

STUDY ABROAD DECISION MAKING:  
THE GAP BETWEEN INTENT AND BEHAVIOR

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## ABSTRACT

As globalization occurs, educators have become increasingly aware of the importance of students gaining a global education, and as a result academic study abroad programs have grown in popularity at universities across the country. Nevertheless, while most college-bound students indicate a strong desire to study abroad, a very small percentage do. Grounded in the theory of planned behavior and both building on and addressing gaps in extant research, my thesis examined differences in beliefs among students have not and will not, and have not but intend to participate in a study abroad program. My research hypothesized that future job prospects, fun, family expectations, peer expectations, and administrative support are positively related to behavior, while risk aversion, homesickness, and timing are negatively related to behavior. Results indicated that perceptions related to job prospects, family expectations, homesickness, and timing were significant predictors of students' intent versus their behavior regarding the decision to study abroad. This research contributes to the study abroad literature by testing two new constructs, homesickness and fun, and by studying the drivers of both intent and actual behavior for the first time. It also assists universities in effectively marketing study abroad programs to undergraduate students to increase the likelihood of performed behavior.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the Lincoln Commission's goals for 2017 is that at least 1 million U.S. undergraduate students will study abroad each year (Durbin 2006). As Durbin (2006) states, "Promoting and democratizing undergraduate study abroad is the next step in the evolution of American higher education." In the past, the United States has been seen as at a disadvantage and underprepared to compete effectively in a global marketplace for the lack of globalized curriculum in its higher education institutions (Relyea et al. 2008). As of late, leaders in various economic sectors have stated how important study abroad participation is to ensure the United States' future security, economic prosperity, and global leadership (Salisbury et al. 2008). Even United States government officials are stating that "Americans don't have enough knowledge of the rest of the world" and this can be seen as a national liability (Toncar et al. 2006). As younger generations are of significant importance to the future of the United States, it is imperative to determine how to engage and market to these individuals to provide them the opportunities to become well-rounded, educated individuals capable of understanding the global interconnectedness of the world today.

The number of study abroad programs offered by institutions of higher education has increased significantly over the past decade, and the number of students with a desire to study abroad has increased over 150% (Zhuang et al. 2015). Universities and colleges across the nation are pushing for students to venture abroad as they are becoming more aware of the fact that employers look for international experience when applicants are being interviewed for jobs. In an increasingly global environment, global awareness and experience is of growing importance to be competitive in today's job market (Presley et al. 2010). Any study abroad experience can potentially provide a career benefit, and universities such as Colby, Dickinson,

and St. Olaf send 80% of their student population abroad for at least a semester (Curran 2007). The trend is on the rise, and as the movement gains popularity, more students enter college with the intention to study abroad during their college career in hopes of setting themselves apart as they search for a future career.

While students are aware of the potential career benefit study abroad holds, there are still students who see abroad as a “time out” from school (Curran 2007). As educational institutions increase their abroad offerings, and programs become more accessible, there is much interest around the decision making process of students deciding to study abroad. Throughout much of the research done on the topic, there have been various factors linked to intent to study abroad. Variables such as gender, parents’ education level, prior international experience, age, and household income have been analyzed in terms of desire for individual growth that translates into intent to study abroad as have five factors in regards to family, including finance, information, expectation, competition, and persuasion (Pimpa 2004; Presley et al. 2010). Research also indicates that those students with a high tolerance for ambiguity are more likely to indicate an intent to study abroad, as well as those for whom the overall perceived value of a study abroad program outweighs the potential risks associated with the decision (Bakalis and Joiner 2004; Relyea et al. 2008). Many of these studies have been done to assist universities in how to design and effectively market various study abroad offerings to students enrolled at higher education institutions (Goel, de Jong, and Schusenberg 2012).

Goel, de Jong, and Schusenberg (2012) used previous research on simple factors in relation to influence on students’ decisions and applied the theory of planned behavior in their research. In using this framework to approach their research, they hoped to understand the belief set of students who intended to study abroad. These studies examine intended behavior, but the

students surveyed were not those who carried out the actual behavior of studying abroad. This is of great importance because there is a large drop off in students who intend to study abroad and those who actually do. While 55% of college students indicated that they were fairly certain they would study abroad during their college experience and 26% indicated a strong desire to study abroad, less than 3% actually made the choice to study abroad during their college careers (Pope et al. 2014).

My objective through the course of the study is to analyze differences in the drivers of intent versus actual behavior. Previous research has centered on factors that influence intent to study abroad, but there is little to no research done on analyzing the difference in these factors in students who have intent and do study abroad versus those who have intent and choose not to study abroad. In highlighting limitations of study abroad research, Presley, Damron-Martinez, and Zhang (2010) discuss the need to extend current research by studying actual behavior. Goel, de Jong, and Schusenbergl (2012) even commented on how interesting it would be to see how many students that intend to study abroad actually end up carrying out the behavior. My objective is to understand how students who do not study abroad differ from those do in terms of various behavioral characteristics. This will be useful to university study abroad offices in terms of marketing, as the information can be used to pinpoint what factors are of importance to focus on with students in order to retain more students from the point of intention to actual behavior.

