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## Tracing Global Experiences to Employer Favorability


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# TRACING GLOBAL EXPERIENCES TO EMPLOYER FAVORABILITY

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Agriculture

By

Sarah Elizabeth McCord

May 2024

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# TRACING GLOBAL EXPERIENCES TO EMPLOYER FAVORABILITY

Agriculture

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Master of Science

Sarah Elizabeth McCord

## ABSTRACT

Globalization has elevated society's workforce contributions, forcing employees to have global competence for career success. Global competence is a term used to describe the proficiencies an individual can gain from experienced-based learning opportunities, like study away. This form of experiential learning has proven to have many benefits for students in secondary and higher education. Existing evidence suggests cross-cultural and international experiences provide travelers with professional, intellectual, and integral traits, increasing their working social capital and aiding in experiential learning. However, research is lacking if employers desire study abroad experience in their new hires and/or if global competence is a skill related to favorability in the hiring process. We used a mixed method convergent design to understand the perceived gains of study away and the weight employees place on the value of experience-based opportunities, like study abroad, in professional workplace settings. Researchers found that study away develops cultural competencies. These skills and thematic codes are ready to communicate, ready to travel, building the foundation, prepared for work, and ready for missions. Individuals who did not study away were perceived to have an idealistic view of global experiences and have a more favorable view of skills developed through study away experiences. Study away experiences give students and employees assets to use in the workplace and throughout life. These skills are likely to be valued and recognized at an organization with an international focus. Future research should seek to promote experiential learning by means of study away, international professional development, and cross-cultural engagement to increase the favorability employees may gain from these experiences which may have a direct impact on their workplace success and opportunities.

**KEYWORDS:** study abroad, globalization, workplace, experiential learning, global competence

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By

Sarah Elizabeth McCord

A Master's Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate College  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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## INTRODUCTION

The 200-million-year-old theory of Pangea suggests every continent on Earth was once together (Kious & Tilling, 1996). Present day, we now have seven unique continents, yet many argue these remain invisibly tied together due to globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Globalization was first coined after World War II when the combination, overlap, and connectedness of world peace, economic growth, and lasting prosperity was desired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Kolb, 2022). Furthermore, organizations like the United Nations coalition, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (formerly GATT) were formed due to the economic rivalry from the war (Kolb, 2022). This has since led to increased international cooperation, also known as globalization.

Trade, media, enhanced travel, and more allow us to work with other nations, travel, and understand the variety of cultures around the world. Researchers from other industries name the industrialization and humanized era as a geological phenomenon, coined the Anthropocene (Simangan, 2023). Authors indicate the Anthropocene is the age where humans are the dominant influence in our lives, homes, and communities (Simangan, 2023). Everyday items we need for work or survival are no longer ‘American made,’ but rather traded and transported by water, air, and land for miles upon miles.

Further, O’Lawrence (2017), suggests “career and technical educators throughout the nation are affected by what goes on globally because of new developments, improved communication, faster travel, and increased commerce, which lead to global competition.” Thus, physical, and educational needs are being met with the influence of foreign companies and actions. The interdependence of country-to-country relationships trickles into each working sector around the world leading to multinational companies (MNCs), i.e. companies which have

employees and/or operations based in a host country(s) and other branches working in one or more additional countries (Kolb, 2022). No matter the industry, ranging from agriculture, healthcare, business, education, etc., globalization has affected each industry independently and created MNCs across the world (Bunch et al., 2018; Kolb, 2022).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a force which brings MNCs together with standards, legalities, and expectations, while the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) keeps statistical data for the United States foreign relations in terms of employment. The BEA (2023) reports more than 20 million individuals in 2020 were employed by a majority-owned U.S. Multinational Enterprise (MNE) affiliate or an all-country majority-owned affiliate (MOFA) within the U.S. (BEA, 2023). U.S. MNEs can be described as United States parent companies with branches located in other countries. MOFAs are defined as foreign affiliate companies whose U.S. combined ownership makes up more than half of the investment entity (BEA, 2023).

