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INTERNATIONAL PROJECT PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN ACADEMICS

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Abstract

The internationalization of higher education has led to changing roles for academics, including opportunities to participate in international projects. However, the extent to which academics feel prepared for entry into the international arena has received little attention. The purpose of this study was to examine women academics' perceptions of barriers, facilitators, and career benefits of pursuing international projects. Thirteen women academics participated in a semi-structured interview which illuminated six core themes depicting the benefits of international roles, influences on motivation, enablers and barriers, expanded personal and academic worldviews perspectives, and ways of gaining international competencies. Suggestions are given for supporting academic women to pursue international opportunities to enhance their academic careers.

The changing world of work demands that we incorporate global perspectives into career development. The global economy has impacted how business is conducted through access to new markets and increasing diversity in the work force (Collin & Young, 2000). Shifting borders throughout the world lead to new trade, travel, and educational opportunities. International partnerships impact on employee mobility as people from different countries work together. A key implication is that people require cross-cultural competencies to be successful in careers that are increasingly global in nature (Herr, 1993a, 1993b). As institutions in the public and private sectors "internationalize" their mandates, they need to consider the human dimensions of global enterprise. This includes equipping the work force with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills required for international employment (Arthur, 2000a, 2002; AUCC, 2002). International competencies have been identified as complementary to people's technical skills for ensuring success in working across cultures and across countries (Wilson, 1999). It has been proposed that

people with the foresight to incorporate international experience into their career planning have a tremendous advantage in current and future employment contexts (Arthur, 2000a; Hansen, 1990).

This paper focuses on the employment context of higher education. Changes in the world of work, including the influences of globalization, have impacted on academic life. There are increasing opportunities and pressures for academics to incorporate international scholarship as an integral part of their academic portfolios. This can be achieved through many avenues through the internationalization of higher education. For example, international partnerships have changed where education is conducted and how it is delivered. However, the links between international experience and the employment context of higher education have not been examined in terms of opportunities, barriers, and the ways in which international roles are career enhancing for women. The purpose of this research project is to gain a better understanding about how women academics develop international competencies and the pathways that influence their career development. In particular, the project examines women's perceptions of barriers and facilitators to participation in international projects conducted in other countries.

Contextual Influences on the Career Development of Women Academics

There are three bodies of literature that provided the foundation for our inquiry. First, the context of the academic institution was considered in light of mandates and practices related to internationalization. Second, the literature on women's career development provided a foundation from which to examine barriers and enablers that facilitate women's participation and mobility in the workforce. Third, the literature from business and management provides examples of the barriers and facilitators that impact women's careers in the international marketplace. This literature was instructive for examining potential influences on the career development of academic women.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Changes in the world of work due to globalization have impacted the nature of institutions in higher education and the nature of academic roles (Marginson, 2000; Scott, 1998). Internationalization has been characterized as "a process that prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world" (Francis, 1993, p.5); however, there are multiple and competing values driving the internationalization of higher education (Arthur, 2003). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the potential local benefits of internationalization must be examined in light of concerns regarding economic motives and exploitation of education consumers. Institutional pressures for international partnerships and revenue generation are driving forces through which academics are encouraged to participate in international projects. Faculty members are expected to participate in the commercialization of curriculum, instruction and supervision of learners from diverse countries and cultures, and the design and delivery of education in other countries and/or through the use of technology.

An expanded definition captures the broad range of internationalization activities that are connected to academic roles. "Internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college. An international dimension means a perspective, activity or service which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of an institution of higher education" (Knight, 1994, p.3). International projects involve academic activities that may be conducted in local contexts or through offshore delivery of academic expertise.

Internationalization has changed the ‘rules’ and roles of academic work. International scholarship is increasingly becoming the expectation for faculty members, as evidenced in changing norms for hiring practices and criteria for determining merit and promotion. However, there is little research that documents how academics incorporate mandates for internationalization into their academic practices.

