



University of Maryland College Park

# Is it Manly to Study Abroad?

*Perceptions of Masculinity in Study Abroad*

Alexander Jacob Shapiro

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## **Abstract**

Study abroad programs are becoming increasingly popular at U.S. universities. Universities and the federal government are working to increase national participation in study abroad, due to its many perceived benefits. Despite their efforts, however, today only about ten percent of undergraduates study abroad before graduation. Strongly contributing to this statistic is the persistence of a large gender gap in study abroad: 65.3 percent of students abroad in 2013-14 were women.

Using an experimental design, I test a novel theory on the causes of low male participation in study abroad. I theorize that males study abroad at lower rates than females because males perceive study abroad to be un-masculine, or “un-manly.” I argue that this perception is the result of: (1) the feminine history of study abroad in the U.S.; (2) an overrepresentation of females in study abroad offices and marketing; and (3) a feedback loop in male participation. I further assert that this perception of study abroad is particularly influential on male behavior due to the roles of social pressure and masculine culture.

I find that males who believe a high rate of males at their school study abroad are strongly, but not significantly, more likely to study abroad in the future than males who believe a low rates of males at their school study abroad. I find that this effect becomes statistically significant when controlling for financial aid. Finally, I find that males with financial access to travel outside study abroad are strongly, and significantly, less likely to study abroad in the future than males without financial access to travel outside study abroad.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Background of the Study**

“Study abroad” can be defined as a program in which students study in a foreign country and receive academic credit from a U.S. accredited institution of higher education after they return (Shirley, 2006). Study abroad participation by U.S. students has more than tripled in the past two decades, reaching a new high in 2015 of 304,467 students studying abroad (Institute of International Education, 2015).

Increased participation in study abroad reflects a growing consensus among students, universities, and the U.S. government on its potential value. According to Salisbury et. al (2008), citing others’ studies, researchers have found that study abroad participants develop sophisticated cognitive skills, a greater appreciation for global issues, improved intercultural awareness and communication skills, a stronger and more mature personal identity, higher self-confidence, and advanced second-language skills. Study-abroad participants also persist at higher rates and progress toward graduation more quickly. Furthermore, surveys of study-abroad alumni suggest that their experience positively informed their search for meaningful postgraduate employment and experiences (Salisbury et. al, 2008).

For universities, study abroad has value as a way of responding to growing pressure to be seen as “international.” According to Stroud, “a campus which has heavily invested in international education is perceived as likely to offer a stimulating learning environment” (2010). Student participation in study abroad programs is thus “often taken as an indicator of overall institutional quality” (Stroud, 2010). Efforts are currently underway at many U.S. colleges and universities to increase the number of students who participate in a study abroad experience (Shirley, 2006). Some institutions, such as Goucher College and St. Mary’s College of Maryland, have made study abroad mandatory, while many others, such as Colby College in Maine, incentivize study abroad with scholarships and attractive programs (Lincoln Commission, 2005; Yeatman, 2008)

The federal government stands to benefit from increased participation in study abroad as well. In 2005, President George Bush and Congress established a bipartisan commission, called “The Lincoln Commission,” to examine the issue of study abroad and set policy goals (Lincoln Commission, 2005). The Lincoln Commission reported that promoting and democratizing study abroad is “the next step in the evolution of American higher education.” According to the commission, study abroad is crucial for the U.S. to remain competitive and safe in a globalized world.

“What nations don’t know can hurt them. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent.”

Specifically, the Lincoln Commission lists globalization and economic competitiveness, national security, U.S. leadership, educational value, and active engagement in the international community as potential national benefits of study abroad. To go along with its evaluation, the

Lincoln Commission set a goal of 1 million U.S. students studying abroad annually by 2016-2017 (Lincoln Commission, 2005). The year after the Lincoln Commission, the U.S. senate, by unanimous vote on Senate Resolution 308, declared 2006 as the “Year of Study Abroad” (Stroud, 2010).

## **Need for the Study**

Despite research into the benefits of study abroad, and the efforts of universities and the federal government to encourage participation, U.S. rates of study abroad remain relatively low. Data from 2013-14, the last year for which statistics have been released, shows only about 10 percent of U.S. students, or 304,467 students, study abroad before graduating from college (Institute of International Education, 2015). While study abroad by U.S. students has more than tripled in the last two decades, current U.S. participation falls well short of the million-student goal set by the Lincoln Commission in 2005.

Low rates of U.S. students studying abroad can be attributed at least in part to the existence of a significant gender gap. In 2013-14, 65.3 percent of students abroad were female. Similar rates were reported every year over the last decade (Institute of International Education, 2015). This proportion of females to males studying abroad does not align with the overall distribution of gender in postsecondary education. In 2014, only 57 percent of postsecondary students were female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). As first pointed out by Shirley (2006), if males studied abroad in the same proportion that they were enrolled in postsecondary education, there would be an increase of 8.3 percent in study abroad participation. This would cause the total number of U.S. students abroad to grow significantly, helping to achieve university and federal goals of increasing study abroad participation.

The above statistics beg the question of why more females than males study abroad. If this question is answered, study abroad participation can be increased through more effective marketing by universities. Unfortunately, research into the study abroad gender gap is relatively sparse (Shirley, 2006; Salisbury et. al, 2008; Stroud, 2010). Despite a significant growth in the body of research available on study abroad as a whole, in 2006 Steven Shirley wrote in his dissertation that “very little research has been completed to understand the disparity between male and female participation in study abroad” (Shirley, 2006). Salisbury et. al echoed Shirley in 2008, writing, “Surprisingly, almost no empirical research has explored the array and potential interaction of factors that affect intent to study abroad” (Salisbury et. al, 2008). While some attempts have been made to research the study abroad gender gap (e.g. Dessoiff, 2006; Shirley, 2006; Thomas & McMahon, 1998; Stroud, 2010; Salisbury et. al, 2008), these studies have largely failed to identify clear, meaningful, and practical explanations for low rates of male participation. As a result, further research is needed to explain the persistence of the study abroad gender gap.