For its primary theoretical framework, this study will draw on the theory of planned behavior because it is perhaps the most dominant theory used in the literature to predict intent to study abroad (c.f. Goel, de Jong, and Schnusenbergl 2010; Presley et al. 2010; Schnusenbergl, de Jong, and Goel 2012). The theory of planned behavior, supplemented by interviews, will be the basis for survey development. This survey will then be distributed to various subjects who

carried out the intention of studying abroad, as well as those who intended to study abroad and did not carry out their actions. The results will then be compared to ascertain if there is a change in characteristics among those who intended and those who performed the behavior. The subjects will be business minors at Texas Christian University (TCU) based in the United States, choosing to study abroad in different locations worldwide.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

#### ***The Theory of Planned Behavior***

Ajzen (1980) developed the theory of planned behavior, which states that beliefs influence attitudes, which influence intentions, and in turn behavior. This is an extension of Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action (1980). According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), intentions are the key to actual behavior, and in studying intentions, the stronger the intention, the more likely one is to engage in the behavior. The theory of planned behavior is designed to take individuals' perception of behavioral control, attitude toward the behavior, and subject norm into account to dissect the path one will take when deciding whether to engage in a behavior (Ajzen 1991).

Attitude toward behavior refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior being discussed. Subjective norm refers to perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior. Perceived behavioral control focuses on how easy or difficult one perceives performing a behavior and often one assumes this is based on past experience and anticipated obstacles or difficulties associated with behavior performance (Ajzen 1991). Behavioral beliefs can include motivators such as fun/enjoyable, personal



development, cultural benefits, language benefits, and broadened career opportunities. Perceived behavior includes that of control beliefs that can include factors like cost, political situation of the country, economic status, scholarship opportunities, graduation delay, safety concerns, cultural concerns, language concerns. And finally, subjective or normative beliefs are an individual's perception that the behavior is influenced by the judgment of significant others. This aspect focuses more on deterrents, such as missing family and friends, family commitments, and work commitments (Goel, de Jong, and Schusenberg, 2010; Payan et al. 2012). If these three factors—attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control—are more favorable, intent is likely higher, and the behavior is more likely to be performed.

Perceived value can also be seen as an extension of beliefs and attitudes (Zhuang et al. 2015). Presley, Damron-Martinez, and Zhang (2010) examined how one's attitudes and beliefs also play into a cost-benefit analysis. When an individual is choosing whether or not to study abroad, their attitudes and intentions regarding the study abroad program often times lead them to look at the overall perceived value of studying abroad. If students perceived behavior is that study abroad programs ultimately result in more benefits—such as career benefits—over costs—such as expenses—they are more likely to show intent to perform the behavior (Zhuang et al. 2015).

This perceived value goes hand in hand with research by Schnusenberg, de Jong, and Goel (2012) on how the influencers of intent in the theory of planned behavior affect willingness to pay, as well as looking at students' perception of affordability. Schnusenberg, de Jong, and Goel (2012) hypothesized that willingness to pay for a study abroad program depends on the subjective belief of future job prospects, the normative belief of family expectations, and the

control belief of administrative support. While willingness to pay and affordability are important to consider when analyzing intent, cost is not the only factor of importance.

### ***Expectancy Theory***

Another theory that has been used to assess study abroad decision-making is expectancy theory. This theory states that an individual puts forth effort to achieve performance and reward that is of value. For the purposes of the study conducted by Sánchez, Fornerino, and Zhang (2006) they considered motivators to be proxies for effort. The theory gives explanation and connects value to results. When discussing study abroad, the theory explains that a student's motivations can explain why they choose to study abroad or not. The behavior chosen by a person is influenced by how much the expected outcome that would result from their behavior is attractive to them. As stated by Sánchez et al. (2006), "People consciously choose particular paths based upon their perceptions, attitudes, values and beliefs."

Individuals differ in what drives and motivates them, and some of this can be explained by nationality. Each individual reacts differently to various motivators and deterrents. When making the decision whether or not to study abroad, individuals will be considering the experience because of something they value, such as a stimulating experience. When going through the decision making process, various barriers might be greater than the motivators to carry out the action. This ultimately means that a student's motivations will heavily influence their decision to study abroad, but that decision will be affected by barriers or deterrents (Sánchez et al. 2006).

### ***Risk and Decision Making***

The decision to study abroad is often contingent on the assessment of various international risk factors. Various risks include economic concerns, disease, political instability,

and the threat of terrorism. While international risks are said to have some influence on the decision to study abroad, the number of programs on college campuses has continued to grow in recent years (Toncar et al. 2006). Risk can fall under the category of control beliefs within the theory of planned behavior, as this is an individual's assessment in the ease or difficulty in performing behavior. Risk would be a factor that plays into this assessment and ultimately the individual's perception, but it is a factor worth noting on its own.

When analyzing perceived behavioral control, it has often been compared to self-efficacy—one's belief in their ability to accomplish a task or succeed in a situation. One can look at the effects on self-efficacy and behavior, incorporated with the theory of planned behavior in order to analyze behavioral intent. In analyzing various factors of behavior, there are certain risk factors that sometimes influence one's attitudes and behavior towards an idea or action. These factors include worry, which has been described as an emotional response to a threat, and perceived risk, which is more of a cognitive assessment (Schmiege et al. 2009). Perceived risk and its association with self-efficacy have generally been researched in the context of studies pertaining to perceived risks with health. For example, Schmiege et al. (2009) found that worry was an influential factor and that it was related to behavioral intent.