Participation in international projects requires academics to gain expertise that is beyond the usual scope of their academic role. Similar to international project work in the private sector, academics must consider expanding their repertoire of academic expertise to include project management and the “soft skills” such as intercultural communication and conflict management that support working across cultures (Arthur, 2002). However, few academics have received formal training for the demands of teaching, research, and service (Janasz & Sullivan, 2004). The preparation of academics for international projects and the methods through which international competencies are gained have not been identified in the literature. At a time when higher education is gaining increasing importance for the export market, parallel efforts must be given to supporting academics in the development of competencies for international roles.

Beyond the rationale for participation in international education projects, contextual forces that impact the career development of academics must also be examined. Acker and Armenti (2004) point out the importance of continued examinations of the structures and ideologies in higher education that impact the working conditions for women academics. In particular, they note the importance of expanding a critical examination of how global trends influence women academics’ experiences in higher education. There are a few sources that examine the ways in which global influences on university work may differentially impact on male and female academics (e.g., Brooks & Mackinnon, 2002; Luke, 2001, and Currie, Thiele, & Harris, 2002). An overriding concern in the current study pertains to the career mobility of women academics and their access to international roles that enhance their academic profiles.

Barriers and Facilitators of Women’s Career Development

In reviewing the literature on women and international careers, we were struck by the many themes that are reminiscent of the earlier literature on women’s career development. The issues for working internationally parallel issues that have been researched to explain women’s access to and mobility within the domestic workforce. Many variables, both internal and external, serve as barriers or facilitators of women’s career behavior (Arthur, 1997). Betz (1994) has summarized how individual factors and environmental factors are influential for women’s career development, depending upon the presence or absence of these factors (Patton, 1997). External barriers and internalized messages are believed to reciprocally influence both the scope and nature of career mobility (Betz & Hackett, 1997; Farmer, 1997). For example, the demand for women’s participation in the labour force has not been matched by their representation across employment sectors and women continue to be underrepresented in high-status (and usually high-paying) occupations (Eccles, 1994). Social stereotyping about occupational roles continues to impact women’s career aspirations and the perceptions of available options held by young women and significant others (Gottfredson, 1981). There are many other environmental barriers and facilitators that have been identified as potential influences on women’s career development, including lack of role models, a null environment that neither encourages or discourages individuals and perpetuates the status quo, family-career conflicts, self-efficacy and expectancies for success (Betz, 1994; Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1992). Despite the burgeoning literature in the career development field during the past 25 years, research suggests that there continue to be serious impediments to women’s career development. A framework for examining women’s

career development, based upon the concept of barriers and facilitators, is useful for targeting areas of change and career-related interventions (Patton, 1997).

Women In The International Marketplace

Literature from the business and management field identifies several barriers and enablers for women's participation in the international marketplace (Adler, 2002; Taylor, Knox-Napier, & Mayrhofer, 2002). In a landmark discussion paper, Adler (1984) examined several myths surrounding the participation of women in international careers. During the last 20 years, research efforts have attempted to ascertain the validity of claims levied against the successful participation of women in the international marketplace. This growing body of literature suggests that there continues to be resistance against women's entry into and mobility within the management hierarchy through international assignments. For example, research has focused on women's reluctance and internal reasons for not pursuing international assignments (Fischlmayr, 2002; Stroh, Varma, & Valy-Durbin, 2000), the reluctance of home-country male managers to send females on international assignments (Linehan, 2002), barriers for the acceptance of women in positions of influence by foreign partners (Caligiui & Cascio, 1998), and working conditions outside their home countries (Napier & Taylor, 2002). In general, findings suggest that the primary barriers pertaining to participation in international assignments lie with home/work conflicts, restraining conditions within their home organizations such as overlooking women as viable candidates for international projects and making assumptions about their career interests, and gender stereotypes that exist within both home and host countries (Caligiui & Cascio, 1998; Mayrhofer & Scallion, 2002; Stroh, et al., 2000). Although each of these factors appears to influence the performance of women on global assignments, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the most serious constraining influences lie with the home organization. As noted in an earlier study of female managers, "The most difficult job is getting sent, not succeeding once sent" (Adler, 1991, p. 296).