## **Purpose and Goals of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine and test a novel theory on the causes of low male participation in study abroad. The goals of this study are to: (a) clearly identify a cause of the gender gap in study abroad; and (b) quantify that knowledge in a way that universities can use to more effectively advertise study abroad programs.

## **Theory**

Males study abroad at lower rates than females because males perceive study abroad to be un-masculine, or unmanly. Males hold such a perception for three reasons: (1) study abroad's long and well-documented history as a female only pursuit; (2) an overrepresentation of females in study abroad employment and marketing; and (3) a feedback loop\* that exists due to low male participation. Males' perception of study abroad as un-masculine is particularly influential on male tendencies due to the roles of social pressure and masculine culture.

*\*Male participation feedback loop: Males observe low rates of other males studying abroad, and perceive study abroad to be un-masculine as a result. This further drives down the rate of male participation, thus forming a loop.*

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

This chapter will review literature relevant to the gender gap in study abroad. The chapter begins with a brief survey of research in study abroad, followed by an examination of literature relevant to the theory stated above.

### **General Research in Study Abroad**

Increased interest has generated a large increase in the body of work available on study abroad. Common topics of research include: benefits of study abroad, language learning and proficiency abroad, program evaluation, learning outcomes for study abroad, dispositional and attitudinal changes due to study abroad, social and psychological outcomes of study abroad, and barriers to studying abroad (Stroud, 2010). Relatively less research has been done specifically on the gender gap in study abroad (Shirley, 2006; Salisbury et. al, 2008; Stroud, 2010). Notable publications on this topic were written by Hoffa and Pearson (1997), Shirley (2006), Stroud (2010), and Salisbury et. al (2008).

In the 1997 *NAFSA Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators*, William Hoffa and John Pearson offer three explanations for the gender gap in study abroad. Their explanations are: (1) study abroad participants have primarily come from female dominated majors such as languages and the liberal arts; (2) cultural values in the U.S. encourage men to pursue more “serious” activities; and (3) women are expected to excel in social relations, which can be improved abroad (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997). Hoffa and Pearson assume that the gender gap will gradually cease as gender roles and norms change. Almost twenty years later, however, the gender gap persists, and thus Hoffa and Pearson’s explanations must be reexamined.

Steven Shirley, in his 2006 dissertation at the University of North Dakota, examined a survey of 179 students from 14 universities, with the hopes of finding “differences between males and females regarding their overall perceptions of the study abroad experience” (Shirley, 2006). Shirley’s analysis found “few significant differences [...] between males and females,” Shirley recommends further studies that “might take into consideration additional variables when exploring differences among genders” (Shirley, 2006).

In the 2010 article “Who Plans (Not) to Study Abroad? An Examination of U.S. Student Intent,” author April Stroud used a survey of incoming freshman to the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, in order to examine factors that may affect U.S. student participation in study abroad. These factors include: “parental income and education, gender, race, intended major, attitudes about other cultures, and distance of college from home” (Stroud, 2010). Stroud found four variables that negatively impact a respondent’s likelihood to study abroad. These include having plans to pursue a master’s degree or higher; intending to study engineering or professional areas such as architecture, medicine, nursing, or physical or occupational therapy; and living with family.

Choice of major and pursuit of higher degrees have often been given as causes of the gender gap in study abroad. The argument goes that males study abroad less than females because they are

more likely to pursue a master's degree, or study STEM or professional fields, both of which discourage studying abroad according to Stroud (2010). Mark H. Salisbury, Paul D. Umbach, Michael B. Paulsen and Ernest T. Pascarella reject this argument, pointing out that "women in traditionally male-dominated majors such as engineering, business, and the hard sciences also study abroad at about twice the rate of men" (Institute of International Education, 2008; Salisbury et. al, 2008).

Salisbury et. al instead attempt to understand the decision making process behind study abroad participation by applying an integrated model of college choice (Salisbury et. al, 2008). They argue that the decision making process for study abroad rests on the relative "human, financial, social, and cultural capital" of the student involved. Specifically, they find that the accumulation of social and cultural capital prior to attending college is positively related to the intent to study abroad while in college.

### **Feminine History of Study Abroad**

Alan Dessoiff, in his 2006 article titled "Who's NOT Going Abroad," notes the historically female reputation of study abroad programs. Dessoiff interviews Dawn Anderson, the associate director of international study programs at Northeastern University. She points out that study abroad was historically a female only affair, stemming from the "eighteenth and nineteenth century practice of sending affluent daughters to finishing schools in other countries" (Anderson qtd. in Dessoiff, 2006). Kischer describes study abroad's origins as, "a grand European tour of art and culture, a refining gloss for a marriageable young woman" (2012).

High rates of female study abroad persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a large portion of study abroad students came from female dominated majors like humanities, the arts, and language (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997; Shirley, 2006). Lewis Fortner, academic director of study abroad at the University of Chicago, recalls that even within his lifetime "the only study abroad programs were junior year abroad programs operated by women's colleges" (Fortner qtd. in Dessoiff, 2006).