With around 169 million employees within the U.S., Moore et al. (2009) reported one in every six employees in the U.S. has some sort of affiliation with international enterprises and trade whether these are with MNCs, MOFAs, or another foreign company. This is up from one in 20 over the last 15 years (ILO, 2008). Therefore, globalization is happening across the world but especially in our workplaces. It will be essential for employees and employers to reciprocate the level of international competence and skill required to communicate, interact, and conduct business with diverse entities. Working in such conditions will require job holders to keep up with the globalized pace of the worldwide workforce.

Employment in international trade is not only a compelling piece of information for this study, but leadership officials declare globalization to be a critical factor in the success of many

industries and aspects of the economy and workplace (Kolb, 2022). Former director-general of the ILO, Juan Somavia (2008), said “the task, is to work for fair globalization where business is profitable and sustainable, and also where social equity is promoted, and natural resources conserved,” (pg. 8). Despite global leadership officials serving as role models, such as Somavia, researchers suggest more work needs to be done to foster a global community. In Moore et al.’s (2009) study of global leadership it was identified there is “a shortage of global leaders in the corporate world;” and suggested, “leaders need to develop global competencies and perspectives,” (pg. 119). Moore et al.’s (2009) study and others push for models of cultural competence, study away experiences, and other ways to develop a more global mindset in individuals contributing to the worldwide workforce.

Additionally, the interaction between technology and globalization has created new challenges and new opportunities. Digitalization is connecting people, cities, countries, and continents in ways that vastly increase our individual and collective potential. However, the same forces have also made the world volatile, complex, and uncertain (Kolb, 2022). Kolb (2022) suggests globalization “is like technical progress.” Through the integration of the internet many jobs became obsolete, but with the termination of these jobs came the creation of new technical careers (Kolb, 2022). Globalization continues to close jobs and open others, all while expanding the global capacity at which the world job market is performing. As an employee in this environment, it requires deliberate and continuous efforts to create the kind of bridging social capital, which can be defined as the internal and external goodwill gains, we may have from our relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Eggerman, 2023). Building social capital allows us to share experiences, ideas, and innovation. Social capital is a concept that leads to a shared understanding among groups with diverse experiences where interests can be built, increasing

our radius of trust with strangers and institutions (Kolb, 2022). Social capital can be seen as an asset with quality “values, trust, social networks, and relationships” (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Eggerman, 2023). Social capital illicitly refers to the capital we have in friendships, working networks, and other connections that allow us to be potentially effective in society (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Eggerman, 2023). Combining this social network with other assets and skills gained from globalization, cultural infiltration, and industrialization may influence other aspects of our working world if we allow it (ILO, 2008; Moore et al., 2009; O’Lawrence, 2017).

O’Lawrence (2017) contends it will be up to us as members of this society to decide whether we use technology as a benefit or a detriment. Societies that value bridging social capital and pluralism often tend to be more creative, as they can draw on the best talent from anywhere, build on multiple perspectives, and nurture creativity and innovation (OECD, 2020). The acknowledgment of our capacity-building society drives the purpose behind this study and the significance of maintaining a global economy and workforce (Moore et al., 2009).

This research study focuses on understanding how learning initiatives through international travel can affect students and employees in being culturally competent in the workplace. Much research highlights the interconnectedness of the world, technological progress/digitalization, advancements with international development, and the societal drive to activate learning led by meaningful experience (Bletscher et al., 2022; Burgett, 2022; O’Lawrence, 2017). These initiatives have led researchers to examine the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in those who previously studied away valuing study away experience in potential new employees?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the views of skills developed through study away programs from those who previously studied away?

These research questions are derived from previous research which will be discussed in the following literature review.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review provides a detailed description of the various research and works that are relevant to understanding the impact study away experiences have concerning employability and what this looks like in terms of globalization. Kolb (2022) concurs the effects of a globalized world include innovation, expanded trade markets, increased product variety and quality, more equality, job reallocation, lower-priced services and goods, and larger, better business. All nations collectively working together to earn the benefits of globalization starts with cultivating global relations and cultural competencies in students and employees (Harder et al., 2015). This research will maintain a focus on study away experiences and the implications this has on employer favorability. It is key to understand these terminologies and those associated with internationalization. Definitions of key terms can be found in Appendix A.