Despite the evidence of barriers, participation in international careers shows positive outcomes. In an introduction to a special issue journal on women in global business (Taylor, Knox Napier, & Mayrhofer, 2002), the research is summarized in stating that women succeed at working abroad even in environments that might be perceived as unwelcoming. It appears timely for research to articulate the factors that facilitate the success of women on global work assignments (e.g., Caligiui & Cascio, 1998). Beyond business and management contexts, research on women and international careers has not been examined in other occupational sectors. Given the concerns levied about women entering traditionally male occupations, additional study is needed on the extent to which international roles are gendered.

Toren (1999) notes that women entering traditionally male occupations are usually regarded as and treated as strangers. This may partially account for the stereotyping and exclusion portrayed in the literature about women working in the international marketplace. Additional research is needed that examines the extent to which the "glass ceiling" has transferred to "guarded borders" in the international workplace. Beyond identifying barriers, research is needed which illuminates the ways that women overcome existing barriers and the factors that facilitate successful careers in the international marketplace. Our study emerged out of curiosity to explore the factors that pose as barriers and enablers related to the career development of academic women through participation in international education and specifically, international projects.

Research Goals and Methods

The overriding goals of this research project were to gain a better understanding about how women academics develop international competencies and the pathways that influence their career development. In particular, the project examined women's perceptions of barriers and facilitators to participation in international projects conducted in other countries.

Women academics employed at one Canadian university were invited to participate in a research project about international project competencies. Through an e-mail notice, women academics were notified of a website address where they could locate further information about the study, including the letter of invitation and consent. Criteria for eligibility were that the participants were full-time employees of the institution and that they had experience working in at least one international project in another country. A total of 13 women academics were interviewed, ranging in ages from 33 to 61. The academic rank of participants included 4 assistant professors, 6 associate professors, and 3 full professors. All participants were Caucasian and the majority identified their ethnic background as stemming from European countries, Russia and the United States. Due to the potential to identify participants from Faculties with few women academics, their Faculty affiliation remains unnamed. Acker & Armenti (2004) have also noted the ethical concerns related to reporting demographic details and compromising anonymity of participants.

An interview protocol was developed which took a semi-structured approach, allowing a focus on international projects and international employment competencies, while encouraging the unique perspectives of each participant to emerge (Kvale, 1996). The interview content revolved around seven guiding questions:

1. What relationship do you see between participation in international projects and your career development?
2. What is the significance of working on international projects for your career development?
3. What are the barriers for your participation in international projects?
4. What are the enablers for your participation in international projects?
5. What competencies have supported your success in international projects?
6. How did you acquire competencies for international projects?
7. What advice would you give to other women academics about their careers and participation on international projects?

Data collected from interviews was sorted to identify key themes using content analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) by the researchers, and employing a three-stage process. The steps taken in data analysis were undertaken with the general progression from macro- to micro-analysis. The broadest categories were extracted first and became the six main themes. Subthemes were identified by categorizing the various components related to each core theme. The progression of analysis is chronologically recounted as follows:

1. All transcripts were read once as an overview to gain a general understanding of the breadth of data therein;
2. Notes were taken to record tentative themes, based on the frequency of identification by, and amongst, participants; six themes were thus formalized;
3. The transcripts were reviewed for the second time to identify content relevant to the study but outside of the topics queried by the specific questions. Adjustments to the wording of the six themes were made to more accurately reflect data content;

4. A number was assigned to each theme. Each transcript was then re-read a third time and numbers were penciled in the margins of each to correspond with those of the themes. A comment made by a participant that corresponded to a given theme (i.e., 1-6) was given its number;
5. The numbered comments were then listed by theme number in order to have a summary of all points made relating to each given theme;
6. The subthemes were extracted from the six theme lists by counting the frequency of comments pertaining to each theme. The most frequently mentioned (i.e., by more than three participants) points became the fifteen identified subthemes;
7. A chart was made illustrating all points and their frequencies of identification made by participants, pertaining to each of the fifteen subthemes. In this way, all relevant data was made available to validate the study and its conclusions.