### **Females in Study Abroad Offices**

In a February 2006 survey of four major universities, Steven Shirley found that the universities' study abroad marketing featured a combined 288 female students, and only 64 male students (Shirley, 2006). In a survey of four different universities the same year, Shirley found a combined 35 females working as study abroad advisors, and only 5 males. Shirley, noting the small sample size, asserts that "further exploration at more campuses reveals similar trends." At the University of Maryland, the employees of the study abroad office are 82 percent female and 18 percent male (globalmaryland.umd.edu).

## **Male Social Pressure**

After completing his dissertation research, Steven Shirley recommended for ensuing research to “more closely address the significance of peer influence” (Shirley, 2006). In 2008, Salisbury et. al found that the study abroad decision making process for males is most impacted by “emerging personal values, experiences, and peer influence,” while females are most impacted by “influential authority figures and educational contexts” (Salisbury et. al, 2008). The impact of peer influence on males is significant for this study. A University of Iowa study found that the more men interacted with their peers, the more deeply influenced they were by them, and the less likely they were to go abroad. Interaction with peers did not have a similar effect on women (Fischer, 2012).

## **Perceptions of Masculinity**

According to Robert Cialdini’s “social proof theory” and a substantial body of evidence, social pressure affects all humans, male and female (Cialdini et. al, 1999). So why does social pressure specifically impact males in their decision making for study abroad? Stronger responses to social pressure among males could be in response to the effects of masculine culture, or “manliness.” In every society there are socially agreed upon gender norms, or expectations of how each gender should act (Aulette & Connell, 1991; Good et. al, 1994). These norms are readily visible in a mass media society like the United States (Aulette & Connell, 1991). Gender norms, and especially perceptions of masculinity, are greatly powerful. They are constructed not by force, but rather by the power of persuasion in the form of “religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth” (Aulette & Connell, 1991; Palmer-Mehta, 2009).

Men in the U.S. are under significant pressure to conform to socially agreed upon gender norms. These norms are so widespread, powerful, and significant that both trying to meet and resist societal and internalized demands to live up to them can cause physical and emotional stress (Good et. al, 1994). According to Good et. al, “Failure to meet cultural expectations can be detrimental to men because people use cultural expectations as standards for their own validation” (1994). O’Neil, in his theory of “gender-role conflict,” argues that males are judged according to the degree to which they conform to traditional gender roles. Failure to conform can result in significant internal conflict (O’Neil, 1981; Jome and Tokar, 1998). The theories of “sex role strain” (Pleck, 1981) and “gender-role stress” (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) also describe the “detrimental consequences” of men’s efforts to meet or resist socially agreed upon gender norms.

The above models predict how men are socialized by their respective societies. According to these models, men in the U.S. “are typically socialized toward independence and achievement (instrumentality), avoidance of characteristics associated with femininity and homosexuality (interpersonal dominance), and restriction or suppression of emotional expression (rationality)” (Good et. al 1994). The intense pressure on males to conform to gender norms by avoiding characteristics associated with femininity is significant for this study.



### **Chapter III: Research Methodology**

This chapter outlines the research methodology of the study, namely the research questions, theory, hypothesis, instrument, sample, variables, and data treatment.

#### **Research Questions**

- 1) Why do males study abroad at disproportionately lower rates than females?
- 2) How do gender norms affect males' likelihood to study abroad?

#### **Theory**

Males study abroad at lower rates than females because males perceive study abroad to be un-masculine, or unmanly. This perception is the result of: (1) the feminine history of study abroad in the U.S.; (2) an overrepresentation of females in study abroad offices and marketing; and (3) a feedback loop in male participation. This perception of study abroad is particularly influential on male tendencies due to the roles of social pressure and masculine culture.

#### **Hypothesis**

In a comparison of individuals, males that believe a high proportion of males at their school study abroad will be more likely to study abroad in the future than males that believe a low proportion of males at their school study abroad. This relationship exists because a belief that other males are studying abroad helps dispel study abroad's feminine reputation, increasing the likelihood of males to participate.

#### **Instrument**

A survey is used to test this hypothesis. The survey was created using Qualtrics, an online survey tool, and distributed through email and social networks. The data was compiled in Qualtrics, and analyzed using STATA.

The survey consisted of four pieces of information about the University of Maryland, and ten questions. Seven of the questions gathered demographics data, asking respondents their age, identified gender, race, political ideology, how many times they traveled outside the country, if they're on financial aid, and if they're an international student. One question asked respondents how likely they were to study abroad while at the University of Maryland, on a scale of one (very unlikely) to seven (very likely). One question asked respondents to rank the reasons they were not planning to study abroad, if they answered the former question accordingly.

The respondents were first instructed that they were playing a memory game, and asked to memorize the four pieces of information about the University of Maryland. Three of the four

pieces of information were true; of those three, two concerned the history of the University of Maryland, while the other listed the University of Maryland's ranking in Forbes Magazine. The fourth piece of information, however, was a made up statistic about the rate of male participation in study abroad at the University of Maryland. Experimental Group One, or the "low male" group, received a statistic stating that 16.3 percent of males at the University of Maryland study abroad. Experimental Group Two, or the "high male" group, received a statistic stating that 83.7 percent of males at the University of Maryland study abroad. The control group received no statistic about study abroad, only being presented with three pieces of information. The Qualtrics "survey flow" option was used to randomize group assignment.

After being presented with the pieces of information, respondents were asked a number of demographics questions. Respondents were then asked to rank the likelihood they would study abroad in the future. If they answered that they were not likely to study abroad, respondents were asked to rank in order the most significant reasons for their choice.