Apart from worry and perceived risk, another factor to consider when examining the drop-off between intent and behavior is that of the degree of risk-aversion an individual possesses. A study on Norwegian and U.S. students by Payan, Svensson, and Høgevold (2012) discusses this personality trait when identifying intent, but the information is useful in both regards. The results of this study showed there were no significant negative associations with study abroad and risk aversion, country, or economic concerns in general. According to the Institute of International Education (2016) there are data showing that U.S. students are more

likely to study in a European country than anywhere else in the world. While there is no statistical evidence stating this is because of risk aversion or perceived risk in a country, this topic and association is of interest. The Payan, Svensson, and Høgevold (2012) study was completed four years ago, and as globalization has increased and there are more imminent threats, these factors are worth looking into again as further research is conducted.

### **Previous Studies on Intent to Study Abroad**

There are numerous studies analyzing different sets of factors that influence intentions to study abroad. Going back to Zhuang, King, and Carnes' (2015) discussion of perceived value coupled with the theory of planned behavior, there are various benefits that can be obtained from studying abroad. Five of these benefits include academic credit, language credit, practical experience, resume building, and an experience of a lifetime, while barriers can include strict curriculum, financial constraints, or perceived international risks (Toncar et al. 2006). All aspects of the theory of planned behavior play a role into how these benefits are perceived by students and intentions are formed. These benefits and barriers could potentially have an effect on the difference between intent and behavior.

Specifically reviewing literature on understanding the choice process of the intent to study abroad, there were factors found to have a positive correlation to intent to study abroad. One of these factors is gender. Salisbury et al. (2009) found that women are more likely to intend to study abroad than males, as are those who are attending liberal arts schools or majoring in humanities related fields. Another factor is socioeconomic status. This factor can be seen as a barrier as a result of an individual's financial resources, but it was also found that it could be seen as a factor that merely shapes intentions, as availability of resources shapes an individual's expectations before even considering if the travel is feasible. Another factor related to

socioeconomic status is level of parents' education. Those with parents who have achieved a higher level of education are more likely to develop aspirations or intentions to study abroad while attending a college or university (Salisbury et al. 2009).

While studies have not empirically examined the differences driving perceptions of intention versus actual behavior with regard to study abroad, Pope, Sánchez, and Schmid (2014) mention this gap in their research into the study abroad decision process. Their research focuses on Gen Y students' desire for individual growth, along with other factors and how this influences a student's intent to study abroad. Their research does discuss that there is a time lag between when one intends and when one actually performs the behavior which leads to promotional challenges. Individuals have the tendency to agree or intend to perform actions in the future upon the belief they will have the time and resources to do so, and eventually do not carry out the behavior upon realizing they do not have the time nor resources.

In a study (Sánchez et al. 2006) that draws on expectancy theory and motivation, barriers assessed included those pertaining to family, financial, psychological, and social. Specifically, these barriers include factors such as study abroad causing debt, being too far from home, having too many obligations in their home country, or none of their friends have ever studied abroad. While this study focused on Chinese, French, and U.S. students, the most valuable conclusions can be drawn from the U.S. student group of respondents. American students were very interested in searching for new experiences when deciding whether or not to study abroad, as well as to gain a different worldview. American students with high familial barriers and low psychological and financial barriers had less intent to study abroad, while those with low familial and high psychological and financial barriers looked at the experience in a more positive light with greater intent (Sánchez et al. 2006). This study offers insight as to why motivation may not

be enough to induce action. There are barriers that may exist that can predict the difference between intent and actual behavior.

While there has been no empirical research performed on intent versus behavior, there is literature that does look into the differences between intent to study abroad and actual study abroad behavior. A study by Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2013) is limited in scope and generalizable insights, but it does report that of those with great intent to study abroad at the beginning of their higher education journey, 50% studied abroad at some point throughout their higher education experience.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 in Appendix B provide a holistic view as to various deterrents and motivators that have been studied in the past in regards to business students, specifically, when forming intent to study abroad.

### **Intent Versus Behavior**

While previous research has focused on intent within the theory of planned behavior, the literature studied is void of any research on behavior (i.e., the actual decision to study abroad), the last step of the theory of planned behavior. Presley, Damron-Martinez, and Zhang (2010) stated in terms of their study, this would have added “validity and robustness” to the theory of planned behavior test. Schnusenber, de Jong, and Goel (2012) suggested it would be interesting to see how many students that intend to study abroad actually carry out the behavior. In a previous study they also stated that a prominent factor missing in their model was that of “fun” and that students participation in study abroad programs is motivated largely in part by if they think they will have a fun experience (Goel et al. 2010). The Schnusenber, de Jong, and Goel study looks to assess the cognitive decision making process as a result of students beliefs, but I believe there are other factors worth considering, including that of perception of an enjoyable

experience, how study abroad fits within an academic schedule, an individual's risk aversion, and peer expectations. It is worth noting that family expectations have been studied, but they are not the only opinions students value. This research looks to fill the gap in the literature and study those who have moved to the final step of the theory of planned behavior to study if there is a difference in beliefs about various factors amongst students that affect intent versus those that affect behavior.

## HYPOTHESIS

A student's happiness is related to their expectation of how fun and enjoyable a study abroad program will be, as well as the overall feelings they would experience during a study abroad program. Research has included recommendations to focus on the fun and development aspects of study abroad when marketing to students (Fitzsimmons et al. 2013). Schnusenberg, de Jong, and Goel (2012) believed that a student's choice to participate in a study abroad program would be motivated by their overall perception of how enjoyable the experience will be. I propose that students' beliefs that they will have a fun and enjoyable experience while studying abroad will be greater for those who intend to study abroad than those who have made the decision not to.