One researcher initially conducted these steps. In the next level of data analysis, a second researcher reviewed the material to check validity of the themes and to confirm the associations of subthemes both within and between the core categories. Third, a copy of interview summaries, themes, and subthemes were mailed to all participants to give them the opportunity to reflect upon their interview responses and to elaborate upon and/or correct information that they personally deemed to be important.

Results

Participants identified a wide range of international experience as relevant to their career paths. This included participation in international development projects both prior to and during their tenure as academics, teaching onsite in other countries, and research collaboration with international partners. The variety of experience attests to a broad scope in defining “what counts” as international experience, and that this definition needs to be expanded beyond participation in projects contracted at university and Faculty levels and overseas partners. The opportunities for international projects secured by individuals, including research collaboration, presentations at international forums and associated networking, and teaching experiences are examples of how participants gained experience that they viewed as relevant for their academic careers. The connections between international experience and academic career development are highlighted in the following review of core themes and subthemes. Excerpts from participants’ transcripts provide illustrative data. It should be noted that the core themes were based on comments made by all participants; therefore, the core themes represent unanimous facets of experience.

Participation In International Projects Brings Substantial Benefits

Through participation in international projects, women academics reap benefits for themselves, benefits for their academic institution, and benefits for their home society.

The **personal benefits** are those that in some way enhance the researcher’s quality of life. For example, all women faculty who were interviewed for this study indicated that they had acquired greater cross-cultural understanding following participation in an international research project. This benefit enhanced communication with others of different cultures, whether at home or abroad.

“(Y)ou just learn to think a lot differently, you have different perspectives and you have a deeper understanding of the sort of world problems and you can see so often both sides of...perhaps an international conflict in that things, the dogma you quite frequently read in the paper or a particular interest group taking a particular position about a company...that is doing something internationally, it’s not that simple; you know, it is really very complex.”

Participation in international projects also helped participants manage cross-cultural transitions and reduced fear associated with experiencing novel situations in a foreign culture.

“...I noticed with friends who have not traveled much during their lives and they say ‘okay, well you know, I’ll retire early or whatever and then I’m going to travel, and generally speaking it’s a bit of a disaster because they’re not used to coping with the fact that you have so many things out of your immediate control.”

Benefits to the institution consisted of the researcher’s better ability to establish rapport with her home students of various cultural backgrounds. For instance, all participants felt that their institution has an increased focus on attracting foreign students, who benefit from professors and teaching that is geared toward cross-cultural diversity *and* commonality. The institution also benefits from the research carried out and the recognition that accompanies such projects.

“(O)ur Masters program is headquartered in [country unnamed to protect identity]... and we have had students from I think 14 countries, the program started in 1996 and they’re in the seventh class, and 16 countries have been involved to date.”

There are **societal benefits** that result from a generalized increase in cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Participants indicated that the world is becoming smaller and travel more widespread and frequent, at the same time that global technology enables various cultures to communicate more freely; cross-cultural teaching and research fosters greater understanding.

“(T)he CIDA projects are always about poverty alleviation so the logic goes that they will alleviate poverty in poor western [country unnamed to protect identity] by improving, or by giving kids, as they grow up better job opportunities, and they will do that by giving them better education, and they will do that by improving the quality of the teaching, therefore we will work on professional development for teachers, so that’s what we are actually doing”

Influences On Motivation to Pursue International Projects

Whether a women academic decides to participate in an international project is dependent on peer and mentor influences, the type and availability of work abroad, and the project location.