## **Sample**

The sample consists of students at the University of Maryland. The sample is not random, as its distribution was limited to members of the researcher's social network. The survey was distributed through Facebook, as well as through list serves for on campus organizations, Greek organizations, and campus departments. 91 respondents completed the survey.

## **Variables**

The *independent variable* is "experiment," a categorical variable measuring if respondents were in the "low male," "high male," or controlled experimental group. "Experiment" was generated by combining three variables: q3\_3 ("low male"), q2\_3 ("high male"), and q4\_1 (control). A value of 1 denotes the respondent is a member of the "low male" group, a value of 2 denotes the respondent is a member of the "high male" group, and a value of 3 denotes the respondent is a member of the control group.

The *dependent variable* is "studab\_dum," a dichotomous dummy variable measuring if a respondent reports being likely or unlikely to study abroad in the future. Likelihood to study abroad was initially measured by "q5\_4," an ordinal variable with values ranging from 1 ("Definitely Won't") to 6 ("Definitely Will"), and 7 ("Already Did"). q5\_4 was recoded as studab\_dum to reflect only two options: 0 ("unlikely to study abroad"), and 1 ("likely to study abroad").

The *key control variable* is "q5\_2," a dichotomous variable measuring if respondents are male (1) or female (2).

A *second control variable* is "q5\_7," a dichotomous variable measuring if respondents are on student financial aid (1) or not (2).

A *third control variable* is “polview,” a dummy variable measuring if respondents are generally liberal, moderate, or conservative. Political view was initially measured by “q5\_8,” an ordinal variable with values ranging from 1 (“Extremely Liberal”) to 7 (“Extremely Conservative”), in addition to 8 (“I haven’t thought much about this”) and 9 (“other”). “q5\_8” was recoded as “polview” to reflect three options: 1 (“Liberal”), 2 (“Moderate”), and 3 (“Conservative”).

A *fourth control variable* is “travel,” a dichotomous dummy variable measuring if respondents have been out of the country 1-3 times, or 4-6 times. Number of times outside the country was initially measured by “q5\_9,” an interval variable with values ranging from 1 time out of the country to 6. “q5\_9” was recoded as “travel” to reflect two options: 1 (1-3 times out of the country), and 2 (4-6 times out of the country).

### **Treatment of the Data**

To test the hypothesis, STATA was used to run a cross tabulation between “experiment” and “studab\_dum,” using the “if” function to control for gender (“q5\_2”). A chi-square and Pr test were used to test statistical significance.

The *null hypothesis* was as follows: There is no significant difference in likelihood to study abroad between males presented with a “low male” statistic and males presented with a “high male” statistic. Any difference is due to random sampling error.

The *alternate hypothesis* was as follows: There is a significant difference in likelihood to study abroad between males presented with a “low male” statistic and males presented with a “high male” statistic. Males that are presented with a “high male” statistic will be more likely to study abroad in the future than males presented with a “low male” statistic.

## **Chapter IV: Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected in this study. Some tables and graphs can be found in the appendix\*.

### **Demographic Characteristics of the Subjects**

91 students at the University of Maryland participated in the study. Table 1\* illustrates the gender, ethnicity, and political views of the respondents, as well as the proportions of respondents who are on financial aid, and the number of times respondents have been out of the country.

In 2016, 57.6 percent of students enrolled in U.S. universities are female. 58.6 percent of students are Caucasian, 15.8 percent are African-American, 15.8 percent are Hispanic, 6.2 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, and .8 percent are Native American. 70.7 percent of U.S. university students are on some form of financial aid.

In this study, only 47.13 percent of respondents are female. 80.43 percent of respondents are Caucasian, and only 35.29 percent are on financial aid. Due to the specific social network of the researcher and an inability to distribute the survey widely, the demographics of the sample in this study do not align with the demographics of universities in the U.S

### **Likelihood to Study Abroad**

Table 2\* illustrates the likelihood of males and females to study abroad, by race, financial aid, political view, number of times traveled outside the country, and experimental group. In this study, 46.2 percent of males said they were likely to study abroad, while 64.5 percent of females said the same. A similar 65.3 percent of females in the U.S. studied abroad in 2013-14 (Institute of International Education, 2015). A total of 54.29 percent of the respondents in this study said they were likely to study abroad.

62.2 percent of respondents that identify as liberal responded they were likely to study abroad. Only 11.1 percent of identified conservatives responded the same. This effect is significant at a 98.4 percent confidence interval ( $Pr = 0.016$ ).

85.7 percent of males who have been out of the country 1-3 times responded they were likely to study abroad. Only 35.5 percent of males who have been out of the country 4-6 times or more responded the same ( $Pr = 0.016$ ).

60 percent of males who received the “high male” statistic responded they were likely to study abroad. Only 40 percent of males in the “low male” experimental group, and 35.7 percent of males in the control group, said the same ( $Pr = 0.382$ ).

### Likelihood of Males to Study Abroad, by Experimental Group

Table 3 displays the results of Cross Tabulation 1\*, which compares the likelihood of males in the study to study abroad, across experimental groups. 40 percent of males that were presented with a low male study abroad statistic said they were likely to study abroad in the future, and 35.71 percent of males that were presented with no statistic about study abroad responded the same. These statistics contrast notably with males who were presented with a high male study abroad statistic, 60 percent of whom said they were likely to study abroad in the future.