***Hypothesis 1:*** Students' beliefs about how enjoyable they find their abroad experience will be greater for students who intend to study abroad than for students who will not study abroad.

Students' perceived subjective norms or the perception of a behavior influenced by the judgment of significant others includes that of their peers (Goel et al. 2010). It has been found that social pressure is a key driver for intent to go on a short-term study abroad (Fitzsimmons et

al. 2013). I propose that students will take into account whether or not their peers study abroad when they decide whether or not to study abroad.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Students' beliefs about their peer's involvement in study abroad programs will be greater for students who intend to study abroad than for those who will not study abroad.

According to data collected by the Institute for International Education of Students (IES), 75% of respondents said through study abroad they acquired skill sets that influenced their career path (Dwyer and Peters 2012). In addition, it has been found that business students, specifically, believe that studying abroad will enhance their job prospects (Toncar et al.). Due to these findings, I propose that students will take into account what skills they will gain by studying abroad that will allow them to be competitive in the job market and those who believe it to be of importance will be more likely to intend study abroad than those who will not study abroad.

***Hypothesis 3:*** Students' beliefs about how study abroad will make them competitive in the job market and allow them to more quickly achieve their professional goals will be greater for students who intend to study abroad than for those who will not study abroad.

Similarly to how the perceived perception of behavior influences students when considering their peers, the same principle applies when discussing family. Students' families' expectations and persuasion have been found to significantly affect their decision to study abroad (Pimpa 2004). I propose that students will listen to their families when making the decision whether or not to study abroad, specifically whether or not their families believe it would be a valuable experience for the student professionally and personally.

***Hypothesis 4:*** Students' beliefs about how valuable their family sees study abroad for their personal and professional development will be greater for students who intend to study abroad than for those who will not study abroad.



As students go through the decision making process about studying abroad, they assess whether or not the administrative staff at their university is qualified and would be suitable to lead and manage study abroad programs. Administrative competence has been found to be of importance as students weigh the costs and benefits of studying abroad (Schnusenberg et al. 2012). If students believe the administrative staff at their university will keep them safe, has a good reputation, and is knowledgeable overall, they are more likely to intend to study abroad than students who do not believe the staff is reputable.

***Hypothesis 5:*** Students' beliefs about how helpful and knowledgeable the university's administration will be when leading study abroad programs and dealing with problems abroad will be greater for students who intend to study abroad than for those who will not study abroad.

Cost is a determining factor when students consider whether or not they can study abroad. For example, Schnusenberg, De Jong, and Goel (2012) found that 45% of students felt they could not afford to participate in study abroad programs. Despite a desire to study abroad and strong beliefs as to why they want to, if students cannot pay for the trip, it is not feasible. Based on this information, affordability is of great importance, and whether or not a student believes they can afford to study abroad and justify the expense will influence their decision to study abroad. Beliefs about study abroad programs and affordability will be greater for those who intend to study abroad than for those who will not study abroad.

***Hypothesis 6:*** Students' beliefs about how affordable study abroad programs are and if they are worth the cost will be greater for students who intend to study abroad than for those who will not study abroad.

Studying abroad comes with many perceived risks. These can include, but are not limited to financial risks, physical risks, and psychological risks. As noted by Relyea et al. (2008),

“These risks become more salient to the prospective study abroad student due to the uncertainty of the outcome.” Relyea and his colleagues found that risk propensity impacts the likelihood of engaging in an international experience. I propose that students who intend to study abroad will be more likely to take risks than those who do not study abroad.

***Hypothesis 7:*** Risk aversion will be greater for students who will not study abroad than those who intend to study abroad.

It can be predicted that how enjoyable a study abroad experience will be is affected by the extent to which a student feels homesick. I propose that students who will not study abroad will believe they will be homesick and miss their family and friends while abroad more so than those who intend to study abroad.

***Hypothesis 8:*** Students’ beliefs about how much they will miss their friends and family while studying abroad will be greater for students who will not study abroad than those who intend to study abroad.

Business students have expressed that a main concern they have when deciding to study abroad is whether or not it will delay or disrupt their academic progress (Toncar et al. 2006). Universities are generally seen as two to four-year institutions, and students have made a financial and time commitment based upon this timeline. It can be reasonably assumed that undergraduate students would like to adhere to this timeline if possible, and study abroad could potentially delay it if it does not work with their schedule. Students will not want to add a study abroad program into their schedule if it would disrupt their academic progress at home. Timing will be seen as a barrier to those who will not study abroad.

***Hypothesis 9:*** Students' beliefs that study abroad will negatively affect their current academic progress and commitments they have at home will be greater for students who will not study abroad than those who intend to study abroad

## METHODOLOGY

### **Survey Development**

Schnusenberg, De Jong, and Goel (2012) developed a survey to help them better understand students' decision-making process to participate in a study abroad program. This survey was used as a basis for the development of the survey for my study. The constructs of desire and the willingness to pay mediator were removed from my survey. Willingness to pay was encompassed by the affordability construct included in the survey. In addition to the previously developed survey, I added the constructs of timing, risk, homesickness, fun, and peer expectations. I used a previously established scale to measure risk aversion (Mandrik and Bao 2005), and adapted the scale related to family expectations to assess peer expectations (Schnusenberg, De Jong, and Goel 2012). I developed new scales to assess timing, fun, and homesickness. I also included a construct measuring intent for the purpose of replicating previous studies and to ensure consistency in results. In using a Likert Scale, respondents will be able to identify how strongly they agree or disagree with these characteristics and how relevant they are to their decision-making process regarding studying abroad.

