THE SOJOURN AND COMMUNICATION SELF-EFFICACY ENHANCEMENT:

A STUDY OF TRAVELERS' PERSPECTIVES

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Sciences

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Department:
Communication

April 2009

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Waserman, Vanessa, M.A., Department of Communication, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, North Dakota State University, April 2009. The Sojourn and Communication Self-Efficacy Enhancement: A Study of Travelers' Perspectives. Major Professor: Dr. Robert S. Littlefield.

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the sojourn, or overseas travel, and the development of traveler intercultural communication self-efficacy. *Self-efficacy*, an individual's perception of his or her own ability to accomplish tasks (Bandura, 1997), originates from the psychology discipline and has rarely been applied to communication. The study examines and extends the work of Milstein (2005), a communication scholar who investigated the relationship between the sojourn and intercultural communication self-efficacy and found a positive relationship between the two. This study investigated how the experience of the sojourn affects traveler perceptions of their own intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Data were collected through individual face-to-face interviews with participants. The researcher selected a convenience sample of 20 respondents who had all participated in separate sojourns. Participants in the study differed in age, ethnic identity, sojourn destination, and purpose for the sojourn. Responses to interview questions were tape recorded and transcribed preceding analysis and categorization of data based on emergent themes. The perceptions of travelers were analyzed to understand how the sojourn affects self-efficacy.

Results of the study supported a positive relationship between the sojourn and development of intercultural communication self-efficacy among travelers with no previous exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn. Travelers with prior exposure to multicultural settings in the home culture did not perceive an increase in

intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. How the background

of the traveler may affect perceptions of the sojourn and the specific types of events

abroad that were perceived as contributors to self-efficacy development are discussed.

Signed:_____

Major Professor

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

"I think I can. I think I can. I think I can," is the phrase the famous little engine

repeats as the initial challenge of crossing over to the other side of the mountain is

gradually overcome. The premise of Watty Piper's classic children's tale, *The Little Engine*

that Could, illustrates the importance of awareness of one's capacities in conquering the

difficulties of life. While individuals are often taught such lessons at an early age, through

tales such as this one and others, this lesson is frequently applied to challenges such as

achieving good grades or having a successful career later in life. Only recently has

successful interaction between members of differing backgrounds been conceptualized as a

challenge; even more recently the role of positive perceptions of personal abilities has been

considered as a variable affecting the effectiveness of intercultural encounters.

As the primary researcher in this study, I understand the challenge of intercultural

communication. The importance of strong intercultural communication skills was instilled

in me at a very early age when I took part in my first sojourn, or overseas trip. At the age

of nine, I went to France for the first time. During that first sojourn experience, I spent two

years immersed in the French culture attending French schools, interacting with my French

peers, and adapting to the cultural norms of the country. I struggled with the language and

understanding the perception my French counterparts held of me. I was an instant

celebrity, since in the minds of nine-year-old French children, anyone from the United

States was automatically associated with the American celebrities they had seen on

television. In my first days at my new French school, I was followed across the courtyard

at recess by groups of intrigued students asking questions in English through thick French

accents. Their questions such as, "Do you know Michal Jordan?" or "How big is your

mansion?" lingered through the crisp fall air accompanied by cheers and laughter.

My experience in France was very different than anything I had known up to that point. In the first months, I remember feeling scared, confused, frustrated, and a sense of longing for the familiarity I had once known. However, by the end of the sojourn, I had mastered the language, learned to love the culture, and acquired a whole host of friendships despite the fact that I had never met Michael Jordan and did not live in a mansion. I learned that I could overcome challenges to persevere. I have carried the lessons I learned during that sojourn with me throughout my life. As I reflect back, I think that the experience played an important role in many of my decisions since that time.

I developed a passion for travel and a curiosity about culture and communication. My first sojourn was followed by subsequent trips later in my life including additional visits to France and first-time trips to Botswana, Germany, Israel, Italy, and Spain. I believe my initial experience during the French sojourn resulted in my interest in travel and perhaps even my decision to study communication. Intuitively, I associate the experience of the sojourn with interest and desire to connect with individuals of different backgrounds. As such, my experiences abroad are more than likely a source of inspiration for undertaking the present study. Herewith, I explore the ways in which the sojourn affects intercultural communication competence. The relationship between the challenge of intercultural interactions and the development of beliefs regarding personal ability has rarely been studied within the context of the sojourn. This study advances our understanding of this relationship and the resulting implications on the achievement of successful intercultural communication outcomes.

In many instances, *intercultural communication*, the act of engaging in

communication with individuals of differing backgrounds than one's own, represents a novel experience for those involved. These new encounters can cause anxiety in individuals (Gundykunst, 1993). While a certain amount of anxiety is necessary for successful communication, negative emotions such as fear can also result, causing ineffective communication outcomes, or halting communication altogether. In previous research on intercultural communication competence (ICC), scholars accounted for the role of the self-concept in effective intercultural communication (Gundykunst, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 2005). While self-esteem and perceptions of the self have been named as factors affecting ICC, the role of positive perceptions of one's own ability to communicate, or *communication self-efficacy*, has rarely been investigated (Milstein, 2005).

Recently scholars have begun to examine *self-efficacy*, perceptions of one's ability to accomplish tasks, in relationship to intercultural communication. Recent studies have linked the development of communication self-efficacy to the sojourn (Milstein, 2005; Steeves, 2006) and the experience abroad has been found to increase individual perceptions of communication self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), a high sense of self-efficacy translates into a higher willingness to approach difficult tasks. Further, individuals with high self-efficacy have been found to execute difficult tasks with greater success than those having low self-efficacy. Since achieving effective intercultural communication represents a difficult task for many, understanding the experiences conducive to the development of communication self-efficacy and the extent to which self-efficacy translates into effective communication outcomes contributes substantially to our understanding of ICC.

Examining the relationship between intercultural communication self-efficacy

development and the sojourn creates a new lens for understanding the personal growth that occurs as a result of immersion into a new culture. Studying the self-efficacy beliefs of travelers provides an opportunity to investigate if perceptions of personal ability are altered as a result of the sojourn. If travelers in this study do perceive a difference in self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn, the findings may reveal how and why that process occurs. This understanding will contribute to the study of intercultural communication by enhancing current findings on how the process of the sojourn can potentially increase competence during intercultural encounters. Further, understanding the distinct events that occur throughout the process of the sojourn increasing self-efficacy will be insightful for the development of intercultural communication competence, education, and training.

Numerous contributions to the current literature on the sojourn may be forthcoming from this study. The limited body of research on international travel outside of the academic realm will be broadened through the analysis of the perceptions of individuals who have experienced sojourn within different contexts. Investigating the perceptions of individuals who have traveled for other non- academic purposes will provide new vantage points for understanding the impact of such an experience and how it affects the development of communication self-efficacy, which has also rarely been examined. This new dimension to the study of the sojourn could potentially reveal new findings that would enhance the understanding of the experience.

Unlike previous studies, in this investigation, the researcher examined the sojourn and its relationship to the development of communication self-efficacy from a qualitative vantage. The goal of this study is to determine the key experiences that occur abroad and contribute to individual perceptions of communication self-efficacy. Further, perceptions

regarding the effectiveness of communication outcomes as a result of the development of communication self-efficacy will be examined.

In the next and second chapter of this thesis, a review of the relevant work on intercultural communication competence (ICC), the sojourn and self-efficacy provides a conceptual framework and further justifies the opportunities for the present study to fill gaps in the literature. Following this, the method for gathering and reporting the data will be presented in Chapter III. Once outlined, the results of the investigation will be presented in Chapter IV; followed by the findings in Chapter V conclusions, limitations and directions for future study in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As outlined in Chapter I, an investigation of the relationship between the sojourn

and the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy presents an exciting

avenue for future research. In this chapter a review of the current literature on intercultural

communication competence, the sojourn, and self-efficacy is presented. Further,

opportunities to expand current research on intercultural communication competence are

revealed.

Intercultural Communication Competence

The study of intercultural communication began during the post World War II era

of democratic and humanistic idealism (Kim, 2005), as the frequency of intercultural

interactions began to increase. In recent years, the area of study has remained relevant in

our global community and has resulted in the emergence of the study of intercultural

communication competence (ICC) (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Kim, 2005; Milstein,

2006). The works discussed in this chapter reveal that research on ICC represents a

significant portion of recent work in the field of intercultural communication. Although

there scholars agree on the importance of the study of ICC, conceptual and theoretical

perspectives from which scholars approach research remains diverse (Arasaratnam &

Doerfel, 2005; Wiseman & Koester, 1993).

Despite varying conceptualizations of the term ICC, the importance of the notions

of individual perspectives and judgments are inherent among those that are most widely

accepted (Jandt, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1999; Wiseman et al, 1993). According to

Koester et al. (1993), the term *intercultural* was prioritized in lieu of *cross-cultural* as it

"involves the study of individuals of differing cultures who are interacting together" (p. 5).

In conjunction, the two most critical dimensions to the term *competence* are effectiveness and appropriateness. Wiseman et al. (1993) described effectiveness as judgments made by the interactants regarding their ability to achieve goals in a manner that is suitable to the culture in question. Through this common conceptualization of the study of effective communication between individuals of differing backgrounds emerges the relevance of studying individual perceptions in ICC research.

Many scholars perceive and link ICC with regard to the relational dimension of communication, with competence as a social judgment that requires an evaluation of one's relational partners (Gundykunst, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1993; Wiseman et al., 1993). Gundykunst accounts for individual perceptions in relational encounters with the Anxiety Uncertainty Management (AUM) Perspective. AUM is a theory of effective interpersonal and intergroup communication, which presents a number of factors that serve as predictors of levels of anxiety and uncertainty during encounters with strangers. Among the motivational factors is self-conception as Gundykunst (1993) posited, "self-concepts influence how we communicate with others and/or the choices (conscious or unconscious) of those with whom we form relations" (p. 47). Ting-Toomey's (1999) Identity Negotiation Theory also emphasizes the role of the self-concept and assumed that "a coherent sense of self-conception enhances cognitive, affective, and behavioral resourcefulness and these resources contribute to both knowledge and predisposition to effective identity negotiation process" (p.74).

