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# Understanding the Value of a Study Abroad Experience and Closing the Gender Gap

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**UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF A STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE  
AND CLOSING THE GENDER GAP**

**A thesis submitted to  
Regis College  
The Honors Program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Graduation with Honors**

**by**

**Justine Bufmack**

**May 2013**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
I. INTRODUCTION AND BENEFITS.....	1
II. A HISTORY OF STUDY ABROAD.....	15
III. THE GENDER GAP.....	29
IV. CONCLUSION.....	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	49

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Benefits**

Prior to leaving for my study abroad experience, I had never been out of the country, never flown by myself, and never had to be somewhere where I didn't speak the language. Eight months later, upon returning home after living in Rome and London, I have been to seven countries on two different continents and am now able to speak conversational Italian. I witnessed protests while visiting Greece, the downfall of Rome's prime minister, and the chaos that surrounds the host city of the summer Olympics. I was able to not only study works of Carravaggio in a church located around the corner from his original studio, but also British literature about the infamous London fog while actually living in London. I have seen firsthand the positive effects that studying abroad can have. It is because of the year I spent studying abroad, that I fully believe that studying abroad is a critical component in a traditional undergraduate education. Living and studying abroad teaches in a way a classroom cannot. Having to navigate streets in a foreign language teaches survival skills, while also creating a full immersion in a new language. Students who spend time studying abroad typically gain new views on everything from politics and international affairs to food and fashion. It is also not uncommon for students to develop new interests while spending time studying abroad—these interests can give students a varied perspective on their majors and career choices.

Upon returning home in April after a whirlwind of a year abroad, I knew that I had changed. I noticed it in the little things that I was questioning at home. Why were the American portions of food so much bigger than the portions in Italy? Why don't we have a public transportation system like the one I had grown so used to navigating in London? After living abroad for eight months, I had a new perspective on not only my home base in Colorado, but also a new perspective on the world. I learned that I still had a lot to learn about the world. However, this learning would not have started had I not studied abroad.

Before going further into my research questions, it is necessary to provide a background as to why a study abroad experience is so crucial. In working to create a valid argument as to why studying abroad is critical to a well-developed undergraduate education I aim to propose three types of claims. First, I will provide the facts that show support for studying abroad. A factual claim, as defined in *Critical Thinking and Communication: The Use of Reason in Argument*, is one that “makes inferences about past, present, or future conditions or relationships” (Warnick and Inch 64). In arguing the side of pro study abroad via a factual claim, I will thoroughly examine the tangible benefits of studying abroad; this includes, but is not limited to: GPA (grade point average—which shows how well students are doing overall in school), four-year graduation rates, and post college career statistics. Second, I will provide key information in the form of a value based claim. A value claim “assesses the worth or merit of an idea, object or practice according to standards or criteria supplied by the arguer” (Inch and Warnick 66). The value side of the pro study abroad argument will examine statements

from students who studied abroad in order to understand what students can gain from participating in study abroad. The conclusion of this section will combine both claims in order to create one cohesive argument regarding the benefits of studying abroad.

However, I would like to point out that studying abroad is different than travelling abroad. Students gain more from an area the longer they are there. So while there are benefits to travelling abroad, a short abroad vacation does not provide as much in-depth acclimation to an area. Travelling abroad just creates students who are tourists of an area rather than creating students who become a part of the area.

On many of my weekends while studying abroad, I travelled. Travelling to France or to Greece for a weekend made me a tourist—it did not create an understanding of the area that I was in like living in Rome did. As a tourist I was only interested in seeing the Eiffel Tower or eating gyros; I was not interested in getting to truly know another place because I was only there for such a short amount of time. The lack of time in each place I travelled to gave me little opportunity to understand a city or area, whereas my four months in each Rome and London gave me more time to explore and become a citizen of my host city. But more importantly, the courses I was taking allowed me to learn on a global level. I have taken years of Spanish language courses with little retention, but living in Italy forced me to put the things I was learning in my Italian language course to use. I learned more in my history of Rome course than I would have learned in a textbook based history course because the course involved actually going to different locations to see and talk about the history of the place. A tourist interacts with only the parts of an



area they wish to see; a citizen interacts with an area on a more broad level. Studying abroad provides an in-depth look at the place of a student's choosing that cannot be gained from short travels abroad.

While the difference between travel abroad and studying abroad is supported by my personal experiences abroad, it is also supported by a multitude of studies that show the length of time spent abroad is a key factor in getting the most out of going abroad. Students who spend time studying abroad, not travelling abroad, often increase their knowledge of the history, art, literature, and political systems of the country in which they study (Kauffman et al 34). A short amount of time abroad does not lead to development of relationships with people in the host country, does not increase interest in international events, and does not do much for the personal growth of the traveler. A study done by Dr. Jolene Koester worked to find the optimal amount of time a student needs to spend abroad in order to gain the most. This study found that, "travel as an option for intercultural contact resulted in the least amount of impact on the student...the traveler lacks opportunities to gain significant learning experiences," (Koester 60). The findings of the study highlight the key differences between travelling abroad and studying abroad. Because studying abroad takes place over a longer period of time, it is more beneficial; because travelling abroad takes place over a shorter amount of time, it has a lesser impact. Koester goes on to say that the greatest impact is found in students who spend three to twelve months studying abroad. Students abroad for at least three and no more than twelve months came back with "increased interest in academic performance and political awareness. They also displayed increased self-confidence...the choice of a

three to twelve month stay produced the most changes” (Koester 60). A student who studies abroad is going to reap the benefits of living and being part of an area for an extended period of time. In contrast, a student who travels abroad is only minimally impacted by their time in an area.

It is important to discuss the difference between traveling abroad and studying abroad because critics of study abroad often claim that travelling abroad is just as beneficial. Spending less than three months abroad does not have a significant change on academic performance, political awareness, or career plans (Koester 60). Like many criticisms of study abroad, the assumption that any amount of time abroad is beneficial does not have a solid base.

The length of time a student must spend abroad to gain the most is not the only criticism of study abroad. Other criticism for studying abroad often comes from the assumption that because a student studies abroad, they will develop bad academic habits, will then get lower grades, which will lower their GPA, and lead to delayed graduation rates. Don Rubin, professor of speech communication and language education at the University of Georgia points out that, “The skeptics of study abroad have always made the argument that study abroad is a distraction from the business of getting educated” (Redden). At first this may seem to be a logical argument—after all how much study really goes into studying abroad? But, studies show that studying abroad, in most cases, has a positive effect on students. Researchers who looked at the academic outcomes of studying abroad across the university system of Georgia found that “students who study

abroad have improved academic performance upon returning to their home campus, higher graduation rates, and improved knowledge of cultural practices and context compared to students in control groups” (Redden). Students who studied abroad typically see a raise in their mean cumulative GPA from 3.24 to 3.30 (Redden). This shows that not only does studying in fact go into studying abroad, but also that the positive outcomes of studying abroad can have an effect even after the student returns home.