### **Sample**

The survey will be administered to undergraduate students from Texas Christian University who have declared business minors. I am using a sample of undergraduate students, as this is the population reflective of those involved in a decision about academic study abroad

programs. This respondent pool allows me to most closely replicate previous studies. I am using a random sample of business minors to collect data on students with a diverse group of declared majors and academic situations. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for all data collection.

### **Procedure**

I collected data from two groups—those who have not and will not study abroad and those who have not and intend to study abroad. This was determined through a qualifying question displayed at the beginning of the distributed survey. The survey was created using Qualtrics and distributed through the use of Texas Christian University's student subjects' pool. The survey was distributed to students who have declared a business minor.

There were 251 survey participants, but only 232 responses were used due to incompleteness or inconsistency. Of the total respondent pool, 39.93% were male and 60.07% female, and an average student age of 20.21 years.

### **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Scale analysis was used to find Chronbach's alpha for each construct, which is a measure of the internal consistency. Chronbach's alpha measures whether or not the scales used measure the same underlying concept. When analyzing Chronbach's alpha, an internal consistency of 0.70 or higher is generally desired, although an alpha of as low as .50 can be deemed acceptable for new scales. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 1, and it can be seen that the measures used have an alpha between 0.61 and 0.97. This indicates that the scales used were reliable.

To evaluate which constructs were of significance in making the decision to study abroad, a logistic regression was used. Prior to running the regression, the average of the respondents' responses to the items in Table 1 were taken. These means were then used in the evaluation. Logistic regression was used because I had binary dependent variables and continuous independent variables. The binary dependent variables were the two groups that I tested—those who have not and will not and those who have not, but intend to. The independent variables were continuous because a Likert scale was used in the survey. The predictors used in the analysis were the various constructs listed in Table 1 and the covariates used were age and gender. The logistic regression output gave each of the constructs tested a Beta coefficient (B) which measures that specific construct's contribution to the probability of accurately predicting the dependent variables.

I first assessed the whether or not the model was a good fit for the study by looking at the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients, which can be viewed in Table 2. This shows whether or not the model is a good fit in accurately predicting the dependent variables in the future and how well the logistic regression works as a whole. Given that the significance of the model is .000, it can be stated that the model is a good fit for the data.

After determining the model's fit, I wanted to assess what constructs would be predictors of the probability of the dependent variables. This can be done by looking at the Beta coefficients and the significance of the various constructs. When analyzing the data, any construct that has significance below .05 is a significant predictor to the dependent variables. As shown by the results in Table 3, the constructs that were significant predictors of the difference between those who intended to study abroad and those who did not study abroad were: future job prospects (Beta=.355, Sig=.000), family expectations, (Beta=-.562, Sig=.001) and

homesickness (Beta=-.328, Sig.=.034). Timing (Beta=.5774, Sig.=.000) was a barrier variable that significantly predicted the difference between those who intend to study abroad and those who did not go. As this study is mainly assessing behavior, this data shows that the most significant reason students choose not to study abroad is because of timing—delaying academic progress, delaying time to graduation, and having previous commitments at home. Those who choose not to study abroad appear to have received support from their family and believe that having a global experience will help them with their future careers. These results support H3, H4, and H9. The significance of homesickness is that those who are going to study abroad believe that they will be homesick, but it does not deter them from carrying out the behavior, as such, H8 is not supported. H1, H2, H5, H6, and H7 were not supported, as the data did not show these constructs to be either a predictor or barrier for the groups represented by the dependent variables.

Data were also collected regarding respondents' intent to study abroad. This data was used to run a linear regression with the dependent variable input of intent, the control variables of age and gender, and the predictors being the constructs listed in Table 1. Based on the linear regression output, it was seen that future job prospects, family expectations, fun, peer expectations, and timing are all predictors for intent to study abroad.

The findings based on the results from both the logistic regression and linear regression further prove that factors previously studied predict intent, but they don't necessarily predict behavior. This research allowed me to compare predictors and barriers that explain the difference between intent and behavior.

## DISCUSSION

After reviewing the results and analyzing the data, my findings differed slightly from previous studies, but upheld the overall framework established in Schnusenber, De Jong, and Goel (2012) regarding beliefs influencing intent. First, I found that age and gender were not significant factors in whether or not a student studies abroad. Previous studies (Presley et al. 2010; Salisbury et al. 2009) have found that females are more likely to study abroad than males, but this was not the case in my research. Gender was insignificant.

For those who intend to study abroad, having a fun experience is important, but people that decide not to study abroad still know it would be fun. This shows how important the enjoyment factor of study abroad is in marketing. Students widely view study abroad as a fun, enjoyable experience. Those who do not choose to study abroad know they would have had fun, but it is not a significant enough of a factor to sway them to study abroad. There are other predictors and barriers of greater significance in the decision-making process.

Students who intend to study abroad will be more homesick, but this predictor is significant to the group who intends to study abroad likely because this group is thinking more about their actual feelings and beliefs given that they are going to be abroad. It is not a barrier to the group that is not studying abroad because the act of going overseas is not a real situation they are going to be presented with in the near future.

