ROLE OF ATTACHMENT IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES

by

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Abstract

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This study examined the impact of attachment, English proficiency, and previous travel experiences on international students' adjustment experiences. It is suggested that based on an individual's attachment style, the sense of dislocation one experiences upon relocation to a new country can range from feelings of excitement and freedom to varying degrees of stress and anxiety, the latter of which may activate the attachment system. Because a place contains familiar places, people and meanings, this study also explored attachment to places and how extending the boundaries of a familiar space through physical separation affects an individual's relationships and identity.

Data were collected and then analyzed using quantitative and qualitative measures. Ninety-one participants completed online questionnaires assessing their attachment style, prior travel experiences, English proficiency, acculturative stress, and psychological distress symptoms. A subset of 15 participants also participated in an approximately two-hour semi-structured interview about their experiences of studying abroad and the impact that living abroad has had on their identity and relationships.

Results show that higher scores on attachment anxiety were significantly correlated with higher reported acculturative stress. Individuals who scored high on

attachment anxiety reported most acculturative stress. In contrast, securely attached individuals reported less acculturative stress. Avoidant individuals reported low acculturative stress, yet their narratives expressed conflicted feelings about being in a new environment and they had ambivalent feelings regarding forming new close relationships. There also appeared to be a parallel between attachment to person and place, as the manner in which participants spoke about places during the interviews corresponded to the quality of their narratives about people. Furthermore, travel experiences and better English proficiency prior to starting college in the US were related to significantly lower acculturative stress.

Prologue

The following proposed study was informed in part by my own experience of being an international student. Moving to the United States over nine years ago, I faced challenges of adapting to a new culture and language and longing for my family and home country, as well as a desire to fit into my new environment. I remember the excitement that was sparked by the thought of going abroad, being independent of the immediate presence of my parents, meeting new people, learning about a new culture, and being exposed to new opportunities. At the same time, I remember feeling anxious and wondering what it would be like to be alone in an unfamiliar place devoid of familiar ties, miles away from my parents and friends.

My clinical work experiences, in particular working as a therapist at culturally diverse college counseling centers, have provided me with opportunities to observe college students' efforts to navigate the challenges that arise in the process of adjusting to a new environment, forming new relationships, maintaining old relationships, and taking on new roles.

All these experiences stirred up my interest in exploring the experiences of international students studying in the United States from an attachment perspective (Bowlby, 1982). I was particularly interested in the impact of their decision to go abroad on their experience of separation, loss, and adjustment, as well as the consequences of these experiences on their identity. The attachment literature itself focuses mostly on individuals' attachment to other people. While Bowlby originally proposed that individuals also become attached to places, not much literature has focused on this aspect of an individual's experience. Most of the literature that does focus on an individual's

attachment to places has come from the field of environmental psychology (Altman & Low, 1992; Thompson Fullilove, 1996; Manzo, 2003). Because a place contains familiar locations, people, and meanings, I would like to find out how extending the boundaries of this familiar space through physical separation impacts an individual's adjustment and formation of new relationships and attachments. These attachments can be to new love objects and places, as well as to work.

This study also examines how travel experiences and English proficiency prior to arrival in the US impact international students' adjustment. This study suggested that previous travel experiences may serve as protective factors against severe acculturative stress as these experiences provide an individual with opportunities to practice separations from familiar places and people and thus gain a sense of mastery. In addition, better English skills may help navigate the new environment and form new interpersonal connections.

The findings of this study could have implications for clinicians working with international students, as well as the university system, that could be better prepared for the possible challenges international students might face upon arrival in a new country. The findings might point to specific support systems that the university could offer, such as international student support groups and psychological services that could facilitate adjustment and help international students negotiate the demands of life transitions, stressors, personal relationships, and academic life.

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Introduction

It has been shown that for many college students transitioning and adjusting to college is a time of multiple stressors and emotional turmoil (Rodgers & Tennison, 2009). International students often face the additional demands of a new culture and a new language, which might make their adjustment to college life in the United States more stressful. Previous research findings indicate that secure attachment is related to greater academic, social, and emotional college student adjustment (Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004) and that securely attached individuals, in contrast to insecurely attached ones, are less afraid of challenges and unfamiliarity and more comfortable seeking out help when needed.

Giuliani (2003) suggested that individuals are not only attached to familiar people, whom they seek out in moments of distress, but also to familiar environments. Place attachment has been defined as an affective bond between individuals and specific places where they feel comfortable and safe and where they prefer to be (Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007). By moving to a new and unfamiliar place an individual is separated from his familiar surroundings and often experiences a wide range of emotions while adjusting to the new environment. As there has not been much research on this aspect of an individual's experience, this study attempted to find out how extending the boundaries of a familiar space through physical separation impacts an individual's ways of navigating the new challenges that arise throughout this process, as well as how new relationships and attachments form.

This study proposed that individuals with different attachment style classifications can experience this separation in different ways. Individuals who are secure in their attachments are more curious, adventurous, and exploratory and experience the widening of their familiar boundaries as exciting, while they might experience their familiar surrounding as constraining. Conversely, individuals who through an interaction of nature and nurture -- for example, growing up with overprotective parents who discourage them from exploring, or having experienced previous negative separations, such as war or tragic death of a loved one -- have become novelty aversive and experience the fantasy of being independent as anxiety provoking. Thus, insecurely attached international students may have a more difficult time initially adjusting to their new living environment, as well as establishing new relationships.

Place as Metaphor

A place can be conceptualized as a container for people, objects, and shared values and beliefs. It serves as the context for human interactions and thus represents the psychosocial milieu (Altman & Low, 1992). A place can refer to a home, borough, town, state, or nation (Giuliani, 2003). By moving to a new and unfamiliar place an individual is uprooted from his or her familiar surroundings and often experiences an initial feeling of being "displaced" and disoriented, which can give rise to a reaction encompassing emotional, cognitive, somatic, and behavioral elements, which are colloquially referred to as "homesickness" (Vingerhoets, 2005). This is in part what it can feel like when an individual is no longer feeling contained and held. A person can tolerate only a certain amount of separation before experiencing a sense of distress that goes along with the loss

of familiar objects, people, and places. Depending on the individual's vulnerability, the sense of dislocation one experiences can range from longing to sadness, anxiety, and even profound despair. Often this experience is referred to as "nostalgia," from the Greek "nostos", meaning "a return home" and "algos", meaning "pain" (Sanchez & Brown, 1994; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006). Thus, nostalgia stands for the pain caused by the yearning to return home.

It is important to keep in mind that "home" represents not just a place, but a place suffused with particular memories, feelings, and meanings – thus, a psycho-social milieu -- which are woven into an individual's identity (Giuliani, 2003). Places take on meanings beyond just a shared space. People who share a space often also share certain beliefs and values, which the individual who lives in that space adopts as his or her own. When individuals live in a space for a long time, they develop a sense of place -- feeling secure in a place where they feel they belong and which represents an anchor for their identity (Hay, 1998). Thus, when moving to an unfamiliar space, individuals not only have to get used to a new environment but are potentially also faced with new values and roles that may challenge their sense of self. Consequently, relocation can give rise to identity diffusion, the feeling of not belonging to a place or group that becomes palpable and real when an individual finds himself or herself to be a stranger in a strange land. Therefore, the feelings that accompany the relocation might not only be due to the loss of a familiar place but also to the transient loss of the sense of self (Winkelman, 1994).

This study proposed that individuals with different attachment style classifications can experience this relocation and adjustment in different ways. Individuals who are secure in their attachments and more curious, adventurous, and exploratory might

experience the widening of their familiar boundaries as exciting. They might even experience their familiar surrounding as constraining. Thus, for these individuals, the feelings that potentially get stirred up by the relocation may be experienced as ego-syntonic, meaning that the individual's feelings, thoughts and actions are consistent with their sense of self and their understanding that they have navigated and eventually mastered previous episodes of separation. Conversely, individuals with an insecure attachment style might experience the relocation as ego-dystonic, meaning that their experience of being abroad is not consistent with their feelings, thoughts, actions, and needs, which may give rise to a wide range of emotions, including anxiety.

As with attachment to people, attachment to places is not stagnant. It is a developmental process that does not entail remaining fixed in a particular position, such as being attached to only one place, for example one's house. Rather, an individual is able to integrate new experiences and relationships with places and people into a coherent sense of self and thereby stretch the existing boundaries. This study suggests that securely attached individuals have established a capacity to be flexible in their relationships to places and objects. They can both separate from their old attachment objects and refer back to them in times of need, just as they would with people they are attached to. In contrast, individuals who are more anxious by nature might feel threatened by being uprooted, and might wish to retreat to their familiar environment, people, and objects. Ultimately, a sense of balance might be established when place, love, and work come together into one location and are integrated into one's identity.

This document is organized in the following way. First, literature discussing the theoretical foundations and hypotheses that comprised this study will be reviewed.

Second, the Methods section will describe the selection of the participants and the instruments and procedures of this study, as well as the data analysis. Third, the quantitative and qualitative results will be presented in the Results section. Finally, the results will be discussed in the context of the existing literature, the clinical implications of the findings, and suggestions for future studies.

Attachment in Childhood

Bowlby (1973) suggested that an individual's early experiences with caregivers impact the individual's expectations of others, sense of self, and capacity for emotion regulation. Emotion regulation refers to the process by which individuals modulate their positive and negative reactions to internal and external stimuli. In particular, Bowlby was interested in understanding why infants are distressed when they are separated from their parents. He was intrigued by infants' attempts to either try to prevent the separation from occurring or to reestablish the proximity to their absent parents by engaging in certain behaviors that would draw the caregivers' attention. He proposed that these behaviors, which he termed attachment behaviors, developed by natural selection in order to increase the chances of survival by ensuring proximity to a figure that provides protection and nurture, since infants are not able to take care of themselves.

According to Bowlby (1973), an infant's way of navigating the world and its objects is influenced by the infant's experiences of the caregivers, which the child internalizes over time and which develop into a prototype for future relationships. Bowlby conceptualized that children develop these internal representations or "working models" based on whether they feel that the attachment figure is likely to respond to

signals for help and support and whether the self is the kind of person to whom others will respond. Thus, infants who experience the attachment figure as available, accessible, and responsive will feel secure, comforted, and loved, and will be more likely to explore the environment and be social. Furthermore, those infants will seek out others when in distress in the future, because they will be more likely to expect to receive comfort from them.

However, infants who perceive the caregiver as not available, inaccessible, or unresponsive are likely to experience anxiety when either venturing out to explore the environment or when the caregiver distances him- or herself. These infants are likely to engage in attachment behaviors until they either reach sufficient proximity to the caregiver or until they experience despair and depression, for example due to prolonged separation or loss.

Ainsworth systematically observed infants' behaviors during and after separation from their mothers in a structured laboratory procedure, which she coined the "Strange Situation" (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). The procedure is such that once the infant is introduced to the lab, toys and a stranger, the mother leaves the lab and returns two times. She made the observation that children cope with being separated from their mothers in three distinct ways. Thus, she divided these children into three groups: secure (group B), insecure-avoidant (group A) and insecure-ambivalent (group C). She observed that the majority of children (about 60%), whom she referred to as secure, became upset when the mother left the room but approached the mother and were easily comforted by her when reunited. Another group of the children (about 20%), who were referred to as insecure-ambivalent, was upset when their mothers left the room and

displayed ambivalent feelings upon the mother's return, such as wanting to be comforted by the mother but also pushing her away. Another group of children (about 20%), who were referred to as insecure-avoidant, appeared neither to be distressed upon the mother's departure nor to seek out contact or comfort with her upon being reunited with her.

Adult Attachment

It has been proposed that attachment continues to play a role throughout life. Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) hypothesized that differences in attachment styles are based on differences in representations of the self and others. Therefore, Main et al. (1985) suggested that in order to assess a person's attachment beyond infancy one needs to examine not just behavior but also a person's internal representations through close examination of language. In order to accomplish this, Main et al. (1985) developed a semi-structured Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) that examines adults' representations of childhood attachment relationships. There is an assumption in the attachment literature that the manner in which children relate to caregivers will generalize to the manner in which they will relate to romantic partners later in life, as well as to other people with whom they will have to establish a relationship. It is reasonable to think that there may be an analogous manner in which people engage in different relationships, including relationships to places.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) studied attachment patterns in romantic relationships. They developed a self-report measure to classify adults into three relationship styles that approximately correspond to Ainsworth's infant attachment categories: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent. Their results showed that 56% of adults could be classified as

secure, 23% as avoidant, and another 20% as anxious/ambivalent. This distribution is similar to the one obtained by Ainsworth (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that compared to secure individuals, insecure individuals reported more negative experiences and beliefs about relationships, had a history of shorter romantic relationships, and provided less positive narratives about their relationships with their parents. Insecurely attached individuals also reported less positive views of themselves and less desirability to others than securely attached individuals.

The previously mentioned studies examined different attachment relationships (parent-child vs. romantic relationships) and utilized different methodologies for classifying individuals (observations in laboratory vs. semi-structured interviews vs. self-report measures). There are strengths and weaknesses to each of the above methods. Moreover, when evaluating these studies one should take into account the context in which they were carried out. For example, by studying an infant's reactions to separation from a caregiver in an unfamiliar space, the lab, instead of a familiar space, such as home, Ainsworth may have inadvertently maximized the infant's reactions to that separation, as infants did not have cues as to where the parents might be nor did they have other familiar objects they could feel comforted by.

Furthermore, Bowlby, Ainsworth, and Hazan and Shaver conceptualized their observations about attachment behaviors during a time when development was thought of as a stage model, and structural change of the developmental system as being rather inflexible after the end of particular critical periods. Lewis, Feiring, and Rosenthal (2000) challenged the notion of stability and predictive power of infant attachment to adult attachment, and proposed that attachment evolves throughout life depending on

interpersonal experiences. Moreover, in the past psychologists organized the phenomena they observed by putting them into categories rather than seeing them as falling onto a continuum. As time went by, there was a shift within the field of psychology, and certain phenomena, such as different attachment styles, began to be seen as more complex. Psychologists also began to notice that there was more variation among individuals regarding their attachment styles and that the categorical conceptualization was too simple and did not allow for the exploration of more nuanced differences between individuals within each of those attachment groups. Therefore, this study will examine not only attachment style as a categorical variable but also as a dimensional variable in order to understand how different attachment patterns may facilitate or impede international students' adjustment upon going abroad.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) pointed out that the attachment interviews identified avoidant adults as individuals who denied experiencing subjective distress and minimized the importance of attachment needs, as opposed to the self-report measures that identified individuals who reported feeling subjective distress and discomfort when they become close to others. Thus, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) suggested that a single avoidant-detached category may overlook conceptually distinct patterns of avoidance in adulthood. Therefore, in order to capture the nuances of people's attachment experiences, a number of researchers conceptualized the different attachment style categories dimensionally with each lying on a different point along a continuum. In particular, Bartholomew (1990) proposed a new theoretical model for attachment-related avoidance with a more nuanced distinction between fearful-avoidant and dismissing-avoidant attachment patterns. She suggested that individuals who are on the fearful-

avoidant spectrum avoid confiding in others or becoming invested in them because they fear being hurt or rejected. These individuals tend to view themselves in negative ways and have negative expectations of others, and they organize their behavior in a defensive manner in order to suppress their insecurities. They both desire as well as fear intimacy with others, and therefore tend to distance themselves from others.

In comparison, dismissive-avoidant individuals tend to be self-reliant and independent and they tend to avoid intimate relationships with others not because of fear of rejection but because they report having little interest in these emotional bonds. While this relationship style might have been impacted by past experiences of rejection, it is consciously experienced as a desire to be independent.

Based on the above argument, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) proposed a four-group model of attachment styles in adulthood. They defined four prototypic attachment patterns based on a combination of two dimensions – an individual's self-image, which can be either positive or negative, and the individual's image of others, which can also be either positive or negative. It is important to keep in mind that each of these combinations represents a theoretical prototype and that in reality different people overlap with these prototypes to different degrees.

The secure prototype is characterized by having a sense of self as being lovable and a sense of others as accepting and helpful. Individuals who fit this prototype value intimate relationships and have an ability to maintain close relationships, while also maintaining personal autonomy. Additionally, their narratives tend to be coherent when discussing relationships and related issues.

The preoccupied prototype is described as having a sense of the self as being unlovable while having a positive sense of others. These individuals tend to be over-involved in intimate relationships and depend on others for acceptance in order to experience a sense of personal well-being. They also have a tendency to idealize others and display incoherence or exaggerated emotionality when discussing relationships. This group corresponds to Hazan and Shaver's ambivalent group (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

The fearful-avoidant prototype was described as having a sense of being unlovable combined with the expectation that others will be rejecting and cannot be trusted. These individuals avoid close relationships with others in order to protect themselves from anticipated rejection. This prototype may be the closest to Hazan and Shaver's (1987) avoidant style.

The dismissive-avoidant prototype is characterized by a sense of self as being lovable with the expectation that others are not trustworthy or helpful. The dismissive individuals protect themselves against disappointments by avoiding close relationships while maintaining a sense of independence and invulnerability. They tend to place less importance on intimate relationships, display restricted emotionality, and emphasize self-reliance. Furthermore, when discussing relationships their narratives are characterized by less coherence.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) examined individuals' attachment ratings of self-concept and interpersonal functioning through an interview, self-report measures and friend ratings. They administered semi-structured interviews to 40 female and 37 male undergraduates, asking them to describe their friendships, romantic relationships, and feelings about the importance of close relationships. Participants were also asked about

loneliness, shyness, and their degree of trust in others, as well as how they imagine others perceive them, and their hopes for change in their social lives. Three raters independently rated the interviews on a 9-point scale, which described the participants' degree of correspondence with each of the above described four attachment prototypes.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) used 15 dimensions to rate the attachment interview and thus to evaluate the degree to which an individual approximates each of the proposed four attachment prototypes. Some of those 15 dimensions are coherence (the degree to which participants presented an integrated and internally consistent portrayal of their experiences and feelings in close relationships), elaboration (how willing participants were to share their experiences and how much detail and emotional content was shared), and reliance on others (ranging from compulsive self-reliance to excessive emotional dependency on others). They found that significant group differences existed for each of the 15 dimensions and they calculated correlations between each dimension and each of the four continuous prototype ratings. Alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the reliability of the prototype ratings. The reliabilities ranged from .87 to .95. The ratings were averaged and the highest of the four average ratings was considered the best-fitting category for that subject. By grouping the interviews into the different prototypes, they found that 47% of the participants could be classified as secure, 18% as dismissing-avoidant, 14% as preoccupied, and 21 % as fearful-avoidant.

The group that was rated as secure obtained significantly higher ratings on the coherence of their interviews, value of involvement in relationships, balance of control in friendships, self-confidence, and warmth. They found that the profile of the group that was rated as preoccupied scored significantly higher on elaboration, self-disclosure

(shown by a tendency to disclose inappropriately), exaggerated emotional expressiveness, frequency of crying, overdependence on others, dependence on others' acceptance for a sense of personal self-worth, a tendency to idealize others, crying in the presence of others, and caregiving. They were rated high on the level of romantic involvement and low on coherence and balance of control in relationships.

The fearful-avoidant group was rated significantly lower than either secure or preoccupied ones on self-disclosure, intimacy, level of romantic involvement, reliance on others, and use of others as a secure base when upset. They were also rated as being significantly less confident. The dismissing-avoidant group scored significantly higher on self-confidence and significantly lower on emotional expressiveness, frequency of crying, and warmth. They scored lower than the secure and preoccupied groups on all scales reflecting closeness in personal relationships, such as self-disclosure, intimacy, level of romantic involvements, capacity to rely on others, and use of others as a secure base. They were also rated as elaborating less in the interview, and as being less caregiving and more in control in both friendships and romantic relationships.

Bartholomew and Horowitz's findings were consistent for self-reports and friend ratings. The researchers emphasize that there are limitations to conceptualizing difficulties with intimacy as either overdependence or avoidance of intimacy, because they found that both groups with a negative sense of self (the preoccupied and fearful-avoidant) gave similar responses on measures assessing a sense of self-worth, yet differed on measures assessing readiness for intimacy with others. Therefore, the notion that individuals who maintain interpersonal distance are driven by a fear of intimacy would be an oversimplification.

Yet a person's avoidance of intimacy makes forming close relationships more difficult. It thereby also lessens the opportunities to revise working models of other people. The results suggest that the fearful-avoidant and dismissing-avoidant individuals have distinct coping strategies when faced with interpersonal stressors. Fearful-avoidant individuals have a tendency to blame themselves for perceived rejection from others, which maintains their positive views of others and reinforces their negative view of self. The dismissing-avoidant individuals minimize the importance of others when they feel rejected by them and thereby enable themselves to maintain a high self-esteem.

It is important to keep in mind that individuals vary in their style across time, as well as within and across relationships. It has been proposed that major life transitions that include new social roles, such as leaving for college, can provide opportunities for evaluating and reorganizing attachment representations.

Attachment to Place

Giuliani (2003) suggested that individuals are not only attached to familiar people, whom they seek out in moments of distress, but also to familiar environments. Place attachment has been defined as an affective bond between individuals and specific places, where they prefer to be and where they feel comfortable and safe (Hernandez et al., 2007; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Place attachment can be conceptualized as a collection of emotions and behaviors that regulate the distance from and maintenance of contact with the attachment object, which serves as a source of protection and satisfaction (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Thompson Fullilove, 1996). Being separated from a familiar environment and people can stir up different emotions that range from feelings of

excitement and freedom to a certain degree of stress and anxiety, the latter of which activates the attachment system. These different feelings are not antithetical to one another, as the willingness to detach from the familiar in order to explore the unknown is related to the anticipation that one could again reattach in times of need.

It has been shown that for many college students transitioning and adjusting to college is a time of multiple stressors and emotional turmoil (Rodgers & Tennison, 2009). Larose and Boivin (1998) examined whether individual differences in perceived security to parents predicted changes in the social support expectations and socioemotional adjustment during the transition from high school to college. They also compared individuals who left home to go to college to those who stayed to live at home during this transition. They met with 320 female and 129 male adolescents, whose age ranged from 15 to 20 years and who graduated from a high school in the Quebec City area, at the end of high school and during their first semester in college. All participants were native French-speaking Caucasians and the majority (78%) were from two-parent families.

Participants completed six self-report measures which assessed attachment security, general and specific perceptions of social support, and perceptions of emotional adjustment throughout the transition. 65% of the initial sample completed the questionnaire midway through the first college semester. They assessed perceived security to parents with a 28-item questionnaire (Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment) that contained items evaluating the degree of mutual trust, the quality of communication and the prevalence of anger and alienation in relating to their mothers and fathers. The questions were answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1

(never true or almost never true) to 5 (always true or almost always true). The overall security score was obtained by subtracting the raw scores of the Alienation scale from the Trust and Communication scales.

The participants' expectations toward social support were assessed using the appraisal support subscale of the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List, which consisted of 12 items rated on a 5-point scale, as well as with another self-report measure called Measure of Perception of Social Support Specific to Worrisome Events, which are related to 36 life events common in late adolescence and during the transition to college. This measure assessed the participants' worry about the occurrence of these events, the perceived availability of others, and the satisfaction with the help received. Individuals' support system was assessed using a modified version of the Social Network Inventory. The participants' socio-emotional adjustment was measured with The Interaction Anxiousness Scale, a 15-item questionnaire assessing feelings of anxiety in different interpersonal situations, and the UCLA Loneliness Scale-Revised, a 20-item self-report scale measuring feelings of loneliness experienced in interpersonal relationships.