Additional research shows that studying abroad has a significant positive impact on four-year graduation rates. The four-year graduation rate for study abroad students (Redden) was 49.6 percent; the four-year graduation rate for their peers who did not study abroad was nearly eight percent lower. And this statistic does not apply to a specific set of study abroad students. Researchers at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities found that “Higher graduation rates for students who study abroad can be observed across a wide variety of variables, including race, gender, major, first-generation status, parental income, SAT score, and grade-point average”(Redden). This draws the conclusion that a positive correlation between studying abroad and four-year graduation rates does in fact exist. The studies done by the research teams in Georgia and Minnesota provide hard data for the pro study abroad argument while also working to push away the notion that studying abroad is academically negative for students. GPA and four-year graduation rates are not the only positive benefits of study abroad. A study by Tracy Terrell compared:

twenty-one students who participated for one quarter in a work and study program in Mexico with a group studying Spanish on the campus of the University of

California, Irvine. The students in Mexico had taken a minimum of one year (three quarters) of Spanish at home and then took an additional quarter in Mexico. They were also, in their work and living experience, immersed in a Spanish-speaking culture. The control group in Irvine completed two full years (six quarters) of Spanish. Researchers then compared the groups' skills in speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing, using tests and taped interviews. The average speaking and listening comprehension score (83) of the students in Mexico exceeded the average score (75) of the students who had completed two years of Spanish on campus. The grammar and composition skills of the students in Mexico also proved equal to or better than those resulting from second-year courses at the UC campuses. Terrell attributed this to the Spanish language courses and written work required during the quarter in Mexico" (Kauffmann et al 37).

This study shows that language skills are also positively affected by studying abroad. In short, study abroad students who study the language where they are studying take in the language faster and with more comprehension than their peers who do not study abroad.

Terrell does point out that these study abroad students were fully immersed in the Spanish language by living in the culture and that they had previously taken the language. It is impossible to say that all students will retain a new language when they study abroad; however, it is possible to say that effects of study abroad give the students more benefits than their peers who do not study abroad.

While it can be relatively easy to show how studying abroad positively effects statistics like GPA, four-year graduation rates, and language comprehension, showing the positive effects of studying abroad on a more personal and less statistical level can be challenging. By analyzing statements from students who have studied abroad it becomes possible to make an argument based on values for study abroad. Statements such as: "I have become more confident in challenging situations"; 'I can be independent from my family'; and 'I have learned about my strengths as well as my weaknesses'" (Younes and

Asay 145) are difficult, if not impossible, to prove. Just because these statements cannot be proven with hard facts, does not mean we should downplay their significance. It is still important to pay attention to the claims, feelings, and statements from students who have studied abroad. These statements give us insight as to why studying abroad is critical to an undergraduate education. Maha N. Younes and Sylvia M. Asay present a qualitative case study that evaluates the impact of international study experiences on college students. Their methodology involved observing three study abroad groups from one university and giving participants questionnaires to get their opinion on their education and personal experiences while studying abroad. By receiving questionnaires filled in with statements like the ones above, they explain that, “There is no doubt that international study ventures offer a world of experience that is rich with context and content. The quality of both the international and incidental learning supersedes any educator’s dream of changing the perspectives of students. The educational gains, the dynamic group process, and the personal treasures that participants discover on these journeys lead to life-changing experiences and endearing memories to be cherished forever” (Younes and Asay). Study abroad participants go through changes in their lives that are hard to nail down and turn into facts. Often, the best outcomes of studying abroad come in the form of newfound confidence, life skills, and a worldly education. These are key results that are hugely important for students. Upon returning from a study abroad trip, a student will likely be able to be more confident in their choices, have better time management skills, and be able to understand how things work in a country other than their own.

In today's global economy the economic, geographic, cultural, or lingual knowledge one acquires from studying abroad can only help to give study abroad students a leg up on their non-study abroad peers. For example, studying abroad shows employers that a candidate is adaptable and able to succeed in new environments. This means that the impact of a study abroad experience reaches farther than just the student who studies abroad. Philip Gardner, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University found that employers also place value on a study abroad experience during the recruiting and hiring process for college seniors. Gardner found that internationally experienced hires (students who have studied abroad) demonstrated higher abilities. These abilities included, "Interacting with people who hold different interests, values, or perspectives; understanding cultural differences in the workplace; and adapting to situations of change" (Gardner 20). Employers of recent college graduates who have studied abroad also state that students who study abroad are more likely than their peers to be able to work independently, take on tasks that are unfamiliar/risky, and apply information in broader contexts (Gardner 20). It becomes evident that studying abroad, while valuable for personal growth (i.e. gaining confidence, independence), is also valuable on a much wider scale and can help students become more employable after graduation.

Studying abroad has a significant positive effect on not only the academics of students, but also on their personal lives. Because of this, studying abroad is a critical component in an undergraduate education. It is obvious that we live in a global world. It is possible to converse and work with people on the other side of the world in a way that

was previously unseen. Part of creating students that are well prepared for living and working in a global world is providing them with a global education. Globally educated students “possess high-tech skills, broad interdisciplinary knowledge about the contemporary world, and adaptability, flexibility, and world-mindedness to participate effectively in the globalized world” (Kirkwood 14). These are skills that can, and often do, come from studying abroad. What better way to globally educate students than to actually put them out into the world? Some things are better taught by experience rather than in a classroom and the key characteristics of a global education are among these things. Studying abroad also “forces students to think about life direction because they encounter new ways of being in the social order” (Kauffmann et al 112). This leads to questions of identity and career and life choices; thus a study abroad experience has intangible benefits in the doors it can open in the minds of students. Speaking from experience, I had never considered an international career prior to studying abroad. Studying abroad was not helpful in narrowing down what career path I want to go down after graduation. Instead, it gave me options I had never even thought about. While it is impossible to say if my study abroad experience was normal and typical of other study abroad experiences, it was chalk full of benefits.

Even though a study abroad experience is beneficial to participants, there are still a wide range of questions that exist in the field of study abroad research. One of the most discussed questions is the value of study abroad. Educators, parents, and students are faced with the decision of weighing the cost of a study abroad experience against what will be gained from the experience. A study abroad experience is expensive, so it only

makes sense that those financing the trip spend time questioning what they are going to get for their money. During the 2011-2012 fiscal year at Regis University, \$393,891 was lost on study abroad costs (“Regis University Study Abroad Financial Analysis”). Because the university is consistently losing money by sending students abroad, the question of value is extremely relevant. Are the students who return from study abroad trips bringing \$393,891 worth of valuable experiences back with them? As the benefits of study abroad have already been thoroughly looked at, my argument is that the benefits outweigh the costs.