Students who chose not to study abroad said it would have changed the timing of their graduation. These students are apparently more concerned about academic progress and do not want to delay their traditional graduation timeline to have an international experience. As universities push for more students to have a study abroad experience, ensuring that there is

opportunity for students to participate and still graduate on time is of great importance if universities want to see an increase in participation.

While there were differences, there were also similarities between the two groups. Both groups placed importance on how study abroad can help with future job prospects and how the intention and the behavior are heavily influenced by how a study abroad would fit into a student's academic schedule. Students' beliefs regarding timing and future job prospects influenced intent and in turn, behavior.

The acknowledgement of limitations for this study mainly stem from that of the respondents. The survey was distributed using the student subjects' pool at TCU, but it is difficult to say with certainty that this was a random, heterogeneous pool of respondents. Specifically, given that the subjects were all students at TCU, this limits the extent to which the recommendations are applicable. In addition to the respondent pool, the way individuals interpreted the survey questions also could have affected the data. The item discussing a study abroad program's "worth" can be interpreted in a few different ways. Those respondents who identified as individuals who will go on a study abroad also are subject to the interpretation issue of what their definition is of planning to go on a study abroad. Lastly, in terms of interpretation, it would be beneficial to have the definition of study abroad displayed at the beginning of the survey to make sure interpretation is consistent.

## IMPLICATIONS

While research has shown that affordability is the typically the main predictor as to why students intend or do not intend to study abroad, it was not a relevant factor in my sample of TCU students. The absence of affordability as a key factor in study abroad decision-making



aligns more with a study by Fitzsimmons, Flanagan, and Wang (2013) that found fun and development to be of more importance than cost for short-term study abroad programs. Given this finding, the TCU study abroad office does not need to emphasize the affordable aspect of study abroad programs to its students. Affordability may not be an issue due to the fact that TCU has a high number of students that come from the top 1% of the income scale (Chetty et al. 2017). Based on the data, the most important factor in the decision-making process to TCU students is timing. The drop-off between intent and behavior really occurs when talking about students potentially having to delay their graduation and disrupt their academic progress or miss commitments at home due to a study abroad program. In order to increase those who transition from intent to behavior, it is imperative that the TCU study abroad office market programs to students in terms of how they can fit within their four-year plan, and really work to uphold this and find an opportunity for every student that wants to participate in a study abroad program.

Another important factor to students was how studying abroad would affect their future job prospects. Based on the data, students who decide to participate in a study abroad program are influenced by their perceptions of how it will make them competitive in the job market. TCU should capitalize on this aspect when marketing to students about what the various programs can offer them long term. They could highlight what skills students will gain through the experience that are valuable to employers, as well as highlighting students who have been on study abroad programs and how it helped them in their careers. As those who intended to study abroad knew it would be a fun experience, it could be beneficial to develop marketing materials that emphasize students who study abroad will gain an enjoyable experience that will make them more competitive in the job market, give them a better perspective of the world, and it can be integrated into their academic plan to graduate in the standard four years.

Apart from the contributions made to the marketing of study abroad programs at Texas Christian University, this paper also provides contributions for future research. This research provides insight to what factors are important when students are deciding whether or not to study abroad and affordability is not the main issue. This is one of the first studies that compare the affect of predictors and barriers on intent versus behavior. The findings in this study can be used in future research addressing the final step of the theory of planned behavior and study abroad decision-making and being able to compare and contrast a model of intent and behavior. Finally, the new scales I developed for the constructs of timing, peer expectations, homesickness, and happiness were internally consistent and could be used for future survey development.

## CONCLUSION

The theory of planned behavior suggests that beliefs influence intent, which influences behavior. This research shows that while this theory is true, there are differences in the extent to which beliefs affect intent versus behavior. By understanding these differences, universities will be able to better market their study abroad programs to their students. Overall, study abroad can lead to the development of many qualities companies truly value and students are aware that international experience can help them with their future careers. Programs offer benefits to students that extend beyond the academic experience and impact them beyond the duration of their study abroad experience. Study abroad programs allow them to see a different culture through their own eyes, often times increasing their confidence and helping them to be more tolerant and accepting of others. As global knowledge, global skills, and global attitudes are critical student learning goals for the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB 2011), universities need to make it a priority to more effectively market study abroad

programs to students so that they are more likely to have a global experience prior to completing their undergraduate studies. For future research, it would be interesting to collect data from those who have studied abroad in the past, as well as to survey students from various universities, especially those with more diverse demographic profiles. In addition, it would be interesting to look at non-academic abroad experiences in relation to the theory of planned behavior as well as what aspects of international experience employers find to be of value.