Results indicated that perceived security to parents was stable throughout the transition from high school to college. Furthermore, attachment appeared to affect general expectations of support equally, regardless of the presence or absence of moving away from their parents. Individuals who reported perceived security in their relationship with their parents at the end of high school also had higher general and specific expectations of support in college, which is not accounted for by previous levels of expectation that these individuals had in high school. Feelings of loneliness and social anxiety were significantly stronger for participants who had left their families than for

those who had not when they were measured in college, while the mean level of perceived security to parents increased. These differences were not significant while the individuals were still in high school. This result might reflect an initial short-term period during which individuals are adjusting to a new environment and people.

The fact that this study found that perceived security to parents did not predict changes in social anxiety might be due to the fact that the researchers could not isolate the social network effect from the separation effect. Thus, the separation from parents might lead to changes in the individuals' social anxiety because those who had left home to go to college in addition to separation from the parents also had to navigate the separation from their friends, relatives, and known routines.

Overall, these findings might support the theory that the transition to college and the separation from loved ones that often goes along with it can be conceptualized as a strange situation. In that case, secure attachment might function as a safe base from which individuals venture out to explore new environments and establish new relationships. Therefore, a good relationship with parents might function as a protective factor and be particularly helpful and stabilizing for individuals during the transition to college, especially since many individuals move away from home and are faced with a new environment and social network changes, all of which may lead to an initial increase in anxiety.

International students face the additional demands of a new culture and a new society. Furthermore, studying abroad often involves not only the separation from the country of origin but also a decrease in regular contact with the extended family, as well

as less opportunity to speak the native language (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007), all which might make adjustment to college life in the United States more stressful.

Like attachment to people, attachment to a place is not stagnant but can expand and accommodate new experiences, environments, people, and objects (Manzo, 2003). As children feel safer they begin to venture out from their parents and explore their immediate environment, but still maintain proximity to the caretakers in case they need protection. The process of expanding one's environment offers the opportunity for new interpersonal relationships and relationships with places. As development progresses some of the dependence on caregivers and the need for protection is shifted onto the larger world (Chawla, 1992). For example, as individuals become less dependent on the care of their caregivers, attachments to home expand to include progressively larger geographic units, such as neighborhoods, the region, and the country (Altman & Low, 1992; Giuliani, 2003).

Furthermore, as attachments to places exist within larger sociocultural and political milieus, they are dynamic in their nature (Manzo, 2003). And as one becomes familiar with multiple people and places, and thus one's familiar environment expands, one gains the capacity to feel comfortable in multiple places. While the attachment to one place is not stagnant, the choices of available places are limited for the infant and coincide with his dependence on a caregiver. For an adult, who no longer solely depends on the caregiver, being in one particular place can feel stagnant or boring and may be accompanied with a desire to be elsewhere.

Place attachment arises from many factors, such as mobility, length of residence, shared meanings, and social belonging (Hay, 1998). Moreover, an individual's

attachment to a particular place also entails memories and cognitive interpretations, which give meaning to one's personal experience in that place and may serve to weave one's sense of place together into one's emerging sense of self. Paasi (1991) suggested that place "represents the nodes of the life biography, which is, itself, a unique event of situated life episodes." People can also have a similar "nodal" quality. Therefore, when studying attachment, it is important to keep in mind that the meanings of places and people are interwoven and that attachments to both of them intersect. Furthermore, the personal meaning and sense of a place depends on an individual's past as well as present experiences.

Place Attachment, Place Identity, and Self-Identity

Thompson Fullilove (1996) proposed that individuals are connected with the environment in which they live through three processes: place attachment, familiarity, and place identity. As discussed, place attachment refers to the bond that develops between an individual and a specific place. In classical cognitive terms, familiarity has a cognitive and affective dimension, the affective being a diffused feeling that is related to an implicit (unconscious) recognition of something -- a sense of something being familiar but not knowing the exact details that make it feel familiar. Thus, familiarity in the context of place refers to individuals' cognitive knowledge about a place, as well as the affective quality of their experience of that place.

Place identity refers to the development of a sense of self based on the place where one lives. Proshansky (1978) described place identity as

> "those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment" (p. 155).

It has been suggested that place attachment is an affective bond that arises relatively quickly because of interaction with the environment, although it takes some time to reach its culmination, while place identity is a more complex, long-term process, which develops only after symbolic long-term experiences with places (Hay, 1998). Thompson Fullilove (1996) suggests that each of these processes (place attachment, familiarity, and place identity) is affected by relocation and that nostalgia, disorientation, and alienation may occur as a result of the relocation.

It has been proposed that place attachment is related to self-identity (Bowlby, 1973; Spencer, 2005). Bowlby (1973) suggested that each individual inhabits a unique personal environment, which serves as an "outer ring" of life-sustaining systems complementary to the "inner ring" of systems that maintain the physiological homeostasis. Having a place is essential to one's sense of security and identity. Throughout development, a sense of place influences an individual's own personal development of self-identity, which in turn affects one's sense of belonging, self-worth, and values. Place attachment might serve as a source of stability in the face of many changes. Conversely, the loss of a familiar place can be perceived as a threat to the self. Therefore, separations from the familiar surroundings can contribute to the disruption of individuals' self-identity, especially if the separation is accompanied with a new role that the individual takes on, such as becoming a college student.

A place has an affect regulating quality. Places, people, and objects that are felt to be familiar can be experienced as soothing because they are more predictable and thus provide the individual with a sense of safety and reliability. In contrast, places, people, and objects that are unfamiliar can give rise to various feelings, which depending on the individual's experience, can range from excitement to profound anxiety. While people have the need for predictability, stability and continuity, people also have a need for novelty and change. Throughout our lives we are trying to navigate and balance this dynamic and go through both phases of change and growth and phases of equilibrium. Growing up, we learn to alternate between those two needs, for example as infants who explore the environment but frequently reference back and seek out their parents when they need comfort. As development proceeds some individuals might eventually come to prefer one need over the other. Thus, while some people favor exploration and the excitement and uncertainty that go along with it, others favor the familiar over the unfamiliar -- the predictable over the unpredictable; those individuals prefer to give up some of their freedom in order to maintain a sense of stability, because novelty might induce too much distress in them.

Impact of Immigration on Identity

Recent changes in industrialized societies, such as delayed marriages and parenthood until the late 20s and beyond, have allowed for continued education. Concurrently, the alteration of immigration laws and globalization have permitted students from around the world to come to the United States to pursue higher education. As a result of those changes, development during the late teens and early twenties has changed for young people and a new developmental period has emerged from ages 18 to

25, which is distinct from adolescence and adulthood. Arnett (2000) referred to this period of development as emerging adulthood.

Today, individuals in their early 20s have more independence from their parents and other social norms and expectations. Depending on their socioeconomic status and other constraints they are free to experiment before settling down more permanently in adult roles. This period of time is different from adolescence, which is nowadays best defined as a developmental period from age 10 to about 18, because during adolescence individuals have in common that they are still quite dependent on their parents, are going through puberty, and are attending secondary school.

However, at the age of 18, this group becomes more heterogeneous in terms of developmental lines due to the transitions during that time (e.g., high school graduation) and greater independence from their parents. For example, while some individuals begin to work, others decide to pursue a college education. During this time, some individuals move out of their parents' homes and begin to live on their own or with friends, while others might continue living at home. Furthermore, turning 18 is also a marker for legal transitions, such as being allowed to vote and sign legal documents, all of which contribute to individuals becoming more independent and assuming new roles in their lives. The greater variety of individuals' developmental lines is a reflection of greater range of independence, transitions, and experimentation.

Emerging adulthood is also a time when individuals can explore different directions in the areas of love, work, and worldviews. Identity formation involves trying out different possibilities in these areas, for example by trying out different majors in college or different jobs, or being romantically involved with different people. Arnett

(2000) suggested that the reasons why this developmental period is best described as "emerging adulthood" rather than "adolescence" or "young adulthood" is that subjectively individuals do not anymore see themselves as adolescents, yet they do not experience themselves as adults either – and "young adulthood" would imply that adulthood has been reached. Moreover, the term "emerging" captures the dynamic and fluid quality of this period. Arnett (2000) suggested that it is around the late 20s/early 30s when individuals will make some more enduring decisions, which will mark their transition to young adulthood. During young adulthood diversity narrows down as individuals settle down in more enduring roles in their professional (e.g., graduation from college and settling into a more stable career path) and personal lives (e.g., marriage or family). If individuals go abroad during the time of emerging adulthood, it might place additional demands on them beyond those that are already operative during this time. In addition to trying to consolidate new roles into their identity, international students might be faced with even more novelty that they need to take in and weave into their identity and life narratives.

Similar to emerging adulthood, immigration has been conceptualized as a time of "psychic flux" (Akhtar, 1995, 1999). It is a time during which an immigrant needs to re-organize the sense of self while attempting to adapt to the new living environment. During transitions, previously organized life patterns are questioned and reaffirmed, and through this process, the individual gains more clarity about his own sense of self. Bromberg (2009) described the self as consisting of multiple, at times contradictory, states of self. The self is the part of the individual that organizes one's experiences (internal in relation to oneself and external in relation to the world) and helps regulate

one's emotions. A well-functioning individual has the capacity to adapt to changes in self-states and thereby preserve continuity and a coherent perception of oneself. In contrast, individuals who are not as flexible in their view of themselves or others can become threatened and dysregulated by the experience of multiple self-states. As Bromberg (2009) described, in such situations "the mind is overwhelmed by sudden "strangeness" that begins to make one a stranger to one's self," which can lead to depersonalization.

The development of a coherent sense of self can be conceptualized as a narrative, one that is based on our need to ascribe meaning to our emotions and life experiences. Changes in our lives, such as immigration, require the adjustment and rewriting of our narratives, especially through the integration of new experiences into old ones, which help the individual gain a coherent sense of self. It has been proposed that immigrants go through different phases during this adjustment process.

Different Phases of Immigration

Brown and Perkins (1992) suggested that there are three phases that individuals go through when faced with separation due to relocation: a pre-disruption phase, followed by a disruption period, and finally a post-disruption period. If, as in the case of most international students, the separation is planned, then the pre-disruption period might entail loosening the attachments to former personally meaningful environments and people, as well as preparations for new attachments in the new country. The different ways in which people loosen their attachments in their country of origin might be productive or counterproductive. For example, some individuals might meet with their

family and friends to say goodbye and perhaps come up with a plan for how to remain connected, such as through emailing or the use of Skype. They might also visit familiar places that they might not see for a relatively long time. Others, however, might feel overwhelmed by the thought of the upcoming separation and perhaps try not to think about it either by behaving as they usually would or by cutting off many of their connections to their country of origin, such as friendships, in order not to be confronted with the sadness of the separation.

During the disruption phase, international students are trying to adjust to the separation from the old environment and its objects while they are simultaneously also attempting to adjust and establish relationships with the new place and its objects. Depending on an individual's preferences for novelty and sense of security, this period can induce a range of different feelings. While most individuals are confronted with adjusting to a new environment, new people, possibly a new language, new objects, and new roles, different individuals have different coping strategies to navigate this process. For example, some internationals students might seek out other international students and make use of existing resources in the university system, such as the International Student Office, that can help them adjust to and navigate the new environment.

For other international students, this period might be accompanied by enormous anxiety, as their attachment system is still highly activated by being in an unfamiliar place filled with novelty and unpredictability. Some might want to stay attached to and idealize their past in order to defend against the anxiety and sadness provoked by the separation. Some might develop a fantasy that if they had only stayed in their country of origin, they would not have problems and life would be more enjoyable (Akhtar, 1996).

This idealized fantasy of the past might give rise to a mix of pain and joy: pain from the realization of the separation from the idealized place and its objects, and joy by remaining connected to it through fantasy (Akhtar, 1999). These fantasies are at times expressed through immigrants' fantasies that "someday" (Akhtar, 1996) they will return to their country of origin. However, living in the future might make it harder to commit fully to the present.

For international students this process might perhaps be made even more complicated by their temporary legal status, which implies that they are expected by the US government to return to their homeland upon the completion of their studies. Some internationals students might come to the United States thinking that they will only remain here until they finish their education and gain some work experience. In their fantasy of their future, they see themselves returning and settling down in their country of origin. However, other international students might come to the United States with the wish to remain in the US. For those individuals, the uncertainty of their immigration status might induce anxiety that they might not be able to remain in the US after the completion of their studies. Depending on their attachment style, they may experience different challenges navigating this uncertainty.

In order to bridge the distance between their new and old home, international students might seek out an environment that evokes memories of the past (Tummala-Narra, 2009). They may also make use of transitional objects that remind them of home and provide them with a sense of comfort. For example, international students might choose to live in culturally or ethnically familiar surroundings, which might represent a symbolic connection to their country of origin. At times, individuals might also navigate

the separation from familiar places, people and objects by holding on to something that represents “home,” such as photographs of loved ones and familiar places. Such old and new objects can have multiple meanings during the relocation. For example, they might have symbolic meanings, such as representing the person who gave that object or serving as a tool to preserve memory (Bih, 1992). Old objects might also facilitate the maintenance of cultural and traditional continuity.

During the post-disruption phase, international students might strive to achieve a coherent sense of self by balancing their ideal self with the experienced constraints. Akhtar (1995) proposed that the initial separation and culture shock gradually lead to psychostructural change and a hybrid identity. Acculturation is often used to refer to the individual’s cultural transformations (Berry, 2005). When a merger is accomplished, psychic growth occurs. In contrast, if the separation is never fully accepted or if new experiences are not incorporated into the existing sense of self, then the individual is at risk of suffering from psychological distress and physical illnesses. It is possible that the degrees of difference between the culture of origin and the new culture, as well as English skills, affect the process of acculturation. More similar cultures may provide the frame for an easier adjustment and better English skills may help establish a support network faster.

Summary of Study

The previous sections provided a basis for understanding the context and value of the proposed study. The objective of the study is to examine the relationship between international students’ attachment patterns and their adjustment experiences upon going

abroad. Previous research in this area has suggested that relocation places various demands on individuals who have different ways of experiencing and managing those challenges. The main premise of this study is that secure attachment plays a protective role against severe psychological distress upon going abroad and eases international students' adjustment to their new country.

As has been reviewed in the previous sections, relatively little is known about international students' attachments to places and how relocations might impact their lives, relationships, and sense of self. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative data will hopefully add to the empirical and theoretical literature in those areas. Findings of this study could be applied to develop specific support systems within universities to facilitate international students' transition and adjustment. Additionally, results of this study might be applied to other immigrant populations in the US.

Statement of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Positive correlation between attachment anxiety/avoidance and acculturative stress. It was hypothesized that the attachment anxiety and avoidance subscales of the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECR) would be positively correlated with acculturative stress.

Hypothesis 2: Positive correlation between attachment anxiety/avoidance and depressive symptoms. It was hypothesized that the attachment anxiety and avoidance subscales would be positively correlated with the number of reported depressive symptoms.

Hypothesis 3: Positive correlation between acculturative stress and depressive symptoms. It was hypothesized that acculturative stress would be positively correlated with the number of reported depressive symptoms.

Hypothesis 4: Relationship between attachment groups and acculturative stress. It was hypothesized that securely attached participants would report less acculturative stress than insecurely attached participants.

Hypothesis 5: Relationship between attachment groups and depressive symptoms. It was hypothesized that securely attached individuals would report fewer depressive symptoms than insecurely attached individuals.

Hypothesis 6: Effect of depressive symptoms on relationship between attachment groups and acculturative stress. In order to assess whether acculturative stress was impacted by depressive symptomatology or attachment style, depressive symptoms were covaried in the relationship between attachment and acculturative stress.

Hypothesis 7: Relationship between previous travel experiences and acculturative stress. It was hypothesized that previous travel experiences would be negatively correlated with acculturative stress.

Hypothesis 8: Negative correlation between English proficiency and acculturative stress. It was hypothesized that higher TOEFL scores would be related to lower levels of reported acculturative stress.

Hypothesis 9: Qualitative analysis. It was expected that the qualitative analysis of the data would reveal themes describing the international students' experiences of studying abroad and how the separation from their home country impacted their sense of place, their interpersonal relationships, and their sense of self. Based on my own experiences and the existing literature, I expected to see an initial phase upon the students' arrival to the new country during which their attachment to their home country was very strong and during which they experienced ambivalent feelings about being in a new unfamiliar place. I also expected to see a change in their attachment to both home county and new country over time, as well as a change in their sense of self.

Furthermore, I expected to observe different patterns for individuals with different attachment styles. It was expected that subjects with secure attachment would report a smoother transition during which they maintained contact with their families and friends from home, and also began to establish new relationships in the US. In contrast, it was expected that subjects with preoccupied attachment would report the most difficulty adjusting to the US. They were expected to report experiencing more homesickness and more difficulties adjusting to the new environment and forming new relationships in the US. While dismissive individuals may report having a relatively smooth transition and adjustment, it was expected that they may not be in frequent contact with their families and friends from home.

Chapter II

Methods

Participants

Participants were international graduate students (46 female, 45 male; M_{age} = 28.88 years, age range: 22 - 45 years) who were enrolled in a graduate program at the time of the data collection. Participants were recruited through emails that were sent to International Student Offices and international student organizations which were asked to distribute the email (with a link to the online survey) through their email list serve. The recruitment email directed the participants to a secure website where consent was obtained. Participants then completed the online survey and were emailed a $10 Amazon gift card as remuneration. Only complete entries were used for the research. A complete entry consisted of a fully filled out questionnaire with a signed consent form and confirmed date of arrival to the US. Out of 176 entries, a total of 91 entries met the above inclusion criteria and were used for this study.

A subset of 15 participants who have been in the US up to three years was selected for a two-hour in-person interview. These participants were selected based on their length of stay in the US and their attachment style, which was identified by their answers on the attachment measure in the online survey. Upon completion of the interview, participants were emailed a $15 Amazon gift card as remuneration.

Instruments

Demographic questionnaire. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire on background information such as age, relationship status, country of origin, date of arrival to US, previous travel experiences, and TOEFL scores.

Self-report questionnaires. In order to assess psychological distress, the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff; 1977) was administered. This is a 20-item self-report measure asking participants to rate symptoms of depression for the past week on a scale from 0 (meaning less than 1 day) to 3 (5-7 days). It takes about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. The reported internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, is high across a variety of populations (around .85 in community samples and .90 in psychiatric samples). Test-retest reliability studies ranging over two to eight weeks show moderate correlations (r = .51-.67), which is desirable for a test of symptoms that are expected to show change over time.

An Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) was used to measure the students' adjustment problems. The ASSIS is a 36-item, 5-point (1 *strongly disagree,* 3 *unsure,* 5 *strongly agree*), Likert-type scale that assesses adjustment-related issues of international students. It consists of seven subscales – Perceived Discrimination (8 items), Homesickness (4 items), Perceived Hate (5 items), Fear (4 items), Stress Due to Change/Culture Shock (3 items), Guilt (2 items), and Nonspecific Concerns (10 items). The total scores for this scale can range from 36 to 180, with higher scores indicating higher levels of acculturative stress. Validity was supported

by a factor analysis and reliability was provided by Cronbach's coefficient alphas ranging from .87 to .95 for the total score of the ASSIS (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Attachment styles were determined with the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver; 1998), which is a 36-item self-report measure that assesses individuals' experiences in relationships and their attachment style. The items were derived from a factor analysis of most of the existing self-report measures of adult romantic attachment. The measure consists of two separate scales, avoidance and anxiety. The anxiety subscale (18 items, such as "I worry about being abandoned") measures excessive need for approval from others and fear of interpersonal rejection or abandonment. The avoidance subscale (18 items, such as "I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down") taps into excessive need for self-reliance and fear of interpersonal closeness. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The reported internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, is .94 for the avoidance subscale and .91 for the anxiety subscale. The anxiety and avoidance subscales intersect and form four quadrants, each of which represents a predominant attachment style based on the orthogonal dimensions of anxiety and avoidance (see Figure 1).

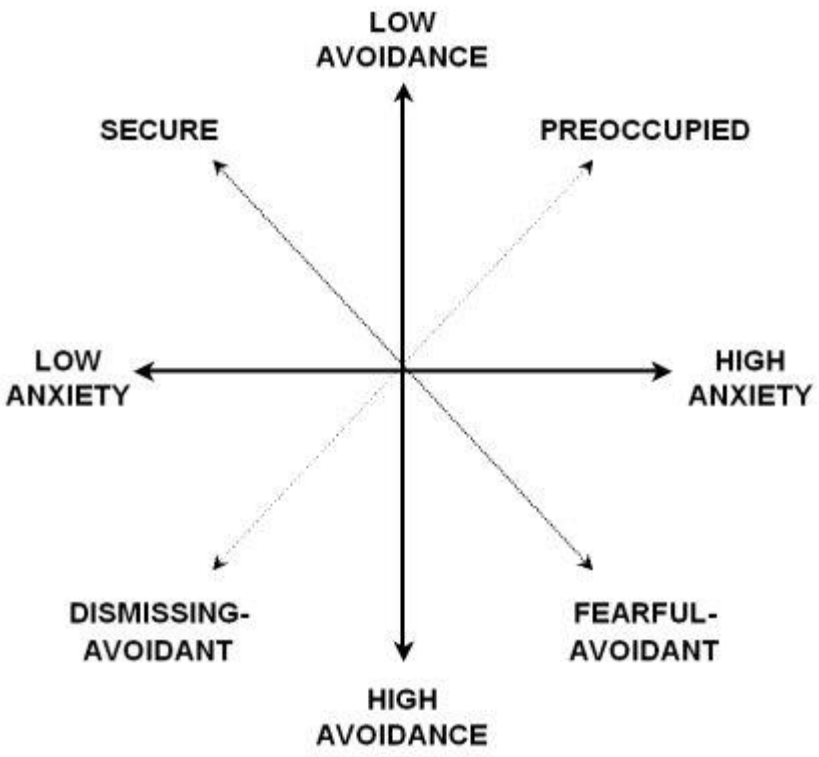

Figure 1. Two-dimensional four-category model of adult attachment (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview used for this study was developed by this writer and her dissertation adviser, Jeffrey Rosen, Ph.D. The first part of this interview inquired about participants' experiences of leaving their country of origin and adjusting to life upon going abroad. It attempted to get a sense of the participants' preparations for departure from their country of origin, their experiences of this separation, and how they navigated the challenges of the new environment. The second half of the interview explored how the participants' sense of self has changed over time, the impact that going abroad has had on their existing relationships, and how

they formed new significant relationships. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for the qualitative analysis.

Procedures

Recruitment. Participants were graduate international students who have been in the US up to six years. This study recruited only graduate students because as a group they are more likely to be homogenous than undergraduate students, and they are more likely to have consolidated a firmer identity and not be faced with additional developmental challenges, such as separating from their parents. Also, based on a few exploratory interviews I conducted with some friends who were both undergraduate and graduate students, graduate students were more likely to be reflective and introspective during those interviews.

Participants were recruited through emails that were sent to International Student Offices and international student organizations which were asked to distribute the email (with a link to the online survey) through their email list serve. Students were instructed either to get in touch with this writer through email or to fill out the survey online by following the link in the email.

Procedure. As outlined in the previous section, participants received an email that briefly explained the study and contained a link and the password to the online survey. Interested participants then followed the link to the online survey. Once they signed into the survey they were presented with the informed consent form, which they

signed electronically. They then filled out the questionnaires. It took participants approximately 25 minutes to complete the online survey.