Just as theoretical perspectives have accounted for the self-concept as a contributing factor to ICC, individual transformation models have also been developed. Models such as the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) present the process

through which communication competence skills can be achieved. The model assumes that as the complexity of an individual's experience with cultural difference increases, one's potential for competence in intercultural relations also increases (Hammer et al., 2003). According to Bennett (1993), the process of the development of intercultural sensitivity begins with *ethnocentrism*, the view that the world revolves around one's self and culture. The process ends in *ethnorelativism*, an acknowledgement and acceptance of worldviews other than one's own.

The process of developing competence occurs through the exposure to different cultures and the consequent challenges of this new experience. Immersion into a new culture during the sojourn can pose challenges to be overcome. Kim (2005) described the challenge of cross-cultural emergence in terms of a stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, where the initial stress of the new situations eventually facilitates cultural adaptation. The challenges faced when transitioning into a new culture and the growth that occurs as a result of those challenges result in an increase in intercultural sensitivity, leading to the development of ICC (Hammer et al., 2003; Kim, 2005; Milstein, 2005).

Development of ICC Through the Sojourn

One setting where scholars can usually locate large groups of sojourners is a college campus. Consequently, a significant amount of research related to the sojourn has been devoted to the evaluation of study abroad programs as well as the outcomes of student participation (Black et al., 2006; Langley & Breese 2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Langley & Breese, 2005; Zhang, 2004). Recent studies confirm positive attitudes toward outside cultures, cross-cultural effectiveness, global perspective, and interest in travel as a benefits of study abroad (Black et al., 2006; Langley & Breese

2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Langley & Breese, 2005). These outcomes are achieved, in part, due to the hardships that students face when traveling to another country (Steeves, 2006). Acculturation and problem-posing have been noted as significant experiences that occur as a result of the study abroad, and result in an increased sense of awareness of other ways of life as well as personal growth (Steeves, 2006).

The growth that students experience as a result of participation abroad is due to the experiential and reflective nature of the learning opportunity (Kitsantas, 2004; Langley & Breese, 2005; Steeves, 2006). According to Kitsantas (2004), the incorporation of self-reflection into study abroad program requirements enhances personal growth and learning outcomes. In a study of 232 students enrolled in study abroad programs across Europe, Kitsantas (2006) found that goal-setting through reflective thought had a positive effect on the development of cross-cultural skills and enrichment of global understanding. The study also identified goal-setting within study abroad programs as a factor that raises self-efficacy perceptions of students.

As important as the findings of studies on the relationship between the sojourn and ICC is the method used for gathering data. A common factor in many recent studies on the sojourn is the use of quantitative methods to survey homogenous samples. Many scholars interested in the personal growth that occurs as a result of the sojourn have selected to survey large numbers of participants based on numerically developed measures. Further, the sample for recent study has tended to lack diversity with regard to the age, background, purpose for travel, and travel destination.

A study conducted by Kitsantas (2004) to determine the role of traveler goal-setting in enhancing cross-cultural and global understanding skills developed during the sojourn is

an example of common method employed to explore outcomes of the sojourn. To gather data, Kitsantas administered questionnaires designed to measure levels of cross-cultural effectiveness and to determine the reason why participants were taking part in the sojourn. In this study, 235 students enrolled in study abroad courses in a variety of countries were surveyed. This study was designed to yield broad, numerical results and did not offer much data with regard to the individual experiences of the participants.

A similar method for studying outcomes of the sojourn was employed by both Black & Duhan (2006) and Koskinen & Tossavainen (2004). Black & Dunhan(2006) assessed the impact of business study abroad programs on the development of cultural awareness and personal growth. In their study, the sample included 26 survey participants in a study abroad program in England who assessed the outcomes of the sojourn experience. Koskinen & Tossavainen (2004) examined how the sojourn affected the development of ICC among nursing students. In their study, 12 Finnish study abroad participants took part in group interviews to gather data on the relationship between the sojourn and ICC development. While Koshiken & Tossavainen did employ a qualitative method to gather data, a homogenous sample of study abroad participants was incorporated into the research design, offering no insight into the perspectives of travelers outside of the academic community.

With regard to research on the sojourn, numerous studies provide the benefits of study abroad programs (Black et al., 2006; Langley & Breese 2005; Kitsantas, 2004; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Langley & Breese, 2005). The use of students participating in study abroad programs assessing academic travel abroad programs and understanding the general benefits of the sojourn is common. While these types of studies

have generated key data on the personal growth that occurs while the student is abroad, to the knowledge of the researcher, scholars have conducted little to no research about the travel abroad experiences of sojourners who have traveled for non-academic purposes. As such, a study incorporating a diverse sample of both students and non-students of multiple backgrounds - traveling for reasons other than study abroad (i.e., work, military, and leisure) - greatly contributes to the literature on the sojourn. Further, the exploration of how self-efficacy in intercultural communication is developed through sojourn also enriches current findings.

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was first developed by Bandura (1977, 1993, 1997) and became a key component to social cognitive research in the field of psychology. According to Bandura (1977), *self-efficacy* is one's own belief regarding personal ability to accomplish goals. Bandura (1997) asserted that beliefs about personal capabilities are just as important as the actual skills that individuals possess (Bandura, 1997). Levels of self-efficacy have been proven to affect feelings, thoughts, self-motivation, and behaviors (Bandura, 1993; 1997). In sum, people's behaviors can be predicted by what they believe they are able to accomplish, rather than what they are actually capable of doing (Milstein, 2005). Further, Bandura (1997) posited that individuals with high self-efficacy were more likely to set higher personal goals as well as demonstrate perseverance in challenging situations.

The role of self-efficacy in human agency has been most extensively studied in the fields of psychology (Bandura, 1977, 1993, 1997; Caprara, 2008; Davis-Kean et al., 2008; Liang, 2008), education (Bandura, 1997; Kerpelman et al., 2007), and health &

rehabilitation (Harlow et al., 2008). Researchers in these fields have explored how self-efficacy affects the accomplishment of goals. Studies of self-efficacy across disciplines have demonstrated the significant relationship between beliefs of one's personal capabilities and the successful completion of tasks. High levels of perceived self-efficacy have been linked to increased ability to deal with stress and greater academic achievement (Bandura, 1997; Kerpelman et al., 2007). However, studies examining the role of self-efficacy in intercultural communication are limited.

Consideration of self-efficacy would enhance understanding of ICC through the response it provides to the uncertainty that individuals experience when placed in new cultural settings. Many times fear of the unknown and the lack of adaptability impedes intercultural communication from occurring. According to Bandura (1993), self-efficacy affects individual beliefs regarding the influence they have over their environment. When individuals feel that they have influence and can make contributions to their environments, they achieve high group performance and demonstrate the ability to meet challenging goals. These challenging goals have been referred to as "mastery experiences," in which individuals see themselves as effective in overcoming challenges. These types of experiences are essential in the development of self-efficacy. Intercultural communication, with its inherent challenges, represents the type of mastery experience that would lead to the development of self-efficacy. However, the current research on the development of self-efficacy through the experience of communicating in intercultural settings is rather limited.

The role of self-efficacy beliefs has been investigated in relation to cross-racial communication and intercultural adaptation. Based on the premise that higher self-efficacy

leads to greater communication outcomes, Smith (1990) explored ways in which cross-racial self-efficacy could be enhanced through training programs. In this study, both Black and White students on a college campus participated in a cross-racial training program designed to increase communication self-efficacy. Levels of self-efficacy among participants were measured before and after participation in the cross-racial training program. The findings of this study suggested an increase in perceived cross-racial communication self-efficacy as a result of training.

While the research of Smith (1990) demonstrated a positive relationship between training and cross-racial communication self-efficacy, Zhang (2004) examined how self-efficacy affected cultural adaptation. In this study, 102 Chinese students at U.S. universities completed a questionnaire to measure levels of self-efficacy and cultural adaptation. The results yielded a positive relationship between levels of self-efficacy and cultural adaption among Chinese students studying at U.S. universities. Zhang (2004) concluded that students with higher personal and academic self-efficacy had greater success in intercultural adaptation than students with lower perceived self-efficacy.

While the previous studies, respectively, examined relationships between self-efficacy and cross-racial communication and intercultural adaptation, one of only a few studies has considered the concept in relationship to the sojourn. In that study, Milstein (2005) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and the experience abroad outside of the academic setting. Milstein (2005) surveyed former participants in a professional exchange program to determine their levels of communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. Drawing from previous findings, that the inherent challenges of the sojourn stimulate personal growth (Kim & Ruben, 1988), and that indicate that the

completion of tasks with high levels of perceived challenge lead to greater self-efficacy development (Bandura 1997), Milstein (2005) formulated three hypotheses: Respondents report a perceived increase in communication self-efficacy after the sojourn compared to before the sojourn; the more respondents rate the overseas experience as challenging, the more they will report a perceived increase in communication self-efficacy; the more respondents rate overseas experiences as a success, the more they will report a perceived increase in communication self-efficacy.

To test the hypotheses, 212 participants who had previously traveled abroad as a part of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) program were questioned about their experiences. Participants completed questionnaires based on the Sojourner Self-Efficacy in Communication Scale (SSEC). Milstein (2005) concluded that the sojourn did result in an increased sense of communication self-efficacy for 95% of the 212 participants. Further, the findings indicate that as respondents viewed the experience abroad as a challenge, they reported higher levels of self-efficacy.

