Examining Acculturative Stressors of the International Student: Following Study Abroad Students in South Korea and Morocco

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Research Question: What are the acculturative stressors faced by study abroad students?

Statement of Problem
- Growth of international students led to increased emphasis on intercultural adaptation studies
- Literature on acculturative stress still belongs to an emerging area of research (Coles & Swami, 2012)

Methodology
- Research Design: Participant-observation, formal/informal interviews, field notes, data coding & reflexive analysis
- 21 Participants: 11 formal interviews, 10 informal interviews

Findings
- Language: Impact on intercultural relationships - Communication difficulties, Humor as key to friendship
  - Impact on academics - Inability to understand class lectures, Exclusion in group discussions
  - Impact on belonging - Acceptance by host culture
- Academic Stress: Registration problems - Physical registration systems
  - Coping with schoolwork - Academic pressure, Notions of responsibility, Language-learning difficulties
  - Sexual Harassment - Perceptions of safety in public areas, Physical harassment
- Personal Factors: Finances - Spending limits, Financial transactions
  - Relationships - Long-distance relationships, On-site relationships
  - Health - Long-distance relationships, On-site relationships
  - Family - Unexpected events at home, Death of a family member

Discussion
- Cross-cultural adaptability: Students with little prior knowledge or cross-cultural contact with the culture they were in faced difficulties in adjustment
- Social exclusion: Students could not participate in the student community
- Social support systems assist in buffering stress and creating positive academic change

Recommendations
- Pre-departure cross-cultural training in cultural norms/ food practices
- Improvement of institutional support (e.g. in-school translators)
- Improved support systems (e.g. buddy programs)