The cost versus value question, while prevalent and important, is only one of the large questions that exist in this field. The second large question that exists in the field of study abroad is one that surrounds which students do not go abroad. The work to understand and answer this question involves looking at groups of people, such as minorities and low-income students, to understand why they are not going abroad. The second part of this question involves creating ways for these traditionally underserved populations to take advantage of study abroad experiences. While the population of students who do not go abroad is vast and diverse, the question that surrounds students who do not go abroad can be further broken down. Specifically, study abroad professionals and researchers are constantly trying to figure out why male students do not go abroad in the same numbers as their female peers.

The gender gap in study abroad is something I experienced in both of my study abroad programs. The number of females in my programs was at least twice as much the



number of males in my programs. This gender gap holds true across the study abroad spectrum; only about 35% of study abroad participants are males. And no one is able to point to a reason and come to one definitive conclusion as to why men do not study abroad. This thesis works to show the history and benefits of studying abroad, but my real research question is based around figuring out why such a gender gap exists in study abroad and working to understand how study abroad experiences can be made more accessible to male students. Studying abroad opened my eyes to how people live in a completely different world from my own and I gained much more from my study abroad experience than I ever imagined possible. With this in mind, I am setting out to understand what can be done to close the gender gap in study abroad so that more students are able to gain the life skills and experiences that study abroad can provide.

It is because studying abroad has a significant positive effect on not only other academics of students, but also on their personal lives, that studying abroad is a critical component in any undergraduate education. Studying abroad can positively alter things like GPA and four year graduation rates in students. Additionally, studying abroad can make a difference in career choices, boost confidence, and create skills that are not taught in a classroom. As a communication student, it only makes sense to look at the accessibility of study abroad through a communication perspective. The main argument of this thesis will be centered around the belief that study abroad should be accessible to all students, while focusing specifically on how to increase male inclusion in study abroad. From a communication perspective this means that the issue of accessibility will be looked at through a lens that analyzes why the study abroad message is being lost on

male students, as well as what communication techniques can be used to solve this problem.

In the course of building the argument that studying abroad is incredibly important, it is first necessary to understand the historical backing of US students abroad. The history of study abroad will work to show why studying abroad is an experience that has been relevant for hundreds of years. The fact that study abroad trips have been around for such a long time will be helpful in weighing the value of study abroad to all groups of people. After providing a history of study abroad, I will focus on looking at why male students are not going abroad and I will work to propose solutions to this problem. As previously mentioned, males are not the only students that are traditionally left out of study abroad programs. But attempting to understand why all other groups of student populations do not go abroad would be near impossible to accomplish in the course of this thesis. Closing the gender gap in study abroad will create the opportunity for focusing the question of who does not go abroad on other groups of students in order to also get them abroad.

Because study abroad is such a huge field, it has many problems. Study abroad opportunities are usually taken by middle to upper class white (mostly female) students. The expensive nature of study abroad trips often means that working students are not financially able to go abroad. Obviously, this is an issue because a study abroad experience should be accessible to any student. Like the question of cost versus value, the issue of accessibility on a wider scale cannot be fully addressed in this thesis. All of the

problems that exist in the field of study abroad are important, but I cannot feasibly solve all of them. Because of this, I will be focusing on fixing the gender gap in study abroad.

After coming up with why the gender gap exists and proposing ways to fix it, the conclusion of this thesis will provide an analysis that asks, why does this matter? This comes back to the question of value—study abroad is beneficial to students, but why is it important for universities to promote study abroad trips? Finally, I will look at how study abroad matters for not only a liberal education, but also for a Jesuit education. Creating an understanding of why this matters to us at Regis will make it necessary to show how Regis can do better in making study abroad accessible to all students, starting with targeting male students.

## Chapter 2: A History of Study Abroad

The idea behind study abroad is nothing new. Study abroad—in some form or another, has roots that can be traced as far back as ancient Greece and ancient Rome. Before the benefits of study abroad can come forth, the history of study abroad must first be presented. Specifically, where does the notion of study abroad come from? Why do we send our students to study abroad?

Scholars of the ancient world were sent to other countries to study out of pure necessity. Schools and universities were not as widespread, if a student wanted to learn they had to travel. So while scholars have been travelling for educational purposes as far back as ancient Greece and ancient Rome, study abroad as we treat it today takes its form from the idea of a “grand tour.” This term was first introduced by Richard Lessels in his 1670 book *Voyage to Italy*. William Hoffa author of *A History of US Study Abroad: Beginnings to 1965* explains that:

“Those who set out on a Grand Tour were not the wandering scholars of previous times, though these youth travelers were invariably gentlemen. They pursued social, diplomatic, familial, and pragmatic ends much more than they sought anything resembling academic knowledge. Their success was assured when it became apparent to all how much could be learned about life by leaving one’s home culture to hear unfamiliar languages and see ancient and modern architecture; to get firsthand knowledge of geography; and to learn about the politics, culture, art, and antiquities of the continent. These journeys represent

precedents related to the twentieth-century evolution of US study abroad” (Hoffa 15).

The Grand Tour was a way for young men to spend a few years experiencing what the world had to offer by visiting different countries and continents. Not entirely unlike the study abroad trips of today, the young men who ventured out on a Grand Tour set out to take advantage of everything they could not learn in a classroom. The Grand Tour was more about seeing the world in a hands on way in order gain knowledge from a firsthand perspective, rather than just reading about the world in texts in an academic setting.

Originally, the Grand Tour was a male only experience before “carefully chaperone female travelers from wealthy families” (Hoffa 17) were able to also participate in their own Grand Tours of the world. Despite their sex, the male and female Grand Tour participants shared at least one commonality—those partaking in a Grand Tour came from affluent backgrounds. The profile of Grand Tour participants holds steady even in today’s diverse world. American study abroad students still tend to be young males and females from affluent families.

For those without the financial backing to go on a Grand Tour, young travelers often participated in a *wanderjahr*. This is “a year or so more of experiential learning than academic study. It involved traveling widely, fending for oneself in new places, meeting people, having adventures” (Hoffa 18). In contemporary terms, we refer this as a gap year in which students take a break from school to wander the world in order to gain important lessons that are not taught through formal study. The idea of a *wanderjahr* also helps to establish the current set up of American study abroad programs in that “an ideal

program should consist of much more than classroom study; indeed, that if students receive only classroom study, they might just as well stay home” (Hoffa 19). Ancient proponents of study abroad, as well as their contemporary counterparts, understand that study abroad needs to be more than simply taking classes in another country. A true study abroad experience must encompass more than classroom study.

As the Puritans moved forth to the New World, study abroad and the idea of a *wanderjahr*, continued to be both necessary and trendy. Due to the fact that New England did not have any establishments for higher education “future doctors, lawyers, and a few other professionals still had to cross the Atlantic for formal training” (Hoffa 22). This meant that studying abroad become more of a necessity than an option. Those who wanted to further their education and attend law or medical school needed to go abroad in order to complete these trainings. For the Puritans, the Atlantic Ocean was not enough to keep them from traveling back to Europe. Going abroad in order to see the Old World “from the perspective of the New became an obsession for those with the means to travel” (Hoffa 26). People with money were able to enough the luxury of travel in order to travel abroad and participate in a sort of hands on study abroad experience. However, the practicality of traveling abroad (either for study or for a *wanderjahr*) soon came to an end. Early American universities, Harvard being the first, started to pop up in New England starting as early as 1636. The universities formed on American soil meant that fewer students had a need to go abroad to study. Hoffa explains that the pressures of creating and running a new country soon became more important than worrying about the political on-goings of Europe and learning about the European culture (Hoffa 24).