In order to refine the understanding of internationals students' adjustment experiences and the impact of attachment on these, this study also included a qualitative part. Thus, while the recruitment for the online survey was ongoing, I selected a total of 15 participants for a qualitative semi-structured interview. These participants were selected from the participant pool on the basis of their attachment classification on the ECR and their length of stay in the US. Originally the plan was to recruit a total of 18 participants (6 securely attached, 6 preoccupied, and 6 dismissing). However, because of the shortage of participants with dismissing attachment, this was not possible. Thus, the final break-down of the interviewees is as follows: (1) 6 participants who had been in the US no longer than 3 years and scored as securely attached, (2) 6 participants who had been in the US no longer than 3 years and scored as preoccupied, and (3) 3 participants who had been in the US no longer than 3 years and scored as dismissing avoidant.

Data Analysis

This study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyzing the data. A quantitative approach made it possible to study a larger sample using standardized measures, which allowed for comparisons between participants. While the quantitative analysis allowed for more generalizable conclusion, qualitative analysis enriched the quantitative data by creating a more nuanced description and understanding of the impact of attachment on international students' experiences of studying abroad.

Quantitative analysis. First, each participant's attachment style was determined depending on the scores on the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory. In order to decide whether attachment would be coded as a continuous or categorical variable, the distribution of the data was first examined. Pearson's correlations were used to determine the degree of the relationship between the anxiety and avoidance subscales and participants' reported acculturative stress and depressive symptoms. The relationship between the different attachment styles and participants' acculturative stress and depressive symptoms was measured by ANOVAs and a univariate analysis of variance.

Qualitative analysis. A total of 15 students who have been in the US up to three years were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. These participants were indexed according to their scores on the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory. The breakdown of the participants was laid out in the Procedure section. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

The raw text of the transcripts was coded and transformed into a theoretical narrative using the grounded theory method as outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). First, all text passages that contained an idea relevant to the research topic were highlighted and copied into a separate document. These passages made up the relevant text.

Second, the relevant text was organized into repeating ideas which are ideas "expressed in relevant text by two or more research participants" (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p. 54). The repeating ideas were initially given simple names (e.g.

future plans) and were eventually replaced by participants' quotes or a paraphrase to reflect their experiences.

Third, the repeating ideas were organized into larger clusters that express a common theme, which "is an implicit idea or topic that a group of repeating ideas have in common" (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p. 62). The themes were then given a simple name with a phrase that expressed a common thread between the repeating ideas.

Fourth, the themes were organized into abstract groupings termed theoretical constructs. A theoretical construct is "an abstract concept that organizes a group of themes by fitting them into a theoretical framework" (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p. 67). While the theoretical constructs were created with keeping attachment theory in mind, the emerging theoretical constructs were also used to expand and refine existing theories.

Fifth and last, a theoretical narrative was created by using the theoretical constructs to organize participants' subjective experiences into a coherent story. As Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) put it, the theoretical narrative integrates "the subjective world of people's experience with the abstract world of theory" (p. 74). In order to create a theoretical narrative, the theoretical constructs were broken down into thematic components using the language of the repeated ideas to tell the going abroad story in the participants' own words. The theoretical constructs and themes were inserted in the narrative in parentheses to show how the narrative is grounded in data. The repeated ideas were put in quotations as they represent the participants' own words.

In the next chapter, results for the quantitative and qualitative data will be presented.

Chapter III

Results

This chapter contains two sections. The first section summarizes the quantitative results that bear on the eight quantitatively examined hypotheses. All analyses within this section used an alpha level of .05 and two-tailed tests unless otherwise stated. The second section presents the results of the qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Results

Out of the 91 international students who participated in this study, a total of 89 participants reported their age. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 45 years, with a mean age of 28.88 (*SD* = 3.93). A count of the participants' ages can be seen in Figure 2.

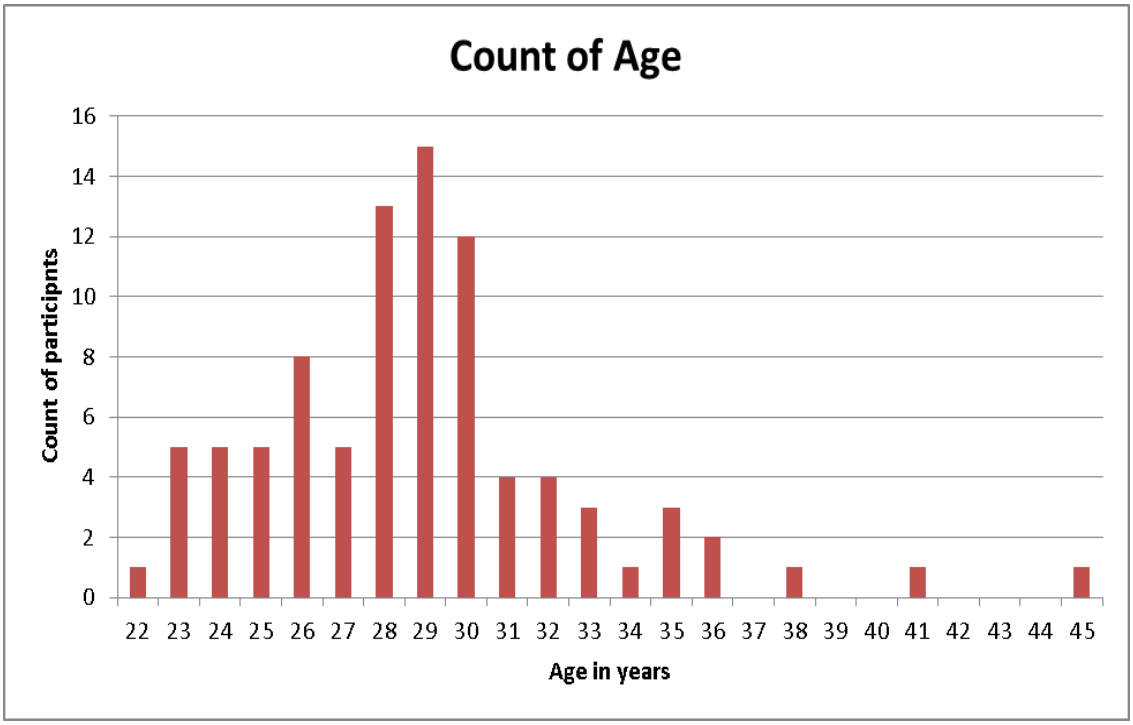

Figure 2. Count of participants' ages in years.

Out of the 91 participants, 42 identified themselves as Asian, 35 as White, six as Latino, and eight as other, such as Middle Eastern. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of participants' regions of origin.

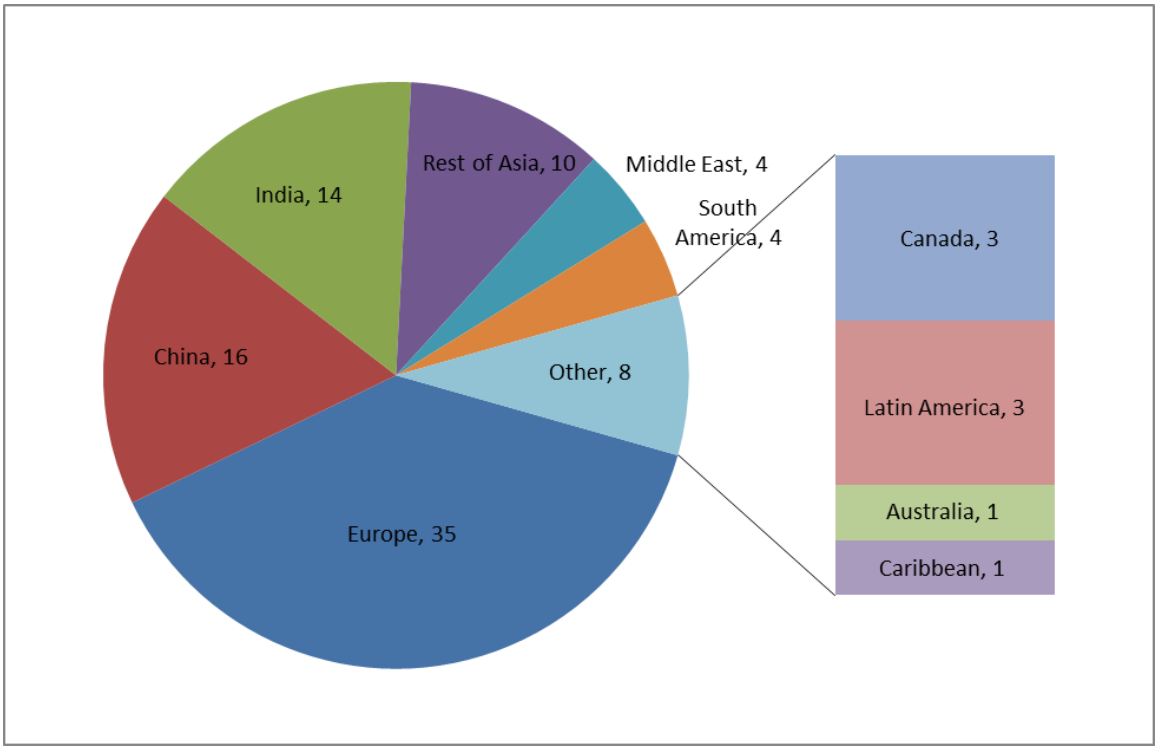

Figure 3. Count of participants' regions of origin.

For the majority of the 91 participants (87%), English was the second language. Out of the 72 participants who reported the graduate degree they seek, 10 were masters students and 62 were doctoral students. The average number of years living in the United States was 2.91, with a range of .51 to 5.81 years. Figure 4 shows the distribution of participants' length of stay in the United States. Figure 5 shows the distribution of participants' reported relationship status. In terms of sexual orientation, 84 participants identified themselves as heterosexual, three as gay, and three as bisexual. One of the 91 participants did not respond to this question.

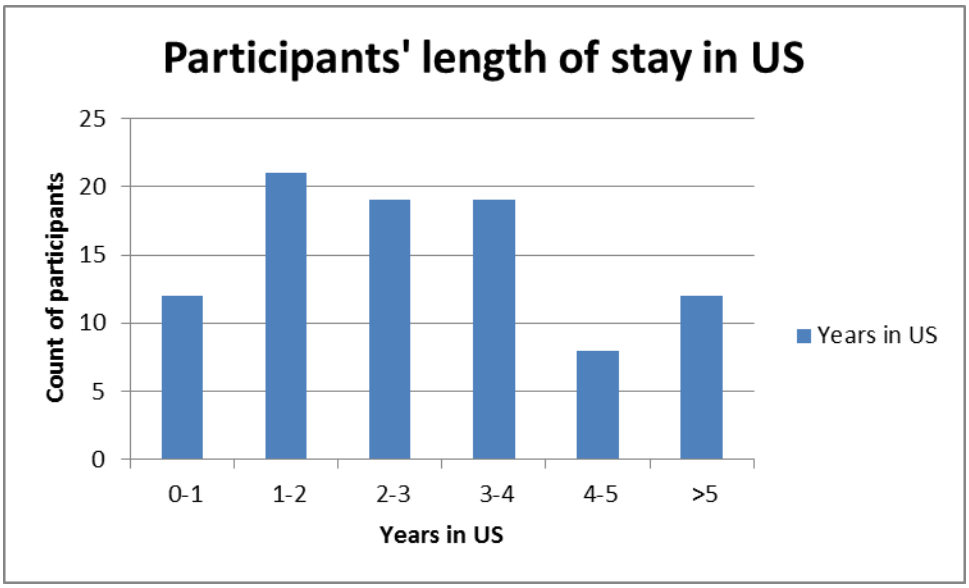

Figure 4. Count of participants' length of stay in US in years.

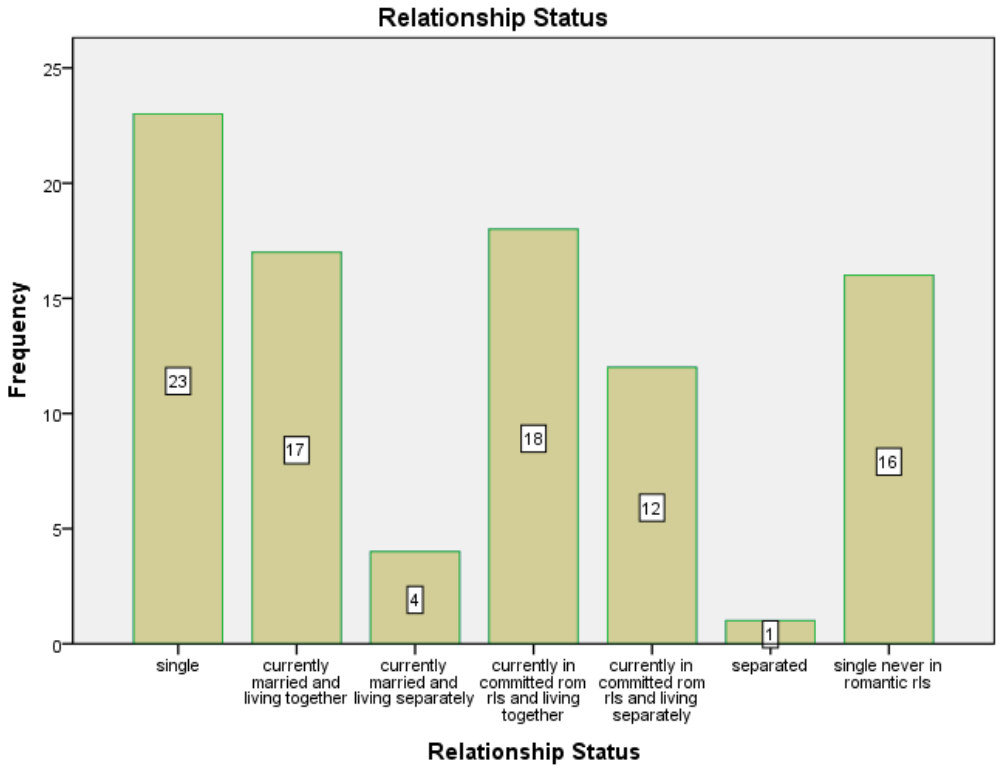

Figure 5. Breakdown of participants' reported relationship status.

Descriptive Statistics: Attachment and reported acculturative stress. Ninety-one participants completed the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECR). As can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 6, 63% scored as securely attached, 25% as preoccupied, 9% as dismissive, and 3% as fearful.

Table 1

Distribution of Participants Across Attachment Groups

	f	Percent
Secure	57	62.6
Dismissive	8	8.8
Preoccupied	23	25.3
Fearful	3	3.3
Total	91	100.0

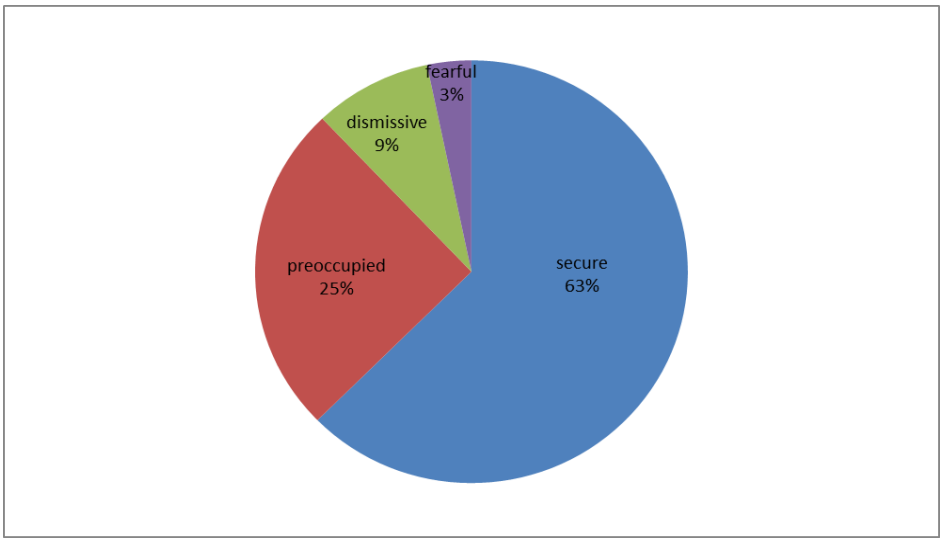

Figure 6. Breakdown of attachment categeories in percent.

As not all attachment groups were sufficiently large for meaningful statistical analyses, we decided to measure attachment as a continuous rather than categorical category by looking at the anxiety and avoidance dimensions separately. For later analyses we also moved the point of intersection for the anxiety and avoidance dimensions so that they created four groups of approximately the same size, which allowed for meaningful statistical analyses. The original paper by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) suggested that the threshold be set at 72 for the anxiety subscale and 72 for the avoidance subscale. After re-weighting our sample to maximize its statistical power, the new thresholds are calculated to be at 59 for the anxiety subscale and 51 for the avoidance subscale. This separated participants into four groups defined by their relative attachment anxiety and avoidance. The new distribution of participants across the adjusted attachment groups can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 7. The distribution of participants before and after the adjustment of the intersection point of anxiety and avoidance can also be seen in Figures 8 and 9.

Table 2

Distribution of Participants Across (Adjusted) Attachment Groups

	f	Percent
Secure	23	25.3
Dismissive	22	24.2
Preoccupied	21	23.1
Fearful	25	27.5
Total	91	100.0

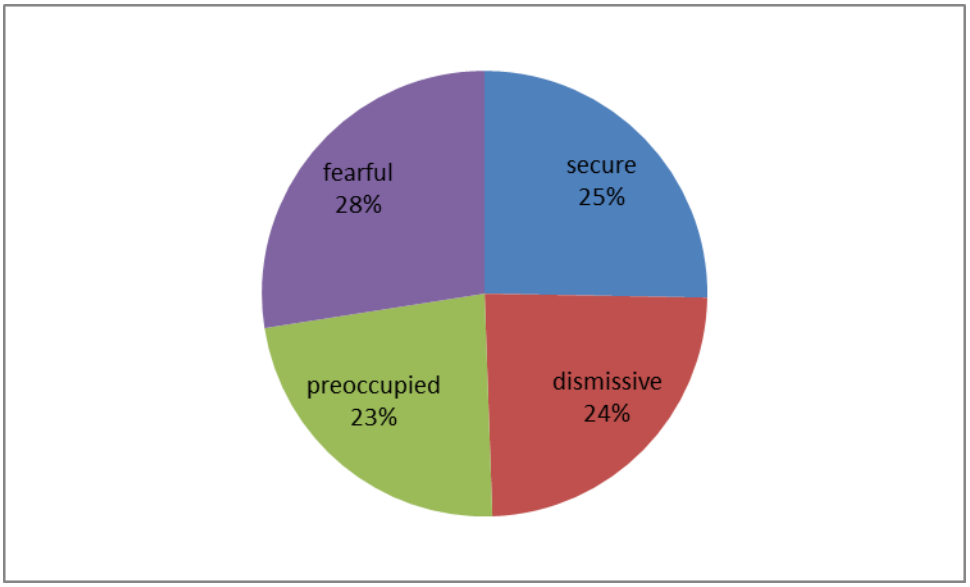

Figure 7. Breakdown of (adjusted) attachment categories.

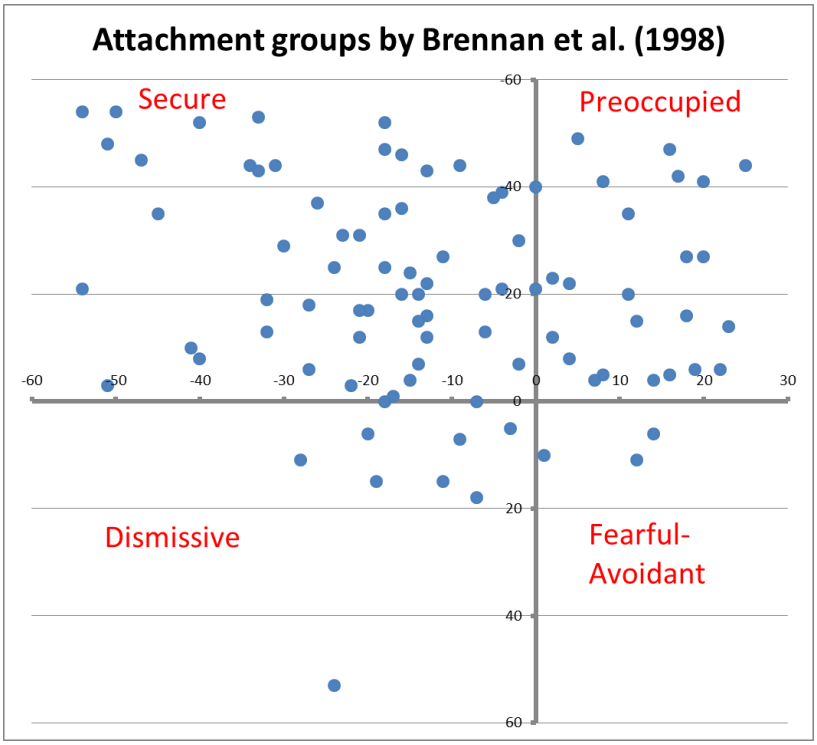

Figure 8. Distribution of participants across original attachment groups.

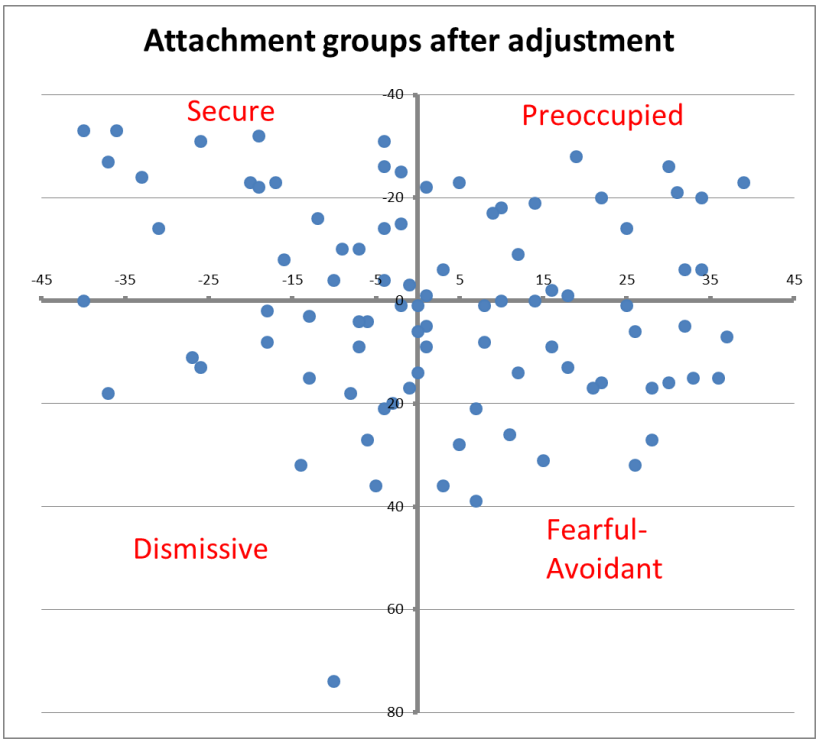

Figure 9. Distribution of participants across (adjusted) attachment groups.

Hypothesis 1. Positive correlation between attachment anxiety/avoidance and acculturative stress. The relationship between the attachment anxiety/avoidance subscales and acculturative stress is illustrated in the scatterplots in Figure 10 and Figure 11.

