

10 Recommendations Advisors Should Follow to Lessen the Gender Gap in Study Abroad
Task Force for Male Students
Diversity Abroad Network

The underrepresentation of college males in study abroad and lack of research on gender differences among participants is the basis for compiling the top ten recommendations advisors should know to lessen the gender gap within international collegiate travels. Despite the positive outcomes of study abroad and the increase in the number of participants, males are studying abroad in significantly smaller numbers than their female counterparts. Between 1998 and 2011, the participation rate between genders have not changed: 65% of study abroad participants were females and 35% were males (Open Doors, 2012). Overall enrollment numbers aside, females are more drawn to study abroad than males. Given this phenomena, the following 10 recommendations have been created to lessen the gender gap in study abroad.

1. Be mindful of how and where you promote study abroad to males. Advertise where they have a strong presence such as athletic events (scoreboards), via social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Vine, etc.), restrooms, fraternity houses, classrooms, television, newspapers, etc. Identifying multiple venues will help you get information out to males in spaces that will yield a high response. In the utilization of promotional materials, study abroad offices must be intentional in the placement of content that advocates for male student participation.
2. Male preferences in study abroad programs. In addition to desiring a direct connection to one's career and major, male students tend to prefer longer, more adventurous programs (Lucas, 2009). Another preference is males tend to gravitate towards programs with a thematic focus, such as, sports, leadership, business, etc. They perceive the study abroad process to be too complex, as there are an array of program options that are very time consuming.
3. Importance of the connection of study abroad to one's career. Males need to understand how study abroad directly influences their career. A strong case needs to be made about why spending a summer or a semester abroad is just as beneficial to their career as a local internship in their field. The need to secure internships during their academic career leads to low study abroad numbers, particularly for males. Males also benefit from hearing about the study abroad experiences of male alumni, and how such experiences can expand their professional network as well as access to future opportunities. In addition, these messages need to be included in promotional materials.
4. College males desire a direct connection to one's academics/major. Research indicates that college males who consider study abroad are very concerned about delaying graduation (Lucas, 2009). Any activity or choice that potentially delays graduation is seen as a situation they should avoid. Without curriculum integration and a direct connection to a student's major, male students will continue to be underrepresented in study abroad. For this reason, study abroad offices should be proactive and aspire to partner with academic units. Partnerships afford

stakeholders the opportunity to be proactive as well as explore strategies that won't delay graduation.

5. Gender roles and gender stereotypes. The behaviors and beliefs that are most central to college male's traditional definition of masculinity are restricting emotion, seeking power, risk, competition, acting homophobic, fearing femininity, prioritizing the opinions of one's peers, and abusing alcohol. While this does not fit every male student's belief or behavior pattern, it is a stereotypical expectation of male behavior in college. From a traditional gender norms perspective, if student affairs programs are perceived as feminine, this is primary reason that males are not actively participating in study abroad programs. (Capraro, 2004)

6. Male's perception on the feminization of study abroad. It is evident that males perceive study abroad as a feminine activity based on their perception of marketing materials. Males perceive the language, images, and promotion of study abroad to be feminized and not relatable. Males focus on obstacles rather than benefits (Lucas, 2009), and prefer concrete facts between the specific benefits of study abroad and their academic and career objectives. In addition, college males are engaged in college services and activities far less than their female counterparts. Research indicates many males view student affairs programs as nurturing, therefore a threat to their masculinity, and rather than participate and feel shame, they avoid to protect their masculine identity (Kimmel, 2008).

7. College males tend to long for deep personal connections. Study abroad is seen as a temporary experience where those deep personal connections from home could be lost or changed only to be replaced by temporary ones in their host country. The use of testimonials specifically from male students to show how those friendships made abroad are valuable and long lasting could be beneficial.

8. College males' fears related to studying abroad. In addition to the desire for deep connections, male students are very concerned about leaving their home network, fear traveling alone, and are apprehensive about being able to make new friends. We can assist with these concerns by acknowledging the need for connection and addressing fears when advising, during orientations, or by establishing "buddy" programs in the host country.

9. Study abroad transforms males' view of masculinity. Previous work has indicated that college males have limited awareness of gender. Male privilege inhibits male students from understanding themselves as males, which can affect identity development and their ability to have a more mature understanding of self in relation to the multicultural world (Davis & Wagner, 2005). Based on recent research (McGivern, 2013; Yankey, 2014....), the male participant's view of self is transformed as a result of studying abroad. After study abroad, males described a more open definition of what it means to be a man, feel less judgmental towards others, place less importance on traditional gender norms, and are less concerned by what others think of them (Yankey, 2014).

10. Learn more about males on your home campus. Consider surveying them, specifically to understand where they would like to study abroad and for how long. Find out how much support or independence they want, if they, indeed, want internships, and how they specifically differ across majors, racial, ethnic, social and cultural groupings. The needs of college male students are diverse; and in addition to their gender we must consider other dimensions of their identity such as race/ethnicity, first-generation college student status, disablement, and sexual orientation to name a few.

As international education professionals, we need to find ways to educate males about the benefits of study abroad. By considering the above suggestions, the market of male students can be reached and will create a worthwhile study abroad experience for all participants. Males students tend to prefer longer, more adventurous programs that have a direct connection to one's career and major (Lucas, 2009). Males tend to gravitate towards programs with a thematic focus, such as, sports, leadership, business, etc. Men prefer an 'easy' application process that is not complex, doesn't include too many steps, isn't too time consuming, and minimal program type decisions. (Yankey, 2014).