Keeping students at home was the most practical approach to education. Once the American economy began to grow, it again became feasible to send young American men to England so that they were able to sample the best of both educations (Hoffa 25). Enrolling in an overseas university or taking a Grand Tour meant the completion of a proper education for the young American man.

Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, study abroad again became unpopular in the eyes of the nation. Key American figures from George Washington to Thomas Jefferson spoke out against the so-called dangers of sending young American students abroad. Washington wrote that sending students abroad created “a serious danger” (Hoffa 27) because of the fact that these students would experience other political systems and thus would become disinterested in their own political system. Jefferson expressed that Americans abroad would lose his knowledge of the American way of life and would return to America as strangers (Hoffa 27). This American way or the highway sort of thinking meant that the only young men (mostly) that went abroad were those that had the nerve to take a Grand Tour or *wanderjahr*; or those that were willing to do an unmatriculated study at a European university (Hoffa 30). At the time, American students who wanted to study abroad had to accept the fact that the classes they took at a European university would not apply to any sort of degree. This might seem like a pointless course of action, but early American students “felt the necessity of being educated overseas. If they did not complete the degree, they nevertheless acquired practical, technical, and professional knowledge” (Hoffa 33). These early American students understood the same concept that the ancient

Romans knew—all of human knowledge could not be acquired from one culture. In order to become a better scholar, one must take advantage of the learning opportunities that other cultures and universities present.

While studying abroad was not a new concept to the young American scholar, the young American universities took longer to put formalized study abroad into action. It is here that we see study abroad put into formalized action. One of the earliest examples of the formalized study abroad comes from Indiana University in the 1880s (Hoffa 43). David S. Jordan, a faculty member at Indiana University, was one of the first to organize a summer abroad trip for students. These summer trips were not part of the “formal curriculum; rather they were offered for the general edification of the university community” (Hoffa 43). Jordan’s summer trips provide perhaps one of the earliest formal university sponsored study abroad programs. The early trips were open to general community members, but special trips were designed for “serious scholars” (Hoffa 44) so that they could engage with places of educational interest in the Old World (Hoffa 44). Unlike current summer abroad programs, students who participated in these early summer abroad trips did not earn university credit for their time abroad—instead they gained experience and life skills.

The formal history of American study abroad truly begins in 1919. It was in this year that the Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded. The IIE created a national organization that was able to “mediate between government policies and college and university programming...IIE’s mission was simple: ‘To promote international



understanding through international education”” (Hoffa 67). In short, IIE worked to create a link between American and overseas universities in order to create a more open way of both sending American students abroad and receiving foreign students to American universities (Hoffa 68). The formation of the IIE provided help for students wishing to study abroad, and also led to the creation of American study abroad programming as it is viewed in contemporary terms. Hoffa pinpoints the 1920s as the era in which American study abroad is truly defined and begins to take off:

“A new initiative within American higher education, it [study abroad] aimed to enrich and diversify undergraduate degree studies through participation in a program of study in a foreign environment. Unlike other previously discussed ways in which young Americans were introduced to the world beyond their national borders, this campus-based undertaking was neither matriculated study for a foreign university degree nor extracurricular enrichment. Rather, it was an innovative and programmatic attempt on the part of a few American colleges to combine academic and experiential learning modes in a foreign setting. As such, it represented a departure from anything that had come before” (Hoffa 69-70).

This formalized way of study abroad represented a new point for American students. Never before had American students had a way to study abroad and to get credit for these abroad studies at their home universities. Creating this link only led to more American students going abroad through the 1920s (and until the Great Depression) in order to fulfill academic requirements and create cultural experiences. Formal study abroad in the 1920s brought forth the creation of three different programs. All three programs continue to be used, in some form, today for contemporary study abroad students. The first program, Junior Year Abroad, allowed students to spend their full junior year of studies abroad. This created “a full year of language and cultural immersion” (Hoffa 70) and was

prefaced with the student spending the first two years of university studying the “language, history, and culture of the selected country” (Hoffa 70). The second type of program further developed the summer trips that Indiana University helped to start and the idea of a Grand Tour. Led by a faculty member, the group of students visited many countries and took courses in English that were focused on world issues (Hoffa 70). Finally, the third type of program to emerge during the 1920s was a summer study abroad. These programs were specifically designed to be theme or discipline specific short term programs that featured “coursework or independent research, perhaps linked with pre-professional training” (Hoffa 70). Because of the up and coming nature of these programs, American students continued to study abroad in low numbers and in small groups. The start of World War II put a firm stop to American study abroad programs—sending students and faculty into harm’s way was an idea that no one was interested in (Hoffa 100). It is only after the war ended that American universities and students began to again consider the idea of study abroad.

The end of World War II allowed American students and the American federal government to once again consider the support of formal study abroad. Veterans were able to attend college due in large part to the GI Bill; some of these veterans even studied abroad (Hoffa 111). However, the most important support towards the support of study abroad came in four key parts. The first of these was the development of the United Nations and UNESCO. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was created in 1946 in order to provide more legitimate standards for “international education on a worldwide basis” (Hoffa 112). The key

benefit of UNESCO in terms of American study abroad was that it led many young American students to consider studying in other countries. The second key part came from Senator William Fulbright. The Fulbright program “gave foreign countries indebted to the United States for wartime loans and supplies an opportunity to pay something back by supporting the mutual exchange of students, teachers, and scholars” (Hoffa 113). While not originally created as a way to promote study abroad, the Fulbright program encouraged international education not only by sending students abroad, but also by creating students that would then continue to work on an international level. Finally, the US Education and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 provided a way to further link study abroad with US foreign policy. The act was “intended to disseminate abroad public information about the United States” (Hoffa 114) and provided funding for both sending and receiving students in order to gain information about different cultural values. Much of the justification behind this act, however, was the promotion of America. The foreign way of life that American students learned from being abroad was important, but not as important as the passing of American values to foreign communities. Students continued to study abroad in low numbers until the final key act of the post World War II era. Passed in 1965, the Higher Education Act authorized colleges to use federal financial aid money to support students studying abroad (Hoffa 124). The use of federal funds was at the discretion of college so while some colleges processed this financial aid as acceptable for use for study abroad, most limited this aid to domestic study (Hoffa 124). The Higher Education Act created opportunities for some students to study abroad, but for the most part those that studied abroad continued to come from wealthy families.