Based upon this research, the sojourn experience as a whole has been thought to affect individual perceptions of communication self-efficacy. While self-concepts have been discussed with regard to ICC (Gundykunst, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1993), the importance of perceptions of personal abilities demonstrated (e.g. self-efficacy) has been under-emphasized in intercultural communication literature (Milstein, 2005). Since cultural differences are challenges that need to be overcome for effective communication to occur, consideration of the role of self-efficacy in intercultural communication would shift focus from cultural and environmental difference and extend the importance of individual perspectives.

The development of self-efficacy could be determined to be a factor that makes the sojourn conducive to the enhancement of ICC skills. However, the specific events related to the sojourn that help to create an increased sense of self-efficacy have yet to be investigated. Travel abroad usually entails immersion into differing cultures for extensive intervals of time. The daily interactions that occur between individuals of differing cultures within their countries of origin may not represent the type of mastery experience that is necessary to affect self-efficacy.

Further, the urgency to overcome obstacles to effective intercultural communication within one's host culture is less obvious, as these encounters can often times be avoided. As such, a qualitative analysis of the key events that are perceived to have resulted in an increase in communication self-efficacy is necessary for several reasons. First, this information could be beneficial in training individuals to be better intercultural communicators through emulation of the key mastery experiences. This knowledge would inform all sojourners, of the types of experiences that are most beneficial to personal growth. Lastly, a better understanding of mastery experiences abroad will provide avenues for investigations of ICC as a result of engagement in such activities.

The Present Study

This study expands the previous research of Milstein (2005) on the relationship between the sojourn and the development of communication self-efficacy by revealing through a qualitative vantage the impact of the sojourn on the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. The investigation will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ1:   How do individuals traveling abroad view the relationship between the sojourn and self-efficacy enhancement?

RQ2:   What events or types of experiences abroad do travelers perceive as contributing to the development of communication self-efficacy?

RQ3:   How does the sojourn work to affect perceptions of communication self-efficacy?

Summary

A review of the current literature on intercultural communication competence, personal development through the sojourn, and self-efficacy reveals significant opportunities for further exploration. Intercultural communication scholars have demonstrated that personal growth in communication occurs as a result of the challenges overcome during the sojourn. Studies discuss the roles of the self-concept and personal identity in relationship to intercultural communication development. Yet, the role of self-efficacy beliefs has rarely been examined in studies on intercultural communication competence and the sojourn. Further, current research on the sojourn has been mostly limited to the context of study abroad. The present study fills gaps in the literature on intercultural communication competence and the sojourn by examining the relationship between the sojourn and intercultural communication self-efficacy development as it is perceived by a diverse group of travelers.

CHAPTER III. METHOD

One of the main goals of this study is to expand current research on the process that occurs as a result of the travel abroad experience as it is perceived by participants of the sojourn. As outlined in Chapter II, previous scholars in this area have overwhelmingly relied on quantitative measures of the accounts of homogenous samples, mostly limited to college-aged study abroad program participants, to gather data on the topic. To expand current knowledge of the subject and ensure that diverse perspectives are examined, the researcher used a convenience sample (Maxwell, 2005). As such, the researcher selected participants to represent diversity with regard to age, gender, ethnic identity, and purpose for travel. Twenty diverse respondents participated in individual, face-to-face interviews and were asked to respond to questions designed to stimulate discussion on the perceived effects of the sojourn on the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Participants

The participants in this study were one of the key components distinguishing this study from previous research on the sojourn. Contrary to previous studies where researchers surveyed homogeneous samples of college-aged respondents on their participation in study abroad programs, this study widened the lens for analysis of perceptions related to the experience of the sojourn. Among the participants was an even distribution of men and women, with 10 participants in each category. The sample included a fairly even representation among age-groups, with nine of the participants falling into the 18-35 age-group and the other 11 of the participants in the 36-75 age-group. The researcher made a conscious effort to include ethnically diverse participants into the sample, where 15 of the participants were white, four were black, and one was Asian-

American. This was done to expand on previous research (Milstein, 2005) by considering

the role of ethnic identity and exposure to multicultural settings in the home culture as it

affects perceived communication self-efficacy development.

In addition to expanding the research sample demographically, an anticipated

outcome of this study was to gather data on how the purpose of the travel, notably whether

the sojourn was voluntary or involuntary, may have affected perceptions of the experience.

Further, this study may be the first to include responses in the same dataset from

participants who traveled through non-education programs and within a variety of contexts.

The participants in the study engaged in the experience of the sojourn for a variety of

reasons and found themselves in very different circumstances upon arrival in the host

country. Out of 20 respondents, seven indicated that the purpose of their sojourns was

work and/or public service. The work and/or public service category included mandatory

travel for a job or voluntary service as part of a service program such as the Peace Corps or

a church mission trip. Six of the respondents indicated that the purpose of their travel was

study and that they had voluntarily participated in travel abroad programs through which

they earned credit toward a degree[1]. Five of the research participants indicated that the

purpose of the travel was leisure or personal development. This category included

individuals who took part in the sojourn on a voluntary basis and were able to select their

host country for the purpose of relaxation or for personal exploration and development.

One participant, who works in higher education and traveled to Spain during Spring Break

to get away from work, is an example of an individual who traveled for the purpose of

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[1] Note: it was not the goal of this study to exclude college-aged students who studied abroad from the sample. Rather, the goal was to not limit the sample to this demographic.

relaxation. One Jewish participant who lives in the United States and traveled to Israel to learn more about his own culture and religion is an example of a sojourner whose purpose for travel was personal development. Finally, two of the participants cited the military as the reason for their sojourns. Individuals in this category took part in the sojourn either because they themselves or a family member was required to travel as an enrolled member of the United States Military. Under this category, participation in the sojourn was involuntary and participants in the study had little to no influence on selection of the host culture of the sojourn.

Another factor that distinguishes this study from many other studies on the sojourn is that the sojourn of each participant was a unique experience with regard to travel destination, length of time in the host country, and the time period in which the sojourn occurred. In other studies, entire groups traveling abroad at the same time, for the same purpose, and to the same place served as the sample for research. In an attempt to understand the impact of the sojourn on communication self-efficacy, without concern for the effect of fixed variables, every selected participant traveled independently from one another, during different time periods, and for varying lengths of time. The host countries cited in the interviews included Denmark, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Nicaragua, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. The variety of cultures and circumstances of the travel allowed for similarity in emergent themes to be attributed solely to the process undergone during the sojourn. Clearly, the influence of any one determining factor such as exposure to a particular culture or travel during a certain time period did not influence the results.

As outlined above, each participant in this study had a unique personal background, purpose for travel, and host country. The individual stories of the 20 participants in this study will be referenced in the results section of this study as emergent themes are presented. In addition, the unique sojourn experience and background of each participant will provide a context for understanding the data. To facilitate the process of reporting results in Chapter IV, each participant in this study was assigned a code name at random for the purpose of distinguishing between participants. A summary of participant profiles and code names is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Traveler Profiles

Code Name	Age	Ethnic ID	Host Country	Purpose	Duration
Sandra	35-75	White	Nicaragua	Church Mission Trip	2 weeks
Ben	18-35	White	Brazil	Church Mission Trip	2 years
Tom	35-75	Black	Turkey	Military	1 year
Sue	35-75	White	Germany	Study	1 year
Liz	35-75	White	England	Leisure	2 weeks
James	35-75	White	Europe/Asia	Work	Varies
Tammy	18-35	Asian Am.	Vietnam	Leisure	1 month
Mary	18-35	White	Portugal/Spain	Leisure	8 days
Matt	18-35	White	Portugal/Spain	Leisure	8 days
Steve	35-75	Black	Thailand	Military	3 years
Sally	35-75	White	Denmark	Study	1 year
Stanley	35-75	Black	Norway/Sweden	Leisure	Varies
Jason	18-35	White	Spain	Study	5 mos.
Roger	35-75	White	Sierra Leone	Peace Corps	2 years
Dena	35-75	Black	France	Leisure	3 weeks
Ellen	18-35	White	Germany	Leisure	5 mos.
Karen	18-35	White	England	Study	3 mos.
Chris	18-35	White	Italy	Study	5 mos.
Ann	18-35	White	Germany	Work/Leisure	4 mos.
David	18-35	White	Israel	Leisure	2 mos.

Procedure

Before beginning the data collection phase of the project, the researcher compiled a list of individuals from her own personal network who met the research criteria. This initial list included nine individuals, three of whom were very close friends or family members of the researcher. The nine individuals on the researcher's list were contacted and asked to identify others who had traveled abroad. Based on the recommendations of the first list of participants, the researcher selected 11 other participants, all of whom the researcher had never met prior to the interview. In relationship to the researcher the individuals who participated in this study range from close personal acquaintance, to colleague or classmate, to stranger.

Prior to the interview, each individual selected for the convenience sample was contacted and asked to participate before a day, time, and location for a meeting were set. Prior to each interview, in accordance with the regulations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), each respondent was informed of the purpose of the study and his or her rights as a human subject. The researcher provided each participant with her contact information as well as information for the project advisor and the IRB. Finally, to confirm participation in the study, participants were asked to sign a consent form.

In addition to the selection of the participants, the selection of the locations and times for each interview were important considerations for this study. According to Maxwell (2005): "Selecting those times, settings, and individuals that can provide you with the information you need in order to answer your research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative selection decisions" (p.88). As such, location, times, and settings that were conducive to generating honest, open, and descriptive answers to the

interview questions were selected. The logic of the researcher was such that if respondents were interviewed in settings where they felt comfortable, safe and relaxed quality data could be collected. Therefore, respondents were able to choose the interview locations and times and settings where they would be able to speak freely. The main locations for interviews, depending on the preference of the participants, were homes or offices, a local coffee shop, or the researcher's office.

