A Sojourn Abroad: How an international experience impacts the career decidedness of college students

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Presentation Overview:

- Introduction of variables
- Current research
- Present Investigation
- Implications & Conclusions
- Questions
Definition of variables

Study abroad

• study abroad, international experience, and international education used interchangeably
• defined as “U.S. citizens and permanent residents who received academic credit at their U.S. home institution for study in another country” (Chow, 2010)

Career decidedness

• confidence in one’s ability to make a career decision (Gordon, 1998); an individual's certainty about the career decision (Osipow, 1978)
• career decidedness is impacted by an individual's self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, decision-making abilities, and metacognitions. (Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004)
Prior research:

75% of study abroad participants asserted that they acquired skill sets abroad that influenced their career path (Dwyer & Peters, 2004)

Business students who study abroad are more receptive to the idea of working abroad than those who did not study abroad (Orahood, Woolf, & Kruze, 2008)

90% of participants believe that study abroad helped build skills to be successful in a future career. Themes included Interpersonal skills, resume booster, language skills, career self-efficacy, global competence (Chapman, 2011)
Present study:

What changes of vocational identity are attributed to the study abroad experience?

How do students report the impact of the study abroad experience on career decision-making variables?
Method:

1. Create survey questions based in cognitive information processing theory
2. Distribute Survey via International Programs Office
3. Analyze results!
Cognitive Information Processing theory:

- Meta Cognitions
- Communication
- Synthesis
- Valuing
- Execution

Population of study:

65 students enrolled in a study abroad program in Spring 2013 affiliated with a large, public research university in the Southeast United States.

AGE RANGE: 18 to 22, with an average age of 19.9 years old. 33% male, 66% female, and 1 student identifying as transgender.

ETHNICITY: Caucasian (64.6%), Hispanic (15.4%), Asian (4.6%), African American (4.6%), American Indian (4.6%), multiracial (1.5%) and prefer not to say (4.6%).

LOCATION OF STUDY: 41.5% of students studied in Valencia, Spain, 33.8% in London, England, 18.4% in Florence, Italy, 4.6% in Panama City, Panama, and 1.5% in Tianjin, China.
Results:

Prior to study abroad

After study abroad
Results:

- Metacognitions
- Valuing

Career Decidedness

*Significant at the .05 level*
Limitations & Implications for future research:

Limitations

• Sample
• Reflective responses
• Researcher bias

Implications

• Expand study to pre-post with control group
• Differences between institution type
• Other factors – GPA, major, international internship, location of experience
What does this mean for…

Higher Education

Career practitioners

Employers
Concluding discussion and questions… and thank you!

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