

THE CHANGE IN ADAPTABILITY AND SATISFACTION WITH LIFE IN
STUDENTS WHO STUDY ABROAD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes place in two parts: the first in a scientific study analyzing the change in students who study abroad. The second part of this thesis is a memoir of the author's personal experience abroad. Previous research has suggested that study abroad is a powerful and transformative experience that increases open-mindedness and self-confidence (e.g., Dwyer, 2004). The objective of the current study was to investigate the changes that university students experience while abroad. Forty-one students completed online measures of personality, satisfaction with life, and adaptability before and after a five-week study-abroad experience. Satisfaction with life increased from before study abroad to after study abroad, with the trend toward significance ($p = .057$). Students' adaptability from before to after studying abroad showed significant increase ($p = .002$). These findings will be useful for universities, students considering studying abroad, and social and personality psychologists interested in culture and identity.

Part One: The Study

Students have been studying abroad, taking classes in a country other than their own, since 1190 (Lee, 2012). In the 2014 - 2015 academic school year, 313,415 American college students, amounting to nearly 10% of U.S. college undergraduate population, studied abroad for class credit (NAFSA, 2016). As such, research on study abroad and its impacts has become increasingly relevant. The most commonly investigated aspect of study abroad is its impact on language acquisition (e.g., Martin, 2012). However, the research literature on personality characteristics and psychological outcomes of study abroad effects is also steadily growing.

Leung and Chiu (2010) found that students who had studied abroad were more creative. Specifically, these students performed better on a gift-giving task that required the participant to use more unconventional methods than those common in mainstream U.S. culture. Most students who had studied abroad also gave more thought to the receiver of the gift and selected a book over a gift card, for example.

Students who had studied abroad also performed better on problem solving tasks (Wiley & Sons, 2015). These students correctly solved problems that required mental flexibility such as conceptualizing objects or instructions in a new way. The study required participants to look at a photo of materials, such as a candle, matchbox, and set of tacks and figure out how to use the materials to make a lit candle hang on the wall without the wax dripping on the floor (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). The aforementioned study has been tested with physical instead of conceptualized objects with the same results (Morris & Cho, 2015).

Beyond creativity and problem solving, studying abroad has also been linked with better leadership abilities due to experience as a “global citizen and social architect”

(Sroufe, Sivasubramaniam, Ramos, & Saiia, 2015, p. 268). Compared to those who did not study abroad, students abroad were better able to share knowledge they'd just learned with their classmates in multiple formats to ensure their classmates' understanding (Sroufe, 2015). Along with leadership skills, students who studied abroad have been found to have an increase in self-efficacy—the belief that one can complete a task—and as such felt less anxiety when faced with new situations, like exposure to an unfamiliar culture (Petersdotter, Niehoff, & Freund, 2016).

Related to self-efficacy, Martin, Nejad, Colmar, and Liem, (2013), found that students who studied abroad for a full semester or year became more buoyant and better able to handle uncertainty in their lives. Furthermore, students abroad for as little as four weeks increased in cultural adaptability, which includes language acquisition and emotional resilience (Mapp, 2012).

Still, some students found that the long-term study abroad experience was not what they had expected, that the glamour of stories may not live up to the actual experience. For instance, some students found that they became more stressed, but also found that they learned a lot more about the culture than they had originally anticipated (Paris, Nyaupane, & Teye, 2014). Moreover, some research suggests that certain students benefited more from a study abroad program than others did. For example, Martin, Katz-Buonincontro, and Livert (2015) noted that students who began their program with a lower level of openness to experience actually showed a greater increase in that variable, as well as in their cultural understanding, than those who began the program with high levels of openness to experience. Martin et al. (2015), also found a positive

correlation between openness to experience before study abroad and critical thinking upon completion of their program.

One important variable to consider when investigating the outcomes of study abroad programs is the length of time that the student spends abroad. There are three common types of study abroad programs: long term, a full year abroad; mid-length, a semester or two quarters abroad; and short term, the most common type of study abroad, lasting only five weeks, or one summer semester. This brings into question why the majority of study abroad research has been done on mid-length or long-term programs despite the fact that 63% of students who study abroad only do so for short-term periods (Open Doors, 2016). The current study sought to correct this imbalance by investigating students who study in these short-term programs.

While there has been some research done on the impact of short-term study abroad, these studies have almost exclusively assessed the changes in students' cross-cultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, and Hubbard, 2006) and cultural adaptability (Mapp, 2012). Little research has been carried out, however, about how students' personal adaptability—reactions to surprises or inconveniences in daily life—and satisfaction with life may be affected by these short times immersed in cultures other than their own.