Although most interviews could be completed in half an hour, many of the interviews took place on the weekends or evenings when respondents had an unlimited amount of time to provide responses to the questions. This lack of restriction with regard to time created a more relaxed atmosphere and seemed to encourage more descriptive, reflective responses to the interview questions. In one instance, three respondents from one family were individually interviewed, one after the other, during a family gathering. While these interviews took place one-on-one in a separate room from the gathering, the loving and secure atmosphere along with the knowledge that others in the family were also participating in the study, generated some of the most descriptive and detailed data of the entire study. On the other end of the spectrum, interviews that took place during the work day in office settings tended to generate less descriptive data as respondents were sometimes preoccupied with other concerns and/or felt rushed.

With the goal of gathering rich qualitative data from various perspectives, the selected method of data collection was individual, face-to-face, in-depth interviews (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). During these interviews, the researcher asked a number of open-ended questions designed to generate data to answer the research questions. Questions were formulated based on the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and the research of

Milstein (2005) on the relationship between communication self-efficacy and the sojourn. The format for the interviews was semi-structured (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) and questions and probes were prepared in advance to allow for consistency among interviews so that comparisons and contrasts could be drawn. While questions were prepared in advance, respondents were able to divert from questioning and insert new dimensions to the topic as needed. Refer to Appendix A for a list of the 10 questions and probes that were used as guides during interviews.

Twenty interviews were conducted until saturation was reached. With the consent of each respondent, the researcher tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews. Analysis of the data took place simultaneously during the data collection, transcription and analysis phases of the project. Throughout the process of data analysis, emergent themes were noted and eventually categorized, allowing for comparisons and relationships between categories to be established (Maxwell, 2005).

Summary

Overall, the research design for the present study is based on the constructivist epistemological approach of the researcher. This approach is based on the assumption that human beings make sense of the world in which they live (Creswell, 2003). As such, one of the goals of this study was to rely solely on the narratives of the participants to gather data. Broad, open-ended questions were asked during the face-to-face interviews to gather data and uncover emerging themes. In the next chapter, the emergent themes will be presented.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The 20 participants in this study were each asked 10 questions during the individual

face-to-face interviews, conducted in a semi-structured format. The interview questions

and prompts in the interview guide were designed to generate data to answer the following

three research questions: How do travelers perceive the relationship between the sojourn

and the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy? What specific events or

types of events are perceived as contributing to the development of intercultural

communication self-efficacy? Overall, how does the experience of the sojourn work to

impact perceptions of intercultural communication self-efficacy? Once collected, the

researcher analyzed and categorized based on emergent themes. In this chapter the data are

presented by research question and organized by the themes that emerged.

The Sojourn and ICC Communication Self-Efficacy

RQ1 was posed to determine whether travelers perceive an increase, decrease, or no

change at all in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. During

the face-to-face interviews, questions five, six, seven, and eight in the interview guide

(Appendix A) were posed to gather data. The responses varied by participant with 14 of

the respondents indicating an increase in perceived intercultural communication self-

efficacy, five respondents indicating no change, and one of the respondents indicating

uncertainty about any change. None of the respondents indicated a decrease in intercultural

communication self-efficacy after the sojourn. The two main factors that emerged as

influential in how participants perceived the relationship between the experience of the

sojourn and the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy were the purpose

for the sojourn and the level of exposure to multicultural environments prior to the sojourn.

Purpose of sojourn and perceptions of intercultural communication self-efficacy

In this study the data suggest that the purpose of the sojourn affected the attitudes of

the participants toward the experience as well as their resulting perceptions of their own

intercultural communication self-efficacy. Participants who traveled for study, to

participate in public service trips, or for the military were much more likely to perceive an

increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy than participants who traveled abroad

for work or personal development and leisure. All of the participants who described little

to no change in perceived self-efficacy development as a result of the sojourn had traveled

for the purpose of work or personal development and leisure.

Matt and James are two participants who traveled extensively for work; at the time

of the interview, both had already made numerous trips abroad. Both Matt and James

approached the sojourn with a more functional outlook than many of the other respondents,

as they both had traveled with specific professional goals in mind. Matt and James were

among two of the five participants who indicated that the sojourn had had no effect on their

perceived intercultural communication self-efficacy. Rather, both respondents indicated a

high level of perceived self-efficacy before their respective sojourns and pointed to their

comfort in interacting with individuals of different backgrounds as the reason for their

pursuit of careers that require frequent international travel.

When asked about his experience traveling for work, Matt responded as follows: "I

love traveling. This is part of the reason why I am in the profession I am in. I really like

seeing things that are different than home." Similarly, James described his interest in

different cultures as follows:

> I have always been pretty comfortable working with people from different backgrounds. I suppose that is why I was drawn to a job like this is because I do enjoy the interaction. I just like meeting people from different backgrounds and I think that I am maybe more accepting of differences than other people may be. I have always been interested in learning about different cultures.

Respondents who traveled for work appeared to view the sojourn as a choice they had consciously made based an already high perceived level of intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Similar to Matt and Paul, participants who traveled for leisure to connect with family abroad or explore their heritage also tended to report a lack of change or insignificant change in their individual levels of self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. Dena, Josh, and Tammy were among the three respondents who indicated no change or an insignificant level of change in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. Dena traveled to France to visit her daughter who has been living there for twenty years; this trip was her first abroad. Josh had made multiple trips to Israel to explore his Jewish heritage. Tammy is of Vietnamese heritage and, at the time of the interview, had traveled to Vietnam to visit relatives twice. None of these three respondents indicated a significant increase in perceived intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. One common factor was that all three respondents were familiar with aspects of the host culture before the sojourn.

Further, Dena pointed to her familiarity with the French culture as the reason her daughter had decided to study in France during college and eventually ended up moving

there permanently: "The reason my daughter is in France now is because of the people I met from Europe. Through my associations with Europeans, the reoccurring theme was sending my children to Europe and more specifically to France to be educated; so that seed was planted very early for me, when my children were young." Although she had never traveled abroad before her trip to France to visit her daughter, Dena attributed her familiarity with the culture and the family environment to her lack of increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn

More prevalent than the purpose for travel, exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn appears to be a common factor among all respondents who indicated no change or an insignificant change in their perceived level of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Matt, Paul, Dena, Mary, and Josh all indicated no perceived increase in self-efficacy after the sojourn. These respondents unanimously attributed their lack of perceived increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy to exposure to multicultural settings in the home culture. Exposure to diverse environments within the home culture was also relevant to Tammy, the one respondent who indicated uncertainty with regard to her level of self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn.

During the interview, Dena explained how her multicultural experiences in her home country helped her to develop intercultural communication self-efficacy before her sojourn:

I was very comfortable communicating with people of different backgrounds before my trip. I was born and raised in [big city] and this is certainly a multicultural city. So I have had the opportunity and the luxury to be around people of many races and

cultures. Constant exposure to people of different backgrounds over the years has lead to my comfort. It was not unusual for me to work with someone from a different country. There were many people around for who English was their second language and times they had move here recently so I could see the adjustments they had to make with regard to language and culture and that sort of thing. So I am sure that helped with my first trip. My exposure to people of backgrounds came basically through work… I was always trying to communicate my thoughts and needs to people of other cultures and find out what their thoughts and needs were as well.

Similarly to Dena, Matt, one of the respondents who traveled frequently for work already perceived a high level of intercultural communication self-efficacy before the sojourn. He attributed his comfort in communicating with individuals of different backgrounds to his upbringing in diverse environments. Matt described his experience growing up as one of the only White athletes in his community and how it developed his self-efficacy.

I do not feel there has been a change [in my ability to communicate across cultures]. I think I still have the same comfort level. A lot of it is because I was an athlete growing up in Houston and in that setting I was a minority. When you have grown up with it, you do not know any different so you just learn to make it work. I think that is the thing that has probably helped me the most. It is more my upbringing and my lifestyle over the years than this trip that has prepared me to interact with individuals of different backgrounds. So this trip did not at all alter my view.

As a result of his upbringing in a multicultural community in a large urban city, Matt already felt confident in his ability to communicate with individuals of different backgrounds before his trip. Mary, Matt's girlfriend, who accompanied him on one of his work trips to Portugal and Spain, also described no perceived change in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. Mary was interviewed separately about her time in Portugal and Spain, which had been her first time abroad. While Mary did not travel for her job, she worked in a diverse environment where she was exposed to individuals of many backgrounds in her home country. She described her intercultural communication self-efficacy prior to the sojourn as follows:

> I was pretty comfortable interacting with individuals of different backgrounds before the trip. It really just depends on a person's personality or their facial expression more so than their...background. I may see a really crabby-looking Caucasian person and hesitate to talk to them. Then I may see a friendly-looking Hispanic person and want to talk to them. So overall, I am comfortable talking to anyone who is friendly-looking regardless of culture. I never felt any barriers to communication due to cultural differences before my trip.

Respondents such as Dena, Mary, and Matt, who perceived high levels of intercultural communication self-efficacy prior to the sojourn, indicated no change in self-efficacy. In addition, individuals with frequent exposure to multicultural settings experienced less change in their perceived self-efficacy levels after the sojourn. Paul described his intercultural communication self-efficacy as follows: "Growing up we were always very open to people of different cultures and backgrounds and very receptive to people who had a background that was different from ours. Maybe I have just been doing

that [communicating across cultures] for so long that I have not recognized that I have changed or did change."

For some of all of the respondents who indicated no change in self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn, familiarity with the host culture and/or high levels of intercultural contact prior to the sojourn were prevalent factors. Tammy, who went to Vietnam to visit relatives, had already been exposed to the culture prior to her visit and indicated an insignificant increase in self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn. Josh, a respondent who was raised in a Jewish household in his home country and traveled to Israel to further connect to his culture also indicated no increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy after the experience of the sojourn.