## APPENDIX A

**TABLE 1**

| <b>Measures and Construct Reliability</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Construct</b>                          | <b>Items</b>   |
| Affordability<br>$\alpha = .69$           | Paying for study abroad will be a significant challenge.<br>I do not think study abroad is worth it. <sup>1</sup><br>Study abroad programs are too expensive.  |
| Administrative Support<br>$\alpha = .88$  | TCU has the required expertise for study abroad programs.<br>TCU's study abroad staff is helpful in providing necessary information.<br>TCU's study abroad staff seems adept in dealing with problems.<br>TCU's study abroad office and staff have a good reputation.<br>TCU's study abroad office appears to care for my safety while I am abroad.<br>The faculties on study abroad programs seem to have the knowledge necessary to lead me on the program.<br>TCU's professors seem qualified at leading study abroad programs. |
| Intent<br>$\alpha = .97$                  | I plan to go on a study abroad.<br>I intend to study abroad.<br>I aim to go on a study abroad.<br>I mean to go on a study abroad program.<br>It is my intention to go on a study abroad.<br>I am determined to go on a study abroad.   |
| Job Prospects<br>$\alpha = .83$           | A study abroad program will help me achieve my professional goals quicker.<br>Skills obtained through study abroad will allow me to advance in my career at a greater pace.<br>Studying abroad will give me a competitive advantage in the job market.   |
| Family Expectations<br>$\alpha = .90$     | My family encourages me to go on study abroad.<br>My family thinks that study abroad is valuable for my personal development.<br>My family thinks that study abroad is valuable for my professional development.   |
| Risk Aversion<br>$\alpha = .73$           | I do not feel comfortable about taking chances.<br>I prefer situations that have foreseeable outcomes.   |

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
|                                     | Before I make a decision, I like to be absolutely sure how things will turn out.<br>I avoid situations that have uncertain outcomes. <sup>2</sup><br>I feel comfortable improvising in new situations.<br>I feel nervous when I have to make decisions in uncertain situations.   |
| Homesickness<br>$\alpha = .69$      | I will be homesick during a study abroad.<br>I will miss my friends and family during a study abroad.   |
| Fun<br>$\alpha = .81$               | I will be exposed to a fun experience if I study abroad.<br>I will enjoy participating in a study abroad program.   |
| Peer Expectations<br>$\alpha = .61$ | I have friends who encourage me to study abroad.<br>I have friends who have participated in study abroad.<br>I have friends studying abroad when I plan to.   |
| Timing<br>$\alpha = .69$            | Studying abroad will delay or disrupt my academic progress and schedule.<br>Previous commitments at home will make it difficult to study abroad.<br>Conflicts with current situations such as other activities, job responsibilities, and life will make it difficult to study abroad.<br>I will not graduate on time if I study abroad. <sup>3</sup> |

<sup>1</sup> Removed when performing scale analysis due to various interpretations relative to other scale items.

<sup>2</sup> Data not collected for those who have not and will not study abroad.

<sup>3</sup> Data not collected for those who have not and will study abroad.

**TABLE 2**

**Logistic Regression: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients**

|       | Chi-Square | df | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----|------|
| Step  | 141.197    | 11 | .000 |
| Block | 141.197    | 11 | .000 |
| Model | 141.197    | 11 | .000 |

**TABLE 3**

| <b>Logistic Regression: Variables in the Equation</b> |          |             |             |
|---|----------|-------------|-------------|
|   | <b>B</b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
| Affordability   | -.177    | .146        | .225        |
| Administrative Support                                | -.154    | .254        | .545        |
| Job Prospects   | -.967    | .244        | .000        |
| Family Expectations                                   | -.562    | .174        | .001        |
| Risk Aversion   | -.356    | .207        | .085        |
| Homesickness  | -.328    | .155        | .034        |
| Fun   | -.042    | .233        | .856        |
| Peer Expectations                                     | -.107    | .198        | .588        |
| Timing  | .774     | .160        | .000        |
| Age   | .104     | .214        | .626        |
| Gender  | -.217    | .404        | .592        |
| Constant  | 7.896    | 5.516       | .152        |

**TABLE 4**

| <b>Linear Regression: Coefficients<sup>4</sup></b> |                         |             |          |             |
|--|-------------------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|  | <b>Unstandardized B</b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>t</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
| (Constant)   | -.263                   | 2.105       | -.125    | .901        |
| Affordability                                      | .081                    | .058        | 1.382    | .168        |
| Administrative Support                             | -.156                   | .105        | -1.493   | .137        |
| Job Prospects                                      | .355                    | .086        | 4.416    | .000        |
| Family Expectations                                | .360                    | .074        | 4.886    | .000        |
| Risk Aversion                                      | .241                    | .084        | 2.877    | .004        |
| Homesickness                                       | .032                    | .062        | .512     | .609        |
| Fun  | .350                    | .098        | 3.585    | .000        |
| Peer Expectations                                  | .245                    | .083        | 2.939    | .004        |
| Timing   | -.268                   | .057        | -4.693   | .000        |
| Age  | -.057                   | .081        | -.711    | .478        |
| Gender   | -.087                   | .166        | -.526    | .600        |

<sup>4</sup> Dependent Variable: Intent

## APPENDIX B

**Figure 1**

**Table 1: Representative Recent Empirical Research on Motivators to Study Abroad - Business Undergraduate College Students**

| Study (sample)                             | Fun, enjoyable             | Good Experience | Personal Development, Friendships | Language | Employers will be positive | Will help with career  |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Albers-Miller, Prenshaw, & Straughan, 1999 | X                          | X               |                                   |          |                            | X                      |
| Bakalis & Joiner, 2004                     | X                          | X               | X                                 | X        |                            | X                      |
| Evans, Finch, Toncar, & Reid, 2008         | X<br>(Leisure & Free Time) |                 |                                   |          |                            | X<br>(Business Visits) |
| Garver & Divine, 2007                      |                            |                 |                                   | X        |                            | X                      |
| Goel, de Jong, and Schnusenberg, 2010      |                            |                 |                                   |          |                            | X                      |
| Kashlak & Jones, 1996                      | X                          |                 | X                                 |          |                            |                        |
| Loh, Steagall, Gallo, & Michelman, 2011    |                            | X               | X                                 | X        |                            | X<br>(job prospects)   |
| Naffziger, Bott, & Mueller, 2008           | X                          | X               | X                                 | X        | X                          | X                      |
| Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010    | X                          | X               | X                                 | X        | X                          | X                      |
| Sanchez, Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006          | X                          | X               |                                   | X        | X                          | X                      |
| Schnusenberg, de Jong, & Goel 2012         | X                          |                 |                                   |          |                            | X                      |
| Toncar, Reid, & Anderson, 2005             | X (Travel in Free time)    |                 |                                   | X        |                            | X                      |