Academic peers and mentors may encourage participation if they have experience with that project or a similar one, have traveled to the research site or area, and/or believe the potential researcher to be a *good fit* in terms of competencies for that situation. For example, one participant told how she first met a new colleague at a conference. He invited her to write a chapter for his book since he was familiar with, and interested in, her area of expertise. He was a professor at a European university and was of a local ethnic origin; a subsequent cross-cultural research project between his country and Canada resulted.

“And he approached me at a conference and said would I be interested in a chapter in a book he’s doing, and so I did that, and then he said let’s translate it into Italian, and he was the translator and published it in Italy, and so he became interested in my work and said ‘why don’t we do something together?’, and so we talked about it, and so we’re doing...(the study)...with the students there and I do it with students here...and after we had the data gathered, I was over there and we would work together on the data on two different occasions”

The **type and availability of work** will be consistent with the competencies and academic expertise of the researcher. For instance, a project in Latin America, which involved teaching children, was of utmost interest to one participant who spoke fluent Spanish and was, herself, a teacher of similar grade levels. In another project, language competency combined with professional experience to open opportunities for participation in international projects.

“I was invited to participate as a nurse with a group of young people that were going to have an exposure to another culture... and that sort of started me on a path of going short-term a few times. My first time was to Mexico... and then I went to Paraguay, South America, and then to the Dominican Republic and Haiti.”

Other factors that influence academic women's decisions to pursue international projects pertain to logistical reasons. For example, participants consider when and where this work is being conducted to coincide with a researcher's ability to leave home and work commitments. All participants stated that flexibility in the academic schedule is limited and may not mesh with a project's timeframe, determined by such factors as funding tied to the fiscal year and seasonal weather patterns (e.g., monsoon season) in the country where the project is located.

"When I go to China it's typically for a month, up to six weeks, so that's a substantial block of time. That's both personal and professional (barrier) because that's away from your life at home...but it's also a weight on your ongoing responsibilities at work... The Chinese have their schedule...when their school, when their teachers are on holidays and are free to come to say, a summer class or something. If we want to see them teaching, we have to go when classes are in session and if we want them to be free to come to classes as students themselves, it has to be when they are on vacation, so there are all kinds of Chinese restrictions as well as restrictions here."

Location of the project represents more than a geographical location and refers also to cultural influences. For example, one participant commented that she would not go to a place that did not recognize women as equal in status and value with men.

"(T)hey did ask me at one time..., I think it was Saudi Arabia, to go there and teach a course. It didn't materialize but I (said) you know I know how women are treated there, if you send me over there, am I going to be accepted? Are they going to even listen to what I say...so I wouldn't want to put myself in a position like that."

Participation In International Projects Reduces Ethnocentrism in Academic Practices

Ethnocentrism, the belief that one's own culture is superior over others, is a major contributor to bias, especially in a cross-cultural forum. Researcher expectations based on ethnocentric assumptions about the people one is studying affect interpretations of data in research projects and related **researcher bias**. For instance, researchers from two different cultures, both scoring data for the same study, might not score the same way.

"...it (research) takes longer because you're doing it by long distance...it's messier. ...our research is fairly messy anyway, especially class research is not black and white unless you do something like surveys and count things up. ...and even then, developing and scoring (the) scoring sheets, it gets messy and then you're doing it in two languages...it's very messy and the problem with getting a rate of reliability – are they scoring it the same as we are? ...it's difficult to get interrelated reliability. Because of that, you want to make sure you're scoring things consistently"

Similarly, **research ethics** would be affected by cultural interpretations of observed behavioural phenomena. One participant recounted how some of her colleagues working on a teaching project were disappointed to discover what constituted as cheating amongst the Central American students, when in fact to these students this was simply sharing information to ensure each other's success.

"(W)e certainly discovered in [country unnamed to protect identity], and since then I have discovered this is actually quite common in many cultures, cheating, what we would call

cheating was a normal way of life, and in fact how you were helpful, so if you had...a very narrow inflexible point of view, yes those students cheated, yes by the university calendar they should have been expelled, but if you...looked at it from their culture,...you could get beyond that to see well, preferably helping one another is part of what you do here.”