These results seems to support the hypothesis that males will be more likely to study abroad if they believe a high rate of other males are doing the same. The results are not statistically significant ( $Pr = 0.382$ , or a 38.2 percent chance the results are due to random sampling error), but this could be due to a small sample size. Observation of the desired effect is promising for this study, and demands further investigation

**Table 3**

#### Likelihood of Males to Study Abroad, by Experimental Group

<i>Study abroad?</i>	<b>Low Male</b>	<b>High Male</b>	<b>Control</b>	<i>Total</i>
<b>No</b>	60.00% (6)	40.00% (6)	64.29% (9)	53.85% (21)
<b>Yes</b>	40.00% (4)	60.00% (9)	35.71% (5)	46.15% (18)
<i>Total</i>	100.0% (10)	100.0% (15)	100.0% (14)	100.0% (39)

$Pr = 0.382$

$Chi-Square = 1.9235$

### Likelihood of males NOT ON financial aid to study abroad, by experimental group

Table 4 displays the results of Cross Tabulation 2\*, which compares the likelihood of males in the study who aren't on financial aid to study abroad, across experimental groups. Only 28.57 percent of males that don't receive financial aid and were shown a "low male" statistic reported they were likely to study abroad, and only 20 percent of similar males from the control group reported the same. In the meantime, 66.67 percent of males that don't receive financial aid and were shown a "high male" statistic reported they were likely to study abroad.

These results support the hypothesis that males will be more likely to study abroad when presented with a high male statistic. The observed effect is significant at a 93.7 percent confidence interval ( $Pr = 0.063$ ).

The effect of the experimental group becomes stronger, and statistically significant, when controlling for financial aid. However, financial aid by itself is not a significant predictor of whether or not a male respondent is likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.455$ ). This raises the question of how financial aid interacts with other factors to affect the likelihood males will study abroad.

**Table 4**

Likelihood of males NOT ON financial aid to study abroad, by experimental group

<i>Study abroad?</i>	<b>Low Male</b>	<b>High Male</b>	<b>Control</b>	<i>Total</i>
<b>No</b>	71.43% (5)	33.33% (4)	80.00% (8)	58.62% (17)
<b>Yes</b>	28.57% (2)	66.67% (8)	20.00% (2)	41.38% (12)
<i>Total</i>	100.0% (7)	100.0% (12)	100.0% (10)	100.0% (29)

*Pr* = 0.063

*Chi-Square* = 5.5211

### **Likelihood of males to study abroad, by access to travel**

One theory about the effect of financial aid on the likelihood of males to study abroad is that males that have access to travel outside of study abroad will be less likely to study abroad. James M. Lucas of Michigan State University argues that men tend to think they will have other/better opportunities in life to travel, and as a result “are more inclined to question the value of study abroad” (Fischer, 2012). This theory can be tested by comparing a male’s access to travel with the likelihood he will study abroad. Access to travel can be measured by the number of times a male has been out of the country, and whether or not they are on financial aid, representing a financial capability to travel.

Table 5 displays the results of Cross Tabulation 3\*, which compares the likelihood to study abroad of males in the study who have traveled outside the country more or less than 4 times. 85.71 percent of males who have been out of the country 1-3 times responded they were likely to study abroad. Only 35.48 percent of males who have been out of the country 4-6 times or more responded the same (*Pr* = 0.016). This seems to show that males who have access to travel are less likely to study abroad. The same comparison is not significant among females (*Pr* = 0.319).

**Table 5**

Likelihood of Males to Study Abroad, by Number of Times Out of the Country

<i>Study abroad?</i>	<b>1-3 times</b>	<b>4 or more</b>	<i>Total</i>
<b>No</b>	14.29% (1)	64.52% (20)	55.26% (21)
<b>Yes</b>	85.71% (6)	35.48% (11)	44.74% (17)
<i>Total</i>	100.0% (7)	100.0% (31)	100.0% 38

*Pr* = 0.016

*Chi-Square* = 5.8729

Further supporting the access to travel theory, males that are on financial aid, and have only traveled abroad 1-3 times in their lives (low access to travel) reported 100 percent likelihood to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.058$ ) (Table 6; Cross Tab 4\*). In contrast, only 36 percent of males that have access to travel (not on financial aid, and have traveled abroad four or more times) reported they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.141$ ) (Table 7; Cross Tab 5\*). Males that have access to travel outside of study abroad seem to not value study abroad as much as males that do not have access to such travel. Among females with access to travel there is an opposite and insignificant effect, as 71.43 percent said they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.541$ ).

**Table 6**

Likelihood of Males ON Financial Aid to Study Abroad, by Number of Times Out of the Country

<i>Study abroad?</i>	<b>1-3 times</b>	<b>4 or more</b>	<i>Total</i>
<b>No</b>	0.00% (0)	66.67% (4)	44.44% (4)
<b>Yes</b>	100.0% (3)	33.33% (2)	55.56% (5)
<i>Total</i>	100.0% (3)	100.0% (6)	100.0% (9)

$Pr = 0.058$

$Chi-Square = 3.6000$

**Table 7**

Likelihood of Males NOT ON Financial Aid to Study Abroad, by Number of Times Out of the Country

<i>Study abroad?</i>	<b>1-3 times</b>	<b>4 or more</b>	<i>Total</i>
<b>No</b>	25.00% (1)	64.00% (16)	58.62% (17)
<b>Yes</b>	75.00% (3)	36.00% (9)	41.38% (12)
<i>Total</i>	100.0% (4)	100.0% (25)	100.0% (29)

$Pr = 0.141$

$Chi-Square = 2.1622$

### **Effect of experiment on males with access to travel**

Table 8 displays the results of Cross Tabulation 6\*, which compares the likelihood to study abroad of males with access to travel (not on financial aid, and have traveled abroad four or more times), across experimental groups. Only 36 percent of males with access to travel reported they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr=0.141$ ). When presented with a “high male” statistic, however, the same group of males reported 60 percent likelihood to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.101$ ). This

likelihood contrasts with 12.5 percent of males with access to travel in the control group, and 28.57 percent of similar males in the “low male” experimental group. The effect of believing a high rate of males participate in study abroad seems to influence males with access to travel to be more likely participate in study abroad themselves.