Method

Participants

Forty-one Texas State University students who studied abroad in summer 2016 participated in the current study. Ages ranged from 19 to 40 years ($M = 26.43$, $SD = 2.17$)

Measures

Students completed online versions of the measures below.

Personality. Personality was assessed using the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), a brief measure of the Big Five domains of personality (McCrae, 2002). The TIPI is a 10-item scale which measures emotional stability, agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraversion ($\alpha = .40$ to $.73$). Participants used a 7-point scale (1 = disagree strongly, 7 = agree strongly) to indicate if they possessed traits such as “extraverted, enthusiastic,” “anxious, easily upset,” or “critical, quarrelsome.” Each trait also has a countermeasure which is reverse-scored during data analysis.

Satisfaction with life. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) measured how satisfied participants felt their lives and experiences. Participants used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to indicate how much they agreed with five statements including “In most ways my life is ideal,” and “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.” Scores were added to determine each participant’s overall satisfaction with life.

Adaptability. The Adaptability Scale (Martin, Nejad, Colmar, & Liem, 2012), measured how students respond to uncertainty in situations outside of their control ($\alpha = .90$). Participants used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to indicate to what extent they agreed with nine statements including “I am able to think through a number of possible options to assist me in a new situation” and “When uncertainty arises, I am able to minimize frustration or irritation so I can deal with it best.”

Procedure

Participants were recruited via e-mail from the director of the Study Abroad Office.

Participants were informed that those who completed both surveys would qualify to enter a drawing to win one of three gift cards. Students who chose to participate completed all questionnaires (a) before leaving the United States to study abroad and (b) after their study-abroad experience had ended. All surveys were administered online using Qualtrics survey software. The first set of surveys was sent to all students at the beginning of the summer, regardless of when their session began, via an emailed link. The second set of surveys was sent within a week of each program's end.

Results

The results below are presented after each of the research questions proposed in the introduction.

Research question 1: Does satisfaction with life change after studying abroad?

A paired sample t-test was used to compare each student's satisfaction surveys before and after study abroad. Satisfaction with life increased from before to after study abroad with a trend toward significance, $t(40) = 1.96, p = .057$.

Research question 2: Does adaptability increase after a study abroad experience?

A paired sample t-test indicated that adaptability from before to after study abroad increased significantly, $t(40) = 3.38, p = .002$.

Research question 3: Is extraversion correlated with change in satisfaction with life after study abroad?

Correlational analyses were performed on the Big Five personality traits and the adaptability and satisfaction with life scales. Despite our hypothesis that extraversion

would correlate with change in satisfaction with life, we found that these variables were not correlated, $r(39) = -.11, p = .48$. However, extraversion was significantly correlated with adaptability before study abroad, $r(39) = .44, p = .004$. Extraversion and satisfaction with life *before* studying abroad, $r(39) = .50, p = .001$.

Other correlations between the Big Five traits and adaptability after studying abroad can be found in the appendix.

Discussion

The current study sought to investigate how students who spent five weeks studying abroad changed in their self reported adaptability, satisfaction with life, and extraversion from before to after studying abroad. Findings are summarized and explained in the context of each research question.

Research question 1: Will participants' adaptability change when they study abroad?

The results supported our hypothesis that students showed a significant increase in their self-reported adaptability—defined by Martin (2015) as regulatory mechanisms in the face of change and uncertainty. As such, students who studied abroad felt better able to handle unpredictable situations and variability in their day-to-day lives than students who had not studied abroad. Though on a shorter and smaller scale, these adaptability findings match those of previous research such as Martin (2015). These results parallel those of Petersdotter, Niehoff, and Freund's (2010) self-efficacy study that showed that students felt less anxiety when faced with new situations after studying abroad. The current findings also overlap with Mapp's (2012) study on students' cultural adaptability increase when studying abroad; students who interacted extensively with host country

members learned to shift their speech to better match those of their host country and avoid miscommunication. Maharaja (2009) also found an increase in students' cultural adaptability.

Research question 2: Will participants' satisfaction with life change when they study abroad?

The current study found a trend toward significance to support our hypothesis that a study-abroad program would increase self-reported satisfaction with life in college students. Though the current study showed only a trend towards significance, the satisfaction with life findings seem to be consistent with Angulo (2008). Sam (2001) found that longer periods abroad result in more satisfaction with life while abroad as students are better able to grow their social network. However, students abroad for longer periods report a higher likelihood of depression upon reentering the U.S. and a strong desire to visit the host country again (Nafziger, 1997).

