

# The Impact of Living Abroad Project

## Fact Sheet



### The project

Researchers from the University of Essex (UK) set out to investigate the impact of living abroad (ILA) in an innovative 4 year study. In collaboration with AFS Intercultural Programs, the researchers of the ILA project examined the experiences of intercultural exchange students. The project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (UK).



### The participants

This study followed 2,478 exchange students for an 18 month period (before, during and after their year abroad). Exchange students travelled from 46 different home countries and spent a year abroad in one of 51 different host destinations. Data was also collected from 578 control participants. The average participant's age was 17 years.



### The method

Data for the ILA project was collected over a 34 month period. Based on their individual travel dates, exchange students were invited to complete different surveys online. Participants completed a total of 9 different surveys, spanning pre-, during and post-exchange phases.



### In numbers

- 3,058 students from 46 countries participated
- participants responded to 1,249 questions
- 17,463 surveys were completed in total
- 2,506,513 unique responses were recorded



### The measures

A broad range of constructs featured in the ILA project, including measures of stress, well-being, cultural adaptation, coping strategies, cross-cultural competence, language proficiency, social identity, interpersonal contact, intergroup anxiety, personality, motivation and more.



### The findings

To date, some of the main findings of the ILA project show:

- the function of personality in adaptation
- which coping strategies exchange students use
- that some students find returning home as challenging as going abroad
- that an intercultural exchange is enriching for personal development
- the importance of developing an identity with the host country
- how an exchange leads to fostering more positive intergroup perceptions
- how cultural distance affects the experience of exchange students



### Want to know more?

Do you want more information on the ILA project?

You can visit our website for:

- information on research methodology
- a list of publications, and working papers
- overview of findings to date

Our new website will go live in January 2013. Visit us on [www.ilaproject.org](http://www.ilaproject.org)