Contrary to respondents with high exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn, respondents with little to no exposure to multicultural settings indicated an increase in perceived intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the experience. Of the 14 respondents who described an increase in communication self-efficacy after the sojourn, many described the sojourn as their first time interacting with individuals of different backgrounds. In these cases, exposure to diverse settings was limited in nature and rarely included exposure to the host culture prior to the sojourn.

The first interview of the study was conducted with Sandra, a middle-aged respondent who had traveled abroad for the first time during a mission trip to Nicaragua with her church. Sandra had taken part in the trip to volunteer her time helping rebuild neighborhoods to benefit members of impoverished communities of the country. When asked about her exposure to multicultural settings before her sojourn, Sandra described her experiences as follows:

I guess I had never thought about it [exposure to individuals of different backgrounds]. As far as different cultures, American cultures, I had dealt with American Indians and African-Americans. But as far as cultures of other countries, I hadn't dealt with any. I couldn't tell you how I felt [interacting with individuals of different backgrounds] before [the sojourn] because I hadn't had the opportunity. While Sandra had had some interactions with individuals of different backgrounds within the home culture prior to the sojourn, she had not had any exposure to the host culture or any other culture outside of the home culture. Sandra was among the respondents who perceived an increase in self-efficacy as a result of her two-week sojourn in Nicaragua.

The second interview was conducted with Ben, a respondent between the ages of 18 and 35 who had sojourned in Brazil for two years directly out of high school to serve as a missionary. Ben described the community where he grew up as homogenous and predictable. According to Ben, he was raised with a very clear set of norms and values that he had learned to follow. Growing up, he always knew that he would take part in a mission trip, as that was what he was brought up to do. What Ben was unaware of was the country where he would be sent to serve his mission and the impact that immersion in the new culture of the host country would have on him. As a result of his time in Brazil Ben perceived his intercultural communication self-efficacy as follows: "I think I have learned how difficult it is to communicate [a message to a diverse audience. I realize the complexity of it. I realize that the only way to close the gap between what you intend to say and actually say is through being able to understand different backgrounds. My experience abroad has really highlighted how complex that process really is..." Ben further described a high level of self-efficacy after his sojourn.

Another example of a respondent who described limited interactions with individuals of different backgrounds before the sojourn is Sue, an older woman who recounted her study abroad experience in Germany that had occurred many years earlier. When asked to describe her experiences communicating in with individuals of different backgrounds before the trip, Sue offered the following explanation:

> Well, I thought I was pretty comfortable, but looking back I probably wasn't. I was young and pretty naïve. I was more sophisticated than I would have been had I not moved from [small Midwestern town] to [big city]. In [the big city] I had interactions with people from the Philippines and Blacks. I had already begun to open myself up to people of different cultures, maybe I had or have biases that I was not aware of. But the travel abroad experience made me aware of another level of biases.

Sandra is among the respondents who felt an increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a after the sojourn. As she described, prior to the sojourn, she had very little contact with individuals of different backgrounds within the home country and no exposure to the culture of the host country.

Data generated in response to interview questions five, six, seven, and eight served to provide answers to the first research question. The data appear to indicate that how travelers perceive the relationship between the sojourn and the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy depends on the purpose for travel and the level of exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn. In this study, respondents who traveled frequently for work or took part in the sojourn for leisure to explore their culture of origin did not perceive a change in intercultural communication self-efficacy. While participants

who traveled for study, mission trips, or the military did perceive an increase in self-efficacy. Further, respondents who had high levels of exposure to multicultural settings within the home culture prior to the sojourn did not perceive a change in self-efficacy. With data on how travelers perceive the relationship between the sojourn and self-efficacy in mind, data for the second research question will be presented.

<div style="text-align:center">Experiences Contributing to ICC Self-Efficacy</div>

RQ2 was posed to determine what specific events or types of events were perceived as contributing to the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy during the sojourn. During the face-to-face interviews, questions two, three, four, and nine in the interview guide (Appendix A) generated data to answer this question. The responses among participants who perceived an increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn contributed more to data collection in this area than respondents who did not. However, when reflecting upon their experiences abroad, participants who did not perceive an increase in self-efficacy were also able to discuss the particular events and types of experiences abroad that had lead to a general sense of personal growth. In analyzing the data on the specific events or types of experiences that were perceived as conducive to self-efficacy development, the following three themes emerged: experience of immersion into the host culture; interactions with members of the host culture; and the achievement of key "mastery" experiences.

Experience of immersion into the host culture

Many of the participants in this study described arrival in the host culture as an exciting experience that both broadened their understanding of different ways of life and helped them to become aware of similarities despite difference. Both of these discoveries

were perceived as contributors to the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. The observed comparisons and contrasts range the spectrum from the mundane habitual aspects of daily life in the host country to the deeper aspects of culture and tradition. Nonetheless, all of these observances were perceived by respondents to represent the initial phase of adaptation to the host culture leading to self-efficacy development.

According the respondents in this study, arrival in the host culture appeared to prompt an immediate survey of how the new environment compared with the home culture. During the interviews several of the respondents discussed how the differences in the host culture made them realize that they would have to temporarily adapt to a new way of life. When asked to recount their initial impressions and strongest memories of the sojourn, many of the respondents provided unique descriptors of their environment. The memories that stood out the most for many of the respondents were detailed sensory images in lieu of personal interactions.

Liz, a respondent between the age of 35 and 75, who sojourned in England for three weeks to attend her niece's wedding, shared that her most striking memory was of the chimney tops because they reminded her of the movie, *Mary Poppins*. Steve, a man between the ages of 35 and 75, who whose father's military service had led his entire family to Thailand when he was a young boy, said that his strongest memory was of the rain and how the food was different. Ellen, a woman between the ages of 18 and 35 who traveled to Germany for five months to visit family remembered how the beauty of the landscape, the distinctness of the buildings, and the long history of the country compared with her home country. The answers to the questions in this section were indicative of the

unique personality of each individual and how they had incorporated who they were and what they found to be important into their experience.

For travelers, the contrast between the host and home countries occurred immediately. The understanding of how the way of life of the host culture would cause them to adapt occurred later into the experiences. Tom, a participant who traveled to Turkey for the military, described the differences in the host culture as his strongest memory:

> [What I remember the most are] the different customs they had in Turkey. They had a lot of ancient customs. So we had to be careful not to offend anyone... if someone got in trouble they would put you in jail and not feed you. So the military would have people check the jails to make sure that everyone got fed. You couldn't date the women. So it was lonely sometimes. When you date, you have to have intentions of marriage and be chaperoned by a family member. Their food was different. We had to be careful of what we ate and drank. We couldn't drink the water. Of course, they had a different language, so you had to be able to speak enough to say, "Hello, how are you?"

Ben, the participant who traveled to Brazil for a mission trip, also discussed how the different way of life of the host country immediately caused him to have to adapt. For Ben, setting appointments to meet with people in Brazil, which would normally be an easy task, posed a challenge:

> They are so laid back in general, the Brazilian culture is and I am so monochromatic at times. I have my little agenda and I am so planned out. I know what appointments I have when and that wouldn't work for me when I was there. I

would go from place to place and people wouldn't be there. [The time structure

there] was never quite definitive enough for me. So that was a little different.

While Ben adjusted to the meaning of time in Brazil, other participants learned to adapt to

other aspects of their host countries. Sally was a respondent between the ages of 35 and

75 who had traveled to Denmark for a year some years back as a part of a travel abroad

program in college. One of the cultural changes that Sally described as a factor in her daily

interactions with her Danish peers was the cultural definition of humor:

> The most challenging part was definitely not being able to communicate at times,
>
> even when we were speaking the same language. The Danes have a very unique
>
> sense of humor. Sometimes I found it insulting or just flat out mean. I was college-
>
> age at the time. Among that group, practical jokes and pranks were very common
>
> and thought of as funny. Whereas if someone came into the place where I was
>
> living and took all the doors off [the hinges] it would be thought of as funny there.
>
> But to me, that would not be funny. So there were times when I did not react the
>
> way they were expecting me to. So it was not only the language barrier, but also the
>
> cultural barriers that affected the meaning of the words that was challenging.

As a result of the experience of immersion into a foreign culture, many of the

respondents indicated a greater understanding and appreciation for differences leading to a

broader perspective of the world. The fact that they had experienced a new culture and

gained a broader understanding of the world contributed to feelings of increased

intercultural communication self-efficacy for many of the respondents. Sue, who traveled

to Germany to study, synthesized the findings very well by explaining the lesson she had

learned during the sojourn: "I learned that… every culture is extremely valuable and

important. We do not have the best culture in the world. It is extremely important to understand other cultures." Further, Sandra, when discussing why she felt her time in Nicaragua had increased her ability to communicate in intercultural settings stated: "I cannot specifically this why it has [improved my communication skills]. I guess it has because I know there exists a world outside of U.S. borders."

Interacting with members of the host culture

In a broad sense, the experience of immersion into a different culture and the perceived development of the understanding of difference appear to contribute to the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. One specific event that many of the respondents perceived as contributing to their sense of self efficacy was the interaction with members of the host culture. According to the respondents in this study, one of the ways in which interactions with people in the host culture led to a gained sense of self-efficacy was through confrontation of prejudice and perception. Further, interactions with inhabitants of the host culture were conducive to the development of competence in the language of the host culture.

Interactions with members of the host culture allowed respondents to understand how they were being perceived in their new surroundings. Many times, respondents reported feelings of being judged by members of the host culture based on their country of origin. Ann, a respondent between the age of 18 and 35 had recently returned from a trip to Germany. The purpose of Ann's trip was to teach English and learn more about German culture. Through her interactions with Germans, Ann discussed how she was initially judged on the basis of being from the United States.