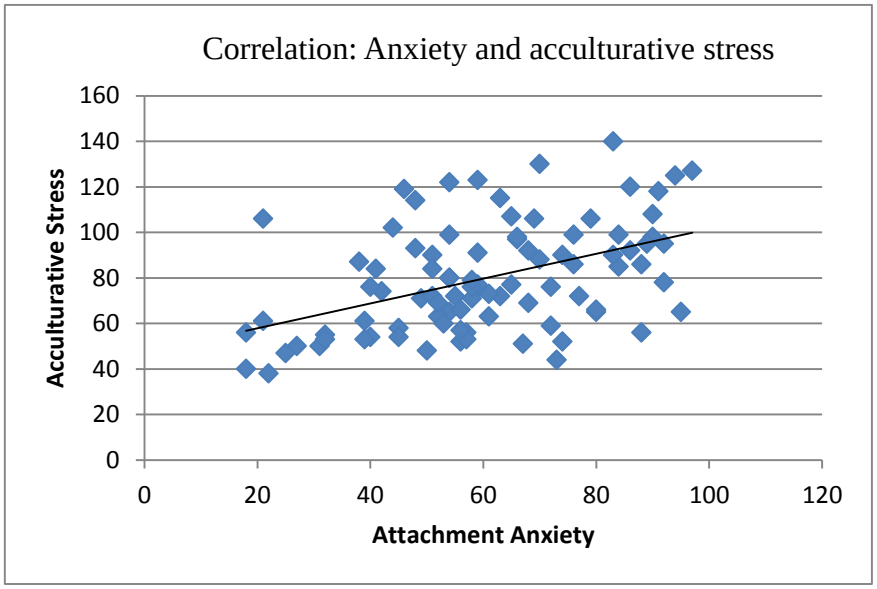

Figure 10. Correlation between attachment anxiety and acculturative stress.

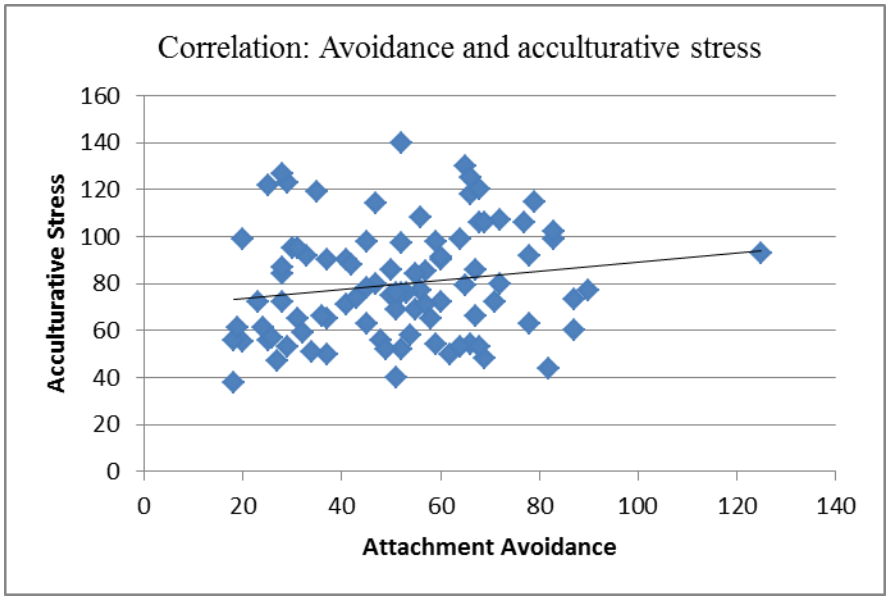

Figure 11. Correlation between attachment avoidance and acculturative stress.

As shown in Table 3, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the anxiety subscale of the ECR and the level of acculturative stress ($r(89) = .46$, $p < .01$). This finding indicated that a higher level of attachment anxiety was related to a higher level of acculturative stress.

Table 3

Correlation Between Attachment Anxiety and Acculturative Stress

		Attachment Anxiety	Acculturative Stress
Attachment Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.46**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
	N	91	91
Acculturative Stress	Pearson Correlation	.46**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	N	91	91

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in Table 4, there was not a statistically significant correlation between the avoidance subscale of the ECR and the level of acculturative stress ($r(89) = .16$, $p = .12$). This finding indicates that the level of attachment avoidance is not related to the level of acculturative stress.

Table 4

Correlation Between Attachment Avoidance and Acculturative Stress

		Attachment Avoidance	Acculturative Stress
Attachment Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	1	.16
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.12
	N	91	91
Acculturative Stress	Pearson Correlation	.16	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.12	
	N	91	91

Hypothesis 2: Positive correlation between attachment anxiety/avoidance and CES-D. The relationship between the attachment anxiety/avoidance subscales and depressive symptoms is illustrated in the scatterplots in Figure 10 and Figure 11.

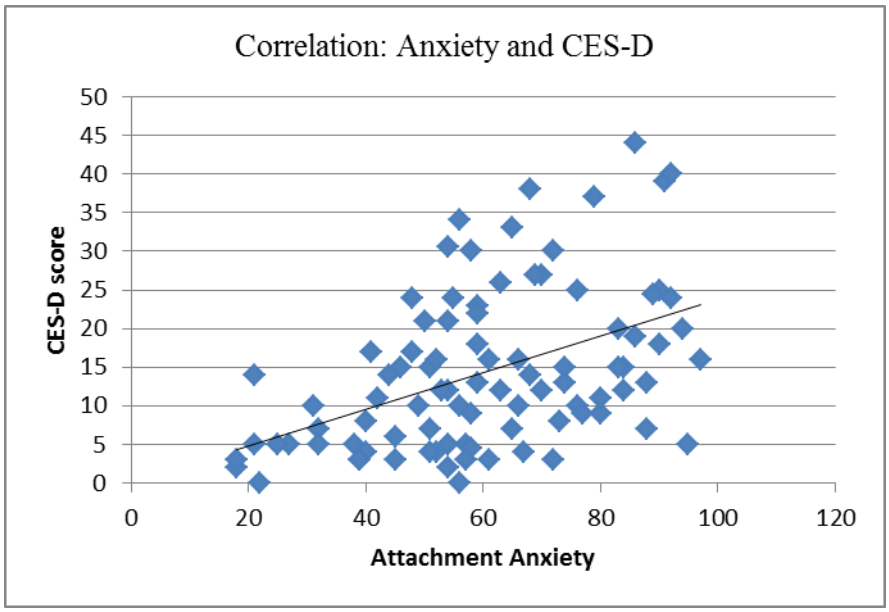

Figure 12. Correlation between attachment anxiety and CES-D scores.

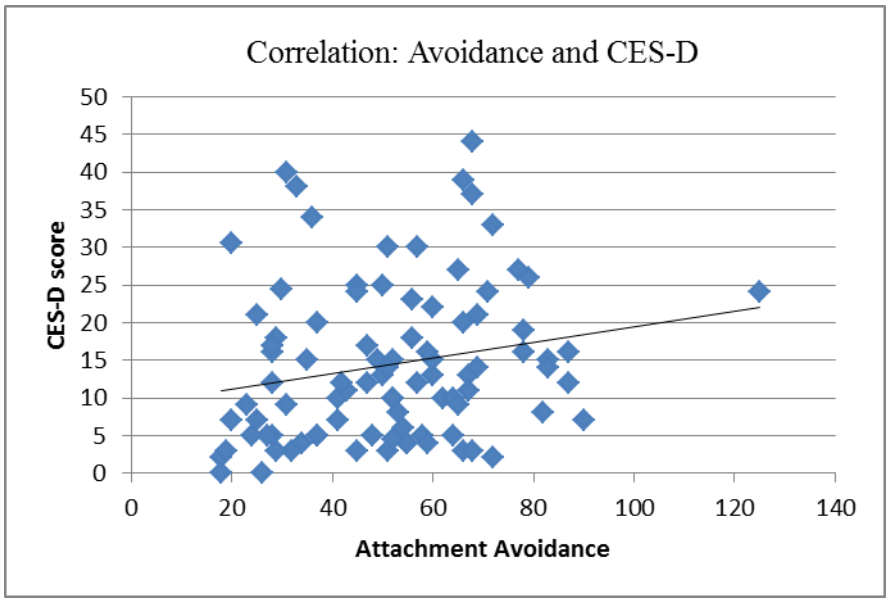

Figure 13. Correlation between attachment avoidance and CES-D scores.

As shown in Table 5, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the attachment anxiety subscale of the ECR and the number of reported depressive symptoms ($r(89) = .46$, $p < .01$). This result indicated that a higher level of attachment anxiety was related to more depressive symptoms.

Table 5

Correlation Between Attachment Anxiety and CES-D Scores

		Attachment Anxiety	CES-D
Attachment Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.46**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
	N	91	91
CES-D	Pearson Correlation	.46**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	N	91	91

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 6, there was a statistically significant correlation between the avoidance subscale of the ECR and the number of reported depressive symptoms ($r(89) = .21$, $p = .05$). This result indicated that a higher level of attachment avoidance was related to more depressive symptoms.

Table 6

Correlation Between Attachment Avoidance and CES-D Scores

		Attachment Avoidance	CES-D
Attachment Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	1	.21
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.05*
	N	91	91
CES-D	Pearson Correlation	.21	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.05*	
	N	91	91

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 3: Positive correlation between acculturative stress and depressive symptoms. As shown in Table 6, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the level of reported acculturative stress and reported depressive symptoms ($r(89) = .59$, $p \leq .01$). This finding indicated that a higher level of acculturative stress was related to more reported depressive symptoms.

Table 7

Correlation Between Acculturative Stress and CES-D Scores

		Acculturative Stress	CES-D
Acculturative Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.59**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
	N	91	91
CES-D	Pearson Correlation	.59**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	N	91	91

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 4: Relationship between (adjusted) attachment groups and acculturative stress assessed by one-way ANOVA. Before using the (adjusted) attachment groups as categorical variables, a Chi-Square test was performed to determine if females and males were distributed differently across the (adjusted) attachment groups. A summary of the gender distribution for each (adjusted) attachment category can be seen in Table 8. There was no statistically significant association between gender and attachment category, $\chi^2(3) = 1.23$, $p = .75$ (see Table 9). A visual presentation of the gender distribution can be seen in Figure 14.

Table 8

Crosstabulation of Gender and (Adjusted) Attachment Groups (AAG)

		Adjusted Attachment Group (AAG)				Total
		secure	dismissive	preoccupied	fearful	
Female	Count	12	9	12	13	46
	% within sex	26.1%	19.6%	26.1%	28.3%	100.0%
	% within AAG	52.2%	40.9%	57.1%	52.0%	50.5%
	% of Total	13.2%	9.9%	13.2%	14.3%	50.5%
Male	Count	11	13	9	12	45
	% within sex	24.4%	28.9%	20.0%	26.7%	100.0%
	% within AAG	47.8%	59.1%	42.9%	48.0%	49.5%
	% of Total	12.1%	14.3%	9.9%	13.2%	49.5%
Total	Count	23	22	21	25	91
	% within sex	25.3%	24.2%	23.1%	27.5%	100.0%
	% within AAG	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	25.3%	24.2%	23.1%	27.5%	100.0%

Table 9

Chi-square Test for Gender and Attachment Group

	Value	*Df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.23[a]	3	.75
Likelihood Ratio	1.23	3	.75
Linear-by-Linear Association	.10	1	.75
N of Valid Cases	91		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is 10.38.

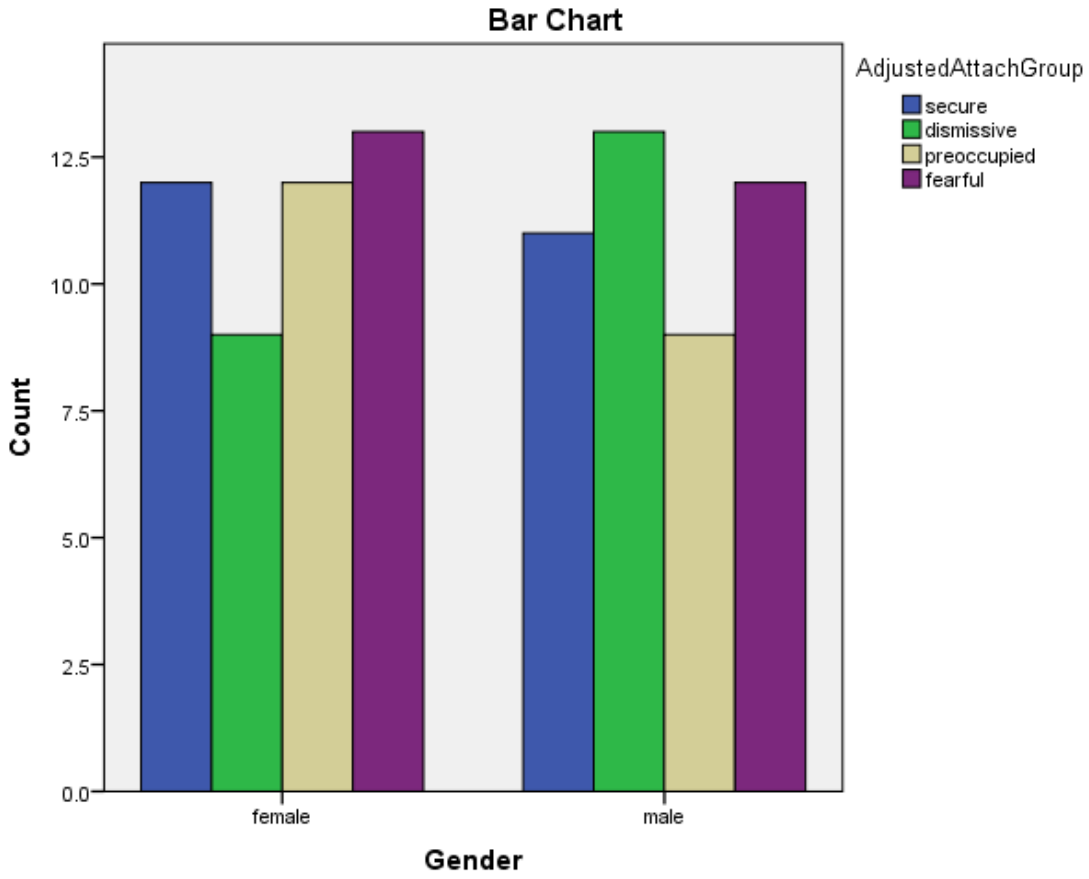

Figure 14. Count of females and males in (adjusted) attachment groups.

A Chi-Square test was also performed to determine if individuals from different regions of origin were distributed differently across the attachment groups. Due to an otherwise too small sample size, only 75 participants from Europe, China, India and other Asian countries were considered. The distribution of individuals from different regions across the (adjusted) attachment groups can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10

Crosstabulation of Regions of Origin and the (Adjusted) Attachment Groups (AAG)

		Adjusted Attachment Group (AAG)				
		secure	dismissive	preoccupied	fearful	Total
Europe	Count	13	5	9	8	35
	% within region	37.1	14.3	25.7	22.9	100.0
	% within AAG	59.1	27.8	47.4	50.0	46.7
	% of Total	17.3	6.7	12.0	10.7	46.7
China	Count	3	3	4	6	16
	% within region	18.8	18.8	25.0	37.5	100.0
	% within AAG	13.6	16.7	21.1	37.5	21.3
	% of Total	4.0	4.0	5.3	8.0	21.3
India	Count	3	4	5	2	14
	% within region	21.4	28.6	35.7	14.3	100.0
	% within AAG	13.6	22.2	26.3	12.5	18.7
	% of Total	4.0	5.3	6.7	2.7	18.7
Other Asian Country	Count	3	6	1	0	10
	% within region	30.0	60.0	10.0	0.0	100.0
	% within AAG	13.6	33.3	5.3	0.0	13.3
	% of Total	4.0	8.0	1.3	0.0	13.3
Total	Count	22	18	19	16	75
	% within region	29.3	24.0	25.3	21.3	100.0
	% within AAG	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	% of Total	29.3	24.0	25.3	21.3	100.0

A visual representation of the distribution of participants from different regions across the (adjusted) attachment groups can be seen in the bar chart in Figure 15.

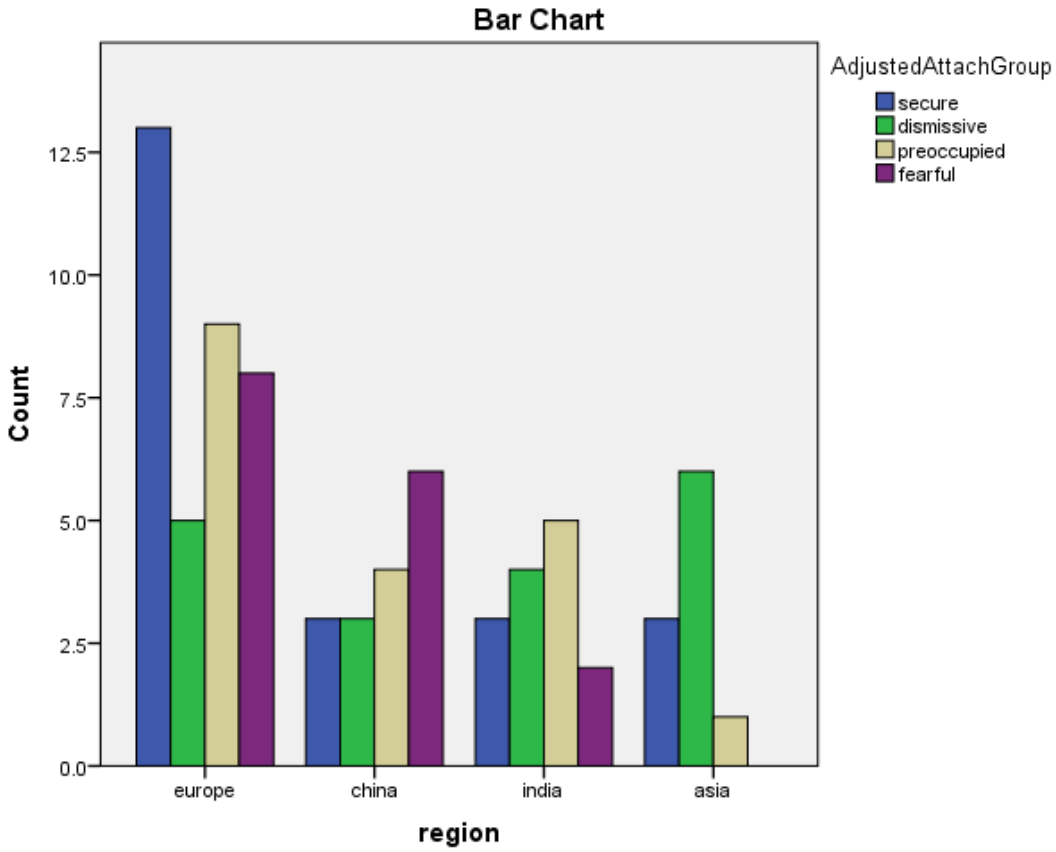

Figure 15. Count of participants from different regions of origin in each adjusted attachment group.

As can be seen in Table 11, the results of the Chi-square test did not indicate that there was a statistically significant association between region of origin and (adjusted) attachment group, χ^2 (9) = 14.70, p = .10.

Table 11

Chi-square Test for Region of Origin and (Adjusted) Attachment Group

	Value	*df*	*p*
Pearson Chi-Square	14.70[a]	9	.10
Likelihood Ratio	15.43	9	.08
Linear-by-Linear Association	.82	1	.37
N	75		

a. 12 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.13.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the relationship between a particular (adjusted) attachment group and the number of reported acculturative stress items on ASSIS. The independent variable, participant's attachment style, included four categories: secure, dismissive, preoccupied, and fearful. One of the assumptions of the one-way ANOVA is that the variances of the groups which are compared are similar. Therefore, Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance was performed. The result was $F(3, 87) = .92$, $p = .43$, indicating the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. As can be seen in Tables 12 and 13, there was a statistically significant difference between the number of reported acculturative stress items across the four (adjusted) attachment groups, ($F(3, 87) = 8.10$, $p < .001$).

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics of ANOVA for ASSIS and (Adjusted) Attachment Groups

	N	*M*	*SD*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Secure	23	71.52	24.27	5.06	61.03	82.02	38	122
Dismissive	22	69.32	16.75	3.57	61.89	76.74	48	106
Preoccupied	21	80.10	20.77	4.53	70.64	89.55	51	127
Fearful	25	96.56	22.31	4.46	87.35	105.77	44	140
Total	91	79.85	23.67	2.48	74.92	84.78	38	140

Table 13

ANOVA of ASSIS and (Adjusted) Attachment Groups

	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	11017.36	3	3672.46	8.10	.000
Within Groups	39424.48	87	453.16		
Total	50441.84	90			

The Tukey post-hoc test revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean number of reported acculturative stress items among the different (adjusted) attachment groups. As can be seen in Table 14, the fearful group reported significantly more acculturative stress (M = 96.56 +/- 4.46) when compared to the secure (M = 71.52 +/- 5.06) and dismissive group (M = 69.32 +/- 3.57). While the preoccupied group's mean of acculturative stress was higher (M = 80.10 +/- 4.53) when compared to the dismissive and secure group and lower when compared to the fearful group, these differences in scores were not statistically significant. Furthermore, there were no

statistically significant differences among the other groups. These results suggested that the (adjusted) fearful group reported higher levels of acculturative stress when compared to the secure and dismissive (adjusted) attachment groups. As the Pearson correlations between attachment anxiety/attachment avoidance and acculturative stress showed, attachment anxiety seemed to be the factor that correlates most with acculturative stress.

Table 14

Multiple Comparisons of Mean Acculturative Stress for (Adjusted) Attachment Groups

(I) Adjusted Attachment Group	(J) Adjusted Attachment Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	*SE*	*p*	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secure	Dismissive	2.20	6.35	.99	-14.42	18.83
	Preoccupied	-8.57	6.43	.54	-25.40	8.26
	Fearful	-25.04*	6.15	.00	-41.15	-8.93
Dismissive	Secure	-2.20	6.35	.99	-18.83	14.42
	Preoccupied	-10.78	6.49	.35	-27.79	6.23
	Fearful	-27.24*	6.22	.00	-43.54	-10.94
Preoccupied	Secure	8.57	6.43	.54	-8.26	25.40
	Dismissive	10.78	6.49	.35	-6.23	27.79
	Fearful	-16.47	6.30	.05	-32.97	.04
Fearful	Secure	25.04*	6.15	.00	8.93	41.15
	Dismissive	27.24*	6.22	.00	10.94	43.54
	Preoccupied	16.47	6.30	.05	-.04	32.97

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The difference in the mean acculturative stress scores can be seen in Figure 16 below.

