

Study Abroad in Australia versus New Zealand: Two of the Same?

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Introduction

Our study explores the effect of engagement in a short-term study abroad program in Australia or New Zealand on nurturing global citizenship. While the two countries differ considerably in politics, culture, and the environment, they are often perceived as being quite similar by many Americans. Moreover, the decision to study abroad in Australia or New Zealand likely does not necessarily reflect a selection between quite disparate destinations, such as China or New Zealand, rather it results from a more basic question, *is study abroad the right choice for me (as the student) or my child (as a parent)?*

The most recent Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education, 2012) reveals that 273,996 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2010/11, representing almost 400% growth over the past two decades from approximately 70,000 in 1990. Of these, short-term programs dominate with approximately 6 in every 10 students studying abroad for less than one semester. In 2010/11, Australia (with 9,736 U.S. students) ranked as the sixth most popular study abroad destination behind the UK ($\underline{n} = 33,182$), Italy ($\underline{n} = 30,361$), Spain ($\underline{n} = 25,965$), France ($\underline{n} = 17,019$), and China ($\underline{n} = 14,596$); New Zealand received 2,900 U.S. students and ranked 21st overall. Today, many short-term study abroad programs are faculty-led and involve a considerable travel component, incorporating field-based, experiential learning (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; van 't Klooster, van Wijk, Go, & van Rekom, 2008).

The adage *Just do it* may arguably be used to justify the popularity of study abroad. McKeown (2009) proposes that “studying abroad for a short time is better than no study abroad at all” (p.7), while Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) conclude that “short-term programs, even as

short as one month, are worthwhile educational endeavors that have significant self-perceived impacts on students' intellectual and personal lives" (p.174). According to Donnelly-Smith (2009), the duration of study abroad is unrelated to the degree of global engagement that is attributable to the experience. Other studies also substantiate the learning and personal impacts of study abroad ranging from professional development (Harrison, 2006), intercultural awareness (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), world mindedness (Kehl & Morris, 2007; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002), intellectual development (McKeown, 2009), and functional knowledge (McLaughlin & Johnson, 2006; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). There is also evidence (albeit limited) that students respond differently to study abroad; notably, students studying abroad for the first-time exhibit gains in intellectual development not seen in their peers (McKeown, 2009) and students' attitudes toward host cultures are dependent on the country visited (Litvin, 2003; Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008). While Kehl and Morris (2007) report that males exhibited higher levels of world mindedness (a measure of perceived global connectivity) than females, earlier work suggests an opposite effect: Female students demonstrate higher cross-cultural awareness than males following study abroad (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Tarrant (2010) suggests that those toward the left of the political spectrum are more likely to select programs reflecting a stronger environmental orientation, though the impact of studying abroad on political affiliation is not known. In sum, the limited and sometimes contradictory findings addressing the role of students' characteristics require empirical substantiation of cohort differences among similar programs offered in different destinations. This is all the more imperative given that the decision to study abroad is fundamentally a voluntary and self-selected activity (McKeown, 2009).

Global Citizenry

While short-term study abroad is less relevant for building language skills, it clearly has the potential to deliver specific environmental and cultural outcomes that are tied to the travel experience, particularly for those experiencing their first significant international travel opportunity (McKeown, 2009). An area in which such programs perhaps have the greatest potential impact, particularly with respect to the mission statements of universities and colleges, is in nurturing a global citizenry (Dolby, 2007). “It is reasonably clear that good citizens are made, not born. The question is how, by whom, to what end?” (Galston, 2001, p.217). Global citizenship commonly refers to an individual’s obligations to act in a fair and just manner, and recent studies suggest that the natural environment is where the primary concerns of global citizenry – social responsibilities, obligations, and justice – are best considered (Attfield, 2002; Bryant, 2006; Dobson, 2003; Dower & Williams, 2002; Noddings, 2005; Peterson, 2002; Shallcross & Robertson, 2006). Attfield (2002) for example suggests, “environmental responsibilities form the most obvious focus of concern for global citizens, as well as the territory where global obligations most clearly arise” (p.191). Similarly, the environment provides the basis of Dobson’s (2003) post-cosmopolitan view of citizenship, as an obligation to reduce our ecological footprint to sustainable levels; i.e., to act as an “Earth Citizen” (p. 99). The global nature of many environmental issues such as climate change, the supply and distribution of renewable and non-renewable resources, and biodiversity and species loss transcend national boundaries with effects distributed across the planet. It follows therefore, that the civic concern expressed by citizens most appropriately concerns the sustainable use and conservation of earth’s resources. As such, global citizens are not simply international by reason of their world travel but as a result of their ecological footprint – the quantity of nature (specifically, the amount of natural resources) required and consumed to sustain their lifestyle choices and behaviors.