### **Background**

**Global Competence.** To be competent in such a globalized workforce, one must possess global competence (Harder et al, 2015). Global competence is the construction of sets of skills, attitudes, and values which foster cultural awareness (OECD, 2020). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020) describes global competence as

a multi-dimensional construct that requires a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values successfully applied to global issues or intercultural situations. Global issues refer to those that affect all people and have deep implications for current and future generations. Intercultural situations refer to face-to-face, virtual or mediated encounters with people who are perceived to be from a different cultural background.



According to OECD (2020) “Developing global competence is a life-long process, but it is one that education can shape.” OECD (2020) seeks to advance such competencies for all citizens of the world. Groups like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and OECD (2020) continue to make the argument that global competence is a contextual skill students and adults require to be purposeful, capacity-building citizens of the world. Bunch et al. (2018) add to this concept of ‘cultural communication,’ which describes the ability to functionally communicate with those from different cultures. Additionally, cultural communication requires acknowledging other cultures' differences which may enhance qualities like “empathy, intercultural experience, motivation, world attitude, and listening skills” (Bunch et al., 2018).

**Study Away.** One of the key ways to meet global competence/literacy and contribute to the formation of global communities can be through the addition of international curricula and the promotion of study away opportunities (Bletscher et al., 2022; Calley, 2021). Educational travel experiences, international exposures, study away opportunities and global experiences are terms used synonymously throughout this study. These terms can be defined as programs students and adults participate in giving them an introduction or residence in some cases, to a country for some time as an educational effort to increase awareness of other cultures, languages, geographic settings, and people unlike those of our native familiarity. It should be noted the opportunities discussed here are not vacations, but rather lengths of time where individuals are actively engaged in learning, awareness, and growth. Study away experiences can range from a week to three months, three to six months, six months to a year, greater than a year, less than three years, and five years or more for the categorization of this study (Bunch et al., 2018; Drum et al., 2022; Education Abroad, 2022). Likewise, no matter the length of the program, whether it be two weeks in a foreign environment, three years, or longer, students have been known to gain

“substantial long-term benefits” from their study away experiences (Bunch et al., 2018). Drum et al.’s (2022) research, along with many others like Calley (2021) suggests students gain career-changing, impactful, and influential perspectives related to the working world after completing study away experiences, no matter the length of the experience. Rather, it is crucial that the experience is offered and available so students can participate (Bunch et al., 2018). All this to say, researchers in this study believe study abroad experiences may provide an enhanced level of expertise to educational institutions and workplaces.

**Cultural Competence.** Other researchers like Bunch et al. (2018) have used models of cultural competence based on the success, development, and past experience of students and employees who participated in study away programs. The Cultural Competence Model used in Bunch et al.’s (2018) study was developed by The Winters Group (n.d.) and later adapted. Bunch et al.’s (2018) cultural competence model is complete with four main stages; cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and lastly, cultural competence.

Bunch et al., (2018) used a cultural competence model to assess the degree of cultural proficiency individuals have upon completing a short-term study abroad. For the means of their research Bunch et al. (2018) redefined education abroad experiences to include immersion experiences like “international service learning projects, internships, and short-term educational excursions,” (pg. 120). Bunch et al.’s (2018) research suggested short-term study away experiences allowed students to grow in each area the cultural competence model determined to be important for gaining skills related to cultural competence. This linear model begins by separating and analyzing personal customs, beliefs, styles, biases, etc., and others’ norms from ours. In the first stage, individuals must question what they have believed against what they are learning and being exposed to from the new culture(s). (Bunch et al., 2018). After determining if

a country's culture is alike or different from previous beliefs, people can construct a pool of knowledge that can be built upon continuously. The previous stages- awareness, and knowledge, allow the third stage- sensitivity, to develop. Here, the question, of 'Do I accept and respect these differences' comes to mind. Am I open emotionally, physically, and mentally to receiving and accepting these cultural differences? Finally, cultural competence is the last stage of this model (Bunch et al., 2018).