Even as study abroad progressed towards more formally structured programs, students who studied abroad between the late 1940s and well into the 1960s were unlikely to receive academic credit at their home university. Most US colleges did not allow transfer credits from programs that other institutions sponsored. But, “students were sometimes able to have their program documentation reviewed for at least partial credit. More often than not, they did not expect to receive credit. Many students and others felt that even if they did not receive credit, ‘as a maturing experience, a year abroad, or even a quarter, may be more worthwhile than the same period spent in the home institution’” (Hoffa 184). Because taking classes at a foreign university was essentially the same as taking a year off, or completing college in five years instead of four, the students that took advantage of studying abroad at the time were not those students who were recipients of financial aid. This held true until various American universities banded together to create a consortium of colleges. One of these consortiums, the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) was founded in 1958 and was originally a group of the presidents of ten colleges (Hoffa 185). The main purpose of the ACM was to “enrich member campuses with additional off-campus study opportunities and faculty development... This made it possible for students to have access to many more overseas programs than their own school offered” (Hoffa 185-186). Because of these consortiums, students were able to find programs at different universities that worked to suit their educational needs. The ACM study abroad programs worked much like the third-party study abroad providers of today. The ACM programs included not only coursework at abroad universities, but also internship and research opportunities as well as field trips,

travel, and homestays (Hoffa 186). As more and more consortiums continued to form and develop, it became clear that American colleges and universities were willing and eager to create diverse overseas opportunities for their students. These consortiums, among other initiatives and programming clearly worked to promote study abroad. By the end of 1954-1955 academic year, IIE was able to provide accurate numbers on American students who studied abroad. In their annual *Open Doors* publication, the IIE reported that “9,457 Americans studied in 49 countries and political areas around the world” (Hoffa 232). And by the end of the decade, the *Open Doors* report showed a substantial increase with an official count of 13,651 American students who had studied abroad during the 1958-1959 academic year (Hoffa 233).

As the number of students participating in study abroad began to steadily increase, it became clear that a new model for study abroad was needed. The traditional Junior Year Abroad programming model was firm in that students had to prepare years in advance to study abroad by studying the language and culture of where they planned to go. Junior Year Abroad programming also put a large focus on creating opportunities for students to study in Western Europe. Starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s, study abroad began to transition “to a more pluralistic model, focusing to a lesser degree on the traditional study of European languages and cultures and move to a broader understanding of the need for American undergraduates to understand the geopolitics, languages, and societies outside of study abroad’s usual purview” (Hoffa and DePaul 18). The transition from studying abroad in Western Europe to all over the world meant that Americans had started to entertain the idea that in order to engage with the world,

American citizens had to be part of that world. It is during this time that the private sector started to dive into becoming involved with study abroad. The desire for study abroad programming across the world led to the development of third-party study abroad providers. Similar to the early consortiums, these third-party providers created new ways for students to study abroad (Hoffa and DePaul 23). By the end of the 1960s and with the help of individual institutions and third-party providers, American students who wished to study abroad had program options in Asia, South America, and Africa (Hoffa and DePaul 24). Motivated in part by the conflict in Vietnam and the Vietnam War, American students went abroad in larger numbers than ever before. The *Open Doors* report from 1973 shows a total of 34,218 American students who had studied abroad during the academic year (Hoffa and DePaul 24). The next decade of study abroad history proved to be relatively quiet. No new legislation promoting international education was passed and President Nixon tried multiple times to end funding for Title VI under the International Education Act (Hoffa and DePaul 29). When President Jimmy Carter took office in 1976, it seemed as though study abroad would again begin to receive national attention. However, the next four years provided more setbacks for American study abroad programming and funding. From the kidnapping of 52 US diplomats in Teheran to the second oil crisis in 1979, a positive stance on sending American students abroad for an international education was hard to be found (Hoffa and DePaul 30). And the beginning of the 1980s would prove no easier for study abroad as the United States was hit hard by high inflation and high unemployment. *Open Doors* numbers for the 1979/1980 academic year show a decline in students studying abroad of more than one-third, as compared to

the numbers from the 1973 report (Hoffa and DePaul 31). President Reagan ran his successful campaign in 1980 based on the premise that America needed to reassert itself in the world (Hoffa and DePaul 32). By the end of Reagan's presidency, the *Open Doors* numbers for American students studying abroad were at 62,341 for the 1988/1989 academic year (Hoffa and DePaul 32).

Even with the conflicts of the early 1990s, American study abroad really began to take off during this period. It was during this decade that the idea of a globalization of the American people really started to take root in the minds of the American people. Globalization, "while difficult to define precisely, the umbrella concept connoting the importance of free trade among nations and the removal of barriers to international exchanges in capital, technological, goods and services markets, began to play an important role in the mindsets of students, administrators and faculty in higher education and in federal government circles" (Hoffa and DePaul 39). In a way different than ever before, the American people started to realize the implications of living in a global society and started to work harder to create options and opportunities for its students to develop their academics abroad. The number of students who studied abroad by the end of the decade showed a doubling of the numbers from ten years earlier (Hoffa and DePaul 39) due to the rising importance of globalization. The growth in number of students studying abroad faced a small setback in 2001/2002 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but numbers reports from the years following 9/11 show that more and more students each year chose to study abroad. As globalization once again became relevant in the early 2000s, the United States government began efforts to broaden study abroad and

its participants. The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program provided “funding for U.S. undergraduate recipients of Pell grants... In addition to financial considerations, the program also attempted to diversify the types of students studying abroad by supporting students from community colleges, students in under-represented fields such as the sciences and engineering, and students with diverse ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities” (Hoffa and DePaul 45). This scholarship program was among the first to actively search for study abroad students who were different from the students who were typically able to spend time abroad. The program also targeted students who studied less commonly taught languages—so students who studied languages like Arabic and Chinese were awarded supplemental awards (Hoffa and DePaul 45). While the Gilman scholarship program received federal financial support as part of the International Opportunity Act, The Freeman Award for Study in Asia was launched by the private sector (Hoffa and DePaul 45). This program provides financial support for students who participated in projects and grants related to strengthening US-Asian understanding (Hoffa and DePaul 45) and is only available to students who can demonstrate financial need. The rise of both these programs shows an understanding of the need to broaden the base of study abroad students. In a global world, it is important to send a wide variety of students from various backgrounds abroad—rather than limiting the resources of study abroad to those who can afford to go on their own.

The current state of the field of study abroad is one that is so vastly different from the early beginnings of study abroad. More and more students are going abroad—*Open Doors* numbers from the 2010/11 academic year show over 273,996 American students



studying abroad and these students are more diverse than ever before. No longer is study abroad an experience for rich, young, white men. This is due in large part to the recent development of financial aid programs for study abroad. While the history of study abroad needs to continue to evolve in order to encompass more students (most participants are still financially stable young women), it is leaps and bounds above where it started. The growth of this field has also lead to more trained professionals, more integrated study abroad programs with American higher education institutions, and more resources for not only students who study abroad, but also for their home universities (Hoffa and DePaul 412). Over time, the field of study abroad has grown and turned into a way to provide undergraduate students of all walks of life a way to experience other people, cultures, and countries.