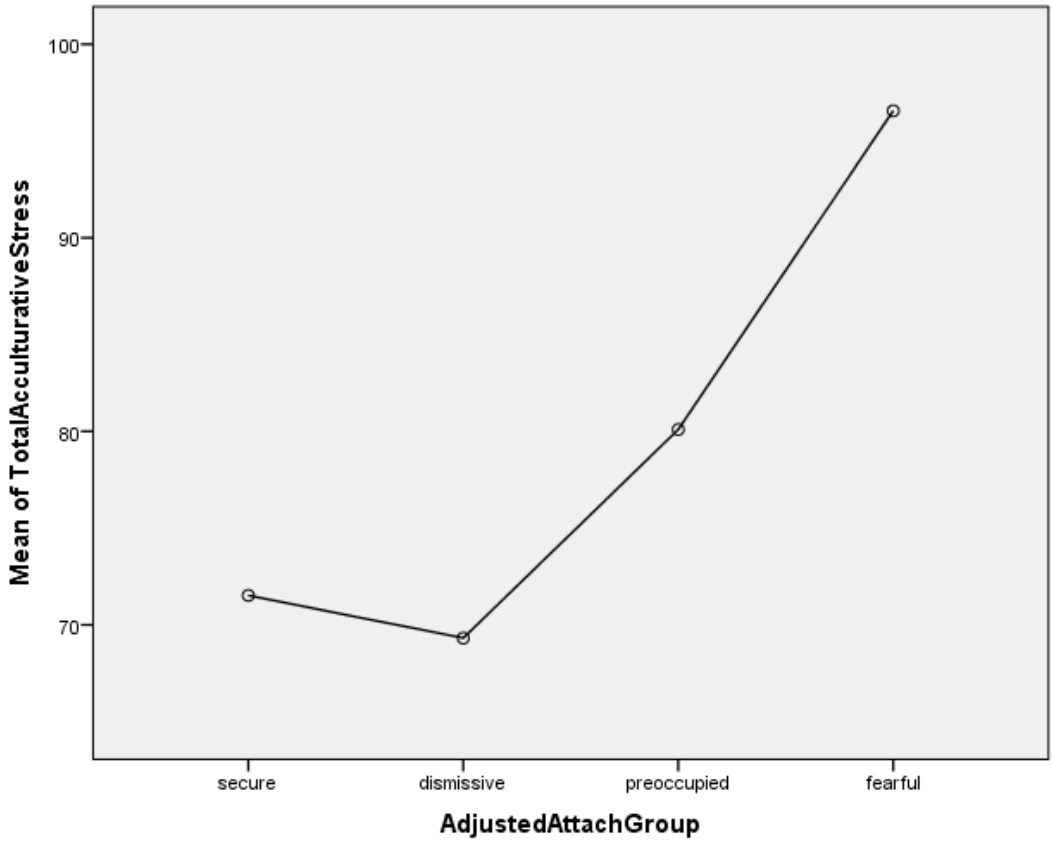

Figure 16. Average acculturative stress for (adjusted) attachment groups.

Hypothesis 4: Relationship between (adjusted) attachment groups and acculturative stress assessed by Univariate Analysis of Variance. A 2 X 2 (attachment anxiety X attachment avoidance) analysis of variance tested the effects of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on acculturative stress. One of the assumptions of the univariate analysis of variance is that the variances of the groups are similar. To test this assumption Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance was performed. The result was $F(3, 87) = .92$, $p = .43$, indicating the assumption of variances was met. As can be seen in Table 15, results indicated a significant main effect for attachment anxiety, $F(3, 87) = 16.03$, $p < .001$.

As shown in Table 16, those who reported higher levels of attachment anxiety reported more acculturative stress ($M = 88.33$ +/- 3.15) as compared to participants who reported lower levels of attachment anxiety ($M = 70.42$ +/- 3.17). There was no main effect for attachment avoidance, $F(3, 87) = 2.54$, $p = .11$. As Table 17 shows, participants who reported higher levels of attachment avoidance did not report significantly different levels of acculturative stress ($M = 82.94$ +/- 3.11) as compared to individuals who reported lower levels of acculturative stress ($M = 75.81$ +/- 3.21).

A significant interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance was found, $F(3, 87) = 4.36$, $p = .04$, indicating that the levels of acculturative stress differed significantly across different levels of anxiety and avoidance. As can be seen in Table 18, participants who reported high attachment anxiety and high attachment avoidance (fearful group) reported the most acculturative stress ($M = 96.56$). They were followed by participants who reported high anxiety and low avoidance (preoccupied group) ($M = 80.10$). Then followed participants who reported low anxiety and low

avoidance (secure group) (*M* = 71.52). Participants who reported low anxiety and high avoidance (dismissive group) reported the lowest levels of acculturative stress (*M* = 69.32).

Table 15

Summary of Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Anxiety and Avoidance on Acculturative Stress

Source	Type III *SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Corrected Model	11017.36[a]	3	3672.46	8.10	.00
Intercept	570955.12	1	570955.12	1259.96	.00
Anxiety	7265.50	1	7265.50	16.03	.00
Avoidance	1151.97	1	1151.97	2.54	.11
Anxiety * Avoidance	1973.96	1	1973.96	4.36	.04
Error	39424.48	87	453.16		
Total	630604.04	91			
Corrected Total	50441.84	90			

a. R Squared = .22 (Adjusted R Squared = .19)

Table 16

Estimates of Error of Mean Acculturative Stress for Low and High Attachment Anxiety

Anxiety	*M*	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	70.42	3.17	64.11	76.73
High	88.33	3.15	82.07	94.59

Table 17

Estimates of Error of Mean Acculturative Stress for Low and High Attachment Avoidance

Avoidance	*M*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	75.81	3.21	69.42	82.19
High	82.94	3.11	76.76	89.12

Table 18

Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Acculturative Stress for Low and High Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance

Anxiety	Avoidance	*M*	*SD*	*n*
	Low	71.52	24.27	23
Low	High	69.32	16.75	22
	Total	70.44	20.73	45
	Low	80.10	20.77	21
High	High	96.56	22.31	25
	Total	89.04	22.93	46
	Low	75.61	22.82	44
Total	High	83.81	24.01	47
	Total	79.85	23.67	91

Hypothesis 5: Relationship between (adjusted) attachment groups and depressive symptoms assessed by one-way ANOVA. A one-way ANOVA was performed in order to compare the effect of a particular (adjusted) attachment group on the number of reported depressive symptoms on CES-D. The independent variable, participants' attachment styles, included four categories: secure, dismissive, preoccupied, and fearful. Results of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance indicated the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met, $F(3, 87) = .73$, $p = .54$. As can be seen in Table 19 and Table 20, the number of reported depressive symptoms differed significantly across the four (adjusted) attachment groups, $F(3, 87) = 5.67$, $p = .001$.

Table 19

Summary of Descriptive Statistics of ANOVA for CES-D Scores Across (Adjusted) Attachment Groups

	N	*M*	*SD*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Secure	23	9.67	9.10	1.90	5.74	13.61	0	34
Dismissive	22	11.02	7.97	1.70	7.49	14.56	2	30
Preoccupied	21	17.21	10.61	2.32	12.39	22.04	3	40
Fearful	25	19.44	10.41	2.08	15.14	23.74	5	44
Total	91	14.42	10.31	1.08	12.28	16.57	0	44

Table 20

ANOVA for CES-D Scores and (Adjusted) Attachment Groups

	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	1565.97	3	521.99	5.67	.001
Within Groups	8007.49	87	92.04		
Total	9573.46	90			

As can be seen in Table 21, post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey test indicated that there was a significant difference in the mean number of reported depressive symptoms among the different (adjusted) attachment groups. Specifically, the results indicate that fearful individuals reported more depressive symptoms (M = 19.44 +/- 2.08) when compared to secure (M = 9.67 +/- 1.90, p = .004) and dismissive individuals (M = 11.02 +/- 1.70, p = .02). Preoccupied individuals also reported more depressive symptoms (M = 17.21 +/- 2.32, p = .05) compared to secure ones. Figure 17 shows the average number of depressive symptoms for all the (adjusted) attachment groups.

Table 21

Multiple Comparisons of Mean CES-D Scores for (Adjusted) Attachment Groups (AAG)

(I) AAG	(J) AAG	Mean Difference (I-J)	*SE*	*p*	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secure	Dismissive	-1.35	2.86	.97	-8.84	6.15
	Preoccupied	-7.54*	2.90	.05	-15.13	.04
	Fearful	-9.77*	2.77	.004	-17.03	-2.51
Dismissive	Secure	1.35	2.86	.97	-6.15	8.84
	Preoccupied	-6.19	2.93	.16	-13.86	1.48
	Fearful	-8.42*	2.81	.02	-15.76	-1.07
Preoccupied	Secure	7.54*	2.90	.05	-.04	15.13
	Dismissive	6.19	2.93	.16	-1.48	13.86
	Fearful	-2.23	2.84	.86	-9.66	5.21
Fearful	Secure	9.77*	2.77	.004	2.51	17.03
	Dismissive	8.42*	2.81	.02	1.07	15.76
	Preoccupied	2.23	2.84	.86	-5.21	9.66

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

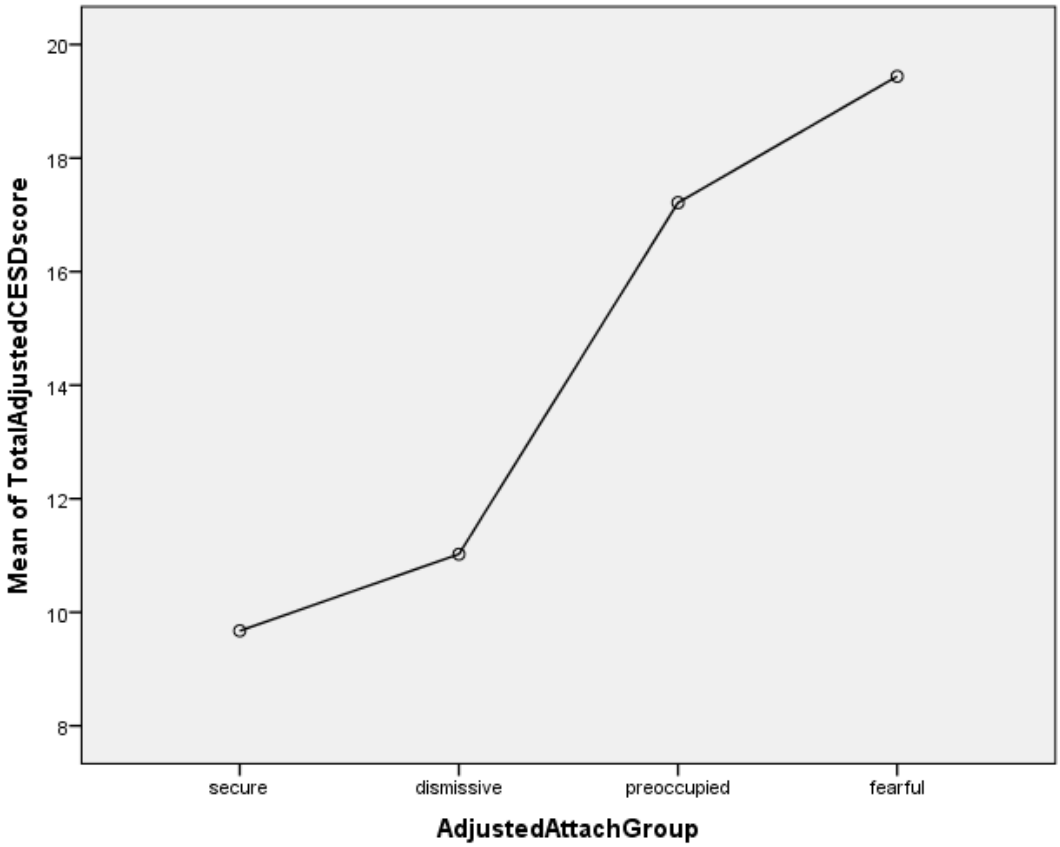

Figure 17. Average CES-D scores for (adjusted) attachment groups.

Hypothesis 6. Effect of depressive symptoms on relationship between (adjusted) attachment groups and acculturative stress assessed by ANCOVA. In order to clarify the effect of depressive symptoms on the relationship between attachment style and acculturative stress, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. The independent variable, participants' attachment styles, included again four categories: secure, dismissive, preoccupied, and fearful. The dependent variable was the number of reported acculturative stress items on the ASSIS. The covariate was the number of reported depressive symptoms on CES-D. An assessment of the assumption of the regression homogeneity was done. As can be seen in Table 22, the result of the F-test of the product term of the (adjusted) attachment group and the CES-D score failed to support the violation of the assumption of the regression homogeneity, *F* adjusted attachment group*CES-D (3, 83) = 1.11, $p = .35$. This result indicated that an interaction effect did not exist. Therefore we were able to assess the effect of attachment style on acculturative stress after controlling for depressive symptoms. As can be seen in Table 23, the results of the F-test supported the effect of the (adjusted) attachment group on acculturative stress after controlling for depressive symptoms, $F(3, 86) = 3.89$, $p = .01$.

Table 22

Test Results for Assumption of Regression Homogeneity

Source	Type III *SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Corrected Model	22579.59[a]	7	3225.66	9.61	.00
Intercept	108836.64	1	108836.64	324.22	.00
AAG[b]	1003.49	3	334.50	.10	.40
CES-D Score	8953.72	1	8953.72	26.67	.00
AAG * CES-D Score	1117.75	3	372.58	1.11	.35
Error	27862.25	83	335.69		
Total	630604.04	91			
Corrected Total	50441.84	90			

a. R Squared = .45 (Adjusted R Squared = .40)

b. AAG stands for (Adjusted) Attachment Group

Table 23

ANCOVA Table for Effect of CES-D Scores on Relationship Between (Adjusted)

Attachment Group (AAG) and Acculturative Stress

Source	Type III *SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Corrected Model	21461.84[a]	4	5365.46	15.92	.00
Intercept	108123.77	1	108123.77	320.86	.00
AAG[b]	3936.50	3	1312.17	3.89	.01
CES-D Score	10444.47	1	10444.47	31.00	.00
Error	28980.00	86	336.98		
Total	630604.04	91			
Corrected Total	50441.84	90			

a. R Squared = .43 (Adjusted R Squared = .40)

b. AAG stands for (Adjusted) Attachment Group

Hypothesis 6. Effect of depressive symptoms on relationship between (adjusted) attachment groups and acculturative stress assessed by Univariate Analysis of Variance with CES-D as covariate. In order to determine the effect of depressive symptoms on the relationship between attachment anxiety/avoidance and acculturative stress the CES-D score was covaried. Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance was performed and indicated that the assumption of variances was met, $F(3, 87) = .24$, $p = .87$. Table 24 shows that even when the number of depressive symptoms is controlled for, there remains a significant effect of attachment anxiety/avoidance on acculturative stress levels, $F(3,87) = 5.24$, $p = .02$. There continues to be a significant main effect of attachment anxiety on acculturative stress levels, $F(3, 97) = 4.41$, $p < .04$.

As can be seen in Table 25, those who reported higher levels of attachment anxiety reported higher levels of acculturative stress ($M = 83.87$ +/- 2.83) as compared to those who reported lower levels of attachment anxiety ($M = 75.07$ +/- 2.86). There was no main effect for attachment avoidance, $F(3, 87) = 1.73$, $p = .19$. This result indicated that participants who reported higher levels of attachment avoidance did not report more acculturative stress ($M = 82.02$ +/- 2.69) as compared to participants who reported lower levels of attachment avoidance ($M = 76.93$ +/- 2.78) (see Table 26).

The two main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(3, 87) = 5.24$, $p = .02$, indicating that acculturative stress levels were not the same for different levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance, and thus across the different attachment groups, even when controlled for the number of reported depressive symptoms.

Table 24

Summary of Effect of Low and High Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance on Acculturative Stress with CES-D Score as Covariate

Source	Type III *SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Corrected Model	21461.84[a]	4	5365.46	15.92	.00
Intercept	108123.77	1	108123.77	320.86	.00
CES-D	10444.47	1	10444.47	31.00	.0
Anxiety	1485.10	1	1485.10	4.41	.04
Avoidance	581.59	1	581.59	1.73	.19
Anxiety * Avoidance	1766.89	1	1766.89	5.24	.02
Error	28980.00	86	336.98		
Total	630604.04	91			
Corrected Total	50441.84	90			

a. R Squared = .43 (Adjusted R Squared = .40)

Table 25

Estimates of Error of Mean Acculturative Stress for Low and High Attachment Anxiety

Anxiety	*M*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	75.07[a]	2.86	69.38	80.76
High	83.87[a]	2.83	78.24	89.50

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: CESD = 14.42.

Table 26

Estimates of Error of Mean Acculturative Stress for Low and High Attachment Avoidance

Avoidance	*M*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	76.93[a]	2.78	71.41	82.45
High	82.02[a]	2.69	76.67	87.36

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: CESD = 14.42.

Hypothesis 7. Relationship between previous travel experiences and acculturative stress. Ninety-one participants reported their travel experiences prior to coming to the US for their graduate studies. Participants were grouped into three groups based on their previous travel experiences. The first group consisted of individuals who never traveled abroad before moving to the US (n = 23). The second group consisted of individuals who traveled prior to moving to the US, yet their travels excluded the US (n = 27). The third group consisted of individuals who visited the US before moving to the US (n = 41).

As can be seen in Tables 27 and 28, there was a statistically significant difference among these groups as determined by a one-way ANOVA, $F(2, 88) = 5.92$, $p \leq .004$. As can be seen in Table 29, a Tukey post-hoc test revealed that acculturative stress was significantly higher for participants who never traveled abroad prior to moving to the US (M = 93.78 +/- 5.02) as compared to participants who traveled to the US before going abroad (M = 75.02 +/- 3.27, $p \leq .01$), and as compared to those who traveled but whose travels excluded the US (M = 75.30 +/- 4.49, p = .01). There was no statistically significant difference in the level of acculturative stress between participants who traveled to the US before going abroad and those who traveled but whose travels did not include the US.

Table 27

Descriptives of Mean Acculturative Stress for Groups with Different Travel Experiences

	N	*M*	*SD*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
no travel	23	93.78	24.09	5.02	83.36	104.20	55.00	140.00
travel no US	27	75.30	23.32	4.49	66.07	84.52	38.00	123.00
travel to US	41	75.02	20.95	3.27	68.41	81.64	47.00	119.00
Total	91	79.85	23.67	2.48	74.92	84.78	38.00	140.00

Table 28

ANOVA for Effect of Previous Travel Experiences on Acculturative Stress

	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	5979.33	2	2989.66	5.92	.004
Within Groups	44462.52	88	505.26		
Total	50441.84	90			

Table 29

Tukey Post-hoc Test for ANOVA Testing Effect of Previous Travel Experiences on Acculturative Stress

Dependent Variable: ASSIS

(I) travel	(J) travel	Mean Difference (I-J)	*SE*	*p*	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
no travel	travel no US	18.49*	6.38	.013	3.28	33.69
	travel to US	18.76*	5.86	.005	4.80	32.72
travel no US	no travel	-18.49*	6.38	.013	-33.69	-3.28
	travel to US	.27	5.57	.999	-13.01	13.55
travel to US	no travel	-18.76*	5.86	.005	-32.72	-4.80
	travel no US	-.27	5.57	.999	-13.55	13.01

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Figure 18 shows the average acculturative stress scores for all the groups.

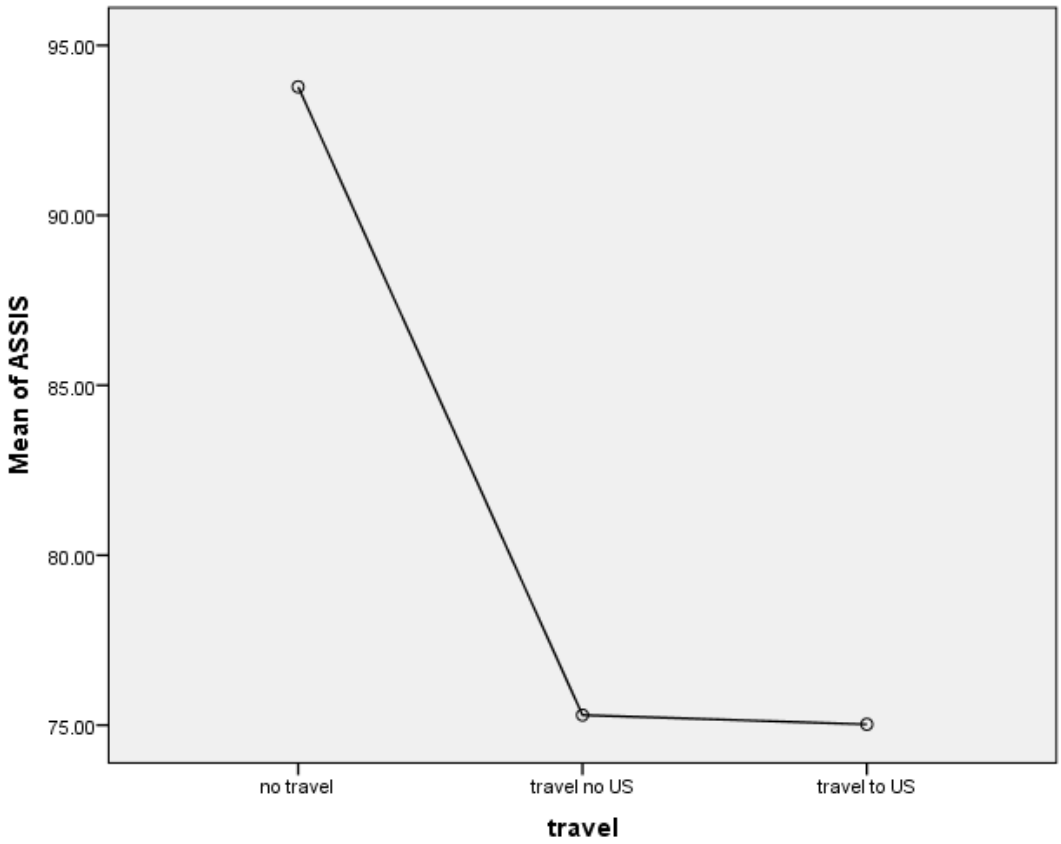

Figure 18. Average acculturative stress for groups with different travel experiences.

Hypothesis 8. Negative correlation between English proficiency and acculturative stress. Forty-one participants reported their TOEFL scores. Other students either did not take the TOEFL, as English was their first language, took a similar but different test assessing their English skills, or reportedly could not recall their scores. It was expected that there would be a negative correlation between the participants' speaking ability (as measured by the TOEFL speaking score) and the level of reported acculturative stress on the ASSIS. Therefore, for this analysis a one-tailed Pearson correlation with an alpha level of .05 was used. A Pearson correlation showed that higher scores on the speaking section of the TOEFL exam were negatively correlated with the reported level of acculturative stress, $r(39) = -.26$, $p = .049$. There was no significant relationship between acculturative stress and the scores on the other subtests of the TOEFL, namely the reading score ($r(39) = .07$, $p = .33$), the listening scores ($r(39) = -.09$, $p = .28$), and the writing score ($r(39) = -0.03$, $p = .44$).

A further analysis was conducted that included only scores for the 33 individuals who stayed in the US for no longer than three years, because those who stayed in the US longer presumably already learned English. Therefore, it was expected that there would not be a strong correlation between their initial English skills and acculturative stress. The results indicated that there was a negative correlation between the English speaking skills and the reported level of acculturative stress, $r(31) = -.30$, $p = .046$.

Qualitative Results

What follows is a report of the qualitative analysis that explored international students' adjustment upon going abroad and separating from attachment objects and places. The interviews also attempted to determine whether there was a parallel between attachment to place and attachment to person. Table 30 contains the quantitative data for the 15 individuals who participated in the interviews.

Table 30

Summary of Quantitative Measures for Interview Participants

Attachment group	Subject	Years in US	Engl.1st language	Anxiety[a]	Avoidance[b]	CES-D[c]	ASSIS[d]
Secure	1	0.81	No	68	33	38	92
	2	0.87	No	39	29	3	53
	3	1.67	Yes	32	64	5	53
	4	1.87	Yes	61	45	3	63
	5	2.43	No	58	65	9	79
	6	2.72	No	54	25	21	122
Preoccupied	7	0.51	Yes	92	45	24	78
	8	0.83	No	74	60	13	90
	9	1.94	Yes	80	31	9	65
	10	2.10	No	91	66	39	118
	11	2.79	No	83	37	20	90
	12	2.83	Yes	70	65	27	130
Dismissive	13	1.05	No	65	90	7	77
	14	1.30	Yes	53	87	12	60
	15	1.34	Yes	61	87	16	73

[a.] Anxiety refers to raw scores on the anxiety subscale of the ECR.
[b.] Avoidance refers to raw scores on the avoidance subscale of the ECR.
[c.] CES-D refers to raw scores on the CES-D.
[d.] ASSIS refers to raw scores on the ASSIS.