Bunch et al. (2018) determined making adjustments in the way we perceive cultural differences will allow us to behave and think effectively in a new context. When using this model to perceive the impacts of study away it can be easy to understand the thought processes and methodical formation of perspective shift which often coincides with study abroad experiences. Hence, this researcher contends study away maintains learning objectives that are key for personal development and cultural competence which largely impact employee viewpoints (Bunch et al., 2018). Implications from this model are that if students and employees can utilize concepts of cultural competence like Bunch et al.'s (2018) then employees may be able to increase their active knowledge gain while on study away experiences to increase their cultural competence at an even deeper level.

## **Employability**

Specifically, when it comes to detailing what it means to increase the quality of employees or the skills and competencies they have, it is important to understand the concept of employability. Employability is a complexity that establishes the quality we have to be employable or compensated for our working efforts.

Römgens et al. (2020) completed a comprehensive review of the concept of employability and how employability can be achieved by members of the workforce. Römgens et al. (2020) study prefaced this topic with the complexity and depth employability has historically had. After reviewing six past conceptualizations of employability, Römgens et al. (2020) found five themes from the reviewed literature. These dimensions included human capital, self-reflection and organization, lifelong learning and flexibility, social capital, and a positive work-life balance. These are the main outlets which Römgens et al. (2020) felt encompassed employability best. Each of these dimensions have specific traits intertwined with them. The categorizations of skills show employability is something to strive for as employees and can be achieved through many avenues.

In general, however, employers by Römgens et al. (2020) standards, desire employees who are capable, confident, and culturally aware. Further, employers are seeking individuals who can engage in multicultural conversations and move their organizations to the next tier of competitiveness, no matter the sector of business or industry (Bletscher et al., 2022; Vetter & Wingenbach, 2019). O’Lawerence (2017) suggests this effort begins with employers hiring individuals who are educated or seeking education.

Global literacy is a concept specifically identified by researchers who note “as students graduate and move into the workforce international experience will be necessary if they are to help the United States remain competitive in a global market” (Moore et al., 2009). O’Lawerence (2017) contends that to stay competitive in our global market and economy “strong skills and lifelong learning should be economically rewarded and the nature and impact if student experiences in career and technical education” have certain implications specifically for the United States, but the global economy alike.

Farrugia & Sanger (2017) conducted their own research study which defined the tangible skills one might require to have a competitive edge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. With the help of the Institute of International Education (IIE) Farrugia & Sanger (2017) conducted a nationwide survey collecting over 4,500 responses from alums of study away programs. The responses of these alumni proved to be very insightful towards understanding the impacts of study away. More specifically, Farrugia & Sanger (2017) highlighted the skills students received from study away and how these compared to the skills one needs to be competitive in this century's job scene. They found that study away uniquely develops students for the workplace through transferrable skills and "positive employment gains," (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). Further, Farrugia & Sanger (2017) highlighted the leverage study away experiences gave students entering into the global workforce who be able to better distinguish differences within themselves and other cultures. The skills needed to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace vary, but it is important to note many researchers and career specialists are calling skills in general 'the global currency of the 21<sup>st</sup> century' which is a nod to the relevance of continuing to understand how to define employability and what specific traits we, as job holders, should have to be employable (Farrugia & Stranger, 2017).

Further, these liquid gold workplace skills include communication skills, confidence, content area knowledge, curiosity, flexibility, adaptability, interpersonal skills, intercultural skills, language skills, leadership, problem-solving skills, self-awareness, teamwork, technological skills, tolerance for ambiguity, and work ethic (Farrugia & Stranger, 2017). Divided into clusters these can be defined as cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies. Essentially, according to Römgens et al. (2020) and Farrugia & Stranger (2017), to be a successful, favorable employee with a competitive edge, one must hold a large majority

of these traits. Holding these traits may allow individuals to gain career advancements, leadership positions, managerial roles, and more (Farrugia & Stranger, 2017; NAFSA, 2020; Römgens et al., 2020).

Formerly the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, now NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2020) completed a comprehensive study interpreting the 2019 report of the Open Doors study abroad summary for the U.S. This study was conducted in an effort to understand what skills students might be receiving from study away experiences and how study gives students a competitive edge in the workforce. More than 341,000 students studied abroad in 2018-2019 as noted in this report (NAFSA, 2020). Each of these students had a varied experience in language, country of exploration, content area, length of the program, etc., yet many students upon returning from their education away opportunities have similar skills sets they curated while abroad (NAFSA, 2020). Skill sets differ, but generally, it can be assumed that students who study away may return with proficiency in a few specific areas as opposed to those who do not participate in study abroad.

