

RECOGNIZING THE IMPACT OF STUDY ABROAD ON WOMEN BUSINESS STUDENTS

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Nearly two-thirds of study abroad participants are women, yet few studies have researched their specific experience in-depth. In fact, previous discussion focuses on the marginalization of men and strategies to expand their enrollment. While it is significant to consider the equitability of study abroad enrollment there have been missed opportunities to critically examine the experience of women. This session describes the results of a mixed methods survey indicating significant gains in the global competency of women business students that studied abroad. This session also presents recommendations for future research, program development, and career integration emphasizing the benefits of study abroad for women business students.

BACKGROUND

Study abroad is an increasingly significant experiential learning experience for undergraduate business students (Olson & Lalley, 2012). More undergraduate business students are studying abroad than ever before, with 62,996 business students studying abroad in 2014/15 compared to 36,047 business students in 2004/05. Business students constitute a significant portion of study abroad students at 20.1 percent of the total U.S. study abroad student population (Institute of International Education, 2016). Study abroad provides business students with an immersive educational experience abroad facilitating learning through Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning, Bandura's (1977) social learning model, and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning model. The learning theories of Kolb (1984), Bandura (1977), and Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the educational value of direct social experiences enabling transformative learning and the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2003; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Study abroad provides experiential learning in the international context supporting the development of additional learning outcomes including global competency (Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios, & Liu, 2016; Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013). This conference presentation defines global competency as the internal and external skills necessary for positive and effective intercultural interactions (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006). Internal skills include self-awareness, risk-taking, open-mindedness, and attentiveness to diversity. External skills consist of global awareness, historic perspectives, intercultural capability, and collaboration across cultures (Hunter et al., 2006). This conference presentation focuses on understanding the ways in which study abroad facilitates the development of global competency in women.

Research documents that study abroad significantly increases students' global competency, yet the discussion of women is limited (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Holtbruegge & Engelhard, 2015; Mapp, 2012). Women continue to confront obstacles to career advancement and leadership in professions across the globe (Madsen, 2017; Ngunjiri and Madsen, 2015; Rhode, 2017). An examination of the benefits of study abroad to women could contribute to research, policies, and programs concerning advancing professional women in an increasingly globalized world.

Current literature has focused on understanding the different motivational factors between men and women, with an emphasis on increasing the enrollment of men (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010; Thirolf, 2014). Studies also indicate potential different predictors of study abroad between men and women (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Pope, Sánchez, Lehnert, & Schmid, 2013). Bryant and Soria (2015) confirm women are more likely than men to study abroad. In regards to understanding outcomes of study abroad on men and women, studies analyzing gender as a control variables have indicated mixed results with cursory discussion on women (Holtbruegge & Engelhard, 2015; Stebleton et al., 2013). Only one academic journal has focused one examining the experience of Japanese women enrolled in Canadian English language programs (Kobayashi, 2007). Several studies indicate need for more research concerning differences between men and women in study abroad programs (Bryant & Soria, 2015; Thirolf, 2014).

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This session presents the results of a mixed methods survey collected from male and female business students that have studied abroad and not studied abroad. The survey of business students indicates significant differences between men and women that have studied abroad regarding motivation and outcomes of study abroad experience. This conference session describes the significant outcomes of study abroad emphasizing the effects of study abroad on women's global competency. This session also suggests recommendations for future research, program development, and career integration for women.

The goal of this session is to have participants reconsider the relevancy of study abroad for women. Participant learning objectives include: (1) understanding the marginalization of women in study abroad research; (2) understanding the results of a mixed-method survey indicating significant gains in women's global competency; (3) learn strategies to understand and strengthen the distinct learning outcomes of study abroad for women; and (4) envision future research projects, study abroad programs, and career integration programs that target women.

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