The qualitative results are structured in the following way. First the results are summarized in a table, followed by a theoretical narrative. As can be seen in the sample Table 31, the qualitative data were organized into tables with three columns, one each for the secure, preoccupied and dismissive groups. The white fields contain repeated ideas, the light grey fields contain repeated themes, and the dark grey fields contain theoretical constructs. An empty box means that a group did not have any repeated ideas for that particular category. The numbers in the parentheses indicate the number of participants of that particular attachment group who expressed that repeated idea. In the example below, three out of six secure subjects expressed repeated idea 1.

Table 31

Example of Qualitative Data Results Summary Table

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Theoretical construct 1		
Repeated theme 1		
Repeated idea 1. (3/6)	Repeated idea 1. Repeated idea 2.	
Repeated theme 2		
Repeated idea 2.		Repeated idea 2.

As mentioned, there is a theoretical narrative of the qualitative data below each table. Repeated ideas are within quotation marks, “repeated ideas,” themes are italicized and in parentheses (*themes*) and theoretical concepts are in capital letters in parentheses (THEORETICAL CONCEPTS).

It was not evident that individual variations in terms of demographic features played such a role that any participant was a distinct outlier. Therefore, individual

demographic variations will not be addressed in great detail. Instead, patterns within and across the different attachment groups will be discussed. Nevertheless, independent of the particular attachment style, attachment style appeared to be a trait characteristic which could both moderate and be moderated by acute life events, such as going abroad.

For example, a female participant with preoccupied attachment reported that going abroad stirred up her fear of others' availability, the longing for her family, as well as her confidence in her own abilities. She reported that she experienced a "culture shock" upon arriving to the US and that it took her approximately eight months to feel adjusted. She remembered that during the first two years she had frequent arguments with her husband, who accompanied her to the US, because she felt that he was not sufficiently emotionally available. She recounted the following:

> "(…) I was lonely and lost cause my friends and I weren't quite close just yet (…). (…) I was just lonely and I was sad and I cried a lot and I was upset cause I thought I was losing (husband) and I would buy phone cards and call my mother every week."

Furthermore, despite English being her first language, she experienced "language barriers" and struggled to adjust to new social rules, all which negatively impacted her sense of self. She said the following:

> "I'm thinking I've always been intelligent, (…) and now it's like, ahm it seems as if I'm an idiot because that's how people behave because I don't (…) follow the rules that they know to exist. (…) I felt stupid for a bit and my grades actually suffered because I didn't have that confidence in my ability (…)."

She eventually established friendships and also remained in touch with her

support network from home, all which helped her through this difficult time and helped her gain a sense of mastery.

Thus, as this case example illustrates, this participant's preoccupied attachment style contributed to her fear of losing others and to her self-doubts. At the same, going abroad appears to have moderated her preoccupied attachment as she reported that by going abroad she has "grown as a person." She has reportedly learned to not be "limited by fears cause I still let my fears limit me and hold me back." She concluded the following about going abroad:

> "It's sort of taking me back to that place where I try to evaluate some of my values and whether it's the right way to behave and not necessarily right in terms of anyone else but in terms of my contentment (…)."

Table 32

Feelings about Home Country

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Home as comfortable but constraining	Home as comfortable but boring	Home as oppressive and a lack of sense of belonging
Positive feelings about home		
I did not have to worry about too many things. (3/6) Life was more comfortable. (4/6)	I didn't have to struggle. (3/6)	
Negative feelings about home		
Bored		
Life felt monotonous and boring. (3/6)	I was bored at home. (4/6) I was afraid to get stuck. (2/6)	
Lack of sense of belonging		
	I felt out of place at home. (2/6)	I never had a sense of belonging in my home country. (2/3) I could not be myself in my home country. (3/3)
Oppressive feelings about home		
At home there was pressure to comply with others' expectations of me. (3/6) My home country was conservative and not very open minded. (2/6) Life felt constraining and limiting. (2/6)		My home country felt oppressive and restrictive. (3/3) There were many pressures from my family and society. (3/3)

When the secure participants reflected back on their lives in their home countries, they felt conflicted about them (HOME AS COMFORTABLE BUT CONSTRAINING). On the one hand, there were aspects about living in their home country that they liked (*Positive feelings about home*). They liked that "they did not have to worry about too many things" and that "life was more comfortable." On the other hand, there were also

aspects about their home countries that they did not like (*Negative feelings about home*). They did not like that "life felt monotonous and boring (*Bored*)." Some of them even experienced their home country as oppressive (*Oppressive feelings about home*). They felt that "at home there was pressure to comply with others' expectations of them." They also thought that "their home country was conservative and not very open minded," because of which "life felt constraining and limiting."

Similarly, when the preoccupied participants thought about their lives in their home countries, they felt conflicted about them (HOME AS COMFORTABLE BUT BORING). On the one hand, they liked certain aspects about living in their home country (*Positive feelings about home*). Specifically, they liked that "they didn't have to struggle." On the other hand, there were also aspects about their home countries that they did not like (*Negative feelings about home*). "They were bored at home" and "they were afraid to get stuck" in their life style at home (*Bored*). Some of them did not feel a sense of belonging in their home country (*Lack of sense of belonging*) and reported "they felt out of place at home."

In contrast to the secure and preoccupied participants, the dismissive participants did not report any positive feelings about their home countries and only spoke about negative aspects of their lives in their home countries (HOME AS OPPRESSIVE AND A LACK OF SENSE OF BELONGING). "They never had a sense of belonging in their home country" and they felt "they could not be themselves in their home country" (*Lack of sense of belonging*). Moreover, like the secure individuals, all dismissive participants had even stronger negative feelings about their home countries (*Oppressive feelings*

about home). For them, “their home country felt oppressive and restrictive” as “there were many pressures from their family and society.”

Table 33

Reasons to Go Abroad

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Wish to explore	Wish to explore and reunite with attachment object	Wish to explore and disconnect
Desire for better opportunities		
I wanted better education. (5/6) There are more opportunities in the US. (3/6)	There are more opportunities in the US. (3/6)	Money was a good motivating factor for me to come here. (3/3)
Better opportunities upon return home		
US degree is highly appreciated in my home country. (3/6)	I will have better opportunities once I return home. (2/6)	
Desire to be with partner		
	I wanted to be with my partner. (2/6)	
Desire for independence and exploration		
		I wanted more freedom and going abroad for studies was an escape. (3/3)
		I was fascinated by and wanted to experience life in the US. (3/3)

When asked about their reasons for going abroad, the secure participants reported being motivated by a desire to explore (WISH TO EXPLORE). They were looking for better opportunities (*Desire for better opportunities*). Specifically, “they wanted better education” and thought that “there are more opportunities in the US” as compared to their home country. Some of them were also motivated by the prospect of better opportunities

once they return to their home country (*Better opportunities upon return home*) because a "US degree is highly appreciated in their home country."

Similarly to the secure participants, the preoccupied participants were reportedly motivated to come to the US by their wish to explore, as well as a desire to reunite with their partners who were already in the US (WISH TO EXPLORE AND REUNITE WITH ATTACHMENT OBJECT). They thought that "there are more opportunities in the US" (*Desire for better opportunities*). They also hoped that with a US degree "they will have better opportunities once they return home" (*Better opportunities upon return home*). In addition, two of them wanted to come to the US because their partners were already here and "they wanted to be with their partners" (*Desire to be with partner*).

Just like the secure and preoccupied individuals, the dismissive participants were motivated to come to the US because of their desire to explore. However, they were not thinking about how going abroad would benefit them upon returning home. Quite to the contrary, they were looking to get away from their home country (WISH TO EXPLORE AND DISCONNECT). "Money was a good motivating factor for them to come here" (*Desire for better opportunities*). "They wanted more freedom and going abroad for studies was an escape." Furthermore, "they were fascinated by and wanted to experience life in the US (*Desire for independence and exploration*)."

Table 34

Feelings about Going Abroad

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Going abroad as activator of attachment system		
Sadness and anxiety about separation and comfort in being with partner		Excitement about separation and anxiety about being independent
Excitement		
I think the idea of going abroad and everything being new is exciting. (3/6)	I was excited to go to a new place. (5/6)	I was excited about the potential in the US. (2/3)
Freedom		
		I was excited to leave home. (2/3) I felt I was getting free. (3/3)
Sad to leave		
I was sad to leave. (2/6)	I was sad about leaving my family. (2/6)	I was torn because it was a good life even though it was very restrictive but I knew there were some people who cared about me. (2/3)
Scared		
It's scary to go to a place that you don't know. (3/6)	I was scared. (4/6)	I wasn't sure I would be successful. (2/3)
Partner's presence in the US as comfort		
Knowing that my partner is/would be there was exciting and reassuring. (2/6)	I was excited about starting a new life with my partner. (2/6)	

All of the participants had ambivalent feelings about going abroad (GOING ABROAD AS ACTIVATOR OF ATTACHMENT SYSTEM). The secure and preoccupied participants were excited and anxious about going to a new place, as well as sad to leave their families. They were comforted by their partner's presence in the US

(SADNES AND ANXIETY ABOUT SEPARATION AND COMFORT IN BEING WITH PARTNER).

The secure participants thought "the idea of going abroad and everything being new is exciting" (*Excitement*). While they were also "sad to leave" (*Sad to leave*) and thought that "it's scary to go to a place that you don't know" (*Scared*), they reported that "knowing that their partner is/would be there was exciting and reassuring" (*Partner's presence in the US as comfort*).

Similarly, the preoccupied participants reported they were "excited to go to a new place (*Excited*) but "they were sad about leaving their families" (*Sad to leave*). Additionally, "they were scared" (*Scared*). However, just like the secure participants, "they were excited about starting a new life with their partner" (*Comfort in partner's presence in the US*).

While the dismissive participants were excited and scared to go abroad, they generally looked forward to leaving home (EXCITEMENT ABOUT SEPARATION AND ANXIETY ABOUT BEING INDEPENDENT). "They were excited about the potential in the US (*Excitement*)." "They were excited to leave home and "they felt they were getting free" (*Freedom*). They did not experience the same degree of sadness about leaving their families and friends as the secure and preoccupied groups did. They experienced some sadness about leaving home but this was expressed more as an ambivalence about leaving their families (*Sad to leave*). "They were torn because it was a good life even though it was very restrictive but they knew there were some people who cared about them." They also experienced anxiety (*Scared*), particularly about their own abilities, as "they weren't sure they would be successful."

Table 35

Adjustment to Life in the US

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Initial separation anxiety and longing for attachment objects but also enjoyment of independence	Strong yearning for home	Little longing for home and enjoyment of independence
Negative feelings		
At first I did not like being in the US. (4/6)	Life at home seemed better and easier. (3/6) I initially wondered if I made a mistake to come to the US. (3/6)	
Initially I felt lonely. (3/6)	I am/ I was feeling lonely. (5/6)	
I felt sad. (2/6)	I was sad. (2/6)	
At first it was stressful. (2/6)		
Longing		
		I do not miss a lot from my home country. (2/3)
		Being away from home is the first time I realized I missed certain things. (2/3)
I miss my parents. (3/6)	I miss my family. (6/6)	I miss specific family members. (2/3)
I miss my partner. (1/6)		
I miss my friends. (5/6)	I miss my friends. (4/6)	I miss a few or no friends. (3/3)
I miss familiar food. (3/6)	I miss familiar food. (5/6)	
Positive feelings		
There is less pressure to comply with others' expectations of me. (2/6)		I enjoy having the sense of freedom. (2/3) It has been fun. (2/3)

Reflecting back on their time in the US, the secure participants experienced both negative feelings, longing for their families and friends, as well as positive feelings about being independent (INITIAL SEPARATION ANXIETY AND LONGING FOR ATTACHMENT OBJECTS BUT ALSO ENJOYMENT OF INDEPENDENCE). They

had some negative feelings, particularly in the beginning of their stay in the US (*Negative feelings*). "At first they did not like being in the US." "Initially they felt lonely" and "they felt sad." "At first it was stressful" for them to adjust to the life in the US. They experienced and continue to experience longing for their former attachment objects (*Longing*). In particular, "they miss their parents, their partner, their friends, and familiar food." At the same time, they also experienced positive feelings about being in the US (*Positive feelings*). They specifically enjoyed that "there is less pressure to comply with others' expectations of them."

Preoccupied participants reported having difficulties adjusting to their lives in the US and reported missing people in their home country (STRONG YEARNING FOR HOME). There were a number of experiences they struggled with (*Negative feelings*). They thought that "life at home seemed better and easier" and "they initially wondered if they made a mistake to come to the US." "They were feeling lonely" and some of them still felt that way at the time of the interview. Additionally, "they were sad." More of the preoccupied participants, as compared to the secure and dismissive participants, reported homesickness (*Longing*). Specifically, "they miss their families, their friends, and familiar food." Unlike the secure participants, they did not report any positive feelings about their adjustment experiences to life in the US.

In contrast to the secure and preoccupied group, the dismissive group appeared to enjoy their newly gained independence and they did not report experiencing much homesickness (LITTLE LONGING FOR HOME AND ENJOYMENT OF INDEPENDENCE). They did not miss many people or things from their home countries (*Longing*). While they reported that "they do not miss a lot from their home country,"

"being away from home is the first time they realized they missed certain things" from home. "They miss specific family members" that they felt more attached to. Similarly, they reported "they miss a few or no friends." Like the secure group, there were aspects of their new lives that they enjoyed (*Positive feelings*). For example, "they enjoy having the sense of freedom." They reported that most of their stay in the US "has been fun."

Table 36

Sense of Others

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Use of others as secure base		Distancing from others and need to maintain sense of independence
Family		
In the beginning I talked more frequently with my family because I was lonely. (2/6) I keep in regular touch with my friends and family. (5/6) I focused on the short-term and kept in mind I'm going back soon to visit. (3/6)	I stay in touch with my immediate and extended family. (6/6)	I used to call my parent(s) more in the beginning, now not that much. (2/3)
		I am not close with my parents because we disagree on many views so I keep it simple by keeping my distance. (2/3)

Both the secure and preoccupied group maintained contact with people they were close to in their home countries (USE OF OTHERS AS SECURE BASE). The secure group reported that they remained in contact with their families (*Family*). Particularly "in the beginning they talked more frequently with their families because they were lonely." "They keep in regular touch with their friends and family." What helped them feel better in the beginning of their stay in the US was that "they focused on the short-term and kept in mind they were going back (home) soon to visit" their families and friends. The preoccupied group also "stays in touch with their immediate and extended family." In contrast, the dismissive group reported that while "they used to call their parent(s) more in the beginning, now (they don't) that much." They reported that "they are not close with their parents because they disagree on many views so they keep it simple by keeping their distance."

Table 37

Sense of Partner

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Partner seen as supportive	Partner generally seen as supportive but separation triggers fear of object loss	Partner generally seen as unreliable and uncertainty triggers fear of object loss
Partner		
My partner is/was supportive. (3/6)	My partner is helpful. (3/6) If my partner was not in the US, I would feel very bad. (2/6)	
		I treat my partner as if he/she is not that important but he/she is. (2/3)
	Initially I had many arguments with my partner. (2/6) I doubted my partner's feelings for me. (2/6) I thought I was losing my partner. (2/6) I felt guilty because I thought it was all my fault. (2/6)	
	I did not date at home so I wouldn't have to leave anybody behind. (2/6)	In the past I would always choose the wrong person to fall in love with and it ended up being hurtful in the end. (2/3) I'm afraid that if I commit somebody will end up hurt. (2/3) I cannot commit because of the uncertainty regarding my future. (3/3)

In terms of their partners, the secure group thought that "their partners are supportive" (PARTNER AS SUPPORTIVE: *Partner*). While the preoccupied group generally experienced their partners as supportive, they reported more conflict in their romantic relationships, particularly in the beginning of their stay in the US (PARTNER GENERALLY SEEN AS SUPPORTIVE BUT SEPARATION TRIGGERS FEAR OF OBJECT LOSS). They thought that "their partners are helpful" and that "if their partner were not in the US, they would feel very bad" (*Partner*). However, "initially they had many arguments with their partners." They felt insecure about their romantic relationships and "they doubted their partners' feelings for them." "They thought they were losing their partners." "They felt guilty because they thought it was all their fault." Some of the preoccupied participants consciously chose not to date in their home countries "so they wouldn't have to leave anybody behind."

Unlike both the secure and preoccupied group, the dismissive group did not report any positive feelings about their partners (PARTNER GENERALLY SEEN AS UNRELIABE AND UNCERTAINTY TRIGGERS FEAR OF OBJECT LOSS). If they were in a relationship, they generally did not want to acknowledge their partner's value and said "they treat their partners as if they were not that important (even though) they are" (*Partner*). They had negative romantic relationship experiences in the past. They thought that in the past "they always chose the wrong person to fall in love with and it ended up being hurtful in the end." Because of those negative past experiences, "they are afraid that if they commit, somebody would end up hurt." Furthermore, they said that "they cannot commit because of the uncertainty regarding their future."

Table 38

Feelings about Friends

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Importance of friendships and wish for more meaningful relationships in the US		Importance of friendships but difficulty getting close to others
Old friends		
I'm in touch with my old friends. (4/6) I'm sad when I think about losing my friends from home. (2/6)	I'm in touch with my old friends. (6/6)	I'm in touch with my old friends. (2/3)
New friends		
Friends are very important to me. (2/6)	I treasure relationships. (2/6)	
	Friends give me a feeling of family. (2/6)	
My friends are helpful. (2/6)	My friends are helpful. (4/6)	My roommate(s) and friends are helpful. (3/3)
It's hard to make friends in the US. (2/6)	It's difficult to make friends in the US. (4/6)	
I do not have many friends. (4/6)	I have superficial relationships in the US. (2/6) No one cares about me in the US. (2/6)	

When it came to friendships, all three attachment groups remained in touch with their old friends (*Old friends*). The secure group had similar feelings towards their friends as towards their families and partners. They valued friendships and maintained their old friendships and also tried to establish new friendships (IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS AND WISH FOR MORE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE US). "They were in touch with their old friends" from their home countries (*Old friends*) and "they were sad when they thought about losing their friends from home." "Friends

were very important to them" (*New friends*) and they generally thought "their friends are helpful." While they have some friends in the US, they thought that "it's hard to make friends in the US." They thought "they do not have many friends" in the US and they desired deeper and more meaningful friendships in the US.

Just like the secure group, the preoccupied group valued friendships and maintained their old friendships (IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS AND WISH FOR MORE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE US). They reported that "they are in touch with their old friends." "They treasure relationships" and "friendships give them a feeling of family" in the US in general while they were far away from their families. They stated that "their friends are helpful." Like the secure participants, they thought that "it's difficult to make friends in the US" and they were not completely satisfied with their friendships in the US. They reported that "they have superficial relationships in the US," which at times gave some of them the feeling that "no one cares about them in the US."

While friends appeared to be important for the dismissive group, they also struggled with establishing close friendships (IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS BUT DIFFICULTY GETTING CLOSE TO OTHERS). The dismissive group reported that "they are in touch with their old friends" (*Old friends*). While they said "their roommate(s) and friends are helpful" (*New friends*), their relationships also appeared to be somewhat superficial.

Table 39

Barriers

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Barriers		
Language		
	Language was a big problem and barrier. (3/6) I was embarrassed and worried what others might think about my English.(4/6)	
Distancing		
		As soon as the other person tries to get close, I back away usually. (2/3) I'm very reserved and it's very hard for me to open up to others. (3/3)
Self-reliance		
		It's hard for me to ask for help. (2/3) If I can count on myself to do what I need, everything will work out. (2/3) I do have those walls that I like to call self-sufficiency but there is a fine line between being self-sufficient or just being sort of walled up. (2/3)
Avoidance of emotions		
		It's easy for me to become emotionless about something. (2/3) I just have developed the idea that whatever will happen to me, I really don't care because if it doesn't happen, it breaks your heart. (2/3)

Both the preoccupied and dismissive groups struggled with barriers to adjusting to the US (BARRIERS). The preoccupied group struggled with English despite English being the first language for some of them. Their English skills not only made it hard to connect with others but also negatively impacted their sense of self (*Language*). Specifically, they felt "language was a big problem and barrier" when it came to making new friendships. In addition "they were embarrassed and worried what others might think about their English" and they were afraid to be made fun of.

Only the dismissive group appeared to struggle with forming close relationships and preferred to keep their distance from others (*Distancing*). They reported that "as soon as the other person tries to get close, they back away usually." All of them said that "they are very reserved and it's very hard for them to open up to others." They had a strong desire to rely on themselves instead of on other people (*Self-reliance*). "It's hard for them to ask for help." They felt that "if they can count on themselves to do what they need, everything will work out." Two of them had insight into their strong need for independence and self-reliance. They said, "they do have those walls that they like to call self-sufficiency but there is a fine line between being self-sufficient or just being sort of walled up." They also had a tendency to want to thwart strong emotions in order not to get hurt (*Avoidance of emotions*). "It's easy for them to become emotionless about something." "They just have developed the idea that whatever will happen to them, they really don't care because if it doesn't happen, it breaks your heart."

Table 40

Sense of Self

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Going abroad enhanced sense of self	Going abroad led to temporary identity strain	Going abroad enhanced sense of self
Negative sense of self		
	I felt stupid. (4/6) I couldn't be myself in the US. (2/6) Sometimes I feel like I lost myself. (2/6) I feel lost sometimes. (2/6)	
Positive sense of self		
I became more outgoing and open minded. (2/6)		I became more confident. (2/3) It challenged me to reconsider my preconceptions. (2/3)
I learned to discipline myself. (4/6)		
I learned to adapt to difficult situations. (2/6)		It taught me to overcome challenges and survive in a strange city. (2/3)
I have a sense of accomplishment. (2/6)	I've grown as a person. (2/6) I feel I grew up. (2/6)	It helped me grow faster. (3/3)
I learned to be more independent. (2/6)	I became independent and more responsible. (2/6) I learned to survive on my own. (2/6)	Going abroad has helped me be more responsible for my life. (3/3)

When reflecting back on how their experiences of studying abroad influenced their sense of self, the secure participants constructed a positive narrative (GOING ABROAD ENHANCED SENSE OF SELF). They felt that going abroad mostly had a positive effect on their sense of self (*Positive sense of self*). They felt "they became more outgoing and open minded." Living on their own, "they learned to discipline themselves." Being in a new environment where they did not know any or many people,

"they learned to adapt to difficult situations." As a consequence, "they had a sense of accomplishment" and "learned to be more independent."

The preoccupied participants were the only ones for whom going abroad had a negative as well as positive impact on their sense of self (GOING ABROAD LED TO TEMPORARY IDENTITY STRAIN). In the beginning of their stay, their sense of self was impacted negatively (*Negative sense of self*). Not knowing the culture or language, "they felt stupid." They had difficulties adjusting to the new culture and felt "they couldn't be themselves in the US" to the point that "sometimes they feel like they lost themselves." Also, "they feel lost sometimes" because they were not certain how to navigate the new environment. However, as time went by and they became more comfortable in the US, they started to find positive effects of studying abroad on their sense of self (*Positive sense of self*). Like the secure group, they felt "they've grown as a person" and "they felt they grew up." "They became independent and more responsible." And they also felt "they learned to survive on their own."

