

# The Effects of Study Abroad in Ethnocentrism and Intercultural Communication

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## Abstract

- This study measures levels of **ethnocentrism and development of intercultural communication** in a group of business students that already studied abroad.
- The **final sample includes 146 students of business**. A group of 39 have studied abroad (experimental group), while 107 have not had that experience (control group). This sample includes students from different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities.
- The results of this research show that **study abroad experiences help to increase intercultural communication skills**. However, it **does not decrease the level of ethnocentrism**. These findings support previous research that shows the benefits of study abroad programs in private and public universities and shows some limitations of their impact.

## Introduction

- **Study abroad programs and international activities have been growing** in recent years in private and public universities. Researchers and program leaders have found interesting evidence that shows the benefits of this kind of programs.
- Williams (2005) reports that students who study abroad exhibit a greater change in intercultural communication skills than students who stay on campus. In addition, he finds **that students that interact with people of different cultures have improved intercultural communication skills.**
- In contrast to Williams, Fuller (2007) finds evidence that study abroad experiences **do not increase intercultural sensitivity.**

## Introduction

- But not only intercultural communication and sensitivity have been analyzed. There are other skills that internationalization help to develop.
- Fluck et al. (2007) shows that including **activities such as cases and reading news** with an international focus are valuable tools to **reduce levels of ethnocentricity** and increase international competence.
- Kehl and Morris (2007) find that **there is difference in the change in global mindedness** based on the length of study abroad programs.
- Yet, there are a lot of areas for further research such as the characteristics of the best programs to be developed in order to get a greater impact in students skills. For example, DeLoach et al. (2004) mention that the approach of **short-term study abroad courses offers a way to maximize the impact** and the effects of these experiences.

## Data

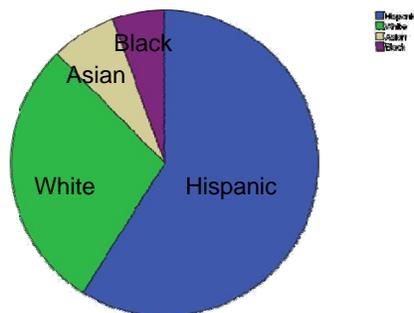
- Our sample includes 151 surveys applied to business students in a private institution. These students were self-selected from a poll of 300 students.
- From the final sample, there are 39 students that have studied abroad at least once (experimental group), and 107 without any studied abroad experience (control group). Five student surveys were eliminated due to incomplete questionnaires.

**Have you studied abroad?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	39	26.7	26.7	26.7
2	107	73.3	73.3	100.0
Total	146	100.0	100.0	

- Students demographics are showed next.

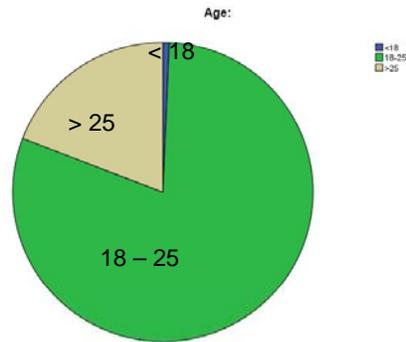
## Student Demographics: Ethnicity



**Ethnicity:**

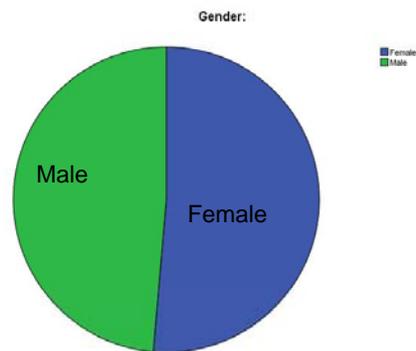
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Hispanic	86	58.9	58.9	58.9
White	42	28.8	28.8	87.7
Asian	10	6.8	6.8	94.5
Black	8	5.5	5.5	100.0
Total	146	100.0	100.0	

## Student Demographics: Age



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<18	1	.7	.7	.7
	18-25	117	80.1	80.1	80.8
	>25	28	19.2	19.2	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	

## Student Demographics: Gender



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	75	51.4	51.4	51.4
	Male	71	48.6	48.6	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	

## Methodology

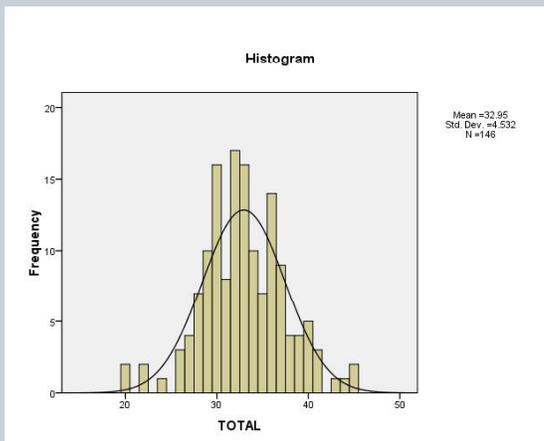
- **Sumner (1906) defines ethnocentrism as the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it.**
- **Neuliep (2002), Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) developed and revised a Generalized Ethnocentrism scale (GENE).**
  - This research uses this scale as part of the survey.
  - This scale is composed of 22 items grouped by 3 different factors.