**Table 8**

Likelihood of Males with Access to Travel to Study Abroad, by Experimental Group

<i>Study abroad?</i>	<b>Low Male</b>	<b>High Male</b>	<b>Control</b>	<i>Total</i>
<b>No</b>	71.43% (5)	40.00% (4)	87.50% (7)	64.00% (16)
<b>Yes</b>	28.57% (2)	60.00% (6)	12.50% (1)	36.00% (9)
<i>Total</i>	100.0% (7)	100.0 (10)	100.0% (8)	100.0% (25)

*Pr = 0.101*

*Chi-Square = 4.5852*



## **Chapter VI: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

There is currently a strong desire in the U.S. to increase study abroad participation. This desire results from perceived benefits of study abroad for students, universities, and the U.S. as a whole. While efforts to improve U.S. study abroad participation have increased heavily, U.S. students still study abroad at a relatively low rate.

One factor limiting the growth of study abroad participation in the U.S. is the presence of a significant study abroad gender gap: females study abroad at disproportionately higher levels than males. Despite an increase in the body of knowledge available surrounding study abroad as a whole, research into the study abroad gender gap is somewhat lacking. The purpose of this study was to determine and test a novel theory on the causes of low male participation in study abroad. The goals of this study were to: (a) clearly identify a cause of the gender gap in study abroad; and (b) quantify that knowledge in a way that universities can use to more effectively advertise study abroad programs.

I theorized that males study abroad at lower rates than females because males perceive study abroad to be un-masculine, or unmanly. I argued that this perception is the result of: (1) the feminine history of study abroad in the U.S.; (2) an overrepresentation of females in study abroad offices and marketing; and (3) a feedback loop in male participation. I asserted further that this perception of study abroad is particularly influential on male tendencies due to the roles of social pressure and masculine culture.

I hypothesized that in a comparison of individuals, males that believe a high proportion of males at their school study abroad will be more likely to study abroad in the future than males that believe a low proportion of males at their school study abroad. I argued that this relationship exists because believing other males are studying abroad helps dispel study abroad's feminine reputation, increasing the likelihood of males to participate.

### **Main Findings**

I found that males who were presented a statistic showing a high rate of males at their school study abroad were more likely to study abroad in the future (60 percent) than males who were presented a statistic showing a low rate of males at their school study abroad (40 percent). Males who were presented with no statistic about study abroad participation were also less likely to study abroad in the future (35.71 percent). This effect was not statistically significant ( $Pr = 0.382$ ), possibly due to a small sample size. Regardless, the desired effect was observed, demanding further investigation.

## **Additional Findings: Financial Aid and Access To Travel**

I found that student financial aid could be a confounding variable in determining males' likelihood to study abroad by experimental group. When comparing students that don't receive financial aid only, the experimental group's effect on males' likelihood to study abroad became significant at a 93.7 percent confidence interval ( $Pr = 0.063$ ). Furthermore, males not on financial aid presented with the "high male" statistic were even more likely to study abroad (66.67 percent) than males presented with the same statistic without a control (60 percent). Males not on financial aid presented with the "low male" statistic or no statistic were correspondingly less likely to study abroad (28.57 percent and 20 percent, respectively) than males presented with the same statistics without a control (40 percent and 35.71 percent).

When exploring financial aid's role as a potentially confounding variable, I determined that financial aid by itself is not a significant predictor of whether or not a male respondent is likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.455$ ). This led me to wonder how financial aid interacts with other factors to affect the likelihood males will study abroad. Common logic would assume that males on financial aid would be less likely to study abroad than males not on financial aid, because those on financial aid could not afford to participate. However, finances have been shown to not be a significant barrier to studying abroad (Stroud, 2010). When the Higher Education Act of 1992 was reauthorized, allowing students to use federal financial aid to study abroad, U.S. participation levels were not dramatically affected.

Funding for study abroad is widely available in the U.S. Federal aid programs available to students include the Pell Grant, Perkins Loan, and Family Loans (Unsubsidized Stafford, Subsidized Stafford, and PLUS) (Stroud, 2010). Universities often offer study abroad at the normal price of a semester, and offer a variety of scholarships and funds as well. As a result, study abroad has become an important opportunity to travel outside the U.S. for students without the financial means to have done so already. In this study, 85.17 percent of males who have only been out of the country 1-3 times responded they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.016$ ). An even greater 100 percent of males that don't have outside access to travel (i.e. males on financial aid that have traveled abroad only 1-3 times in their lives) reported they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.058$ ).

This result is a positive testament to the availability of funding for study abroad, and the opportunities study abroad programs afford to those without the means to travel on their own. On the other side of it, however, an issue for study abroad participation arises. Males that have access to travel are significantly unlikely to study abroad. Only 35.48 percent of males who have been out of the country 4-6 times or more responded they would study abroad ( $Pr = 0.016$ ). A similarly low 36 percent of males that have access to travel (not on financial aid, and have traveled abroad four or more times) reported they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr = 0.141$ ).