Research question 3: Will participants' extraversion change when they study abroad? Contrary to our hypothesis, there was no significant change in self-reported extraversion from before leaving the United States to after the study-abroad program. This result was not surprising because of personality's stability over time. Borghuis (2017), for instance, found that personality is relatively stable after age 12. An interesting result of the current study, however, was that extraversion levels before studying abroad were significantly correlated with the extent to which both adaptability and satisfaction with life increased after the program ended.

One limitation to this study is the small sample size and the fact that all students participated in programs offered by the same university and were all led by familiar

faculty. There was also no side by side comparison done on students who went on similar programs for longer periods to show the significance of these short-term semester results.

Future directions of research should focus on time management changes and changes in study habits in students who study abroad. As well as doing longitudinal studies on the same surveys across different program durations. It would also be interesting to see if students who spend a full semester abroad report the same changes found in this study. Another interesting question would be if students find a change in their perceptions of distance when the conveniences allotted to them in their host country are no longer present.

The current study makes a meaningful contribution by adding to the growing research on the personal benefits of studying abroad. As study abroad programs become increasingly popular, investigating their advantages becomes ever more valuable. With this information, study-abroad offices and programs can better inform their potential students of what to expect and adjust any programs that may be less beneficial to students. Study abroad aids students in creativity (Leung and Chiu, 2010), problem-solving skills (Wiley & Sons, 2015), leadership, and becoming a global citizen (Sroufe, Sivasubramaniam, Ramos, & Saiia, 2015). Further research on additional variables, such as those covered in the current study, can only help students choose if study abroad and all of its benefits would be suited to them.

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Appendix

Ten-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6
					7

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative

Satisfaction with Life

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

The Adaptability Scale

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with these statements. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I am able to think through a number of possible options to assist me in a new situation
2. I am able to revise the way I think about a new situation to help me through it
3. I am able to adjust my thinking or expectations to assist me in a new situation if necessary
4. I am able to seek out new information, helpful people, or useful resources to effectively deal with new situations
5. In uncertain situations, I am able to develop new ways of going about things (eg. a different way of asking questions or finding information) to help me through
6. To assist me in a new situation, I am able to change the way I do things if necessary
7. I am able to reduce negative emotions (eg. fear) to help me deal with uncertain situations
8. When uncertainty arises, I am able to minimize frustration or irritation so I can deal with it best
9. To help me through new situations, I am able to draw on positive feelings and emotions (eg. enjoyment, satisfaction)

Part Two: Planes, Ferries, and Automobiles

Day 1

The novelty of being thirty-nine thousand feet in the air only lasts about twenty minutes. After driving for four hours to DFW, checking in three hours early for my flight (because people tell you to and I'm a rule follower), and waiting an extra two hours due to a delay, I was finally on the first flight of my trip.

While studying abroad is glamorous, exciting, and a downright transformative experience, it's expensive. The price tag for my program alone was \$4,500. This included hostel/hotel stays for the full four weeks, transportation while in Greece, entry to any museum that our student IDs didn't get us into for free, and "some meals." This left a \$1,500 plane ticket to get to and from Greece, money for all other meals—referred to as a welcoming dinner and a farewell dinner—money for any excursions not originally planned by the school, and gifts for everyone you've ever met who heard you were going abroad.

Because of this hefty price-tag, I went to great lengths to cut down costs where I could—such as buying a plane ticket with three layovers both ways to save \$500. This is where I ran into my first big hump of the trip; each layover was in a different country, so this meant that I had to go through customs three times.

This does not seem like a big deal, but my first flight from DFW to Toronto, Canada, was delayed by two hours, which means that my three-hour layover was chopped down to one hour. Then we spent another thirty minutes on the tarmac, waiting on the terminal to open. At this point I and a few other passengers were getting ready to bolt through the airport to get to our next gate before the flight left without us. This was a bit of a bonding experience for me and one woman who were trying to get to the same

flight. The airport had changed the gate and hadn't updated the app *or* the signs at the gates themselves. We only found out because I a very put-out security guard for verification since it seemed like the flight might have been delayed as boarding hadn't started. He gruffly informed us that the gate was on the opposite side of the terminal and was about to close. He begrudgingly called ahead to inform them of our arrival and sent us on our way. So, we sprinted across the Toronto airport, no idea if we're going to the right place or if we're going to make the flight—especially since I had another connection in London I needed to make. My textbook was falling apart, dropping pages as we ran and I rushed to get there with me and all of my belongings in a semi manageable piece. We made it to the door, puffing and blowing our reservations away, ready to fight our way onto this plane. They let us on with none of the stress we expected from the encounter we'd had with that security guard.