## Methodology

- **In addition to ethnocentrism, this analysis measures intercultural communication competence (ICC).**
- **Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) define communication competence as communications behaviour that is both effective and appropriate.**
- **Cui and Van den Berg (1991), Sercu (2004) and Spitzberg (1991) agree that intercultural communication competence can be characterized in three dimensions:**
  - Cognitive,
  - Affective
  - Behavioural.
- **This research includes an instrument developed by Arasaratnam (2009) to measure these three dimensions in a questionnaire of 15 scale-items.**

## Frequency Distribution of ICC Scores

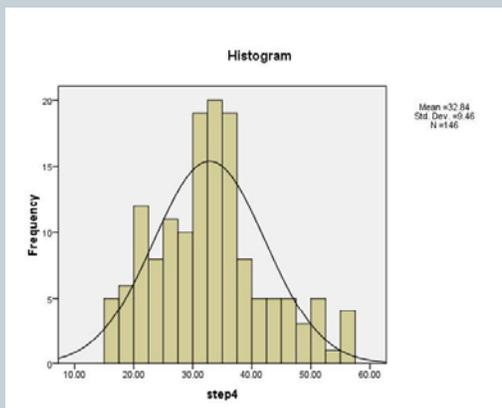
- Once calculated, the scores of the final sample show a normal distribution.
- Separately, our experimental group and our control group show the same distribution.



## Frequency Distribution of GENE score

Like the ICC instrument, the scores of the final sample show a normal distribution.

Separately, the experimental group and the control group show the same distribution.



## ICC results (Study Abroad Experience)

- Tables below show that the scores from the ICC instrument find a **significant difference between the experimental group and the control group**. The mean score for the **experimental group is higher** when compared to the control group.
- Then, evidence **indicates that the study abroad experience helps to increase intercultural communication competence**.
- It is important to mention that Levene's Test shows equality of Variance in both groups.

Have yo.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TOTAL 1	39	34.69	4.691	.751
2	107	32.31	4.321	.418

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
								Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed	
TOTAL	.404	.526	2.882	144	.005	2.384	.827	.749	4.019	
			2.774	62.971	.007	2.384	.866	.666	4.102	

## GENE results (Study Abroad Experience)

- Tables below show that despite equality of variance, the experimental group and the control group have significant equality of means. In other words, **there is no significant difference among the scores of both groups for this instrument**.
- These results are evidence that **there is no change in ethnocentrism even after a study abroad experience**.

Have yo.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
step4 1	39	31.1282	10.71443	1.71568
2	107	33.4673	8.93194	.86348

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
								Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed	
step4	2.620	.108	-1.325	144	.187	-2.33908	1.76481	-5.82736	1.14919	
			-1.218	58.347	.228	-2.33908	1.92072	-6.18334	1.50517	

## ICC (Gender)

- In addition to the experimental group, this research divides students based on gender. (Code: 0 for women, 1 for man).
- The table below shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of intercultural communication competency between men and women.
- Mean is higher for women than men. Then, there is evidence that women have a higher level of ICC than men.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TOTAL	0	75	34.11	4.348	.502
	1	71	31.72	4.425	.525

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	.004	.952	3.289	144	.001	2.388	.726	.953	3.824
	Equal variances not assumed			3.287	143.246	.001	2.388	.727	.952	3.824

## GENE results (Gender)

- Table below shows that there is a difference statistically significant in the level of ethnocentrism measured with the GENE between men and women.
- Mean is lower for women than man. Then, there is evidence that women have a lower level of ethnocentrism in comparison to men.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
step4	Female	75	30.2533	8.62600	.99605
	Male	71	35.6775	9.58818	1.13791

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
step4	Equal variances assumed	1.058	.305	-3.531	144	.001	-5.32413	1.50787	-8.30456	-2.34371
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.521	140.396	.001	-5.32413	1.51226	-8.31388	-2.33438

## ICC (Ethnic Groups)

- Finally, this analysis separates the total sample based on ethnic groups. (Code: Hispanic (1), White (2), Asian (3) and African-American (4).
- This test required the running of an ANOVA analysis. The analysis shows that there is no statistically significant difference among ethnic groups based on their level of ICC.

TOTAL					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	61.999	3	20.666	1.007	.392
Within Groups	2915.563	142	20.532		
Total	2977.562	145			

TOTAL								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	86	32.78	4.266	.460	31.86	33.69	22	45
2	42	32.57	5.176	.799	30.96	34.18	20	44
3	10	34.20	3.458	1.093	31.73	36.67	29	40
4	8	35.12	4.824	1.705	31.09	39.16	28	41
Total	146	32.95	4.532	.375	32.20	33.69	20	45

## GENE results (Ethnic Groups)

- In the same way as the ICC test, this research ran an ANOVA analysis to look for differences among ethnocentrism based on ethnic groups.
- This analysis shows that there is no statistically significant difference based on the GENE score.

step4					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	103.789	3	34.596	.382	.766
Within Groups	12871.588	142	90.645		
Total	12975.377	145			

step4								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	86	32.2209	9.21176	.99333	30.2459	34.1959	15.00	56.00
2	42	34.0714	9.55445	1.47428	31.0941	37.0488	17.00	56.00
3	10	33.5000	11.72130	3.70660	25.1151	41.8849	19.00	55.00
4	8	32.2500	9.85248	3.48338	24.0131	40.4869	20.00	52.00
Total	146	32.8425	9.45967	.78289	31.2951	34.3898	15.00	56.00

## Conclusions

- Our results support previous research showing that study abroad programs improve intercultural communication competence. However, our findings don't hold the argument that study abroad programs reduce ethnocentrism.
- In addition, our results show that females tend to develop stronger competency in intercultural communication and show a slight decrease in ethnocentrism in comparison to males.
- Further research efforts will be focused on the increase of our sample and the measure of other expected skills in international students and the impact from study abroad experiences.

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