Whereas our culture values the individual and competition, here was a culture steeped in group values and cooperation. The experience reminded this participant of equally valid but sometimes polar-opposite cultural rules and motivators.

Enablers Outweigh Barriers For Participating In International Projects

The logistics of participating in international projects will ultimately determine whether a particular international opportunity is pursued. **Enablers** are factors that facilitate participation in a direct way. For example, all participants reported that adequate funding was an important aspect international research, as was family support.

“(F)unding is a big issue too. But I find that [our university] is pretty generous in terms of the funding opportunities. (E)xternally would be SSHRC for me, but I think internally there are opportunities available for travel.”

Several participants had spouses who were eager and able to provide support in terms of accompanying the researcher and assisting with operational tasks such as childcare and accommodation arrangements.

“(H)e (my husband) could probably go down and set little business projects up, so he’s always said to me if I was able to get ...even a teaching position somewhere, in a different country then, he said, go for it.”

Barriers consist of those factors that could prevent a woman academic from undertaking an international project. For example, children were mentioned as a potential logistical barrier, especially if the research location was considered unsafe due to health issues or political instability.

“I couldn’t go abroad because it was a big deal for us to even be pregnant and therefore we didn’t want to jeopardize my health, or the baby’s health so we decided not to take those chances, and so I could have gone to India to do a project,...but I couldn’t.”

Lack of flexibility in scheduling during the academic year could also prevent participation in a research project having a definite timeframe.

“...(C)learly we would have to negotiate around our academic responsibilities here, and actually a colleague of mine, one of the men on faculty, and I had coded out the courses, and in fact, the first time I was there I taught one and he taught the other and the next time we switched, just because of timing.”

Participation In International Projects Broadens Academic Horizons

A key point raised by participants in this study is that international projects do not facilitate career building during the establishment years of an academic role. Instead, all participants reported that they engaged in international work as a means of enhancing their felt sense of personal and professional rewards.

“I think it intrigued me personally to be more open to international work in the future. So it opened my eyes to the possibilities and the rewards, at this very personal level, you know, becoming colleagues with people and its rewards. The university perspective, as probably in the eyes of seeing, it was a career-enhancing move regardless...”

First, such participation **builds competencies** that help academics understand and relate to people of various cultures in a collaborative way. One participant reported that her research in the Middle East made her so much more empathetic toward this culture, and appreciative of her life and career opportunities in Canada. She felt motivated and grateful as a positive influence on the academic community.

“You learn as I am sure anybody who has done international work in politically sensitive areas, you learn how much propaganda we hear, and you also learn about the atrocities that nobody ever hears about. You can be very proud to be a Canadian.”

Second, **academic credibility** increases with experiential learning in other cultures. Working in countries with greater cultural distance in comparison to one's home culture was considered an asset for gaining credibility. A general belief was shared that one gains a broader knowledge of humanity after experiencing that which is most different from cultural behaviour in the home environment. Several participants noted that they were now actively sought out by their own institutional colleagues and external agencies as the “the person who does the international stuff,” and the local expert.

“I think in my case I sort of became the international person, or one of the members of faculty that did international work and that it was good for the profile of the department and the faculty”

Developing Competencies For International Projects Is Multifaceted

The skills required for conducting successful international research result from inherited personality traits, the social environment during one's formative years, life experience, and formal education. Competencies, then, are of three main types.

Personality competencies include a person's attitudes, attributes, and genetic endowments (e.g., disposition such as a sense of humour).

“(G)rowing up with another culture...(there are) personal experiences you can have that help shape you into who you are, what you've become, and how you accept situations and experiences and so forth... (J)ust learning cultural sensitivity from an early age...”

Professional competencies include such aspects as communication (e.g., understanding the language and cultural etiquette), interpersonal, and organizational skills

“(Y)ou go into a community and facilitate a discussion of ideas and events that the community can then resolve and you facilitate that process rather than swooping in as an external expert and imposing some kind of development solution”

Educational competencies are comprised of formal (i.e., degrees and accreditation) and informal (e.g., positions held on Boards and associations in paid and voluntary capacities) learning at school and in other community and service enterprises.