On that topic Ann stated: "I learned a lot of open-mindedness [from] seeing how much relief people had when they saw I was American, but that I was not pig-headed and only going to see things one way. That is the image that a lot of people have of Americans. At first I was judged for being an American." Liz shared a similar sentiment when recounting her time in England: "There were times when I felt from being on the buses... when people were looking at us because they could tell we were American. I almost felt disdain. They really didn't like us and looked at us like... I almost felt unwelcome. [T]hat just made me really sit back and made me think more of our students who come over here from other countries."

When reflecting back on his time in Turkey with the military, Tom also described how he was received by members of the host culture as a result of his American citizenship. Tom stated: "Arriving there too was kind of strange because when we arrived there everyone kind of approached us like they think all Americans are rich. They would all try to take your baggage and luggage and stuff like that. They wanted money."

Further, Tom discussed his unique experience as a Black American in Turkey and how it affected the reception he received from members of the host culture. According to Tom,

> Everyone there was friendly as long as you were friendly. They liked Muhammad
>
> Ali. Since he was Muslim they associated Black guys with him. So they were nice
>
> to us [Black guys]. If you are in a different community or town you are not always
>
> accepted. I was surprised that I was so well accepted. Just because there are
>
> differences doesn't mean that you won't be accepted. There were incidents in the
>
> airport where they had never seen a Black person. This was back in the 70's and it

was hard for Black people to be accepted. Here [in Turkey], as long as you knew how to say hello in their language you were accepted.

As a Black woman, Dena shared a similar experience as Tom when she traveled to France for the first time. Dena discussed how her interactions with members of the host culture changed her perspective: "The trip changed my perspective as far as the way people treated me. In France, you are treated more as a human being as opposed to just a Black person. Here in [big city] or in the United States as a whole, when you walk in a room, people see you as a Black person as opposed to just a person. That is very, very significant."

Stanley, a participant in the study between the ages of 35 and 75, had participated in several sojourns for both work and leisure and was among the participants who felt that his intercultural communication self-efficacy had increased as a result of his travels abroad. During the interview, Stanley mostly discussed his experiences in Scandinavia and pointed to his interactions with members of the host culture as a key event that had helped him develop a great sense of intercultural communication self-efficacy. As a Black man, Stanley shared a similar experience as Tom and Dena with regard to how his interactions with members of the host culture changed his perceptions. According to Stanley,

[During my time abroad], I discovered that people in the host countries were far more genuine than people in the U.S. They didn't think of Americans as Black, White, or other. They thought of Americans as Americans and they interacted. I discovered that we had far more problems with people of different backgrounds in this country than people in other countries have with us. Whatever the shade of our skin or complexions, in those host countries they saw us as Americans and we were

all lumped into the same category. My experiences for the most part were very

pleasant, inquisitive, and rewarding. There has been a change in my interactions

with individuals of varying backgrounds as a result of my trip. For me, I think I

make fewer assumptions about what the encounter will be like based on external

appearances.

For respondents of color in particular, feeling accepted among members of the host

culture irrespective of differences in ethnic background was cited as an event that occurred

during the sojourn that contributed to gained confidence in approaching individuals of

different backgrounds. However, this sentiment was expressed by other participants as

well. Jason, who traveled to Spain, described how he was perceived by members of the

host culture and pointed to his encounters with his roommate, a Muslim of Arab descent, as

an event that contributed to his intercultural communication self-efficacy. During the

interview Jason stated described the experience of living with his housemate as follows:

It seems like we, especially White Americans, come from so much of seeing so

many people that are exactly the same as [us] that you do not know where the

differences lie. So when you are able to go out and see how different people react,

you notice things… A lot of times there was a bit of prejudice against me. People

looked at me as a rich person who could travel whenever I wanted to. When in

actuality, I am a poor college student and my parents were nice enough to pay for

my ticket. My roommate, who I would call my brother at this point, had been

studying [in Spain] for a year when I got there. He was from Bolivia and was

Muslim. He had an interesting opinion of the United States and was quite biased in

many ways. Myself, not knowing many Arabic nations, I was a little bit cautious to

get to know him. His friends had assumptions about what it would be like to live

with an American and my friends had made assumptions about what it would be

like to live with a Muslim. There were a lot of prejudices going on, but we were

both mature enough to treat each other with respect and eventually became great

friends. He was very respectful, honest and genuine. This was going on as we are

at war in Iraq and there is all this propaganda going on saying that Muslims are bad

and Arabs are bad. Every Muslim I met through [my roommate] treated

me with the utmost respect. It was a brotherhood.

Roger, a participant between the ages of 35 and 75 who had traveled to Sierra

Leone many years earlier when he was a young man in the Peace Corps, shared some of the

sentiments of the previous respondents. Roger also discussed how his interactions with

members of the host culture helped him to change his perceptions of individuals of

different backgrounds resulting in more confidence during these types of encounters.

Roger described his experiences with members of the host culture in Sierra Leone as

follows:

> I think when I went to Sierra Leone the fact that there was a difference between
>
> Africans and African-Americans and how they accepted someone who was White
>
> working with them [was probably what] surprised me the most. Before I went I did
>
> not expect that there would be a difference between Africans and African-
>
> Americans. There wasn't a lot of hatred or anger. That was really nice. Working
>
> in [large U.S. city] there was so much anger because we were White. It was to the
>
> point that when we went to the restaurant we were not served. That was in 1968.
>
> We did not understand why. Then we realized it was because we are White. So to

see the difference was really fascinating. It was more of difference from being in a rural area where we were. If we went back into the capital city you would see more of that anger, but not where we were. In the city the way you were treated was based on your skin color. In the village how you were treated was based on how you treated others. When I came back it was still hard to relate to African-Americans because of the anger that was there... I think you have to live long enough in another culture to begin to understand how that culture impacts communication and whatever you are doing in that particular society.

Through daily interactions with members of the host culture, participants in the study indicated that they gained a new perspective of self and individuals of different backgrounds that made them more confident in their ability to communicate in intercultural settings. In addition to gaining new perspectives, respondents described the development of language skills as an outcome of interactions in the host country, which also contributed to a greater sense of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Several of the respondents described struggling to communicate with members of the host culture and being forced to learn new ways of communicating as key events that contributed to the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Several of the participants in the study discussed how language and cultural barriers in the host country forced them to learn new ways of communicating. Mary, one of the respondents who spent eight days in Portugal and Spain for leisure, indicated that she perceived very little to no change in her communication self-efficacy because of her exposure to multicultural environments before her sojourn. However, she did indicate that her daily interactions with the people in Spain did help her to develop new ways of

communicating that made her confident. She talked about how she learned to use gestures to communicate with merchants who did not speak English. In retrospect, Mary also talked about how she could have used pictures to communicate messages while she was there.

During his interview, Chris, a respondent between the ages of 18 and 35 discussed is experiences during a four-month sojourn to Italy to study. Due to his limited knowledge of the Italian language, Chris learned alternate ways of communicating to get his message across. According to Chris, the realization that he was able to find alternate ways of communicating helped him feel more confident during intercultural encounters.

> I think my time abroad definitely helped [me feel more confident in my ability to communicate]. You have to learn. By the time I left I was able to tell my taxi driver how to get home. I have a really hard time learning languages, but I learned to communicate on different levels, like by pointing things out in common. That might be a landmark by my apartment to tell a taxi driver. You find things that are common that everybody understands. That helped me reach out to a broader group of people. I learned a ton of communication skills there. Unfortunately, very few of them were actual Italian words. My first couple of weeks there I was scared. I would avoid interactions with Italians at all cost. My Italian improved a little bit. I would just learn. It forced me to learn about my neighborhood in some respect to be able to describe it better. [But I would mostly find] common things that were understood to explain to somebody where to go. At a restaurant if I wanted my chicken cooked a certain way, I had to be descriptive or compare it to something without using the Italian adjective. I would use universal words. You have to pick your words to achieve your goal.

The sentiment of Mary and Chris was echoed by many of the respondents. The data suggest that in the early phase of the sojourn or in situations where the traveler is not able to learn the language, the act of improvising to communicate a message to members of the host culture contributed to perceptions of higher intercultural communication self-efficacy. Throughout the interviews numerous instances of using gestures, symbols, or words in English that would be easily understandable in order to achieve the goal of ordering food in a restaurant, shop, or take public transportation were highlighted by the respondents.

With regard to language, the data suggest that the duration of the stay and the goals of the travelers determined how language affected perceptions of self-efficacy development. For travelers who were in the host country for longer periods of time and set a specific goal of learning the language, the event of mastering the local dialect greatly increased feeling of self-efficacy. For Ben, the respondent who spent two years in Brazil, the event that had the greatest impact on his perception of his ability to communicate was his ability to speak the language of the host culture. Ben described this experience as follows:

> My goal while in Brazil was to be a Brazilian, to understand people, to talk to them. I had to by nature of my assignment. I could not be an outsider. If I was going to get to know these families and understand how I could help them in their life, I needed to be involved... For me, it was always about the people. I knew that I had to understand them. My first "aha" moment was when I went to bed and I woke up in the morning to realize that I had been dreaming in Portuguese. That was after I had been immersed in the culture for about three months. From then on, all my thoughts were in Portuguese. Then it was really easier for me to communicate

because I was not doing this double-dialogue. It was one even flow.