When it came to their sense of self, the dismissive participants reported similar experiences as the secure participants. For them, going abroad has been a positive experience (GOING ABROAD ENHANCED SENSE OF SELF), which had a positive effect on their sense of self (*Positive sense of self*). They felt "they became more confident." Being in a new culture and around people with different values "challenged them to reconsider their preconceptions." Being on their own in a new environment "taught them to overcome challenges and survive in a strange city." Just like the secure and the preoccupied participants, they felt that being abroad "helped them grow faster." They also felt that "going abroad has helped them be more responsible for their lives."

Table 41

Cultural Identity

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Development of stronger cultural and national identity		Ambivalence about home country and culture and separation as reparative
Home country		
I tie my identity to my country. (2/6) In the US, I identify as my original nationality. (2/6)	My identity is my home country and my city that give me a sense of belonging. (2/6)	
		I don't tie myself to my country. (2/3)
Culture		
Studying abroad made me more aware of my culture. (3/6)	I started thinking more about my own cultural identity once I was in the US. (2/6) I'm more drawn toward and have a more positive attitude towards my culture since in the US. (2/6)	I've come to appreciate my cultural identity better because I don't feel stuck in and threatened by it. (only 1 but important so included)
I'm a little ashamed about the political situation in my home country. Otherwise I'm proud of my country. (2/6) I'm proud of my culture. (2/6)		I almost exist on a border between my home culture and the American culture. (2/3) I am proud and ashamed about my country of origin, partially because of stereotypes. (2/3)
I feel like I can be myself more in the US. (2/6)		I feel more like myself in the US than in my home country. (3/3)
People		
I'm most comfortable with people from my country because we have more in common. (3/6)	It's easier for me to relate to people from my own background. (2/6)	
		I can relate better to people in the US than in my home country. (2/3)

For the secure group going abroad appeared to have made them more aware of their culture and drew them closer to it (DEVELOPMENT OF STRONGER CULTURAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY). They continued to identify with their nationality (*Home country*). “They tie their identity to their country.” And in the US, “they identify as their original nationality.” They felt that “studying abroad made them more aware of their culture” (*Culture*). While “they are a little ashamed about the political situation in their home country, otherwise they are proud of their country” and “their culture.” Nevertheless, “they feel they can be themselves more in the US.” The secure participants reported that in the US “they’re most comfortable with people from their country because they have more in common.”

Like the secure participants, preoccupied participants reported that since their move to the US, they became more aware of and more drawn toward their culture and toward others from their country of origin (DEVELOPMENT OF STRONGER CULTURAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY). They strongly identified with their home country (*Home country*). “Their identity is their home country and their city that gives them a sense of belonging.” “They started thinking more about their own cultural identity once they were in the US.” As mentioned above, “they are more drawn and have a more positive attitude toward their culture since they have been in the US.” Some of them felt “it’s easier for them to relate to people from their own background.”

Unlike both the secure and preoccupied participants, the dismissive participants felt more ambivalent about their home country and culture (AMBIVALENCE ABOUT HOME COUNTRY AND CULTURE AND SEPARATION AS REPARATIVE). They did not base their identity on their home country. In fact, they said that “they don’t tie

themselves to their home country (*Home country*).” Only one of the participants stated that since his move to the US “he’s come to appreciate his cultural identity better because he doesn’t feel stuck in and threatened by it” (*Culture*). While this was only reported by one participant, it appears to be important and may perhaps become a shared experience by others in that group once they develop a more balanced relationship with their old and new country. They felt “they almost exist on a border between their home culture and the American culture.” Like the secure participants, they seemed to have ambivalent feelings about their countries of origin. “They are proud and ashamed about their country of origin, partially because of stereotypes” they encountered in the US. They also feel more like themselves in the US than in their home country.” However, unlike both the secure and the preoccupied group, the dismissive participants felt “they can relate better to people in the US than in their home country” (*People*).

Table 42

Concept of Home

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Strong attachment to home country, family and friends		Ambivalent feelings about home
Home is the home country and presence of specific people		
My home country is my home. (3/6)	My home country is my home. (2/6)	Home country is an escape haven if things do not work out in the US. Even though it is an oppressive haven there is somebody there who will take care of you. (2/3)
Home is where there are family and friends. (2/6) Home is where my partner is. (1)	Home is not a specific place but the presence of significant people. (3/6)	
		Wherever I am that is my home. (2/3)
Uncertainty		
Right now I don't know where my home is. (2/6)		I'm still not decided where home is for me despite the fact that the US feels like a home. (2/3)
US as a home		
		I'm a foreigner in the US but I feel more at home in the US than in my home country. (2/3)
		I see both countries as a home. (2/3)

Both the secure and the preoccupied individuals had a strong attachment to their home country (STRONG ATTACHMENT TO HOME COUNTRY, FAMILY AND FRIENDS). For them, "their home country is their home." Additionally, for them home was represented by the presence of specific people (*Home is the home country and presence of specific people*). For the secure participants, "home is where there are family and friends." One of the secure participants reported that for her "home is where her partner is." In her case, her partner was in her country of origin. Similarly, for the preoccupied participants "home is not a specific place but the presence of significant people." In contrast, dismissive participants had more ambivalent feelings regarding where their home is (AMBIVALENT FEELINGS ABOUT HOME). They stated that their "home country is an escape haven if things do not work out in the US. Even though it is an oppressive haven, there is somebody there who (they felt) would take care of you." Furthermore, instead of associating their home with the presence of other significant people they seemed to focus on themselves and stated that "wherever they are that is their home."

There were two secure participants, as well as two dismissive participants, who experienced some uncertainty regarding where their home is (*Uncertainty*). The secure ones felt that "right now they don't know where their home was." While the dismissive ones seemed to feel more at home in the US, they appeared to struggle with settling down in the US. They said "they're still not decided where home is for them despite the fact that the US feels like a home." In fact, only the dismissive group experienced the US as a home or "they see both countries as a home" (*US as a home*).

Table 43

Future Plans

Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive
Ambiguity of future as activator of attachment system		
Positive feelings about leaving the US		
	I would be happy to be again with my family and friends. (2/6)	
Negative feelings about leaving the US		
I would feel sad and disappointed to leave the US now. (4/6)	I would feel bad about my education and worry about my education and future. (3/6)	I would feel unhappy and unfulfilled if I had to go back because I have not yet achieved what I wanted. (2/3)
I would feel sad leaving my friends and partner in the US. (2/6)		
Uncertainty about future		
	I feel anxious and lost regarding my future. (3/6) I'm torn between going back to be with my family and staying in the US for more opportunities. (3/6)	I'm confused because of the uncertainty of the future. (3/3)
I want to stay here for 2 to 3 years and then go back. (3/6) I want to move back to my home country. (1/6)	I plan to stay in the US to become financially stable and then go back. (3/6)	
I want to find a job here. (1/6)	I would prefer to stay in the US. (2/6)	
		I would like to give back to my home country. (2/3)

For all groups, the uncertainty about their future and their status in the US appeared to stir up anxiety (AMBIGUITY OF FUTURE AS ACTIVATOR OF ATTACHMENT SYSTEM). Only the preoccupied group reported positive feelings if they were to leave the US (*Positive feelings about leaving the US*). They reported "they would be happy to be again with their family and friends." All of the groups reported some negative feelings at the thought of leaving the US (*Negative feelings about leaving the US*). The secure participants reported "they would feel sad and disappointed to leave the US now." Some of them also stated "they would feel sad leaving their friends and partner in the US." The preoccupied group similarly reported "they would feel bad about their education and worry about their education and future" if they would leave the US now. Similarly to the other groups, the dismissive group also reported "they would feel unhappy and unfulfilled if they had to go back because they have not yet achieved what they wanted."

As mentioned before, all of the groups experienced some degree of uncertainty regarding their future (*Uncertainty about future*). Only the secure group seemed to have more definite plans for their future. Some of them expressed "they want to stay in the US for two to three years and then go back" to their home countries. Another person was not sure when he would go back but stated that ultimately "he wants to move back to his home country." Only one of the secure participants wanted to find a job in the US, which was largely due to her partner being American and her wishing to settle down with him.

Both the preoccupied and the dismissive participants felt more uncertain and ambivalent regarding their future. Some of the preoccupied participants "feel anxious and lost regarding their future." "They are torn between going back to be with their family

and staying in the US for more opportunities." Like the secure individuals, some of the preoccupied participants "plan to stay in the US to become financially stable and then go back" to their home country, while others "would prefer to stay in the US."

The dismissive participants reported feeling "confused because of the uncertainty of the future." While they were not sure in which country they wanted to live, two of them expressed that "they would like to give back to their home country" in some way.

Chapter IV

Discussion

Interpretation of the Results

This study investigated the relationship between attachment, English language skills, and previous travel experiences and international students' acculturative stress, as well as depressive symptoms. It also examined whether the manner in which individuals spoke about places was parallel to the manner in which they described their relationships to people and, thus, whether there is such a notion as attachment to place.

Attachment, acculturative stress, and depressive symptoms. Out of the 91 participants, 63% scored as securely attached, 25% as preoccupied, 9% as dismissive, and 3% as fearful. As this distribution would not have provided a sufficiently large sample for each of the attachment categories to make for statistically meaningful results, two adjustments were made to the statistical analyses. First, attachment was measured as a continuous rather than categorical variable by correlating the anxiety and avoidance subscales of the ECR with ASSIS and CES-D. Second, the threshold for the anxiety and avoidance scales was moved so that they divided the sample into four groups of approximately the same size, which then allowed for meaningful statistical analyses.

As expected, higher levels of attachment anxiety were related to higher levels of acculturative stress and depressive symptoms. Higher levels of attachment avoidance were related to more reported depressive symptoms, but not to higher levels of acculturative stress. Similarly, when comparing different (adjusted) attachment groups, the fearful group reported significantly higher levels of acculturative stress and depressive symptoms than the secure and dismissive groups. The preoccupied group also

reported significantly more depressive symptoms than the secure group. These results indicate that higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance may negatively impact international students' adjustment.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous literature on the impact of attachment on college students' adjustment to the transition from high school to college. Specifically, it was found that secure attachment was correlated with positive college student adjustment (Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004). For example, Vivona (2000) found that insecurely attached late adolescents reported greater depression, anxiety, and worry when compared to securely attached students.

Another possible explanation for our results could be that dismissive-avoidant participants were less aware, less self-disclosing, or minimized their level of acculturative stress, depressive symptoms, and homesickness, as it would imply they are dependent on others, which may be too threatening and destabilizing for their self-concept. Furthermore, Fraley and Shaver (1997) found that highly dismissing individuals are less affected by the loss of a loved one, not only because they actively work to inhibit the activation of their attachment systems but also because they are less emotionally invested in the relationship. Therefore, the loss or change in former relationships might not be as disorienting for people with dismissive-avoidant attachment as compared to people with preoccupied attachment, because their sense of self is less intertwined with relationships.

It has also been suggested that dismissive attachment has an adaptive function and may serve as a protective factor. Fraley and Bonanno (2004) found that attachment-related anxiety is correlated with elevated symptoms of grief and distress, whereas attachment-related avoidance is not. In a study they tracked individuals' reactions to the

loss of a loved one and found that dismissing-avoidant individuals appeared less distressed than others and did not exhibit a reappearance of distress-related symptoms at a later point in time. Similar to the secure participants, dismissive-avoidant individuals showed a resilient response to the loss of a loved one. They argue that dismissing-avoidant adults may be less vulnerable when faced with interpersonal loss than has been suggested in the past.

As predicted, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of reported depressive symptoms and the level of acculturative stress. The more depressive symptoms an individual reported, the more acculturative stress items were reported as well. However, when interpreting this result it is important to keep in mind that this relationship is correlational, not causal. For example, it is possible that homesickness or perceived discrimination, both of which are subscales on the ASSIS, contribute to depressive symptoms. At the same time, it is also possible that depressed mood negatively impacts one's perception of the studying abroad experience. Thus, further research is needed to investigate the directionality issue regarding the relationship between depressive symptoms and acculturative stress.

In order to clarify the effect of depressive symptoms on the relationhip between attachment and acculturative stress, depressive symptoms were covaried. Results showed that even after controlling for the number of reported depressive symptoms there continued to be a statistically significant relationship between (adjusted) attachment groups and acculturative stress levels. This implies that a state variable, such as depressed mood, does not abolish a trait variable, such as attachment style.

Previous travel experiences and acculturative stress. As expected, reported levels of acculturative stress were significantly lower for participants who traveled before going abroad as compared to participants who never traveled abroad prior to moving to the US. There was no statistically significant difference between participants who traveled to the US before going abroad and those who traveled but whose travels did not include the US. Kenny (1987) conceptualized going abroad as the "Strange Situation." As noted, the "Strange Situation" was developed by Ainsworth in collaboration with her colleagues (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) to study infants' responses to novel experiences that included the separation from the attachment object (in this case, the mother). Similarly, going abroad frequently separates international students from their attachment figures and challenges their adaptive and coping mechanisms as they try to navigate the new environment, establish new relationships, and remain connected to their old attachment objects. Traveling prior to going abroad may have allowed individuals to practice separating from familiar people, environments and objects, as well as adjusting to and navigating unfamiliar environments. Having been separated from attachment figures in the past may have also offered these participants the opportunity to explore ways to bridge the physical distance between them and their loved ones, as well as ways to form relationships in their new environments. Through this process, traveling may have provided individuals with a sense of mastery and the confidence in the knowledge that if they have done it before, they can do it again. It is likely that higher socioeconomic status plays a moderating role, as it may offer individuals more opportunities not only to travel before going abroad but also to visit home once they live abroad.

It is reasonable that going abroad could be moderated positively by previous travel experiences, unless those previous travel experiences were negative. Take, for example, a securely attached male student who reported that coming to the US was his second experience of studying abroad. He described coming to the US as a strikingly different experience than when he went abroad for the first time to pursue his undergraduate studies. The first time around he reportedly did not feel prepared and said "I was not happy and I was not any confident about myself to go to another country." He described having a difficult time during the first month in meeting new people and he felt "very homesick a lot of times." Nevertheless, he reported that he eventually made friends and entered into a romantic relationship, all which helped him feel better adjusted. In contrast to this first experience of studying abroad, he felt "prepared" for coming to the US for his graduate studies. He seemed to have applied what he had learned during his first experience of being abroad. For example, he facilitated his transition by finding roommates and an apartment in advance, as well as by reaching out to different student organizations. He appeared to have built up his confidence knowing that if he had successfully completed his studies abroad before, he could do it again.

In contrast to this example, if previous travel experiences were negative then individuals may have a harder time adjusting upon going abroad. For example, a securely attached female reported that it was her "long-time dream" to come to the US for graduate school. She, too, had a previous experience of studying abroad that she described as "difficult." She remembered feeling under a lot of pressure to the point that she forgot to take care of her physical and mental needs. Longing for the familiar, she decided to move back to her home country. Yet as the years went by, she started to feel

that she was "distancing" herself from her goal of coming to the US. Despite visiting the US many times before coming here to study, she had a difficult time adjusting to being away from her loved ones, familiar places, and established routines. Even after half a year in the US, she felt that part of her continued to live in her country of origin, and she even reported experiencing "feelings of depression" during her first few months in the US. All of these contributed to her fear that she might have a repeated negative experience of studying abroad.

English skills and acculturative stress. As predicted, higher TOEFL scores, specifically on the speaking section of the TOEFL exam, were negatively correlated with reported acculturative stress. This correlation was slightly stronger when only individuals who stayed in the US up to three years were included. The result may be more significant for the individuals who stayed in the US up to three years because the ones who stayed in the US longer presumably may have already learned English, and thus their English skills may not be as strongly related to acculturative stress. There was no significant relationship between acculturative stress and participants' scores on the other TOEFL subtests, namely the reading, listening, and writing scores. One possible explanation for this finding may be that the speaking score might be more relevant for the adjustment process as compared to reading or writing skills, because speaking might impact international students more in their everyday life. For example, in the interviews a number of students expressed feeling anxious, stressed, and overwhelmed while they were trying to settle into their new environment, such as by opening bank accounts,

applying for a social security card, or calling a cable company. Better language skills could facilitate these processes and lessen the stress.

As Yeh and Inose (2003) pointed out, better English skills may also make it easier for international students to navigate the new environment and to interact with others in the new environment, all which may contribute to better self-esteem and feeling well adjusted. Moreover, better English speaking skills may make international students feel less embarrassed or self-conscious about their accent, which in turn could make them feel more comfortable to interact with others. For example, as could be seen in our qualitative results, the preoccupied group was the only group that expressed concerns over their English skills, even when English was their first language. They reported feeling embarrassed about their English skills or accents and worried about what others might think of them. Consequently they were less likely to participate in class or speak to others at social gatherings, which contributed to lower self-esteem, feelings of loneliness, and isolation.

Furthermore, Yeh and Inose (2003) stressed that language is linked with culture. They found that students from Asian and Central/Latin American countries experienced more acculturative stress than students from European countries. They hypothesized that one explanation for this finding may be that European international students may encounter less racism and discrimination than students from Asian, African, and Latin American countries. Specifically, their sample of European students was all White racially, which may have allowed those students to blend more into the dominant racial group in the United States. Additionally, they suggested that since European and American cultural values are similar, European international students may experience

less difference in the cultural patterns of behavior and the value system, all which may facilitate their transition and adjustment to life in the US. However, it was not clear from their study to what extent English skills were related to European international students' lower levels of acculturative stress. As there is not much literature on the relationship between country of origin, perceived discrimination, language and acculturative stress, this could be an area of investigation for future studies.

The qualitative data put the quantitative findings into context and revealed some aspects of the relationship between attachment and adjustment that the quantitative data did not address. Qualitative results also provided implications for clinical interventions when working with this population, which are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Parallel between attachment to person and attachment to place. When examining the interviews, there appeared to be a parallel between the manner in which individuals spoke about their relationships with people and places and how they navigated the separation from both. Similar to the "Strange Situation" (Ainsworth et al., 1978), all participants reportedly experienced mixed feelings about leaving their home country, such as feeling sad and scared, as well as excited and encouraged by the possibility of new opportunities. Yet there were also individual differences between the groups, which will be discussed next.

The secure and preoccupied participants expressed positive feelings about their lives at home. At the same time they remembered yearning to explore and experience something new. Similar to the rapprochement subphase (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975) when infants feel comfortable exploring the environment as long as they can return to

their attachment object for reassurance, the secure and preoccupied participants reportedly found comfort in the presence of their partners who seemed to represent a secure base for them. The preoccupied group in particular seemed to be motivated to come to the US by their desire to be with their romantic partners who were already in the US. Both the secure and preoccupied individuals were furthermore motivated by the prospect of having more opportunities once they returned home after obtaining a degree in the US. It seemed as if they referenced back to their secure base and kept it in mind when they encountered difficulties in the US. For example, one secure participant stated that a gift from home "remind(ed) (her) that this (studying abroad) has an expiration date" because it made her think about her family and reuniting with them, which made it easier for her to get through difficult times in the US. In contrast, our dismissive interviewees did not report positive feelings about their lives in their home country. Instead, they reported feeling oppressed at home, or as if they did not belong there and were yearning to "escape" from home.

Upon arrival to the US the secure and preoccupied individuals missed their families, friends, and familiar food. They felt lonely and perceived their home country as better. This is consistent with literature on post-immigration adjustment. Winkelman (1994) suggested that upon arrival to a new country individuals are likely to experience an initial crisis or culture shock due to increased stress. During this phase individuals may feel confused by new cultural expectations and norms that may lead them to feel helpless, dislike the new country, and yearn for home. Akhtar (1996) also suggested that upon separation from the home country individuals develop a fantasy that if they had only stayed at home, life would be easier and more enjoyable.

In contrast, dismissive participants denied experiencing much homesickness, and if any, then it was reportedly minimal. They reported having conflicted relationships with their families. While they were in more frequent touch with them in the beginning of their stay, they preferred to keep their distance from them. Overall, the preoccupied group appeared to have the most difficulty adjusting, while the secure and dismissive groups reported positive feelings during the adjustment phase, particularly as it related to having more independence. This finding is consistent with the literature examining the role of attachment on college students' adjustment to college. For example, secure attachment has been linked to greater academic, social, and emotional college student adjustment (Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004). It has been shown that securely attached individuals, in contrast to insecurely attached ones, are less afraid of challenges and unfamiliarity and more comfortable seeking out help when needed. In contrast, insecurely attached late adolescents have been found to report greater depression, anxiety, and worry than their secure peers (Vivona, 2000).

In terms of romantic relationships, both the secure and preoccupied participants experienced their partners as supportive and comforting. However, while the preoccupied group generally saw their partners as reliable, they also had frequent arguments with their partners upon arrival to the US. During this initial period the preoccupied participants reportedly doubted their partners' love for them, blamed themselves for the conflicts, and felt guilty. It is possible that the move to the US stirred up anxiety and induced a fear of object loss, which may have contributed to those participants seeking out more reassurance and support from their partners. However, some of their partners may not have understood their increased neediness and/or may have struggled with adjusting

themselves. For example, one of the preoccupied participants shared that her husband struggled with depressive symptoms himself upon coming to the US. He was far away from his family and friends and was unable to work due to immigration related issues, all of which took a toll on his emotional state. At the same time this participant longed for more support than her husband was able to give her because he was struggling himself, which made the participant feel unloved and uncared for and contributed to her initial adjustment difficulties. It is also interesting to note that before going abroad to the US, some of the preoccupied participants reportedly made a conscious choice not to date because they were afraid of having to leave their partner behind.

The dismissive group reported generally experiencing their partners as unreliable. They reportedly had hurtful experiences in past romantic relationships. The way they appeared to deal with the fear of object loss or being hurt seemed to be by keeping others at a distance. They expressed long-standing difficulties opening up to and getting close to others, such as distancing themselves when they felt the other person would like to be closer to them. They expressed a strong yearning to be independent and to rely on themselves. It is possible that in a new situation, such as moving to a new country where they can no longer rely just on themselves, dismissive individuals start longing for others, for example missing certain family members. Some of them recognized that their pattern of keeping others at a distance may be problematic. For example one avoidant-dismissive participant stated “I do have those walls that I like to call self-sufficiency but there is like a fine line between being self-sufficient or just being sort of walled up.” He expressed a simultaneous desire to be with his partner and to remain independent.

Yet, as mentioned before, it is important to recognize the protective role of avoidance, such as protecting against possible disappointment despite the potential cost of having more superficial relationships. It has also been suggested that one potential benefit of dismissive avoidant attachment is that it allows for "pragmatic coping" (Bonanno and Mancini, 2008). "Pragmatic coping" enables an individual to successfully negotiate the demands of highly stressful situations, such as going abroad, by using a single minded and goal oriented approach.

All groups expressed that friendships are important to them and they remained in touch with their old friends from their home countries. The secure and preoccupied groups reported that while they found their new friends in the US helpful, they experienced a difficult time making friendships in the US and were yearning for more meaningful friendships. In contrast, the dismissive group did not report experiencing difficulties making friends and they found their roommates and friends to be helpful. However, the quality of their friendships appeared to be somewhat superficial, for example somebody lending them money. It is possible that dismissive individuals have a different concept of what constitutes close relationships. What they might perceive as close, the secure and preoccupied individuals may experience as superficial. Therefore, further qualitative research is needed to investigate differences in the quality of friendships between people with different attachment styles.