The effect of access to travel is not the same for females, for whom it is not significant ( $Pr = 0.541$ ) and in the opposite direction (71.43 percent of females with access to travel were likely to study abroad). This means that access to travel is a uniquely male phenomenon, and could help explain the gender gap in study abroad. Upon realizing this, I went back and compared my original experiment ("low male" vs. "high male" groups) to the effect of access to travel.

Initially, only 36 percent of males with access to travel (not on financial aid, and have traveled abroad four or more times) reported they were likely to study abroad ( $Pr=0.141$ ). When presented with a “high male” statistic, however, the same group of males reported 60 percent likelihood to study abroad, with 89.9 percent confidence ( $Pr = 0.101$ ). Males with access to travel that were shown no statistic (control) had 12.5 percent likelihood to study abroad, while males with access to travel that were shown a “low male” statistic had 28.57 percent likelihood. Thus, I found that believing a high rate of males participate in study abroad seems to influence males with access to travel to be more likely to participate in study abroad themselves.

### **Additional Findings: Political Ideology and Study Abroad**

62.2 percent of respondents that identify as liberal responded they were likely to study abroad. Only 11.1 percent of identified conservatives responded the same. This effect is significant at a 98.4 percent confidence interval ( $Pr = 0.016$ ). Contrasting likelihood to study abroad by political ideology is an expected result, but interesting nevertheless.

### **Recommendations**

Universities should increase male representation in study abroad employment and marketing. A significant overrepresentation of females in both seems to contribute to the perception of study abroad as un-masculine. Changing study abroad marketing to reflect high participation by males could greatly increase male participation, as could attracting more male employees to study abroad offices.

Other researchers should more closely examine the effects of female overrepresentation in study abroad offices and marketing on male rates of study abroad. This phenomenon seems like a preventable factor in the study abroad gender gap, and further research may solidify the need for change.

More research is required on the gender gap in study abroad as a whole. International experiences have immense value for all students, and for our society as a whole. Anything preventing the highest rate of study abroad possible should be more closely researched.

### **Limitations**

This study was most limited by a small and homogenous sample. The sample was only distributed through the researcher’s extended network, limiting it to a single institution. In 2016, 57.6 percent of students enrolled in U.S. universities are female. 58.6 percent of students are Caucasian, 70.7 percent of U.S. university students are on some form of financial aid.

In this study, only 47.13 percent of respondents are female. 80.43 percent of respondents are Caucasian, and only 35.29 percent are on financial aid. The demographics of the sample in this study do not align with the demographics of universities in the U.S

The sample was also too small. Initially, 91 respondents seemed to fill the need for groups of  $n=30$  or greater (central limit theorem), with three groups of the independent variable. However, almost the entirety of the research was done considering males only, effectively dividing the number of responses in half. If this survey were to be redistributed, it would require responses from at least 90 males.

A second limitation was the short length of the survey. More complete information on respondents' backgrounds and demographics would have been beneficial.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, I found that males are more likely to report they will study abroad when they believe a high rate of males at their university do the same. I theorize that this relationship exists because males perceive study abroad to be "un-masculine," and choose to not participate as a result. I argue that believing other males are studying abroad helps dispel study abroad's feminine reputation, increasing the likelihood of males to participate.

I made a notable discovery that males with low access to travel are significantly more likely to intend to study abroad than males with high access to travel. I also confirmed the assumption that liberal males study abroad at much higher rates than conservative males.

## Appendix

The appendix presents tables, graphs, and data outputs used in the study.

**Table 1**

### Demographics

<b>Characteristics</b>							
		<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		<b>Total</b>	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender							
		46	<b>52.87</b>	41	<b>47.13</b>	87	<b>100</b>
Race							
	Caucasian	37	<b>80.43</b>	29	<b>70.73</b>	66	<b>75.86</b>
	African-American	2	<b>4.35</b>	4	<b>9.76</b>	6	<b>6.9</b>
	Asian	3	<b>6.52</b>	7	<b>17.07</b>	10	<b>11.49</b>
	Hispanic	2	<b>4.35</b>	0	<b>0</b>	2	<b>2.3</b>
	Pacific Islander	1	<b>2.17</b>	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>1.15</b>
	American Indian	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>0</b>
	Other	1	<b>2.17</b>	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>1.15</b>
	Prefer not to answer	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>2.44</b>	1	<b>1.15</b>
Financial Aid							
	Yes	10	<b>22.73</b>	20	<b>48.78</b>	30	<b>35.29</b>
	No	34	<b>77.27</b>	21	<b>51.22</b>	55	<b>64.71</b>
# Times Outside U.S.							
	1-3 times	7	<b>15.91</b>	8	<b>19.51</b>	15	<b>17.65</b>
	4-6 times or more	37	<b>84.09</b>	33	<b>80.49</b>	70	<b>82.35</b>
Political View							
	Liberal	23	<b>56.1</b>	34	<b>87.18</b>	57	<b>71.25</b>
	Moderate	8	<b>19.51</b>	3	<b>7.69</b>	11	<b>13.75</b>
	Conservative	10	<b>24.39</b>	2	<b>5.13</b>	12	<b>15</b>