The following soft and global skills are derived as a compilation from student data as represented by NAFSA. The most represented keywords in terms of soft skills gained from study away as reported by NAFSA (2020) were communication, leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, time management, prioritization, decision-making, critical thinking, independence, creativity, interpersonal communication, tactfulness, quick learning, curiosity, and empathy. The most represented keywords as global skills gained by students who studied away were cultural awareness, language, diversity, cultural sensitivity, global perspectives, intercultural communication, cross-cultural communication, global awareness, and intercultural skills (NAFSA, 2020).

The Office of Education Abroad at a Missouri university lists 10 Cultural Superpowers (2022) students gain upon the completion of study away programs. They describe these as “transferable skills born and boosted through education abroad.” These cultural superpowers include adaptability, communication, courage, self-awareness, empathy, and more. Farrugia and Sanger (2017) report students “often described study abroad as one of the only opportunities during their undergraduate studies to develop skills like flexibility, written and verbal communication, interpersonal skills, and intercultural skills.”

Many of these skills for employees tend to be similar to those mentioned and are gained from study away (Education Abroad, 2022). From professionalism, communication skills, self-awareness, and several other intercultural competencies, study away provides an overlap in employment-related skills (Vetter & Wingenbach, 2019). These skills, along with others identified by various entities and credible sources, will be used to gauge the impact and perception of specific skills students and employees may or may not receive from international experiences. Numerous studies have identified skills employers find desirable for new graduates which are enhanced by experiential learning programs such as study away (Drum et al., 2022; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012; Strange & Gibson, 2017).

### **Lifelong Competencies**

Ultimately, there is considerable overlap in the characteristics quality employees should have at workplaces and the skills individuals gain after completing a study away program as derived from Farrugia & Stranger (2017) and NAFSA (2020). Further, Römgens (2020) argues education and workplace learning share many similarities and are placed along the same lifelong learning continuum. Countless research studies continue to identify similar traits as important to

contribute meaningfully to the workplace. Likewise, these sources suggest these skills may not be enhanced to proficiency without the aid of professional and cultural development experiences, like study away (Burgett, 2022; Calley, 2021; Drum et al., 2022; NAFSA, 2020).

Table 1 shows both the skills recommended for ideal employees to have compared to the skills individuals gain from study abroad experiences based on the findings from NAFSA (2020) and Römgens et al. (2020). Whether individuals gain these proficiencies from study away as an employee through professional development means or a student on a high school or collegiate opportunity, it may be critical for employees to have these experiences upon employment. Farrugia & Sanger (2017) suggested “study abroad provides a unique opportunity for students to gain work-related skills in a global context.” Further, career progression, economic prosperity, and community development are all emerging benefits for employees to possess in the workplace from Farrugia & Sanger’s (2017) research which makes the concept of global competencies an important one.

Table 1. Characteristics of Ideal Employees & Skills Gained from Study Abroad

Ideal Workplace Traits	Skills Gained from Study Away Experience
adaptability, communication, confidence, content area knowledge, curiosity, flexibility, intercultural and interpersonal skills, language, leadership, problem-solving skills, self-awareness, teamwork, technological skills, tolerance for ambiguity, and work ethic (Farrugia & Stranger, 2017).	communication, creativity, critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, curiosity, decision-making, diversity, empathy, global perspectives, independence, intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, language, leadership, prioritization, problem-solving, quick learning, tactfulness, teamwork, time management (NAFSA, 2020).

Thus, there is a resounding push for high school and collegiate students to participate in study away programs, and simultaneously a push for workplaces to continue incorporating



international affairs and foreign career development opportunities for their employees to learn and gain skills from (Calley, 2021). NAFSA (2020) estimated the value of study abroad for employers and determined more than 31 million open job positions were seeking applicants with the soft and global skills received from study away. Similarly, many of the skills individuals receive from study away are often the most desired traits employers look for in new hires (Farrugia & Stranger, 2017; NAFSA, 2020; Römgens et al., 2020).