Crisis averted, I settled in for the overnight flight. I met my seatmate, a professor from the university of Toronto who was going to a conference in Cambridge! I had a few pretty good meals (you always hear about airplane food being awful, but Air Canada crushed bad airline food rumors), watched: *Shrek*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *9 to 5* , took a nap, and froze my toes to hypothermic standards despite the socks Air Canada provided—why are airplanes so cold!? From sheer boredom I did as much last minute homework as I could with my tattered textbook until we landed in London.

Another obstacle: in the airport for three hours with nothing to do. So I hit the gift shops pretty hard--seeing nothing of London but merchandise which I didn't buy because when I got to the till my card was declined.

I had gone in person to my bank to tell them that I was leaving the country and when. So this must have been a fluke. Just as well, I didn't want to start depleting my funds. Still, stuck in an airport I tried to catch up on homework, then decided to get euros now so I wouldn't have to figure out how first thing after landing.

TRANSACTION CANNOT BE COMPLETED.

No. The bank thinks I've stolen my own card? and won't let me use my only form of currency for the next four weeks. After a few seconds of extreme panic, I looked up the bank's number and tried calling. This great plan couldn't be executed for two reasons: making calls requires cellular data, not wifi, and it was three AM at home. Knowing I would be on another flight when world resumed stateside, I Facebook-messaged my mother who would wake up while I was in the air to call the bank and sort out the issue. Even while supposedly independent in another country, knowing your mom has your back is comforting. With me miles above the ocean, my mom would have the funding sorted out so by the time I landed I was able to make a withdrawal.

A total of 30 hours of travel from the time I left, I touched down in Athens, wearing my day and a half old make up, smelling like I've been sitting in the same spot of hours and hours on end, but filled with excitement. I had made it! I grabbed my carry-on and headed to the terminal where my ride was to meet me. Supposed to meet me. The driver was stuck at a different terminal, but I didn't have cellular data for them to call, so I was having to relay information to my professor through iMessage that she then told my driver. It was a bit hectic but we found each other eventually. Then we began the hour drive to Athens proper where I met my fellow travelers and began our formal adventure.

We'd all met twice before at two orientations to prepare us for what to expect. This also allowed other students to plan flights so they wouldn't have to travel alone. Orientation also allowed us to become slightly better acquainted so conversation the first night was very light and easy—not that of complete strangers.

Since I'd taken a different flight and arrived later than everyone else, I did not know who my roommates were. I arrived midway through the welcoming dinner of traditional Greek food, my classmates and I were not fans. Greek food had a lot of eggplant and cooked vegetable dishes that all have the taste and texture of mush (See figure F.1). By the third course we were all feeling very skeptical but dove into a giant plate of gilled meat which quickly became one of our favorite staples in the city (see figure F.2). At the end of the dinner we were given a small dessert of honey and Greek yogurt. I was introduced to my roommates for our stay in Athens, Anne (a 27-year-old student from the Round Rock Campus in Austin) and Kaycee (a short sorority girl who was beyond sweet). This meal lasted about three hours, we were all jetlagged, and finally, we all began our walk back to the hostel a few blocks away (Figure F.3). Thank goodness. Anne was a mother so in the evening she called her family and wished them a good morning, sending her kids off to school. There isn't much privacy when you are sharing a room with two other girls. We were well versed in all of each other's business by the end of the week.



F.1: Traditional vegetable dish.



F.2: A peta and meat dish.



F.3: A map of Athens indicating the main areas discussed in this paper, for printing would take up two pages, as such, this full page was left otherwise blank.

In Athens, we stayed in the middle of down town, so we could easily walk almost anywhere (Which is saying something as Athens houses five million of Greece's 11 million people). Our hostile was situated cattycorner to a strip of restaurants catered to tourists and the Acropolis Museum and hike (Figure F.3). This allowed us to really get to know the city and save money on transportation while we stayed here.

A few of my classmates expressed discomfort with how poorly lit the surrounding area was after the businesses closed for the evening but I was too tired to care. Later I found that this was especially an issue if you wanted food after nine in the evening, all of the surrounding shops were closed and you had to walk down some dark streets to get to the square. Always travel with a buddy!