### **Chapter 3: The Gender Gap**

Evidence shows that studying abroad has lasting effects on participants. A study abroad experience can not only increase overall GPA of participants and four year graduation rates, but also can lead to personal developments that students do not gain by staying at their home university. Additionally, universities are able to use study abroad as a recruiting tool to encourage prospective students to choose their school. At Regis University, admissions counselors use study abroad as a persuasive tactic to further sell Regis. A short survey done by Deb Vinnola, who works in admissions at Regis University, shows that at least four out of six admissions counselors that were questioned mention study abroad as part of their presentation to students. Additionally, all six admissions counselors agreed that study abroad is a viable marketing tool in getting students to choose Regis. This means that study abroad programs benefit the individual participants as well as benefitting their home university. One admissions counselor even wrote that, “When students gain international and cross-cultural experiences, the lenses through which they see the world, and their role in it, can shift completely. They bring these perspectives back to campus—in their classes and as well their extra-curricular pursuits—and can begin to appreciate and alternatively challenge aspects of their day-to-day lives as students. I think that students who study abroad are ultimately more worldly and engaged and though I haven’t seen data suggesting the relationship, I am sure there’s a correlation between studying abroad and having success in their careers” (Vinnola). Knowing the benefits of study abroad makes it seem like studying abroad would be an

obvious choice for any undergraduate student. Reports from the Institute of International Education show that 270,604 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit during the 2009/10 academic year (“Study Abroad by U.S. Students Rose in 2009/10 with More Students Going to Less Traditional Destinations”). While more than a quarter of a million students might seem like a substantial number, The National Center for Education Statistics shows that 21.6 million students were expected to attend American colleges and universities in 2012 (“Fast Facts”). These numbers show that students in the United States are studying abroad at shockingly low rates compared to how many students attend college in total.

And while many populations of people are not studying abroad, I want to break this population down. Specifically, I will be looking at the fact that male college students study abroad in much smaller numbers than their female counterparts. Institute of International Education numbers show that “only 34.9% of all U.S. study abroad students in 2007 were male despite the fact that they comprised approximately 42% of the entire United States undergraduate population” (Stroud 493). Men who study abroad account for such a low percentage of study abroad participants on the whole, even though the overall population of men at colleges is rising.

If there is one definitive reason for the gender gap in study abroad, this reason has yet to be discovered by study abroad professionals and researchers. It seems to be practically impossible to nail down one reason for the lack of men going abroad. Because of this, I would like to propose three possible reasons as to why men do not take

advantage of study abroad opportunities. In proposing these reasons, it will then become easier to show possible ways to close the gender gap in study abroad.

### *Explanation 1: It's a Girl Thing*

Researchers of all things study abroad have multiple suggestions as to why college aged men do not study abroad. The first of these reasons is that study abroad has been categorized as a girl thing. The stereotypes about study abroad are plenty, but the most damaging one is that studying abroad is for girls. Like with most stereotypes it is hard to pinpoint studying abroad as it's a girl thing to one specific reason. However, part of the backing comes from the fact that most study abroad providers choose to market their programs with female students. Typically the only marketing materials (like brochures and posters) that are aimed towards male students are ones for programs in Australia and New Zealand. Tuett Cates, director of study abroad at Austin College, explains that “If you’re a guy who doesn’t do languages, Australia and New Zealand are attractive and you can do guy things like kayaking and bungee jumping” (Redden). Third-party study abroad providers have found a way to market to students in a way that works for them. Marketing materials, such as those shown below from three of the largest third-party program providers, International Studies Abroad, the American Institute for Foreign Study, and Globalinks Learning Abroad, feature photographs of all women.



Figures 1-3 from International Studies Abroad, the American Institute for Foreign Study, and Globalinks Learning Abroad

When Cates asked why third-party providers use females for marketing purposes, study abroad providers told him that “it’s just a marketing decision; that’s who our customers are” (Redden). Third-party study abroad providers have to market to females because that is their target audience—study abroad is a woman’s world so it only makes sense to aim marketing materials towards the largest portion of an audience. The women pictured in these study abroad program catalogs are featured prominently either on the front cover, as with the GlobaLinks catalog; or in the main header picture for programs, as with the American Institute for Foreign Study catalog and the International Studies Abroad catalog. Photographs of men in various study abroad programs are not featured prominently (meaning in the main picture of a page) until page 8 of the GlobaLinks catalog and page 28 of the AIFS catalog. The International Studies Abroad catalog does a better job at featuring both male and female students in their pictures. Female students are still the ones that are featured in most of the large pictures, but smaller pictures that include male students are dispersed throughout the catalog and are even on the front cover.

Another part of the stereotype of study abroad being a girl thing comes from the way people view study abroad. The director of education abroad at Ohio University, Connie Perdreau says that “The perception by males in many cases is that it still is...just something for women to do” (Dessoff 22). Part of this comes from the stereotype held by some male students that studying abroad is nothing more than a few classes and some shopping.

On top of these stereotypical views of study abroad, another possible explanation for study abroad being a girl thing is the reasons female college students cite for choosing to study abroad. While Jill McKinney, associate director of the Center for Global Education at Butler University, was conducting her master's research, she focused on female students' decision-making in regards to study abroad. She found "the three main factors...were motherhood, age, and safety" (Redden). Basically, the women she surveyed expressed that their desire to be mothers meant traveling abroad later in life, as a mother, would be harder to do; participants also told McKinney that they felt the need to travel abroad while they were younger and were able to participate in some sort of sanctioned manner to keep safe. Male students that McKinney surveyed did not feel as plagued by time—the tick of their biological clock is quieter, so to speak. The ones surveyed felt that they had time to do everything they wanted to do and did not feel the need to participate in a structured program to keep themselves safe. A study done by Martin and Rohrlach identifies thirteen areas of concern for students studying abroad; these areas are "housing, coursework, food, climate, language, health, sufficient money, homesickness, interaction with new people, unfamiliar currency, adjustment to new customs, extracurricular travel while abroad, and local transportation" (Shirley 20). These concerns are ones that are typically addressed in pre-departure programs, but further findings of the study show that they need to be addressed sooner for male participants. Results show that "women were more realistic about their ability to deal with the intercultural experience than were men' (40)" (Shirley 20). For various reasons, males are not as prepared to deal with the "uncertainties potentially associated with studying

abroad” (Shirley 21). These concerns are ones that will keep male students studying at home instead of going abroad.