### **Relevance to Every Industry**

Burgett (2022) contests that for students at business colleges studying away is not merely a relaxing vacation, but a “real-world educational experience” which students and adults should be encouraged to embark upon. Burgett’s (2022) study implemented a survey which aimed to understand the consequences of studying away as a student at a university’s school of business. Participants graduated between 2012 and 2022 and were either members of the control group (students who did not study away) or the experimental group (students who studied away). Survey participants exceedingly agreed they gained many skills from their education abroad which would apply to their professional lives but also give them an edge when working with clients and colleagues (Burgett, 2022). Specifically

it was found that business students who studied abroad are more likely to work internationally, more prepared for the workforce and more confident in their ability to obtain jobs, and more comfortable networking with colleagues in the business world than business students who did not study abroad.

Thus, the Burgett (2022) study emphasizes the impact and importance study away opportunities have on students at universities, but also the lasting impact study abroad has for students turned

adults in the workforce. A study conducted by Merklen and Wolfe (2020) analyzed dietetic students' proficiencies when functioning in culturally diverse settings through a survey which measured CQ- cultural intelligence. Merklen & Wolfe (2020) concluded “Dietetic educational programs must seek ways to enhance students’ cultural intelligence (CQ) to prepare them to be culturally aware practitioners.”

This study supports previous research in that international experiences contribute to cultural awareness and understanding, and that the interaction with people from different cultures may increase professional competency while enhancing CQ. Both current dietetic students and practicing dietitians may benefit from participation in study abroad programs and international travel as it may equip them with the skills needed to practice as professional, culturally aware, and outstanding dietitians.

Some industries also highlight the importance of incorporating cultural skills and study away opportunities into academia and workplaces. Moore et al. (2009) confirmed: “Through application and synthesis students will connect the necessary leadership skills and global perspective to find a solution and realize their own role in the globalized agricultural world.”

Other researchers, specifically in healthcare, are taking to the term “cultural humility” as it is more reflective of the ever-changing and dynamic cultural population the U.S. society continues to have. Lekas et al. (2020) initiated this verbiage conversion by suggesting individuals cannot become ‘competent’ in culture, rather they must be open and humble when learning and accepting patients in healthcare and similar fields. Further, cultural humility allows doctors, nurses, and laymen to learn from those they serve and admit they may not always be aware of someone’s culture (Lekas et al., 2020).

Through each industrial sector; agriculture, business, education, communication, dietetics, healthcare, etc.; individuals must be proficient in global competence, and cultural

communication, if they want to remain competitive in the current state of the workplace climate (Burgett, 2022; Harder et al., 2015; Merklen & Wolfe, 2020). Specific impacts for employers and employees include an increased ability to network, communicate, and exude confidence if hires have previously studied abroad. Thus, it will be key to mobilize students of all departments and subjects to form a community proficient in global affairs to contribute to a successful and productive societal workforce for every industry.

However, the efforts related to the impact of study away on workplaces combined with globalization and interdependence will require more of employees within the traditional workforce (Burgett, 2022). As of 2024, employees are held to a standard which requires them to effectively and appropriately communicate and work with those across the globe (Burgett, 2022). Sources estimate that more than 20% of employees interact with partners, customers, clients, etc. located around the world (Burgett, 2022; ILO, 2008; O’Lawrence, 2017). Perhaps 20% of the workplace population is a small percentage for some companies, but having culturally competent employees could mean the growth of an international affairs department and increased connections and profits across the globe.

Ultimately, “it is critical that those employees possess intercultural skills in order to bring in new clients, work with diverse teams, and support a good reputation for companies” (Burgett, 2022). Whether gained from study away or an international professional development experience, cultural skills are no longer optional, but a requirement to be considered for career advancement in the U.S. (Burgett, 2022; Calley, 2021; Drum et al., 2022; NAFSA, 2020). Calley (2021) conducted a research study aimed at interpreting the specificities study away had on the characteristics of creating a global citizen in today’s professional workplace. Her key findings showed students who engaged in study away and similar programs

had a transformative effect as participants cultivated specific knowledge and skills. With specific knowledge and skills as a foundation, participants clarified their sense of self through experiencing congruent feedback from trusted others. Their clarified sense of self in turn led to confidence and capacity to engage with diverse others in leadership in their postbaccalaureate lives (Calley, 2021, pg. 4).