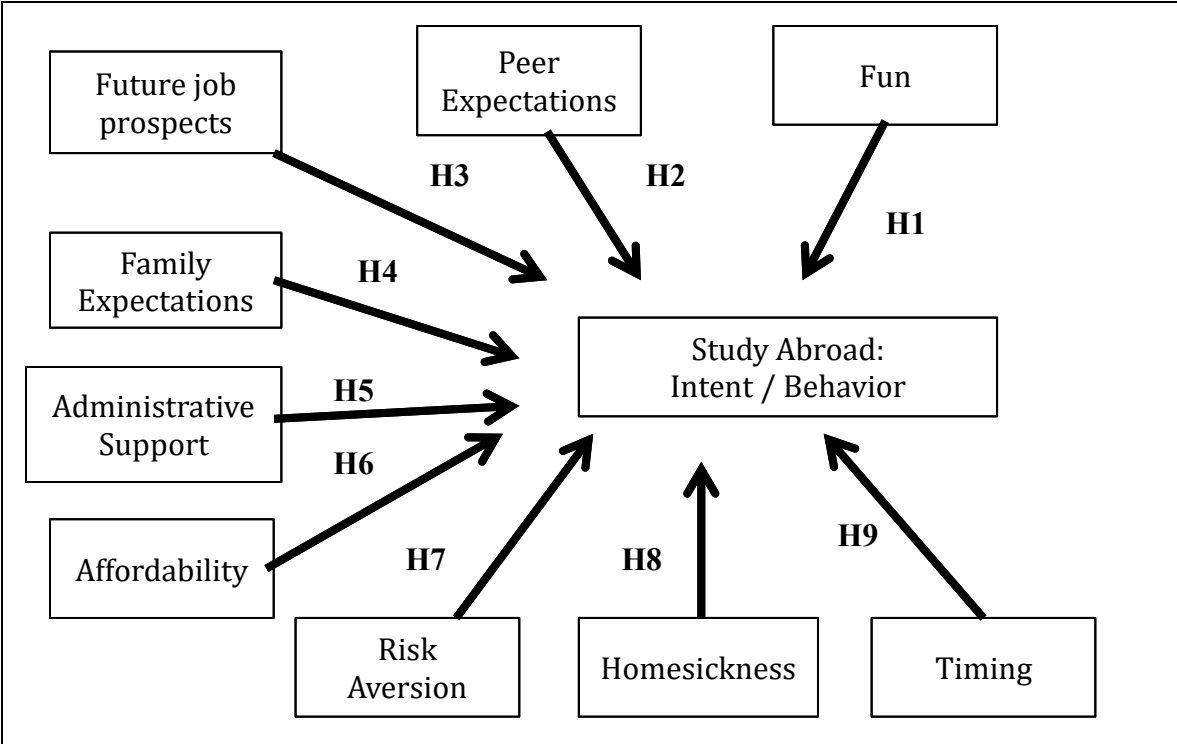
**Figure 2**

**Table 2: Representative Recent Empirical Research on Deterrents to Study Abroad - Business Undergraduate College Students**

| <b>Study</b>                               | <b>Will delay graduation</b>                | <b>Cost</b> | <b>Miss Family/Friends</b> | <b>Family Commitments</b>                | <b>Work Commitments</b>             | <b>Cultural Barriers</b>      | <b>Safety</b>       |
|--|---|-------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Albers-Miller, Prenshaw, & Straughan, 1999 | X   | X           |                            |  |                                     |                               |                     |
| Bakalis & Joiner, 2004                     | X   | X           | X                          |  | X                                   |                               |                     |
| Evans, Finch, Toncar, & Reid, 2008         |   | X           |                            |  | X                                   | X                             | X                   |
| Garver & Divine, 2007                      |   | X           |                            |  | X                                   | X                             | X                   |
| Kashlak & Jones, 1996                      |   | X           | X                          | X  | X                                   |                               |                     |
| Naffziger, Bott, & Mueller, 2008           | X   | X           | X                          | X  | X                                   | X                             |                     |
| Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010    | X<br>(availability of classes in the major) | X           | X<br>(Home-sickness)       | X<br>(Conflicts with current situations) | (Conflicts with current situations) | X<br>(needed language skills) | X (Safety & health) |
| Sanchez, Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006          |   | X           | X                          | X  |                                     |                               |                     |
| Schnusenberg, de Jong, & Goel 2012         |   |             |                            |  |                                     |                               |                     |
| Toncar, Reid, & Anderson, 2005             | X   | X           | X                          | X  | X                                   | X                             | X                   |



**Figure 3: Hypothesis Model**



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