Finally, study abroad is seen as a girl thing because of the degree path male students are more likely to choose. More male students than female students who attend college are science and engineering majors according to numbers from the Institute of International Education. These are programs that are very structured, compared to a degree program in the humanities, and often have less wiggle room for students to spend a semester abroad. However, this seems to be more of an excuse than an actual reason. While previous study abroad programs were often limited to participants of certain majors, current study abroad programs provide for students of all majors; this means that the lack of men studying abroad cannot be based just on their majors. Numbers from The National Science Foundation show that men earn 80 percent of bachelor’s degrees in engineering (“US Higher Education Degree Awards”); but participation by women in The Global Engineering Education Exchange, a study abroad program for engineering students, hovers at around 35 percent annually (Redden). For a host of reasons, study abroad appeals to women of all majors while only appealing to men of certain majors.

The most obvious solution to solving the it’s a girl thing problem is to break the stereotypes that surround study abroad. If breaking stereotypes were easy though, it would have already been done. As with most problems, there is not one easy answer. Instead, I would like to propose two manageable steps that can be taken for male students to stop looking at study abroad as a girl thing. The first is for third-party study abroad



providers to change their marketing materials to target a larger audience. By doing this, more male students will see study abroad materials and see a variety of students that are represented instead of just females. Of course this is not the end all solution to get more males abroad, but it would help to show males that studying abroad is not just a girl thing. The second solution would be to inform male students of the study abroad possibilities. If female engineering and science major students are able to go abroad, males should be too. Perhaps part of what is holding them back is the idea that their major will not leave room for them to go abroad. Male students need to know that with the right planning and preparation, their degree path will allow them to go abroad. Because female students are the ones that are more likely to attend study abroad information sessions or make an appointment with the study abroad office, study abroad offices should consider working with male-dominated social groups, such as fraternities, and other organizations (Shirley 79). Targeting male-dominated groups on campus will likely spark interest in study abroad among male students and thus lead to more male involvement in study abroad.

### *Explanation 2: Male Involvement on Campuses*

The second reason that male students tend not to study abroad is due to their level of involvement on their home campuses. Male students who are involved on campus have more reasons to stay all four years than spend time studying abroad. It is interesting to note that the amount that male students are involved in high school has an effect on whether or not they will study abroad. A study done by Mark H. Salisbury, Michael B. Paulsen, and Ernest T. Pascarella looked at why male students do not study abroad and found that one key factor that influenced intent to study abroad was involvement. Increased involvement in high school had a negative effect on male students' intents to go abroad (Salisbury et. al 633). This can be explained by the fact that once male students become involved in high school, they tend to stay involved in their college careers. This involvement can come in the form of participation in student government, strict college athletic programs, and fraternities. For female students, with the exception of athletics, they are likely to still go abroad even if they are involved, but for male students, being involved at their university tends to keep them at their home university.

It is unclear why male involvement affects study abroad participation but does not have an effect on female study abroad participation. For whatever reason male students are more worried about missing something at home. The most obvious solution to this problem would be marketing the short study abroad programs that range from a week or two to the full summer to male students. While studies show that students gain more from a longer study abroad period, studies also show that students gain from even a short

program as opposed to staying at home. Short programs can still be beneficial in helping students to connect with the global world we live in. A short program would allow male students who are involved during the school year at their home universities to still have a study abroad experience while also allowing them to continue their involvement on campus.

### *Explanation 3: General Misinformation*

A key part of the equation of males not going abroad is the simple fact that they are often misinformed about study abroad. This misinformation is coming not from the individual study abroad departments or study abroad providers, but from the male students themselves. Because communication is transactional, it can lead to a variety of problems. For example, just because study abroad departments and providers are putting messages out about study abroad, does not mean the receivers are actually getting the message (Pearson 30). So while the information about study abroad opportunities exists, it often fails to reach and impact a wide audience. Those who seek out information about study abroad opportunities are properly informed, while those who do not seek out this information view study abroad in a different light.

As previously discussed, study abroad can have a positive impact on four year graduation rates. Critics and students often assume that studying abroad will delay graduation. And this delay can happen, but it can be avoided if participants properly prepare for their time abroad during their first two years of college. Steven Shirley's dissertation research for the University of North Dakota found shows that "21% of males agreed or strongly agreed that studying abroad has significantly delayed their date of graduation while only 5% of females agreed with that statement" (Shirley 70). Study abroad, in most cases, is an experience that can fit into a four-year academic plan. Without the proper planning many students either miss out on the opportunity or are delayed in graduating. Proper planning for a semester (or more) abroad must be done not

only by the student, but also with the help of an academic advisor and the study abroad department. While Shirley's research does not lead to a definitive answer, it is likely that the students who were delayed in graduating because of study abroad did not properly plan for their time abroad and had to take more classes upon returning home.

This receipt of general misinformation would appear to be having a significant impact on the amount of male students going abroad. Of the male students that do spend time studying abroad, eighty-nine percent indicated that they would repeat the experience if given the chance (Shirley 72). Essentially, once male students actually get abroad they enjoy themselves and actually gain something from their experience. The problem is getting them there. Shirley suggests that a change in marketing materials, similar to changing the brochures put out by third-party study abroad providers, would fix part of this problem. Things such as testimonials of male returnee students to prospective male study abroad students would be an easy way to show that studying abroad is not just for women.

Additionally, one of the key solutions to solving this problem is understanding how men communicate. Men and women communicate and receive information differently so what works for getting female students abroad does not necessarily work for getting male students abroad. Elizabeth Aries in *Men and Women in Interaction* points to the fact that research studies have found that talk is more important to women than to men (Aries 148). In her research, Aries found that, "twice as many men as women preferred to do an activity; three times as many women as men preferred to talk" (Aries

148). Women are more comfortable talking, whether it's with their friends, co-workers, or professors. In order for study abroad to effectively reach a wider range of people, study abroad departments and providers must release that a one size fits all method will not work. Males prefer activities over talking. For marketing study abroad to male students, this means that an informational session where the study abroad department talks to students is unlikely to work for male students. They need something that is more hands on and activity based, rather than conversation based.

The final piece of general misinformation about study abroad is that all study abroad programs are based on experiential and out of the classroom learning. While this may be true for some study abroad programs or some classes, it is not true across all study abroad programs. Study abroad programs work to cater towards a large sampling of students. Male students and female students learn in different ways, so just like a one size fits all approach does not work for the communication about study abroad, it also does not work for actual study abroad programs. Carl Jung identified different ways of learning; these different ways are helpful in understanding why male students are more hesitant to go abroad. Jung points to two basic operational modes of learning. The first is an introverted learner who benefits from independent reflection and learns best by working on their own (Jung 163). The second is an extroverted learner who interacts with the world and is thus influenced by their environment (Jung 160). For a male student who is an introverted learner, studying abroad may seem like a far too daunting task. A common misconception about study abroad programming is that a majority of it takes place outside of the classroom—such as on weekend excursions and field trips. The

ability to use the world as a classroom is one appealing aspect of study abroad, but for introverted learners a learning experience like this becomes intimidating. Male students tend to be more quiet and reserved in the learning process, while female students tend to participate more in the learning process.