Later in the interview, Ben discussed how by the end of his trip, members of the host country were mistaking him for being Brazilian. Being able to communicate at the same level as the inhabitants of the host country was a great source of pride for Ben. Sally, who had traveled to Denmark for a year, expressed the same level of pride at being able to communicate in the host language. When asked to identify the event that had contributed the most to her development of intercultural communication self-efficacy, she discussed her ability to speak the language of the host culture. Sally explained as follows:

> A friend of mine had been on the same trip a year before. She met this elderly man who she had a great deal of respect for and told me I had to go meet him. So I went to go and meet him the first week I was there. I hardly spoke any Danish and he did not speak any English so it was hard to communicate. I just had a headache by the time I left because I was working so hard to find words he could understand. It was after I had been there a while and I went there one day and we were actually able to talk. At that point I realized it was happening. I was actually going to be able to learn the language! A good sign of this was that I had actually begun to think in Danish. This occurred after about four months into the trip. This is when it started clicking. I never became fluent, but I became conversational. It put me at a different level of communicating.

For respondents such as Ben and Sally who spent a year or more in one host country learning the language was described as the key event that had the greatest impact on feelings of increased intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Achievement of key mastery experiences

As outlined in Chapter II, master experiences occur when individuals see themselves as effective in overcoming challenges (Bandura, 1997). When asked to identify events that were influential in their self-efficacy development during the sojourn, the respondents described the hardships and challenges they had faced in the host culture. Overlaps occurred between this section and the previous section on interactions with members of the host culture. In many instances, respondents described interactions with people they encountered during the sojourn as experiences that helped develop their communications skills. At the same time, these encounters were sometimes framed as mastery experiences themselves. For Ben and Sally, mastering the language was an important component to their interactions with members of the host country. At the same time, overcoming their struggles with the language was an important challenge that both respondents had to overcome.

Beyond language, other sorts of mastery experiences were discussed by the respondents. The challenges faced during the sojourn usually involved the sojourner confronting an obstacle alone. For the respondents who traveled alone, overcoming fear and going through the previously discussed experiences was considered a mastery experience. Travelers who engaged in the sojourn alone tended to speak of challenges more frequently than those who traveled with others or for the purpose of visiting family.

Karen, a study abroad participant between the ages of 18 and 35 traveled independently to England for a semester. The only person from her college who took part in this particular program, she knew no one when she arrived. She spoke extensively of her struggle to adapt to being alone in her new environment. For Karen, overcoming

challenges alone was a frequent theme. She described a particular event occurring when she was traveling alone from England to France as the most significant in helping her develop confidence communicating in intercultural settings:

> I was in France and I thought I could speak enough French to order myself a train ticket from Paris to Rome. [Instead] I ordered myself a train ticket to Rouen, France. I went to Rouen and I did not realize it until I got off the train. So I bawled and bawled. At that point I was very homesick because I had left my comfort to be in an uncomfortable place again. I was bawling and bawling. Finally, I was able to the man at the ticket booth what I needed. It made me see that I could handle this. It all worked out in the end because I met these amazing girls from Australia on the train. It's weird how you will always find a comfort somewhere, no matter where you are.

Events involving daily functioning in the host environment, such as the one described by Karen often presented challenges to travelers. When able to overcome obstacles due to differences in culture and language barriers, these types of daily occurrences served as mastery experiences that contributed to an increased sense of intercultural communication self-efficacy.

In this section, data on events and the types of experiences that occurred during the sojourn and affected perceptions of intercultural communication self-efficacy were presented. Through adaptation to the host culture, interactions with members of the host country, and overcoming the challenges of daily life in their new environments, respondents gained increased perceptions of self-efficacy. In the final section of this chapter, data on how the sojourn shapes perceptions of self-efficacy will be presented.

The Sojourn and Perceptions of ICC Self-Efficacy

RQ3 explored the ways in which the sojourn affected the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. After gaining data on the specific events that contributed to an increase in self-efficacy, the final question of the interview (question 10) was posed to reveal how the respondents felt the sojourns impacted their communication ability and their lives as a whole. When asked to summarize how they were impacted, two main themes emerged. Many of the respondents discussed empathy and humanity as the key outcomes of the sojourn experience.

According to the respondents, the events that occurred during the sojourn resulted in an increased ability to empathize with individuals of different backgrounds. Immersion into the culture of the host country, interacting with the inhabitants of that country and mastery experiences helped them to understand what it feels like to be an outsider from the dominant culture. As a result of the experience, respondents felt that they had developed skills to approach individuals who were not a part of the home culture. According to James who travels frequently for work:

> Overall, my travel abroad has impacted me the most by making me more
>
> empathetic to people who come here to the United States from other countries. I
>
> am more understanding of what they are going through because I have been
>
> through the same thing in other countries. I am more willing to step up and help
>
> them find something in a store or help them order a meal than I was before.

As described by James, feelings of not being a part of the dominant culture awakened him to the experience of others. Respondents who had never spent time outside of their culture before the sojourn discussed understanding what it felt like to be a minority. With this

enhanced understanding of what individuals of different backgrounds experience when trying to adapt to a new way of life, many of the respondents reported a greater willingness and ease in initiating communication in intercultural settings.

Humanity

Earlier in this chapter, immersion into the host culture and the observance of differences were presented as themes that emerged from the data. While adapting to differences were identified as events that contributed to self-efficacy development during the sojourn, perceived similarities led to a greater understanding of humanity. When asked to summarize how the sojourns impacted their communication abilities and their lives as a whole, several respondents explained the sojourn helped them to understand that despite differences, people are all the same. This new understanding helped respondents see that they could share things in common with individuals who appeared to be very different on the surface. Learning to relate to individuals of different backgrounds allowed respondents to feel more confident in their ability to communicate.

Mary, the respondent who traveled to Spain, summarized the remarks of many of the respondents when she stated:

> I realize now that people are very similar. It does not matter where you come from.
> There are more similarities than differences. This is something that I did not
> realize before my trip. I expected people from different places to be completely
> different. People all have the same set of positive and negative characteristics.

When discussing what he had learned during his trip to Turkey, Tom echoed Mary's sentiment stating: "Once you are able to communicate in one culture, you do not feel so out of place in another new culture. You learn that people are people."

When discussing the impact of her trip to Germany on his ability to communicate and his life as a whole, Sue spoke at length about humanity stating:

> It [the sojourn] helped me to be a more humane person. Being able to want to understand other people and know that everybody is a human being. There are damaged people, but most people are not beyond recovery. We all basically have the same needs, wants, hopes, and fears. Understanding that is crucial to being able to communicate. This experience has influenced my job choices and my interest in communication.

Practically all of the respondents discussed a greater understanding of humanity as an outcome of the sojourn. For several others such as Mary, Tom, and Sue, discovering the commonalities between themselves and individuals of different backgrounds was a way in which the sojourn experience helped them to perceive themselves as more engaged, confident communicators.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings from the interviews were presented and the three research questions were answered. In response to RQ1, the data indicated that the factors determining whether travelers perceived an increase in self-efficacy were purpose for travel and exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn. For respondents who were not frequent travelers, and had not had a significant amount of exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn, a positive relationship between the sojourn and self-efficacy development was perceived. For travelers who sojourned frequently for work and/or had been exposed to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn, a neutral relationship was perceived. Data for RQ2 indicated that immersion and adaptation to a new culture,

interactions with members of the host culture, and overcoming challenges were the events

or types of experiences cited as conducive to self-efficacy development. Lastly when

asked to summarize how the experience of the sojourn as a whole had contributed to

increased self-efficacy, participants mentioned the development of empathy and a greater

understanding of humanity.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

This study has revealed how the experience of the sojourn affected the participants' development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Further, this study has extended research related to the sojourn by diversifying the sample to include broader perspectives. Since self-efficacy involves an individual's perception of his or her own ability, the findings consisted of the personal accounts of travelers collected during the in-depth interviews. In the previous chapter, the data were presented with as relevant to one of the three research questions. The data revealed consistent responses to the research questions, as well as opened new avenues for exploration. In this chapter, the findings of this study will be discussed.

Research Question One

As presented in Chapter IV, the data provided responses to each of the three research questions posed. In a previous study, Milstein (2005), the only other scholar to investigate the relationship between the sojourn and communication self-efficacy development, found a positive relationship between the two. RQ1verified Milstein's findings; overall, the findings of this study support the positive relationship between the sojourn and intercultural communication self-efficacy, with the majority of the respondents believing their self-efficacy improved. However, only those respondents who had taken part in one sojourn or had little exposure to multicultural settings prior to the experience were more likely than other respondents to perceive a positive relationship.

An interesting notation with regard to RQ1 is that some respondents did not feel that the sojourn had impacted their self-efficacy. As observed through the data, the purpose for travel and the level of exposure to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn

were common factors among participants who did not perceive an increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy. Respondents who traveled for work or personal development and/or had high levels of exposure to multicultural settings before the sojourn did not perceive a change in self-efficacy. This finding also extends the research of Milstein (2005) who recommended examining how exposure to multicultural settings in the host country affected self-efficacy development during the sojourn. The findings of this study suggest that exposure to multicultural settings in the host culture also contributes to the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Perhaps individuals who were already exposed to different cultures in the host country prior to the sojourn had already developed such a high level of self-efficacy that the further development became harder to detect.

Further, respondents who traveled for the purpose of work or personal development had either participated in multiple sojourns at the time of the interview or had exposure to the host culture prior to the sojourn. The fact that respondents in these categories did not perceive any change in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn inspires additional inquiry. To explore whether exposure to multicultural settings in the home culture results in the same level of self-efficacy development as the sojourn would be interesting. Additionally, this study did not yield data exploring the varying levels of intercultural communication self-efficacy. In other words, observation of the point individuals reach the plateau of communication self-efficacy development, where the sojourn no longer has any perceived effect would contribute to current findings.

Research Question Two

With regard to intercultural communication self-efficacy development, no previous

data exist regarding the type of events or experiences abroad that are conducive to

perceived self-efficacy increases by travelers. As such, RQ2 explored the specific

experiences and events that occurred during the sojourn and leading to a perceived increase

in self-efficacy. As presented in the previous chapter, the following three categories

emerged from the data: Immersion into the culture of the host country; interactions with

members of the host country; and accomplishment of key mastery experiences.