The secure and preoccupied groups reported strong attachments to their home country, family, and friends. For them home was not a specific place but rather the presence of specific people. The preoccupied group felt strongly that their home country is their home. Some of the secure participants felt that their home country was their home

while some others felt that the US was their home. Some of the secure participants' partners were also in the US, which may have contributed to them experiencing the US as a home, particularly if home was defined by the presence of significant others. In contrast, the dismissive group appeared to have more ambivalent feelings about the notion of home. Rather than focusing on the presence of others, they appeared to want to be independent and reported that home was wherever they were. At the same time, they acknowledged experiencing some comfort in knowing that home "is an escape haven if things do not work out in the US. Even though it is an oppressive haven there is somebody there who will take care of you."

For all groups, the uncertainty about the future seemed to have stirred up anxiety and sadness about leaving the US and thereby activated the attachment system. All groups reported feeling sad if they had to leave the US. Only the preoccupied group reported feeling happy about reuniting with their old attachment figures, namely family and friends. Both the secure and the preoccupied groups seemed to have divided opinions about where they wanted to live after graduating. Some wanted to move back to their home country, while others wanted to stay in the US. It is noteworthy that those who wanted to stay in the US were also those participants whose partners were in the US as well. The dismissive group reported preferring to stay in the US. Nevertheless, they also wanted to contribute or give back to their home country in some way, mostly through professional contributions. It is possible that this would allow them to remain connected with their home, yet at a safe distance which does not threaten their sense of self.

Impact of going abroad on identity. As discussed in the introduction section, going abroad frequently accompanies changes in one's social roles and relationships, which challenge one's sense of self (Winkelman, 1994). Akhtar (1995, 1999) also referred to this initial period as a time of "psychic flux" during which individuals question their previous life patterns and either reconfirm or change them. Qualitative results indicate that for the secure and dismissive groups going abroad mostly contributed to a positive sense of self. The secure and dismissive individuals felt that they became more independent, grew as people, and learned to adjust to difficult circumstances, all which instilled in them confidence and a sense of accomplishment. In contrast, the preoccupied participants reported that negative feelings about themselves were stirred up upon arrival to the US, such as feeling "stupid" or like they lost a part of themselves. This finding is consistent with the literature on the role of attachment on one's sense of self. Fraley and Shaver (1997) suggested that preoccupied individuals base their self-esteem on others' perceptions of them and yearn for positive feedback. In contrast, secure individuals have internalized a positive sense of self and thus do not depend on others' continuous positive regard. As dismissive avoidant individuals do not place much importance on others they are not as affected by others' presence or absence and opinions of them.

Thus, being separated from others whom one feels one depends on will be a more disorienting and difficult task for preoccupied than for secure or dismissive avoidant individuals. It is possible that the emergence of new relationships facilitated the adjustment of preoccupied individuals. For example, one of our preoccupied participants

described how close relationships helped her get through times when she doubted her own abilities. She stated:

> "I'm thinking I've always been intelligent, I've always been on top of the heap sort of or at least pretty high and now it's like, it seems as if I'm an idiot because that's how people behave because (…) I don't follow the rules that they know to exist. So (…) I felt stupid for a bit and my grades actually suffered because I didn't have that confidence in my ability so I lost the confidence for a bit but (…) because I have such a strong support network, there are few friends that I have here, my husband, my sister, and my best friend (…). And they would tell me, look you are, intelligent you know, don't let it bother you, you can sort this out. (…) And they did a lot of things to help build my confidence without telling me, yeah you're an idiot. (…) I don't think I would have survived if it wasn't, it wouldn't have been there for specific friends. If I did not have those individuals I don't think I would have reached a contented happy place, you know."

As this example illustrates, the formation of new relationships could have contributed to preoccupied individuals becoming more comfortable in the US. As time went by, the preoccupied individuals also reported that by going abroad they grew as people, became more independent, and felt more confident to "survive on their own."

In terms of cultural identity, all groups felt that being in a new culture made them more aware of their own cultural background. It seems that being the "other" may highlight the difference between the home and host culture, which places stress on an individual's tolerance for dissonance. However, there appeared again to be differences

between the attachment groups. The secure and preoccupied groups reported that upon coming to the US they developed a stronger cultural and national identity. Both groups tied their identity to their home country that they felt gave them a sense of belonging. Both groups also felt that they could relate better to people from their own backgrounds because they felt they had more in common. Yet, while mostly proud of their home country, the secure group also had some negative feelings about their home country, such as feeling ashamed and feeling like they could be more themselves in the US.

In contrast to the secure and preoccupied participants, the dismissive avoidant participants explicitly stated that they did not tie their identity to their home country. They felt they could be more like themselves in the US. They also reported ambivalent feelings about their home country and culture, such as feeling both proud and ashamed either because of the political situation back home or because of stereotypes they face in the US. Nevertheless, they also reported experiencing the distance as a reparative and corrective emotional experience. For example, one dismissive participant stated, "I've come to appreciate my cultural identity better because I don't feel stuck in and threatened by it." While it was only one person who made this statement, it may have crucial implications for the development of and changes in attachment over time.

Only the dismissive group felt they could relate better to people in the US, even if these were people from their own background, because they were reportedly more open-minded than people in their home countries. Yet, while the dismissive participants stated that they felt more comfortable with other cultural groups, two out of three socialized mostly with people from their own country of origin. It is possible that culture plays a role in terms of the cultural groups individuals choose to socialize with. For example,

people from cultures that are less similar to the US culture may gravitate towards people from their own background. In contrast, individuals who are from cultures that are more similar to dominant culture in the US may feel more comfortable socializing with people from the host country because they feel they have more in common with them. It is also possible that as time goes by and individuals begin to feel more comfortable in the host country, they feel less threatened by it and then start to socialize more with people from the host culture.

Study Limitations

The sample for this study was very specific and results need to be interpreted with this in mind. First, all participants were graduate students. Given different developmental tasks, one should be cautious when generalizing the findings of this study to other groups of international students, such as undergraduate students. Furthermore, given the legal status of international students it is possible that there are periods of increased stress during certain times. One such period could be, for example, graduation when international students are faced with the decision whether to stay in the US or return to their home country. As graduation nears, international students may experience the additional stressor of finding a way to stay in the US legally after graduating, which may negatively influence their mood and thus their experience of living abroad. This is important to keep in mind for our study as well, because it may have impacted some of our participants' scores on the CES-D, ASSIS, and ECR.

Second, the participants for this study came from major metropolitan areas, mostly New York City and Chicago, both of which are ethnically and culturally diverse.

Thus, the participants likely had some shared experiences. However, recruiting international students from less diverse geographical areas may yield different results. For example, international students who do not belong to the dominant ethnic or racial group of the area that they live in may experience more discrimination and difficulty establishing a support network. These students may also have less opportunity to interact with people from their country of origin or to obtain familiar objects, such as food, all of which could make the transition and adjustment to the US more difficult and increase feelings of homesickness. For example, a number of the students we interviewed described food and specific neighborhoods which reminded them of their home country as transitional objects which they sought out when they felt homesick. Not having such familiar people or objects nearby may make it more difficult to remain connected to one's origins, as well as to adjust to the new environment.

Third, attachment style was assessed using a self-report measure. We observed a discrepancy between individuals' answers on the self-report measures and during interviews. For example, one participant who scored as securely attached on the ECR characterized himself as "dismissive" in his attachment during the interview. He, for example, stated: "I mean like I love my parents but like we talk to each other but like I never talk to anything to them about my hardship or anything so like I keep it to my own and I think I can solve it by myself." At a later point in the interview he also stated: "I think I'm the person who really enjoy to be myself" and "I don't really care for people." It has been suggested in previous research that self-report measures and implicit attachment measures assess different things. Self-report measures, such as the ECR, ask adults about their typical ways of forming and being in relationships. Thus, these only

measure aspects of internal working models that are within an individual's conscious awareness. As such, central aspects of attachment theory, such as the wish for closeness and autonomy, may be distorted by defenses (Westen, 1991). For example, dismissively attached individuals may be uncomfortable with revealing or getting in touch with experiences where others have hurt them as this would imply that they depend on them, which may feel too threatening (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

However, it may be harder to sustain the defenses during a longer interview versus a short self-report measure. Attachment interviews, such as the AAI, include information about internal models that may be only partly or fully outside of an individual's consciousness. Therefore, it is not a surprise that attachment styles as determined by self-report measures and semi-structured interviews are not strongly related to each other (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). Thus, one implication of our observation could be that one should not take self-report measures at face value, especially for a given subset of individuals who for a number of reasons may not report their internal state accurately. Unfortunately, given the limited resources for this project it was not possible to administer and score the AAI. Therefore, further research could use a more implicit measure of attachment, such as the AAI, and compare it to the acculturative stress measure.

Directions for Future Research

As mentioned in the previous section, rather than relying on self-report measures, further research could use a more implicit measure of attachment, such as the AAI, and compare individuals' answers on that measure to their answers on the acculturative

stress measure. One could also use the findings of this study to develop a semi-structured interview that would assess a person's attachment to place. One could model such an interview after the AAI and for example ask participants to choose five adjectives to describe their home country and give examples that would illustrate those adjectives. One could then compare the content and quality of their narratives about places during this interview to their narratives about people during the AAI to find out if there are any parallels in the manner in which they talk about people and places.

Future studies could follow international students and explore what personal or community supports help them manage effectively their study abroad experiences. As could be seen in our qualitative results, the support networks varied across the attachment groups. For example, the dismissive group reported having less contact with their families, while the preoccupied group was in daily contact with their families and friends. It is also possible that people with different attachment styles have different expectations of relationships. Future qualitative research could identify such qualitative differences in relationships and explore their impact on adjustment.

Furthermore, some international students reported feeling more comfortable socializing with others from the same background, whereas other students felt more comfortable socializing with people who were from a different background. Further research could explore the role of culture on international students' social networks. One could also examine how the make-up of social networks changes over time for international students from different cultural backgrounds. As mentioned earlier, it is possible that individuals from cultures that are less similar to the US culture may have

less diverse social networks or may gravitate more towards people from their own background for support.

Further research is also needed to explore experiences of international students from cultures that are more restrictive than the host country and to better understand how this difference may impact adjustment. One area for further investigation could be how LGBTQ individuals from more conservative or restrictive cultures experience the move to a host country whose culture is more accepting of individual differences regarding sexual orientation. For example, one of our dismissive participants who was gay came from a conservative background where being anything but heterosexual was condemned. He expressed feeling oppressed in his home country and therefore experienced the move to the US as liberating. The positive experience in the US may provide him with an opportunity for a corrective emotional experience. As attachment is not static it is possible that through positive experiences he may become more secure in his attachments.

Results of this study showed there is potential for change in the quality of individuals' relationships with people and places. Thus, it would be interesting to track international students' support networks to find out not only how they are made up but also how they change over time. One could for example repeatedly assess a cohort of international students throughout their studies and thereby establish trajectories for adjustment and attachment development over time.

Finally, while this sample was too small for the purpose, future studies could continue to assess the relationship between English skills during the first year of studying abroad and acculturative stress. It is probable that in the beginning of studying abroad

language skills play a particularly important role in the adjustment process as they facilitate navigating the new environment and establishing relationships.

Clinical Implications

Despite its limitations, this study has identified some common experiences international students have, which could have implications not only for further studies, but also for clinical intervention programs. The findings of this study bring to light the importance of providing support systems for international students to help them negotiate their transition and adjustment to life in the US.

All participants in this study were current graduate students and as such were enrolled in a university, which offered them the opportunity to interact with other students, including international ones. In fact, many participants reported during the qualitative interviews that they got in touch with other students from their country of origin prior to arriving in the United States, which they identified as being helpful because it provided them with a support network even before they arrived in the US. Additionally, the simple fact of belonging to a university may foster resilience in international students and help reduce their feelings of isolation by providing them with opportunities for social interactions.

Universities could use the milieu to facilitate international students' adjustment. For example, international students could be paired up with more senior international students who could function as their mentors. Furthermore, they could be paired up with a student from the US who could introduce them to the new culture and customs and thereby help facilitate cross-cultural interactions and development of cross-cultural

friendships. Jacob and Greggo (2001) also suggested pairing up graduate counseling practicum students and international students for a semester in an effort to provide international students with additional social support and an opportunity to get to know the culture, while also providing the counselors-in-training with a multicultural experience to refine their cultural sensitivity.

The results of this study showed that some individuals, such as dismissingly attached ones, do not tend to reach out to others, even when they are in need of help. Yet, many of the participants reported that they appreciated having taken the time to participate in the interview because it provided them with an opportunity to think and talk about their experience of studying abroad. It would thus be worthwhile that clinicians who work with international students attempt to engage them in university- or community-based organizations and offer groups focused on the exploration of studying abroad experiences and adjustment. Because previous research has showed that international students particularly underutilize counseling services (Mori, 2000), it may be more helpful to develop alternatives to counseling in order to increase international students' knowledge about potential challenges during the transition period and how to facilitate adjustment. This would also provide international students with additional support and a platform from which to develop initial friendships. Thus, universities could for example offer informal weekly groups where international students could socialize and share their experiences of living abroad. Counseling staff could also collaborate with and provide workshops through the International Students Office. There could also be web-based forums where every month a student could write an article about his or her experience and share it with others.

Lastly, results showed that going abroad does not only impact international students but also their larger social network, such as romantic partners and families. For example, one of the married participants reported that when she and her husband moved to the US, both struggled with adjustment, especially her husband, who did not have the support network of the university setting and who was unable to work due to his legal status in the US. This consequently led to internal conflicts, as well as to conflicts in their marriage. As some of the participants reported initial conflicts in their romantic relationships during the adjustment process, it may be advisable to also host workshops for international students' significant others. This would in turn facilitate the international students' transition and adjustment as it would educate couples and families on the effects of going abroad on relationships. Such workshops or support groups could provide international students and their families with an additional support network and the context to help understand and normalize ambivalent feelings and potential conflicts in relationships upon going abroad.

Conclusions

This study examined international students' adjustment through the lens of attachment and gained new insights into individuals' attachment to places.

In summary, the current study's findings regarding the relationship between attachment and adjustment were similar to previous research findings. Lower levels of attachment anxiety were positively correlated with lower levels of acculturative stress. Additionally, lower levels of attachment avoidance were positively correlated with lower levels of acculturative stress but negatively correlated with depressive symptoms.

As expected previous travel experiences appeared to facilitate adjustment as they were negatively correlated with lower acculturative stress. Furthermore, better English speaking skills were also negatively correlated with acculturative stress.

Lastly, the results of this study indicated that individuals are not only attached to people but also to places and that there appears to be a parallel between individuals' attachment to people and places as the manner in which individuals described their relationships with people parallel the manner in which they described their relationships with places.

It is hoped that the results of this study provided directions for future research and suggestions for outreach within the university setting to facilitate international students' adjustment and improve their study abroad experience.

Appendix A

CONSENT FORM

Examination of the Role of Attachment Style in the Adjustment Experiences of International Students Who Study in the United States

You are invited to be in a research study of international students' experiences of studying abroad. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an international student. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by:

Iskra Smiljanic (principal investigator), Clinical Psychology subprogram of The Graduate Center, located at The City College, The City University of New York;

Jeffrey Rosen, Ph.D. (faculty advisor), Clinical Psychology subprogram of The Graduate Center, located at The City College, The City University of New York.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the range of possible experiences and difficulties international students go through when studying abroad and factors that might help determine better adjustment after their relocation. The range of experiences that international student have as they try to adjust to the university community and the new culture in which they find themselves can vary. In our current study, we are trying to learn more about the experiences people have since the time of

their arrival until 2 to 2 ½ years after their relocation. We are particularly interested in interviewing people across the full spectrum of adjustment experiences - from the difficulties that one encounters to the adjustments that one has made. We are exploring a number of aspects of this adjustment process, including the thoughts and emotions people experience, how they remember their separation from their home country and their loved ones, and how their experience of adjustment may or may not affect other aspects of their life. Ultimately, this study can help design better interventions and more effective forms of counseling for all international students.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following: We would like you to fill out a couple of online questionnaires regarding your experience of studying abroad, which should take about 25 minutes.

You will receive a $10 Amazon gift card for filling out the approximately 25-minute-long survey. The principle investigator will email you this gift card upon your completion of the online survey.

There is also a possibility that we might invite you to participate in an interview about your experiences of coming to the United States to pursue your education. This interview will take about 2 hours. With your permission, we would like to audio and video record the interview so we can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by the principal investigator and her advisor. If at any time during the study you feel

uncomfortable, you are free to refuse to answer or you can completely withdraw your participation without any negative consequences.

You will receive an additional $15 Amazon gift card if you are chosen and agree to participate in the approximately 2-hour-long in-person interview. The principle investigator will give you this gift card in person upon your completion of the interview.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the City College of New York or your current educational institution. If you decide to participate, **you are free to not answer any question** or withdraw from the study at any time without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has several risks: If at any times you feel uncomfortable answering a question you are free not to answer the questions or engage in the tasks. If at any point you wish to terminate your participation in this study for any reason you are free to do so.

If for some reason the questions that you are asked raise any negative feelings on your part that would cause you to wish to seek professional assistance, the principal investigator will make sure to make an appropriate referral. You will also be given an opportunity to ask any questions and discuss your reactions to the study materials at the

end of the interview session. As with all the data which are transmitted through the internet, email communication and online forms have a significant potential for breach of confidentiality.

Remuneration

You will receive a $10 Amazon gift card for filling out the approximately 25-minute-long survey. The principle investigator will email you this gift card upon your completion of the online survey.

You will receive an additional $15 Amazon gift card if you are chosen and agree to participate in the approximately 2-hour-long in-person interview. The principle investigator will give you this gift card in person upon your completion of the interview.

Confidentiality

The records of this study, such as questionnaires, audio-**,** and video-recordings will be kept private. In any sort of report that we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Records gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only the principal investigator and her advisor will have access. The data will be stored at The City College, The City University of New York, in the North Academic Center, Room 7/315, 137th Street and Convent Avenue, New York, NY 10031. Your name will not be associated with any collected data. Instead, each participant will be assigned a code. I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics,

will not be used in any of the publications. You will have the right to request to review the recordings and transcripts and request that all or some portions of your data not be used if you feel uncomfortable. Once the study has been completed, the investigators will keep the data for further research. The data will only be used for research purposes and scientific publications. Only researchers approved by the principal investigator will have access to the data. The data will be de-identified to ensure confidentiality. The data will be stripped of all information that could identify a participant before it is shared with anyone beside the principal investigator and her advisor.

Contacts and Questions

The researchers conducting this study are: Iskra Smiljanic, M.A. and Jeffrey Rosen, Ph.D. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at: Iskra Smiljanic at (email address) or Jeffrey Rosen, Ph.D., The North Academic Center, Room 7/315, The City College, The City University of New York, 137th Street and Convent Avenue, New York, NY 10031, (212) 650-5694, (email address).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact Arita Winter, Research Conduct Associate and CUNY-Wide IRB Administrator, at (212) 794-5504, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm or via email at Arita.winter@mail.cuny.edu.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

CUNY-Wide IRB Approval June 3, 2010

Appendix B

Demographics questionnaire

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Gender: _____

Marital status (please circle one): Single Married Divorced Widowed

Ethnicity: _____

Race: _____

Sexual orientation: _____

Date of arrival to the US: _____

Country of origin: _____

TOEFL score for reading _____ listening _____ speaking _____ writing _____

Please check the source/s of your financial support while studying in the United States.

_____family _____friends _____native government

_____College/University _____ U.S. Government _____other

Major in University: _____

Language/s

Native language: _____

Which languages do you speak? _____

Is English your native language? Yes No

Did you learn English as a second language in your native country? Yes No

Did you visit the US before deciding to come here for studying? Yes No

How often and long did you visit the US? _____

How often did you travel outside of your home country before coming to the US to study abroad? _____

Please share anything that you think may be helpful to this study:

_____

If recruited, tape number and pseudonym:

_____

Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview for International Students

Today I'm going to interview you about your experiences of studying abroad and how those experiences may have affected you. During this interview I am going to ask you a couple of open ended questions that will allow us to explore your experiences of being a graduate student studying abroad. Occasionally I may ask you follow-up questions which will help me deepen my understanding of your experiences. I am particularly interested in your relationships with other people and places and the extent to which they influence your sense of self. I hope that by the end of the interview we will both have learned more about the excitement and challenges of studying abroad.

1. What comes to mind when you think about yourself coming here as a graduate student? (If they only mention one thing: Does anything else occur to you?) (If they do not mention a specific experience: Can you tell me about a specific experience which comes to mind in which that was really clear to you?) (If they do not talk about experience abroad: You are providing me with a lot of information of what it's like to be a grad student but I am also interested what it's like to leave your country, come here, and find yourself as a graduate student?)

2. Tell me about (your home country) and your life in (home town). (Follow-up unless they already incorporated into their answer: Tell me about your current sense of yourself in terms of being (nationality)?)

3. What do you experience as the most striking differences of being in (current town in US) instead of being in (home town)? (Look for balance of positive and negative characteristics. If they omit any positive differences follow up: What do you find most exciting or interesting about being here? If they omit any negative differences: What do you miss most about not being in (home town)?)

4. Could you tell me about a time in your country of origin when you felt most like yourself? Can you tell me about a time when you felt most alive? What about a time you felt least yourself? Least alive?

5. If you go back in time, do you remember when you first started thinking about going to the US?

    - Can you describe the circumstances? How was it decided? What were the major reasons and who was mostly making the decisions?

    - How did you prepare for coming to the US?

    - Did you talk to anybody about it? Can you recall what gave rise to this conversation?

- Did you talk with your parents about it? I would like to explore just a little more what your early memories with your parents were. (If memories are not very early: And what about your earliest memory? Do you recall anything earlier than that?)

6. Describe the last week or so before you were going to the US.

   - What were the kind of things you were doing?
   - What people did you meet with?
   - Were there any special places you went to visit before you came here? Why those places?

7. What did you imagine it would be like here?

8. What did you actually find here upon your arrival?/ How were things different from what you imagined?

9. Can you tell me about the first thing that comes to mind when you think about your first week or 2 after you arrived in the US? What about it stands out to you?

10. When you think back about your experiences being here, what would you like to remember the most? Is there an experience that comes to mind that was really positive? Could you describe it?

11. When you think about your experiences being in the US, which ones would you like to forget and why?

12. What do you miss most about your home country? What about it? (Depending on their initial answers follow-up: Remember half an hour ago we talked about what you miss most about not being in your home country? I was wondering if anything else has come to mind?)

13. In the US, what are the places and people that you feel most comfortable around? How did you find them? Describe the first encounter? What do they mean to you?

14. Can you tell me about a time when you felt most like yourself here in the US? Where do you feel most alive in the US? What about a time when you felt least like yourself? Least alive?

15. Imagine you had to leave the US tomorrow, what is the first thing that comes to mind? What would you do?

16. Can you tell me about what you wish and desire for your future? Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you want to go back and live in your home country? Why/why not?

17. What is one of the most important things you take away from studying abroad?

Interpersonal Relationships/Identity

Now I would like to talk to you about your relationships and how studying abroad may have affected them.

18. Who were your friends when you first arrived?

19. Who are your friends now? With whom do you spend the most time?

20. Who did you date when you were still in your home country? Who did you date when you arrived here? Talk about past relationships. How did your move to the US affect them?

21. Have you ever dated anybody who was not from your background? Was that an issue in the relationship? In what ways?

22. Could you show me the object you brought today that will show me how you remain in touch/connected with your country of origin? What are your preferred modalities for keeping in touch? Which ones are your least favorite and why?

23. How do you identify yourself? Where do you consider your home to be? Has it changed over time? How has it changed?

24. How do you feel about being (original nationality)?

25. What kind of things do you do that you would consider (original nationality) or American?

26. How do you think your studying abroad experiences have affected your identity?

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