Day 2

We were exhausted from traveling and the time difference. Waking at 8AM proved quite the task. Most of us were either up since five or couldn't keep our eyes open. I did run into a student who was not in our program but was in Greece with a church group! What a small world. Thankfully, our directors went easy on our lagging selves, scheduling us a guided walk around the markets and through Anafiotika; a village of tiny one bedroom houses made for those who'd built the city. These were meant to be temporary dwellings during construction. However, the construction of this section was stalled due to ownership disputes. Now the tiny houses are passed down through families as property is very hard to come by in Athens and rarely sold.



F.4: Eight small apartments in Anafiotika.



F.5: Thin roads that connect the buildings.

The “streets” between the houses in this village are so narrow that many of them cannot accommodate the width of a refrigerator, and any such large appliance must be brought in via crane.



F.6: The view from the top of Anafiotika.

This one-bedroom village led us the amazing view above (Figure F.6). This was the first time we'd seen the city from so high up, we could see across what felt like the entire city. Thousands upon thousands of rooftops. Understandably, everyone wanted to take pictures (Figure F.7). This went on for so long that half of the group left and the rest of us found ourselves completely lost! The houses had brightly colored doors which were semi recognizable but only some had house numbers and those were not in order. We knew which way we'd come from, but not which way the rest of the group had gone. We formed a mini pack of students including my roommate Kaycee, my close friend Kendyl, and one of the only boys in our group Pablo to find our way out of the tiny house maze. Since most of our phone communication is done through wifi and we were outside, we couldn't contact our group or look up a map. So we ventured back into the maze and trailed down tiny streets until we heard our professors (and some of our louder classmates) again and were reunited. While this was good bonding (I spent 10 minutes calling Pablo, Bablo, because he repeated his name three times and I couldn't hear him despite the peaceful atmosphere of the village so he finally gave up and accepted his

fate), I recommend team building exercises over blindly wandering through a foreign country.



F.7: Top row, left to right: Pablo, Rickie, Grace, Jenny, Brooke, Anne, Chantelle, Dr. Howard, Austin
Middle Row: Megan, Celeste, Julia, Kat, Nahara, Savannah, our tour guide, Mellissa, Hailee, Kendyl
Bottom Row: Dolores, Annie, Gina, Ysabella, Kaycee, Kimberly, Ashley (me)

They allowed us to have the rest of the day to ourselves to explore the city and all the shops it contained. This also gave us an opportunity to bond with our roommates, whom I hadn't met previously. We ate dinner and discussed how little we were looking forward to taking actual classes and how exciting simply being here was. By evening half of us were in a panic about an assignment that was due that night.

We'd been advised that we could complete all of the quizzes before arriving in Athens but they weren't actually due until different times in the program—so obviously we all waited until the last moment. This is a bad idea under normal circumstances, now

add to that a weak internet connection and twenty students all trying to use it at the same time? That spelled disaster. After turning our quizzes in with mere seconds to the deadline we were all pretty on edge and decided to join the rest of the cohort for a drink a few blocks over. Mind you, I'd been asleep all of last night and had not joined in any festivities, so I was unfamiliar with the routes we were taking in daylight, much less guided by light posts—and on one street, the lights of our phones—so I relied on my group to lead the way. The first bar we went to was too small to accommodate all twenty-five of us, so we went to another, which was big enough but felt very formal and not appropriate for a giant group of twenty-somethings.

We walked some ways more—I now have no idea which way to our hostel—and came upon a place that seemed good, but it was so good that the crowd made it difficult for us to stick together. Luckily, next door was a place that was just right. We made our way up the stairs and even got a free round. We all got to talk and sing happy birthday to the first of five birthdays we had during this adventure. We danced, sang, and had a wonderful evening. At the end of the night we had to figure out how to call Ubers for 20 people with two phones that still had batteries. We ended up all squeezing in together and had the streets to ourselves for peaceful ride home.

Day 3

While this ended up being one of my favorite days, it was also our earlier day. As such, many of us decided to sleep in instead of going to breakfast. This was a mistake. While I was fine for the walk over to the Acropolis, we ended up standing in front of the museum for almost an hour while our tour guide talked to us about the history of one or

two artifacts. If I sound bitter, that's because I am—more on that later. While standing in front of this model of the ancient city I felt myself beginning to sway. My hearing started to get muffled. According to my professor, I'd begun to look quite sick. My skipping breakfast along with my locked knees during the tour guide's speech spelled disaster for my immediate well being. I could feel myself getting sick and asked if there was a gift shop where I could buy a candy bar or something to get my blood sugar back up. They only had a café, which was expensive but far better than passing out.