“I was part owner of a clinic for a few years which gave me a huge competency towards the consultatory roles, I wrote a lot of medical legals in the sense that I was asked to testify in court related to Workmen’s Compensation...so that gave me a lot of skills...a lot!”

These three domains culminate in a dynamic set of expertise that academic women acquire over a lifetime.

Discussion

The overriding goals of this research project were to gain a better understanding about how women academics develop international competencies and the pathways that influence their career development. In particular, the project examined women’s perceptions of barriers and facilitators to participation in international projects conducted in other countries.

It was interesting to see the variety of experiences that participants considered under the inclusion criteria of international projects. The parameters need to be expanded about “what counts” as international experience. Several participants described a fuller repertoire of international experience as contributing to their personal and professional development. An implication of the selection criteria for this study, which focused on international projects in another country, is that some women academics who have developed international competencies through other means may not have defined themselves as eligible for participation. A wider net needs to be cast in future research to include a broader range of avenues for gaining and implementing international experience.

Another implication of how international experience is defined has to do with the criteria through which academics are evaluated. The impetus for campus internationalization and specifically funded projects has led some Faculties to incorporate international dimensions into their selection, merit, and promotion policies. However, there are controversies about “what counts” as international experience and how that experience compares to traditional sources of scholarly work. It is ironic that Canadian universities are pursuing international projects and that faculty may experience pressure to engage in international work when the formal institutional rewards/recognition for such work are inconsistent and ambiguous. Faculty members may be concerned about a two-tier system in which priority would be given to international projects and less credit would be given to academics whose focus remained on domestic activities. It appears that there is a lag between mandates for internationalization, and how those mandates translate into the domains of academic scholarship in domains of teaching, research, and service.

A key finding of this study is that the view of international experience by participants was broader than their academic roles. Although it may be through their academic roles that they have gained international experience, participants were adamant about the personal benefits. The personal learning and enjoyment of interactions in other cultures was both a precipitating force

for pursuing further experience and an outcome of international experience. The institutional benefits of faculty members participating in international projects appeared to be consistent with the overriding goals of mandates for campus internationalization. Women academics discussed how their personal worldviews had broadened, the reduction in ethnocentrism, and how they incorporated international perspectives in their teaching and research. Participants consistently discussed how their international experience added global dimensions to their personal identity and to their academic role. Further research is needed to elaborate on these processes and to evaluate efforts through which faculty contribute to mandates for internationalization in higher education.

The review of barriers and enablers that emerged from the experiences of participants offers several interesting insights that are consistent with the literature on women's career development. In particular, the interface of dual careers and the work-family interface surfaced as a major consideration about participation in international projects. This mirrors literature that discusses the complexities of women's career decision-making based on the salience of multiple role demands (Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980). Additional factors in the local environment such as funding to support international activities and balancing demands of international projects with demands during the academic calendar year are important considerations for infrastructure. Safety considerations were also identified as external factors that would lead to interests in working in particular countries or concerns about hardships encountered in particular foreign environments.

One important motivator for participating in international projects appears to be encouragement and recognition from academic peers. Becoming known as an expert in one's field, along with networking, appears to be crucial for developing a profile that is known by others as deserving of consideration for international partnerships. However, beyond expertise and networking, participants identified the importance of peer support and encouragement for becoming involved in international projects. This suggests the importance of interpersonal connection in academic roles for women to feel confident about expressing their expertise in an international forum. The support of others such as mentors has been named as an important influence on women's career development in general (Richie, Fassinger, Linn, Johnson, Prosser, & Robinson, 1997; Young & Richards, 1992) and for facilitating women's participation on international assignments (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998). Another important motivator for participating in international projects appears to relate to a values-orientation in working for social change and for making positive contributions to people in other parts of the world. This social justice perspective appears connected to the centrality of relational values that have been identified as important to women's career identity (Crozier, 1999).