The tie between study abroad and global awareness (an attitudinal measure of world mindedness) is well documented (e.g., Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Stearns, 2009), but the relationship with global citizenry (as a behavioral concept) is much less well known (refer to Annette, 2002; Dolby, 2007; Dunkley, 2009; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). It has been suggested that programs with a significant experiential component have the greatest potential to nurture such a citizenry because they facilitate learning through a triad approach of subject matter, practice, and context (Pagano & Roselle, 2009). While there exists an entire field, and critical discourse on experiential education, most agree with Dewey's (1963) assertion that "for learning to take place and be considered educational, the experience has to be transformed into knowledge by means of action or reflection" (Pagano & Roselle, 2009). The value of critical reflection, as a tool to maximize student learning, has been further substantiated by Dunkley (2009) in her assessment of Australian students abroad. Clearly, study abroad programs offering transformational international experiences that are action-oriented and relate global issues to local context in a reflective manner have significant implications for facilitating global citizenry.

Research Questions

We address two fundamental questions. First, how do U.S. students who self-select to study abroad in Australia differ to students who self-select to study abroad in New Zealand on personal characteristics; i.e., political orientation, gender, and past experience? Second, how does studying abroad in Australia versus New Zealand influence students' levels of global citizenry?

Methods

Sample

Students from 10 U.S. universities participated in a 4-week study abroad program, on the theme of sustainable development, to either Australia or New Zealand in May, June, or July in 2008 or 2009. A pre-post design was used in which students voluntarily completed a survey instrument on the first day (pre-test) and last day (post-test) of the program in the destination country.

Variables

Global (environmental) citizenry (pre-test) was measured using three scales: (a) seven items reflecting Environmental Citizenship (EC) (from Stern et al., 1999) with a response scale of “Yes” or “No,” (b) three items of Support for Public Environmental Policies (SPEP) measured on a 7-point scale from 7 (“Strongly Agree”) to 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) with a mid-point of 4 (“Neither Agree or Disagree; Stern et al., 1999); and (c) 10 items selected from the 29-item, six-factor, Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior (ECCB) scale (Roberts & Bacon, 1997) with a 7-point response scale from 7 (“Always True”) to 1 (“Never True”). The first two scales have reported internal reliabilities (alpha) of .77 (EC) and .78 (SPEP) (see Stern et al., 1999). The 10 items selected from the ECCB represent four of the six factors: Two items from the oil/driving factor, three items reflecting general recycling behavior, three items of general environmental consumption, and two items from the electricity-saving factor. All selected ECCB items had reported loadings on the respective factor of between .65 and .95 (Roberts & Bacon, 1997). (Roberts and Bacon’s ECCB scale was selected over Stern et al.’s environmental consumption measure (alpha of .72) because it demonstrated higher internal consistency.) Higher scores on all three scales indicate greater levels of global (environmental) citizenry.

Global citizenry (post-test) was measured using the same three scales, but the response format for the EC and ECCB was different to that asked in the pre-test. In the post-test EC and

ECCB, respondents were asked to indicate how likely is it they will perform the respective behaviors in the next 12 months on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 7 (“Extremely Likely”) to 1 (“Not at all Likely”). Item statements were modified to reflect a future intention to act; for example, instead of “To save energy, I drive my car as little as possible” (ECCB pre-test item), the revised item read “To save energy, I will drive my car as little as possible” (ECCNB post-test item). Only the SPEP items used the identical (agree/disagree) response scale, meaning that a pre-test/post-test change analysis could not be performed with the EC or ECCB scales.