After eating spaghetti at a breakneck speed, I was able to rejoin my group as they walked through the museum at about an artifact every fifteen minutes speed. This may not seem slow, but imagine going through an entire museum and having someone basically read the plaques to you—but at a turtle's pace. It wasn't my style, but it was all worth it to end at the acropolis. We were allowed to look around on our own, no tour guide! This hike is not for the faint of heart. There are over 3,000 stairs and they are fairly steep. Photo shoots were had by all. After such a climb and surrounded by so much history, we were feeling on top of the world—or at least, on top of Athens—so we had to commemorate the moment (Figures 8-13).



F.8: The whole gang.



F.9: Me in front of Nike Temple.



F.10: Ruins of the Acropolis



F.11: Ampitheater on the way up to the Acropolis.



F.12: Kendyl exploring.



F.13: Kendyl and I in front of the Temple of Nike.

With our spirits high, we strolled through the city to a garden museum where we saw the oldest standing Greek Temple, the Temple of Hephaestus (Figures 14-15). Most were destroyed during the Turkish rule as the Turks thought worshipping the gods was akin to being in a cult. This one only survived because it was turned into a catholic church during this time and returned to its glory after the Greeks gained their independence. The Temple of Hephaestus is circa 5th century BC and resides in the Ancient Agora of Athens. Agora means “city center” as this was a gathering place. This garden had its own museum (Figure F.16) (where I broke away from the group because the tour guide was taking so long at each artifact), this was beautiful and had an original *kleroteria*. A *kleroteria* was how the ancient Greeks assigned jury duty. Each citizen was given a bronze plaque, a *pinkion*, with his name, his father’s name, and tribe inscribed on it. The magistrate would choose a slot on the *kleroteria* (Figure F.17) to place each

citizen's *pinkion* on the day of the trial by randomly pulling *pinkions* out of ten baskets (one for each tribe) that would be placed at the base of the *kleroteria*. Beside this was a hollow tube full of white and black marbles, once turned the tube would drop a marble. If white, the first row of men would have to serve in court (one from each tribe), if the marble was black, that row of men was free to go. This was done until the jury was filled.

And I learned that from a plaque. Who needs tour guides?



F.14: Most of the class in front of the Temple of Hephaestus.



F.15: The Temple of Hephaestus.



Days 4 and 5

Walking was a pretty common theme of the trip. I'm not complaining. It's nice to see how short long distances become when you have no choice but to walk them. In fact, my daily step count increase because of this trip—for more information see Table 1 in the appendix. It's a bit of a culture shock coming from Texas, where driving is a right of passage and a way of life. For the rest of this week we went a graffiti tour (Figures 17-22)—where we learned a bit about the current state of Greek politics, walked to the Olympic stadium, walked to the mall—which would become a common theme, and everywhere we wanted to eat. After the scheduled tours, we had free days to take care of our homework while the wifi was working best—midday when most other residents are out and about. Then we gathered our things and got on the charter bus we would spend the next six hours in. It would be a four-hour drive, but in Greece they have very strict rules about buses taking breaks so the drivers don't get tired during a long drive.



F.17: An eye, possibly of the government or God, always watching.



F.18: A man in the shadows.



F.19: Hands descending from the sky. Maybe God's.



F.20: A scene outside an asian restaurant.



F.21: A depiction of a jazz band in action.



F.22: An installation on the corner of a building.



F.23: A monastery on the top of one of Meteora's monoliths.



F.24: The entrance to the hiking trail.



F.25: Hailee and I halfway up the mountain.



F.26: Me at the church trail marker.



F.27: Kendyl climbing up the path to the church.

Week 2

Our second week in Greece began in the city of Kalambaka, just steps away from the suspended Eastern orthodox monasteries that sit on the tops of extremely steep mountains (Figure F.23). Back when they were first built, the monks would use a pulley system to work as an elevator to send goods and receive rations. This was also the only way to and from some monasteries whose mountains were too treacherous to ascend any other way.

