated on your survey that you encountered the following challenges as you were deciding to study abroad… Could you say a little more about that?
9. What kind of support did you receive? Opposition?
10. How did you deal with these challenges?
11. Could you tell me more about the major challenges you experienced *while* you were abroad?
12. What challenges did you encounter upon your return to the US?
13. In what ways do you feel your experience abroad has changed the way you look at the world? At your identity?

14. Do you think more Asian Americans would be inclined to study abroad if there were more short programs available? If there were more programs to one's country of origin?
15. What else would make it more appealing for Asian Americans to study abroad?
16. Are there any countries or regions that your family would object to you studying in, or studying the culture of? Any countries your family would encourage? (think of past historical conflicts, relations, cultural stereotypes)
17. Is there anything else you feel I should know about your perceptions and experiences with study abroad, or anything you would like to add about how you feel others of similar cultural background would answer?

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