Studies like Calley's (2021) suggest experiences that take place during a student's life or academic career may play a major role in their professional lives after school. Similarly, the interdisciplinary nature of global and cultural competence has allowed for many opinions, suggestions, and recommendations as to how we progress in society. One suggestion from theorists to increase global competencies is through experience-based learning theories and opportunities such as study abroad (Calley, 2021).

## **Theoretical Framework**

**Experiential Learning Theory.** Being able to cognitively think through learning processes and understand the questions to ask ourselves to move through various stages of acceptance and knowledge gain is a key skill to have for active learning to occur according to theorists like Dewey (1897) and Kolb (1984). Many researchers over the years have sought theories to describe and explain the impacts experiences have on humans. Experiences may be various learning opportunities that occur in connection to a student's learning environment (Kolb, 2022). Opposing theorists like 1950s psychologist, Erik Erikson, suggested age allows us to grow and adapt our personalities based on how to solve problems and conclude resolutions through major life events and crises (Erikson, 1993). Thus, as individuals increase in age, their wisdom and knowledge naturally grow (Erikson, 1993).

Conversely, there is a growing body of evidence that shows participating in experience-based learning efforts can vastly increase lifelong skills no matter the age or stage of life of an

individual (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Dewey (1897) created a creed devoted to sharing his theories and beliefs that learning is a social instinct reflective of our experiences and relationships. Dewey (1897) believed implicit learning happens every day from a child's birth to an adult's death. "This process begins unconsciously almost at birth and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions" (Dewey, 1897).

Kolb (1984) began to understand these experiences in relation to knowledge gain; in that much of learning can be derived by an experience or an active learning point in our lives. Specifically, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as described by Kolb and Kolb (2005) suggests active knowledge gains happen through experiences.

ELT is based on six main principles which define how learning is best achieved and conceived for students or learners young and old alike. Notably, these include the notion of learning being a process, not just a measurement of objectives a learner must achieve to 'pass' or fulfill their education. Learning as considered by Kolb (2005) is a never-ending structure that is constructed through experiences leading to knowledge gains.

Moreover, learning happens in layers; all learning is simply building on previous knowledge and relearning. Dewey (1897) believed "education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing." Drawing on previous experiences also requires the student to ponder, be inquisitive, adapt to worldly situations, and problem-solve. Dewey (1897) confirms students must commit to 'learning by doing.' Further, knowledge gains materialize due to the transaction of experiences with other beings or things. The main principles defining ELT can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Experiential Learning Theory Principles (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Principle	Description of Principle
1.	Learning is a process. It should not be measured in objectives, rather it should be layered experiences. Study abroad experiences force reflection and building on native experiences in comparison to the international opportunity at hand.
2.	All learning is relearning. Refinement and building on topics should drive the examination and assessment of learners. Study away experiences force students to relearn what daily tasks look like in a new country versus their native habits.
3.	Proper learning requires problem-solving and conflict resolution through real-world problems. Engagement with international experiences may create tension, disagreements, and conflict which individuals must process, problem-solve, and work through.
4.	More than content recognition, learning is the integration of understanding and adapting to the world. This includes thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. Study away opportunities allow travelers to reflect on their feelings, perspectives, and emotions daily while abroad.
5.	Learning happens as a result of our transactions with those around us through our environmental interactions. Through good, bad, or ugly, students or employees learning internationally will have many environmental influences that will contribute to more learned experiences.
6.	Crafting learners' personal knowledge is the process of learning. This is not a fixed transmission of material but the development of the individual. Through reflection, problem-solving, and perspective shift, participants of study away experiences will learn new things contributing to their breadth of knowledge.

All of these ideas make up the principle that suggests learning is a developmental process that involves crafting a learner-specific knowledge toolbox (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Learning occurs holistically, and honestly, and is a relationship built between an educator and made for a learner (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Scholars must understand learning is a whole practice that occurs over a lifetime. (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012).