Kendyl, Hailee, and I took to exploring these mountains and their trails on foot (Figures F.24-27). We walked a few miles and ended up at the front door of one of the monasteries! It was closed for the day, but it was still beautiful from the outside. With nightfall quickly approaching, we turned back and met the rest of our group in the central city for dinner at a local pub. After which, we walked—far further than Kaycee kept insisting—to a liquor store. As we were all of age in Greece this was not a problem, however, I have quite the babyface so I was the only one carded and I didn't have my driver's license! I'm not even sure I had it in the country. They accepted my student ID in the end because it said "University." We joined the rest of the group for a hang out session downstairs for about half an hour before Kendyl and I decided to head upstairs for a quiet night in the hotel. For us anyways, the students staying on the floor below us received a few noise complaints.

The next day we went Meteora to visit three different suspended monasteries and learn all about their histories and the people who live there now. At the time the first monastery was built, there was a war. In order for the monks to be left in peace they decided to build their holy sites on the tops of monoliths. These were so tall and so steep that no roads or foot-trails could easily reach the monasteries. As such, in order to get people or resources in and out of the buildings they had to create a man powered pulley dumbwaiter. This worked as an outdoor elevator of sorts but it ensured that only those already present in the monastery could invite more people in. This was a bit troublesome in that at least one person had to stay behind at all times to allow people back into the monastery if they had to make a trip into the town below for food or other resources (Figure F.28). Now, monks and nuns make their livings by the donations of tourists and

the production and sale of blessed cards. On monastery had such an excess of income that they installed intricate sliding doors, in an ancient church on the top of a mountain! While we were there, the girls were given long scarfs to wrap around their waists if we were not wearing long skirts already (Figure F.29). No pants were allowed to be worn by women visiting the monasteries.



F.28: The dumbwaiter on the side of the monastery.



F.29: The scarves women had to wrap around their pants to make their outfits church appropriate.

After visiting these holy sites, we hopped on the bus to Delphi, where we climbed up to Nike stadium. In ancient Greece, stadiums were not the lavish structures we have today with fields a city block wide and seats going up several stories on all sides. This stadium was a modest field, about 70-feet-long with seats going up about a half story on two sides—though they once went up about a story and a half in the prime of the stadium. All along the trails leading up to the stadium are structures resembling Greek crypts that

were once treasuries for each major city to place offerings to the goddess Nike. These offerings became a bit of a showing off exhibition—you wanted your city to have the biggest treasury because you and your city loved Nike the most and wanted every other city to envy yours.

At the base of this stadium was a small museum and shop for those who climbed up to relax and rehydrate (and for us, check our phones—Free wifi!). Here we would rest before traveling to a very tight ferry connection that would take us to the island where classes would be held and we would spend our remaining days in Greece. Remember what I said about not being fond of tour guides? It didn't start out as a tight connection. We were supposed to have two hours on the dock before the ferry was scheduled to depart, but our tour guide spent so long describing the artifacts in the museum we lost all of that window.



F. 30: Zakynthos Island, we stayed in the town of Laganas.

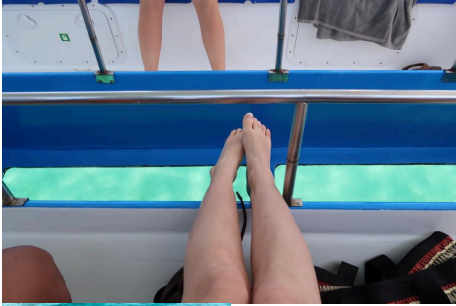
After an hour on the ferry, we landed on Zakynthos and checked into our hotel for the next few weeks. The hotel was owned and run by a lovely family who lived next door. They were very hospitable and answered any questions we had, including where the nearest market was. After spending a week eating out for every meal and spending heavily on souvenirs, we were all glad to find that our rooms had fridges and burners as well as a few basic cooking essentials. So with our roommates for the rest of the trip settled (Kendyl and I would share a room and Kaycee and Hailee would be a few doors down together), we all set off to get ingredients to make dishes instead of buy them. I can tell you right now, starting a kitchen from scratch is expensive. We also only had one pot,

no pan, so any dish we wanted to make had to be done in sections and then combined (these pieces did not always stay hot). Still, it was fun to try and experiment with recipes with my roommate. A couple of atrocious spaghetti dishes later, we invested in cup noodles.

Week 3

We fell into a routine fairly quickly. My classes were at 9 and 10, while my roommate's were at 10 and 11, so she was able to sleep a bit later, but I was able to get ready for the day while she was in class and pack my bag for the day. Most of the time we were on Zakynthos we did not have planned excursions, so we would spend the morning in class and the afternoon exploring, tanning, and catching up on homework.