Once again, the key to solving this problem is more information. By being well informed on different study abroad programs, the male introverted learner who is intimidated by the interactive learning will be more likely to find a program that best suits their needs. A study by Maha N. Younes and Sylvia M. Asay that looked at the impact of international study experiences on college students reveals that “international study tours provide both types of learners with an appropriate methodology that addressed their learning styles. Introverted learners have ample time to reflect on their experiences and learn at their pace, and extroverted learners thrive on the richness of interaction that they gain not only from other participants but also from the people they encounter along the journey” (Younes and Asay 142). The male introverted learners who are scared away from study abroad because they think the experience will be geared towards extroverted learners need to be shown that classes abroad do not always translate to treks around the city. Instead, many study abroad classes are taught in a traditional classroom that might not be all that different from a student’s home classroom—the difference in this case comes more from living and learning in a different place than from the structure of the class.

## **Conclusion**

Study abroad has come a long way from the travel learning of ancient Rome and Greece to the more formalized trips of the 1880s. As part of this progress, study abroad has grown to accept all types of students. However, with all the progress that has been made in the field of study abroad, key groups of students are still being left out. With the gender gap in undergraduate education rates getting smaller (males make up about 45% of the undergraduate population), the gender gap in study abroad also needs to close.

It's undeniable that we live in a multi-gendered world. And the benefits of study abroad prove that a study abroad experience is beneficial for students of all genders. Study abroad is an opportunity that can be life changing. It not only affects the participant, but also affects the way they live in the world around them. It is because of that reason that we need to establish study abroad as a valuable opportunity for a wider variety of students. In order to invite more students be participants in study abroad, I am suggesting a change in the policies around study abroad. As previously mentioned, part of this involves widening the categories of who study abroad providers and offices target. By showing traditionally unrecognized students, (specifically, but not limited to male undergraduates) that studying abroad is an option for an inclusive group, it is likely that more students will start to go abroad.

The numbers of students who are studying abroad in the fall from Regis University show a much higher rate of male students than in previous years. During the 2009/10 academic year at Regis University 16 male students (out of 58 total) went



abroad; the next academic year 2010/11 shows a significant dip in this number, with only eight male students going abroad. Numbers from the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 academic years both show that 15 male students (out of 83 and 69 total, respectively) went abroad. While the numbers of male students for the past few years at Regis University are low compared to the number of female students going abroad, they are not low for trends in this field. Nationwide, about 30% of the students who go abroad are males. Recently, this number has been very slowly increasing. However, at Regis University the number of males going abroad held steady for the past two years and for the fall 2013 semester, 18 males applied to go abroad. For that same semester, 20 females applied to go abroad. This means that roughly 47% of the study abroad participants for the fall 2013 semester are male students from Regis University. But this is not a trend that is on par with the national study abroad numbers. The numbers from the *Open Doors* reports from 2000/01 to 2010/11 show the increase of male students going abroad is happening at slow and insignificant pace. From 2007/08 to 2009/10 the percent of male students abroad increased only from 34.9% to 36.5%, an increase of only 1.6% (Institute of International Education).

It is hard to pinpoint one solid reason that male students from Regis University are starting to go abroad in larger numbers. But, it is interesting to note that the promotional study abroad board in Loyola outside of the former study abroad office has featured various study abroad stories throughout the academic year—and all of the students profiled on this board have been male students. Maybe it really is as easy as changing the marketing materials. Because of the communication differences between

males and females, simply talking to male students about study abroad does not work. It is hard to say if the promotional study abroad board in Loyola led to an increase in male students who applied to go abroad for the fall 2013 semester, but if it did have an effect on male students going abroad it would be an easy way to alleviate the problem. If more promotional study abroad boards across college campuses and more study abroad marketing materials featured male students, more male students would be likely to go abroad.

While realigning the communicative message of the study abroad marketing materials should be the first step in reaching students who do not typically go abroad, this cannot be the only step. Because male students tend to be more involved and worried about missing something on their campuses, they need more information on study abroad options. That's not to say the information they are currently receiving is inaccurate, just that male students tend to be misinformed in their own assumptions of study abroad. For those who are worried about missing part of the school year or assume that studying abroad is only an option during the school year, they need to know that studying abroad in the summer months is an option. While summer study abroad programming tends to be shorter, students can still gain from these opportunities and bring their new experiences back to their home campuses. The benefits of study abroad are far reaching and continue to be beneficial to students long after they return home.

As part of this policy change, it is absolutely necessary that study abroad be promoted to students early in their academic careers. The director of Study Abroad at

Regis University already does this—as do the admission counselors who use study abroad as a selling point. One of the keys to getting more students—specifically more male students—abroad is to help them figure out how to make it work for their degree plan. By making students aware of their study abroad option as early as in the freshman year, they are able to adequately plan their next three years to make study abroad fit. Studying abroad is typically done during the junior or senior years of college. But there are exceptions to this standard. Nursing students, for example, who want to study abroad must study abroad in their sophomore year due to the clinical rotations they must complete during their junior and senior years. Study abroad departments should make exceptions like this for students of other rigorously structured majors as well. If it works better for a student to go abroad as a sophomore, the student should be able to have this opportunity.

But what does that all mean for a Regis student? Over the past four years I have heard the phrase “how ought we to live?” more times than I ever thought possible. While my three years at Regis have helped me to answer this question, it is the year I spent abroad and reflection about my time abroad that I truly found an answer. Studying abroad helped to show me that we ought to live as citizens of a global world. While universities work to provide for their students, they also must work to make a university education relevant in a global society (Kauffmann et al 1). The world is connected in a way that was unseen in previous decades. Because of this, our educational programs must come into the global era. In doing this at a university level, it is incredibly important to realize that “study abroad is one of the most powerful tools available for internationalizing the

curriculum in American colleges and universities” (Kauffmann et al 1). For study abroad to be as powerful as possible, it must be used in a way that is effective in teaching students. The authors of *Students Abroad: Strangers at Home* suggest that in order for a student to come back from a study abroad experience with a new world view, they must engage in “reflective analysis of what they experience” (Kauffmann et al 156). This reflective analysis is crucial in transferring their new experiences and new ideas into the “existing worldview and expanding that view to accommodate new material” (Kauffmann et al 156).

Intellectual development is the main goal of study abroad programs, but the experiences that come from living in another country and culture also develop the student as a person. As a system, study abroad is failing male students. Male students make up only about 36% of the total number of American students abroad. I fully believe studying abroad is a crucial part of an undergraduate education—and I think in order to better serve all students, this experience needs to involve more students. Once the gender gap in study abroad is successfully closed, study abroad professionals and researchers can focus on other opportunities for improvement in the field.

Studying abroad can have significant positive impacts on GPA and four year graduation rates in students. But the benefits of study abroad are about so much more than high GPAs and on time graduations. The change in career choices and development of skills that are not classroom based are a large part of the reason why studying abroad is

so important for students. In order to best live in this global world, we ought to be able to mold citizens that are truly prepared for their opportunities to take on the world.

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