Political orientation was assessed by asking respondents to indicate the party that best describes their political orientation, with “Green” on the far left and “Libertarian” on the far right and “Democratic” and “Republican” at one-third and two-third intervals, respectively. Scores were assigned as follows: 1= Green, 2=Democrat, 3=Republican, and 4=Libertarian. Gender was self-reported, male or female. Past study abroad experience was measured by asking the following question “Have you previously participated on a study abroad program? If yes, please state which countr(ies) and the year(s) you participated.”

Analysis

Significance for all statistical tests was set at $p \leq .05$ and analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 17.0 (2009). Levene’s statistic tested for equality of variance in the samples. Items within each of the EC, SPEP, and ECCB scales were summed and Cronbach’s alpha was used as an indicator of internal consistency. A Chi-Square analysis was conducted to examine differences in gender (male or female) and levels of past experience (yes or no). An independent sample T-test was used to explore differences in political orientation. Differences in pre-test and post-test scores on EC and ECCB between students on the Australia versus New Zealand

programs were analyzed using T-tests, and a repeated-measures MANOVA was used to test for differences in pre-and post-test scores on SPEP between students on the two programs.

Results

Of a total of 695 students, 651 respondents completed both the pre- and post-tests generating a response rate of 93.7%. The majority of the sample was female (68.3%), almost two-thirds (64.8%) participated in the Australia program, less than one in 12 students (7.8%) had prior study abroad experience, and their political orientation was fairly evenly divided between Left and Right: 6.4% (n=41) Green, 45.7% (n=294) Democrat, 42.5% (n=273) Republican, and 5.4% (n=35) Libertarian. Levene's test showed no significant difference in the variances for each group in the T-test and variances were therefore assumed to be equal. Pre- and post-test global citizenry scales demonstrated internal reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) respectively of .64 and .89 (EC), .87 and .90 (SPEP), and .88 and .92 (ECCB).

There was no significant difference for gender (Chi-Square = .28, $p = .594$), suggesting that males and females were equally as likely to select to study abroad in Australia as New Zealand, but those with past study abroad experience were significantly more likely to select New Zealand over Australia (Chi-Square = 9.64, $p = .002$). Students who had selected the Australia study abroad program (mean = 2.55) were significantly more likely than students in New Zealand (mean = 2.41) to consider themselves more toward the Right of the political orientation spectrum (T-test = 2.14, $p = .033$).

Students in Australia exhibited significantly lower EC (mean = 1.89, s.d. = 1.56, T-test = 3.93, $p < .001$) and ECCB scores (mean = 38.76, s.d. = 11.87, T-test = 2.47, $p = .014$) prior to the program than New Zealand study abroad students (EC mean = 2.47, s.d. = 1.76; ECCB mean = 41.29, s.d. = 11.45). However, upon completion of the respective programs, Australia students

reported significantly *higher* ECCB scores (mean = 52.13, s.d. = 10.83, T-test = 4.05, $p < .001$), and their EC scores were no longer different, to those of students in the New Zealand program (ECCB mean = 48.17, s.d. = 11.53).

A repeated measures MANOVA revealed a significant country (Australia versus New Zealand) by program (pre-test versus post-test) interaction effect ($F = 12.93$, $p < .001$) suggesting that the Australia program had a greater (positive) effect on SPEP scores (SPEP mean pre-test = 12.72, s.d. = 3.80 versus mean post-test = 14.04, s.d. = 3.71) than did participation in the New Zealand program (SPEP mean pre-test = 13.76, s.d. = 3.75 versus mean post-test = 14.15, s.d. = 4.10). Significant main effects for country ($F = 44.14$, $p < .001$) and program (pre- vs. post-program) ($F = 3.60$, $p = .05$) were not interpreted in light of the significant interaction effect.