Me and a few girls who'd become close went on a turtle sighting tour and took a boat to turtle island for the afternoon (Figures F 31-36). The island of Zakynthos has a strict curfew during laying and hatching season. Because such a large number of sea turtles use this island as their breeding grounds, it is important to keep lights along the coast to a minimum so as not to confuse the hatched turtles into going inland instead of to the sea where they have the highest chance of survival. Boats are also not allowed to dock near land for a similar reason—though also because the sand is very high in this area. Once boats have set off, they must go under the speed limit for the first 20 kilometers or so before picking up speed so as not to disturb or injure any sea turtles that might be in these shallow waters.



F.31: The glass bottom boat we took to go turtle spotting. F.32&F.33: A turtle we saw on the way to the island in the clear waters.



F.34: Kendyl, Me, Kaycee, and Hailee on Turtle Beach.



F.35&F.36: Kaycee trying to turn me into a sand mermaid, it didn't end well.

Another day we all decided to chart a boat to shipwreck beach, where we learned the local folklore (Figures F.37-F.40). This boat is resting in the middle of the beach because that cove was once filled with water but it was very shallow. During high tide some thieves took shelter there from a storm, but when the storm passed the water was too low for the boat to get out. The local police were looking for these thieves and were tipped off about where they'd been stuck so the thieves decided to abandon their loot (mostly tobacco, but some other contraband as well) for freedom.

Those men and women who lived in the village near the shipwreck were clever, they knew that it would take the police at least three hours to get from their station in the capital on the other side of the island. So, they took to their small fishing boats and some on foot went to pillage the ship for all of the stolen goods. By the time the police got to the ship, it was completely empty. No thieves. No stolen goods. Simply a nearby village with a much better economy.

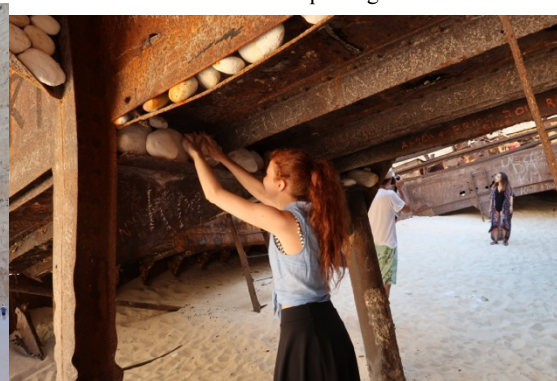
Now the people who live on this island say that if you take a stone from the island, you're destined to return so that you can put the stone back. This is why this ship is such a hotspot among lovers. They believe if they come once, they must stay together to return and put the stone back in it's rightful place.



F.37: Shipwreck beach, hidden in a cove.



F.38&F.39 Exploring the ruins of the ship.



F.40 Picking a stone to guarantee our return to the island.

Week 4

The last week of our stay we had an excursion to Olympia before we buckled down for final exams. Each class required a presentation connecting the subject to Greek history or mythology. In personality psychology, we were required to diagnose three Greek Gods with personality disorders: Zeus has a histrionic personality disorder—everything has to be about him, he'll do anything for attention. Narcissus has a narcissistic personality disorder—unsurprising as it was named after him. Hera has a paranoid personality disorder brought on by her husband's constant infidelity. She is suspicious of everyone.

After exams we had a bittersweet farewell dinner to share memories and get ready to say goodbye to our time here. Here we had a meal similar to our welcome dinner filled with several courses of vegetables and one giant course of meat. The restaurant we were at was open seating on the patio, so we were able to hear and interact with the street performers who played music throughout our meal. Near the end of the night a song played that excited our vendor, Katarina. The song, she told us, was a traditional Greek song that gained popularity after the movie *Zorba the Greek* came out in 1964. She encouraged us to get up and taught myself and about eight other students how to perform the dance associated with this song. It was a beautiful end to our time on the island.

The drive back to Athens was long, but loud. A group that started as strangers now considered those on the bus to be some of the closest people to them. We've shared excitement, fear, joy, sadness, and a new place together. Games and laughter cover the silence that our bus once held. Half of us are asleep, exhausted from the sensory and historic input we've absorbed these past four weeks.

The hotel we stayed in for the last night had open doors and floating friends. We all had a meal trying to split the bill twenty-five ways just one more time and completely frustrating the wait staff. No one was safe from farewell hugs or tear recaps of our favorite memories in the past few weeks. When we finally said goodbye, contact information had been exchanged and we knew that while some of us wouldn't be close when we get home, others will become permanent fixtures in our lives.