Table 2

Likelihood to Study Abroad

	Male				Female				Total			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>	18	<b>46.2</b>	21	<b>53.9</b>	20	<b>64.5</b>	11	<b>35.5</b>	38	<b>54.3</b>	32	<b>45.7</b>
<b>Race</b>												
Caucasian	15	<b>48.3</b>	16	<b>51.6</b>	14	<b>60.9</b>	9	<b>39.1</b>	29	<b>53.7</b>	25	<b>46.3</b>
African-American	1	<b>100</b>	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>50.0</b>	1	<b>50.0</b>	2	<b>66.7</b>	1	<b>33.3</b>
Asian	0	<b>0</b>	3	<b>100</b>	5	<b>83.3</b>	1	<b>16.7</b>	5	<b>55.6</b>	4	<b>44.4</b>
Hispanic	2	<b>100</b>	0	<b>0</b>					2	<b>100</b>		
Pacific Islander	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>100</b>					0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>100</b>
Other	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>100</b>					0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>100</b>
<b>Financial Aid</b>												
Yes	5	<b>55.6</b>	4	<b>44.4</b>	9	<b>60.0</b>	6	<b>40.0</b>	14	<b>58.3</b>	10	<b>41.7</b>
No	12	<b>41.4</b>	17	<b>58.6</b>	11	<b>68.8</b>	5	<b>31.3</b>	23	<b>51.1</b>	22	<b>48.9</b>
<b>Political View</b>												
Liberal	11	<b>57.9</b>	8	<b>42.1</b>	17	<b>65.4</b>	9	<b>34.6</b>	28	<b>62.2</b>	17	<b>37.8</b>
Moderate	5	<b>62.5</b>	3	<b>37.5</b>	2	<b>66.7</b>	1	<b>33.3</b>	7	<b>63.6</b>	4	<b>36.4</b>
Conservative	1	<b>12.5</b>	7	<b>87.5</b>	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>100</b>	1	<b>11.1</b>	8	<b>88.9</b>
<b># Times Outside U.S.</b>												
1-3 times	6	<b>85.7</b>	1	<b>14.3</b>	4	<b>50.0</b>	4	<b>50.0</b>	10	<b>66.7</b>	5	<b>33.3</b>
4-6 times or more	11	<b>35.5</b>	20	<b>64.5</b>	16	<b>69.6</b>	7	<b>30.4</b>	27	<b>50.0</b>	27	<b>50.0</b>
<b>Experimental Group</b>												
Low Male	4	<b>40</b>	6	<b>60</b>	6	<b>60</b>	4	<b>40</b>	10	50	10	<b>50</b>
High Male	9	<b>60</b>	6	<b>40</b>	5	<b>55.6</b>	4	<b>44.4</b>	14	58.33	10	<b>41.67</b>
Control	5	<b>35.7</b>	9	<b>64.3</b>	9	<b>75</b>	3	<b>25</b>	14	53.85	12	<b>46.15</b>

## Cross Tabulation 1

### Likelihood of Males to Study Abroad, by Experimental Group

studab_dum	1=LowMale; 2=HighMale; 3=Control			Total
	1	2	3	
0	6 60.00	6 40.00	9 64.29	21 53.85
1	4 40.00	9 60.00	5 35.71	18 46.15
Total	10 100.00	15 100.00	14 100.00	39 100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 1.9235 Pr = 0.382  
 likelihood-ratio chi2(2) = 1.9347 Pr = 0.380  
 Cramér's V = 0.2221

## Cross Tabulation 2

### Likelihood of Males Not on Financial Aid to Study Abroad, by Experimental Group

studab_dum	1=LowMale; 2=HighMale; 3=Control			Total
	1	2	3	
0	5 71.43	4 33.33	8 80.00	17 58.62
1	2 28.57	8 66.67	2 20.00	12 41.38
Total	7 100.00	12 100.00	10 100.00	29 100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 5.5211 Pr = 0.063  
 likelihood-ratio chi2(2) = 5.6760 Pr = 0.059  
 Cramér's V = 0.4363

### Cross Tabulation 3

#### Likelihood of Males to Study Abroad, by Number of Times Out of the Country

studab_dum	1=1-3 times; 2=4-6 times		Total
	1	2	
0	1 14.29	20 64.52	21 55.26
1	6 85.71	11 35.48	17 44.74
Total	7 100.00	31 100.00	38 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 5.8279 Pr = 0.016  
 likelihood-ratio chi2(1) = 6.1915 Pr = 0.013  
 Cramér's V = -0.3916

### Cross Tabulation 4

#### Likelihood of Males ON Financial Aid to Study Abroad, by Number of Times Out of the Country

studab_dum	1=1-3 times; 2=4-6 times		Total
	1	2	
0	0 0.00	4 66.67	4 44.44
1	3 100.00	2 33.33	5 55.56
Total	3 100.00	6 100.00	9 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 3.6000 Pr = 0.058  
 likelihood-ratio chi2(1) = 4.7271 Pr = 0.030  
 Cramér's V = -0.6325



## Cross Tabulation 5

Likelihood of Males NOT ON Financial Aid to Study Abroad, by Number of Times Out of the Country

studab_dum	1=1-3 times; 2=4-6 times		Total
	1	2	
0	1 25.00	16 64.00	17 58.62
1	3 75.00	9 36.00	12 41.38
Total	4 100.00	25 100.00	29 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 2.1622 Pr = 0.141  
 likelihood-ratio chi2(1) = 2.1666 Pr = 0.141  
 Cramér's V = -0.2731

## Cross Tabulation 6

Likelihood to Study Abroad of Males with Access to Travel, by Experimental Group

studab_dum	1=LowMale; 2=HighMale; 3=Control			Total
	1	2	3	
0	5 71.43	4 40.00	7 87.50	16 64.00
1	2 28.57	6 60.00	1 12.50	9 36.00
Total	7 100.00	10 100.00	8 100.00	25 100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 4.5852 Pr = 0.101  
 likelihood-ratio chi2(2) = 4.8066 Pr = 0.090  
 Cramér's V = 0.4283

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