As suggested by the findings, the act of immersion and adaptation to the culture of

the host country was an experience leading to increased intercultural communication self-

efficacy. Kim (2005) attributed the stress-adaptation-growth-dynamic to the development

of intercultural communication competence. The findings of this study support Kim's

claim that the initial stress caused by the new surroundings of the host country cause the

traveler to adapt, ultimately leading to the development of ICC. The data presented in

Chapter IV indicated that the experience of adapting to daily life and cultural difference of

the host country during the sojourn contributed to feelings of increased self-efficacy.

Another type of experience that emerged as conducive to intercultural

communication self-efficacy development was the experience of interacting with members

of the host culture. Respondents in this study spoke extensively about their interactions

during the sojourn and how they had helped them develop self-efficacy. Interactions with

members of the host culture developed actual skill through a progression that travelers

were able to measure. This finding is consistent with previous research on ICC suggesting

that competence refers to the judgments of the participants on the effectiveness of the

encounter (Wiseman et al., 1993). The progress in the ability to communicate that occurs during extended stays abroad contributes to an increase in perceived ability.

These interactions abroad also appeared to affect travelers by challenging their perceptions of themselves, as well as their judgments of others. During the interviews, many of the respondents discussed the experience of discovering how members of the host culture perceived them, based upon their appearance and U.S. American nationality. In many instances, participants learned through their travel experiences that their judgments of others were not always accurate. Participants also gained an increased understanding of how it feels to be different and how difference impacts communication.

Particularly interesting to note was the change in self-perception that occurred among respondents of color as a result of the sojourn. During the interviews, Black respondents expressed feelings of being identified by their race in their home country. In other countries, respondents of color reported being treated as a person and not a "Black person." The experience of the sojourn significantly altered the self-perception of these participants. The experience of not being judged based on race seemed to help them form new perceptions of themselves and gave them new hope in the possibility of being accepted by individuals of different backgrounds. Inversely, participants who are members of the dominant culture in their host country reported a gained understanding of what it feels like to be the minority, which also affected their self-perception. Both of these findings are relevant and support previous ICC research emphasizing the importance of the self-concept in effective intercultural communication outcomes (Bennett, 1993; Gundykunst, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Lastly, the data revealed that certain key mastery experiences, or challenges that were overcome during the sojourn, contributed to an increased perception intercultural communication self-efficacy. The mastery experiences involved perfecting the language and learning to survive in the host culture. Further, the data suggest these mastery experiences were much more likely to occur when the respondents entered the experience of the sojourn with specific goals in mind. Respondents who began the sojourn with the goal of perfecting the language saw the realization of that goal as mastery experience leading to an increase in self-efficacy. Similarly, respondents who began the sojourn with the goal of becoming more independent, perceived simple tasks such as ordering a train ticket and traveling alone in a foreign environment as mastery experiences that greatly impacted their sense of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Kitsantas (2006) posited that goal-setting during the sojourn contributed to cross-cultural adaptation. This study also confirms that goal-setting sets the framework for achieving mastery experiences, which Bandura (1993) attributes to the development of self-efficacy. As such, suggests that goal-setting before and during the sojourn greatly increases the likelihood that travelers will gain intercultural communication self-efficacy.

<center>Research Question Three</center>

The final research question sought insight into how the sojourn functioned to increase intercultural communication self-efficacy. In other words, the researcher sought to explore how travelers perceived the experience as a whole as contributing to self-efficacy development. According to the participants in this study, the sojourn contributed to self-efficacy development by allowing travelers to gain a sense of empathy, as well as a better understanding of humanity. These two findings have yet to be mentioned as

byproducts of the sojourn in intercultural communication research. However, the ability to relate to individuals of different backgrounds through an increased understanding of what it means to be different was perceived as meaningful. Further, respondents discovered that despite differences, inherent similarities exist in all human beings, creating a sense that individuals of different backgrounds are approachable. Both empathy and humanity bridge the gap between cultures. Understanding another individual's experience and acquiring the ability to see beyond difference are essential to effective intercultural communication.

The findings of this study both validate and expand previous intercultural communication research. Immersion into new cultures and self-perception remain important components to the development of ICC. However, the diversification of the research sample and the incorporation of Bandura's concept of self-efficacy provided new vantage points for examining the experience of the sojourn, revealing new findings. Data revealing the unique perspectives of travelers from diverse backgrounds, the mastery experiences of the sojourn and the roles of humanity and empathy can be useful both in future research and in trainings for travel abroad. In the final chapter, findings will be applied to the communication discipline, along with directions for future research.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

This research study explored self-reported increases in intercultural communication self-efficacy development reported by travelers experiencing a sojourn. The experiences described by the participants in this study shed insight into all three research questions, supporting the following conclusions: new travelers perceive an increase in intercultural communication self-efficacy as a result of the sojourn; while travelers who had participated in multiple sojourns or had high levels of exposure to multicultural settings in the home country perceived a neutral relationship between the sojourn and intercultural communication self-efficacy development. The types of experiences and events conducive to self-efficacy development were identified as immersion into a new culture, interactions with members of the host culture, and the accomplishment of mastery experiences are essential to the process. Further, empathy and humanity emerged as the two of the main areas of growth that travelers perceived as unique outcomes of the sojourn that contribute to self-efficacy development. In this chapter, how this study contributes to the communication discipline, limitations of the present study and directions for future study are presented.

Through this study, some essential questions regarding the sojourn were addressed. Prior to this study, there was a significant lack of data regarding how the sojourn affected the perceptions of diverse travelers. As a result of the present study, the purposes for travel, level of exposure to multicultural settings, and ethnic background of the traveler all had great effects on perceptions of self-efficacy. This, along with the increased understanding of the specific events that lead to greater self-efficacy may be used for training purposes. Since self-efficacy is a factor that affects ICC, the data in this study

could be used to develop trainings in ICC development that concentrate on exercises that are conducive to increasing self-efficacy. While, the current study did yield new data, there were several limitations.

<center>Limitations of the Present Study</center>

The main limitation of the present study involved the level of neutrality of the researcher as a frequent traveler and interpreter of the data. While every precaution was taken to avoid subjectivity on behalf of the researcher, the research design and interpretation of data may have been impacted by the sojourn experiences of the main researcher. To a certain extent, prior experience with the sojourn was beneficial in understanding the experiences of the participants. However, personal experiences may have also affected the way the interviews were conducted and the data that were collected. If the same study were conducted by an individual without previous experience abroad, different results and conclusions might have been drawn.

Additionally, the convenience sample for the study included personal acquaintances of the researcher. In some instances the relationship of the researcher to participant may have affected the quality of the data. While in some instances the quality of data may have been improved by the level of comfort that existed between the researcher and the participant, in other instances, participants may have interpreted interview questions and provided responses they felt were appropriate based on knowledge of the background of the researcher. In this regard, the relationship between the researcher and the participants may have been a limitation to the study and should be considered in future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

In many ways, this study provides a framework and new vantage point for investigating the experience of the sojourn as it relates to ICC development. One interesting direction for future research would be to examine how levels of exposure to multicultural settings in the home culture contribute to perceived intercultural communication self-efficacy. Additional study might also explore types of exposure that may be conducive to self-efficacy development. Further, based on the findings in this study, an investigation of when and how maximum levels of self-efficacy might be achieved would be insightful. Is there a point where self-efficacy can no longer be developed through exposure to intercultural environments?

Another interesting area for future research is related to how the experience of the sojourn affects the self-perceptions of U.S. American people of color. While ethnicity was not a variable in the present study, participants of color were among those who shared very similar experiences to one another and described the most significant changes in self-perception and personal judgment as a result of the sojourn. The study how experiences abroad have affect self-perception and communication patterns upon return in the host country would be beneficial to the literature on cross-racial communication. Future scholars should devote attention to the investigation of how the sojourn affects racial perceptions.

Lastly, further research could investigate how experiences abroad could be mimicked in the host country in order to train individuals to be more confident in their communication abilities. For example, do domestic sojourns in different parts of the country provide experiences for vicarious learning? Since the sojourn is such a powerful

tool in improving intercultural communication skills, it would be interesting to determine if similar experiences that occur abroad could take place in the home culture as a means of helping individuals develop intercultural communication self-efficacy.

Summary

Through the present study, the relationship between the sojourn and the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy was examined. The results revealed that travelers with no prior exposure to multicultural settings perceived a positive relationship between the sojourn and the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Travelers who were exposed to multicultural settings prior to the sojourn, perceived the sojourn as having a neutral effect on the development of intercultural communication self-efficacy. Further, the data revealed the types of mastery experiences that were perceived as conducive to self-efficacy development. Future research should further explore the impact of exposure to multicultural settings in the home culture and how it can affect perceptions of intercultural communication self-efficacy as well as resulting ability to adapt during the sojourn.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. Please describe your sojourn.

- When did you go?

- Where did you go?

- Who did you go with?

- What was the reason for the travel?

2. When you reflect back to your time in _____, what experiences/memories stand out the most?

3. What is the single most valuable lesson you learned while abroad?

4. What was the most challenging part about the experience?

5. How comfortable were you interacting with individuals of different backgrounds before the trip?

- Why do you think you felt that way?

6. How would you describe your interactions with individuals of differing backgrounds now?

- Has there been a change?

- Why or why not?

7. How effectively do you feel you could communicate a message to a diverse audience?

8. Do you feel that your ability to communicate with individuals from different backgrounds was developed through your experience abroad?

- If so, how?

- At what point in the trip did you begin to feel growth in your ability to

    communicate with others?

9. Overall, how would you describe the impact of the sojourn on your communication style and

your life? Please provide examples.