The bottom line for participants in this study was that international experience should be viewed as "career enhancing" versus "career building". In other words, participants were mindful of the demands required in the early years of an academic career pertaining to research, teaching, and scholarship. Until academics have established a solid base of experience, including tenure, participation in international projects was not viewed as a desirable direction. In fact, several participants noted that international work could detract time and energy needed for productivity in more traditional domains of academic life. The advice offered by participants was for women academics to get their careers established first, then enhance their careers through participation on international projects. Most participants drew a direct connection between building a solid academic record and reputation that would be considered as reputable across countries. While women academics are establishing their academic careers, they can be gaining relevant and transferable experience in preparation for work on international projects.

The advice noted by participants requires further examination regarding the costs and benefits of international dimensions of academic women's careers. Many concerns have been raised about how the 'old norms' in academia become rules of behavior for women academics (Acker & Armenti, 2004). There is a constant interplay between the explicit pathways for academic success and the implicit experiences and personal costs for women of pursuing career success. For example, it was surprising to find little evidence in this study that the work/family interface was a core issue for participants as it has been identified as a significant tension for women faculty (Armenti, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2003). In our research with women academics in Australia, partner support was identified as a major factor in contemplating international work. It is possible that the current study involved a unique group of academic women who had appropriate supports in place. The perspectives of women academics from more diverse backgrounds would also diversify the narratives about women's experiences of working in international roles. Alternatively, we caution readers who expect to see traditional gendered concerns reflected in the data and might feel disappointed that this was not reflected in the data obtained from participants. It is precisely due to the representation of barriers pertaining to women's participation in international work in other fields that lead us to inquire about the experience of academic women in higher education. More research is needed to understand how internationalization has impacted women's academic roles, the extent to which pressures for international involvement advantage or disadvantage women, and the responsibilities of academic institutions for supporting women in pursuing international roles. More practical information is needed about how to help women academics to develop competencies for working internationally.

Conclusion

The changing world of work has impacted the nature of academic roles with increased pressure to incorporate international perspectives. This needs to be accompanied by career planning processes that help women academics develop and articulate their competencies for participation in the international workplace (Arthur, 2004). This exploratory study focuses on the experiences of a volunteer sample from one academic institution. Future research needs to incorporate the perspectives of a larger sample, in order to clarify common patterns of experience across academic settings.

Despite the limited sample size, the findings of this study point to some critical directions for women academics' career development. In discussing a framework for interventions designed to expand women's career options, Patton (1997) refers to strategies addressed by Hackett and Betz (1981) for fostering women's career-related self-efficacy expectations. Three important components are included in the framework:

1. Providing exposure to female role models;
2. Helping women to address the underlying sources of anxiety in relation to pursuing non-traditional domains of employment in their career development; and
3. Actively supporting women to develop interests, skills, and competencies.

We believe this framework has high utility for encouraging women academics to develop both the confidence and competence for working internationally. Rather than waiting to be invited to participate on international projects, women academics can be proactive about positioning themselves to gain relevant experience and take initiative to make international connections. First, it is important for women academics to have contact with role models and mentors. There is

substantial evidence to suggest that women pursuing academic careers benefit from support (Collins, Chrisler, & Quina, K., 1998). Mentoring programs typically take on the form of matching newer academics with associate or full professors. Janasz and Sullivan (2004) suggest that faculty need to develop multiple mentoring relationships across their academic career. It is the dissemination of “acquired wisdom” from the professorial network that enhances the acquisition of career competencies. This requires articulating the steps towards building and consolidating an academic career, including ways for women academics to incorporate international perspectives. It also entails defining the competencies that are valued for international projects and identifying ways for women academics to gain relevant experience. Career-related interventions are required that facilitate career building and career enhancing accomplishments for women academics. These are important considerations for helping women to expand the scope of their academic portfolios and to incorporate participation on international projects as a viable career direction.

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