Limitations

The issue of sampling bias raises a limitation to the study. Across the two-year sampling period almost 2.5% ($n = 651$) of all U.S. students studying abroad in Australia ($n = 11,140$ in 2008 and 9,962 in 2009) or New Zealand ($n = 2,769$ in 2008 and 3,113 in 2009) participated in the study. Assuming 60% of all study abroad travel is short-term (less than one semester in length), ~1 in 20 students who studied abroad on short-term programs to Australia or New Zealand in 2008 and 2009 were represented in our sample. While our sample was not randomly selected from the entire population of all U.S. students studying abroad in the two countries (and, therefore, issues of nonprobability sampling bias arise), the relatively high proportional representation of the population, coupled with the high sample size (generally, a sample size of 400 is considered acceptable where the population exceeds 5000, see Cochran, 1963), suggest the findings nevertheless warrant interpretation as a highly relevant case study. Indeed, in applying an alpha of .05, a sample of 651 cases will yield power coefficients close to 1.0;

typically 0.8 is considered acceptable (Cohen, 1989). Not only would a random sample been extremely difficult to achieve, but controlling for the effect of program variability (ranging in length, academic topic, and/or location) would have meant an extensive sampling design and (improbable) access to all university programs across the country. Finally, the lack of qualitative data resulted in the loss of a richness to the empirical data, which would have provided more in-depth understanding and possible explanation for the findings.

Conclusions and Discussion

The Australia program not only produced increases in global citizenship (as measured by scores on consumer behavior, support for environmental policies, and environmental citizenship) significantly beyond that of the New Zealand program, but any initial differences between the programs were erased following participation. At least three plausible explanations may be offered. First, the two programs appeared to attract a different set of students. While there was no difference in the gender make-up of each program, Australia appealed to students studying abroad for the first-time and to students more likely to rate themselves on the Right of the political spectrum, as compared to students in New Zealand. Unfortunately, no additional details on the personal characteristics of students were available to shed further light on this proposition.

A second argument is that *something* about the Australian program generated changes in global citizenship for that particular group of students that did not produce a change for the group of students in New Zealand. While the academic structure and delivery format of the two programs were identical, the destinations and faculty (including field guides) differed. In Australia, the primary locations were a city environment (Brisbane or Cairns), the Great Barrier Reef, the rainforest, and the Outback. In New Zealand, the sites included the city of Christchurch, the Southern Alps, the West Coast, and Fiordland.

A third explanation, however, is more plausible: The Australian program appealed to a particular group of students who were more responsive to the theme of the program than students in the New Zealand program. New Zealand students received a message about sustainable development that had only limited impact on their intentions to act as global citizens, while students in Australia, perhaps because they had a relatively low intention level initially, were far more receptive to future changes in behavior. This raises two questions: (1) Why did Australia appeal to first-time study abroad students and those politically oriented to the Right and (2) why did students in the Australia program respond in the manner in which they did, relative to students in New Zealand?

In addressing the first question, Australia and New Zealand's images and appeal as tourism destinations to U.S. students are arguably a reflection of their respective overseas marketing efforts. Since 1967, Tourism Australia (formerly the Australia Tourism Commission) has marketed the Australia tourism brand, and in the past five years (a period most relevant to U.S. students aged ~20 years) using two key brands: *So Where the Bloody Hell Are You?* (from March, 2006 to May, 2010) and *There's Nothing Like Australia* (launched on May 31, 2010). The former, surrounded in controversy over use of the word *bloody* and focus on alcohol consumption, was ultimately considered a failure, causing then-Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to conclude that the campaign was a "Rolled gold disaster" (Sydney Morning Herald, June 24, 2008). The current campaign features personal stories submitted by the Australian public to highlight what is diverse, unique, and iconic about Australia; its brand proposition, according to Tourism Australia, is that "On holiday in Australia you don't switch off you switch on. The unique experiences you have and the people you meet will make you feel uplifted and full of

life” (Tourism Australia, no date). There is evidence, however, that even this new brand image suffers from an identity crisis (Knowledge@Australian School of Business, 2010).

In contrast, the New Zealand Tourism Board has relied on the same tourism brand, *100% Pure New Zealand*, since 1999 (though it recently underwent some modification in 2010 to become *New Zealand 100% Pure You*). *100% Pure* has arguably been one of the most successful international tourism campaigns in history, portraying New Zealand as a clean, green, environmentally friendly destination, captured by its “stunning landscapes and awesome scenery” (Tourism New Zealand, no date). One argument is that the New Zealand brand appealed to U.S. students with a strong environmental value orientation (based on the clean, green image of the destination), while Australia attracted students with a much broader value orientation (reflecting a diffuse cultural and natural image). Given that environmental concern has previously been associated with a more liberal (i.e., less conservative) political affiliation (see for example, Dunlap et al., 2000; Engel & Plötschke, 1998; Kilbourne, Beckmann, Lewis & van Dam, 2001; Olofsson & Ohman, 2006; Samdhal & Robertson, 1989) it is not surprising that the New Zealand program attracted students with views more toward the Left of the political spectrum. In addition, since previous overseas travel experience is related to greater international awareness and perceived intercultural competence (McKeown, 2009) it is understandable that U.S. students who had not traveled internationally would be more drawn to a destination with broader cultural and societal appeal (Australia) than a relatively strong environmental orientation (i.e., New Zealand), as reflected by their respective destination brand images.

Clearly, students in Australia had greater potential for growth in global citizenship simply because they began the program at such a low level relative to students in New Zealand. Consistent with Wexler (2006), issues of sustainable development may have been sufficiently

novel to students in Australia that any new information would have been elaborated upon (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986), while course material in the New Zealand program may only have reinforced existing beliefs for those students with prior knowledge. While we cannot substantiate information elaboration as the source of behavior intention change for students in Australia, it is plausible that because the New Zealand program appealed to students who already demonstrated strong support for global citizenry and pro-environmental behaviors, any messages consistent with this pre-existing belief structure may not have generated new beliefs that would have led to further changes in behavior intention. A similar assertion has been proposed by Wexler (2008) who argues that first-time international travel experiences can cause students to restructure their internal world to match the external (study abroad) environment; consequently, any ensuing learning outcomes (in Wexler's case, gains in intellectual development) are greatest for those individuals where the external and internal worlds differ significantly.

Implications

While only about 2.1% of all U.S. tertiary students study abroad (Donnelly-Smith, 2009), this translates into over 270,000 students annually and is expected to increase almost four-fold with anticipated passage of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act. For countries such as Australia and New Zealand, which rely heavily on international education as a source of export revenue (Barron, 2006; Withers, 2010), and are facing increasing competition from other destinations (note the decline in the number of U.S. students to Australia between 2008 and 2009), understanding the nature of the overseas student population, and key sectors of that industry, remains significant to maintaining and growing their market share.

The overseas study tour market has been identified as a strategic growth area for Australian tourism (see for example the New South Wales Joint Ministerial Taskforce on

Education Tourism, 2009) and New Zealand (see Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003) given that global trends, such as stronger (higher world ranking) academic institutions in Asia, heightened security and immigration issues, and the increasing economic costs of Australian degree programs for overseas students (exacerbated by the strength of the Australian and New Zealand currencies relative to the U.S. dollar), collectively suggest that the recent decline in the number of long-term international students in Australia (but also likely in New Zealand) may continue for many years. Our study therefore provides important market research for Australia and New Zealand tourism initiatives concerned not only with growing the number of overseas educational travel programs (Barron, 2006; Son & Pearce, 2005) but also substantiating *why* overseas institutions should send their students to these destinations. Tourism Australia for example can argue that for U.S. students without previous study abroad experience, a study tour to Australia can yield important learning outcomes with respect to nurturing a global citizenry – a critical platform for developing a unique niche market in the competitive study abroad environment.

The benefit of educating students as global citizens is not only that, as a society, we begin to actively address issues of global sustainability (and reduce our individual and collective ecological footprints), but that such students, perhaps for the very first time, consider their role as U.S. citizens (Susnowitz, 2006; Dolby, 2007). It is critical, therefore, that study abroad does not become over-commercialized and commodified as tertiary institutions increasingly seek to self-finance study abroad and promote it for economic gain. Whether it be students themselves who treat their college education as a commercial product or offices of international education that promote consumerism in study abroad (Lewin, 2009; Zemach-Bersin, 2009), ensuring that the academic structure and delivery mechanisms of such programs remain true to the principles of experiential education (i.e., a triad of subject matter, practice, and context) is critical. Therefore,

we empirically substantiate the argument offered by Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) that, “study abroad and experience education are natural partners because they share the common goal of empowering students and preparing them to become responsible global citizens” (p.46). Failure to manage the opportunities as such will inevitably result in educational travel becoming a form of service tourism, dominated by independent third-party service providers motivated primarily by commercial endeavors.

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