The Kolb theory suggests learning is an individual process and must occur through experiences. Experiences like Kolb and Kolb (2005) talk about are highlighted through study abroad programs as students must acclimate to various cultures, meet people of different orientations, and build on previous knowledge to understand current realities (p. 194). These are just a few aspects of study away experiences that contribute to ELT which Kolb and many others

speak highly of. ELT is interconnected with increasing global competencies which are often developed by educational-based international study opportunities. Hence, ELT as explained by Kolb & Kolb (2005) and Kolb (1984) will be some of the primary lenses researchers use in this study as a driving theoretical framework.

Pasarelli and Kolb (2012) examined ELT within the context of study away. These authors outline many learning outcomes made possible by study abroad experiences. Specifically, Pasarelli and Kolb (2012) are explicit in suggesting international grounds give learners room to create wholesome and authentic transactions, relationships, and experiences. By extending the walls of classrooms, it allows learners the opportunity to see educators as supporters, family, citizens, counselors, tourists, coworkers, friends, staff, peers, traveling companions, and more (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Adopting and cultivating learning environments that model ELT are active experiences that foster intellectual fellowship. “Meaningful relationships abroad not only ease the adaptive challenge of living abroad, they also facilitate transformative learning and the development of cultural competence” (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). According to ELT, learning is much more than simply learning; It is the formation of skills to keep building upon to create a rich life which study away has a hand in, one international experience at a time.

Experiences have positive efforts associated with them such as career benefits like professional development or position advancements (Farrugia & Stranger, 2017; NAFSA, 2020; Römgens et al., 2020). Many studies have concluded an increasing amount of life-changing traits can be attributed to the impacts of such experiences like study away (Calley, 2021; Drum et al., 2022; Merklen & Wolfe, 2020; NAFSA, 2020; O’Lawrence, 2017).

In short, this theory suggests learning at high levels occurs not only through lectures or classroom direction but especially through the transaction of interacting with others. These

factors will contribute to what knowledge you take in and store in your brain (Kolb 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Not only that, but learning is purposeful and can immediately be consequential in study away experiences. Study away opportunities are rich and dense, and foster intentional chances for students to have experiential learning opportunities (Drum et al., 2022; Passareli & Kolb, 2012).

**Studies Using ELT.** Strange and Gibson (2017) conducted a study which used a combination of transformative and experiential learning theories as a lens to view the impact of study away experiences. The quantitative data collected from 216 students at a U.S. university show that almost all of the students achieved some level of transformative learning through participation in a study away program. Respondents indicated their level of agreeance with various descriptions related to experiential and transformative learning. The main objective of this study was to understand the level at which study away opportunities (at varied lengths) impact participants' perspective shift as defined by transformational learning theory (TLT) and ELT. In short, Stange and Gibson (2017) found the majority of students achieved a full shift in perspective. In the response to the open-ended questions, there was evidence the participants showed signs of achieving all three of the basic pre-cursors to transformative learning (Strange & Gibson, 2017). These pre-cursors are the physicality of an event (the occurrence of a study away experience), self-reflection, and discourse or action taken as a response to the experience. For example, if a student went on a study away experience to Kenya, internally reflected on the opportunity, and returned to their native country to eat new foods and implement practices learned from their Kenyan experience, it would be accepted that they partook in a transformational shift in perspective. Stange and Gibson (2017) make it clear that many study away experiences have lasting, and direct impacts on participants' lives.



A majority of respondents indicated that the most influential parts of their programs were the field trips, self-reflection, community interaction, and writing aspects. These components and the ability to have concrete experiences, reflective observations, and active experimentation are key tenets of Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Strange & Gibson, 2017).

Respondents in this study also commented on the meaningfulness of their programs and understood the lifelong impact an international experience would have on their future (Strange & Gibson, 2017).

In addition, Drum et al. (2022) conducted research by using the theoretical framework of ELT and a convergent mixed methods study design. Participants in this study were all students who previously took part in a Taiwan study abroad program. The data were analyzed years after the study abroad occurred. Data were collected to understand the long-term impact of study away programs on participants' career choices and professional development specifically within healthcare. Drum et al.'s (2022) results and discussion found the narratives from the qualitative data strongly support how the TWSA [study abroad] program influenced career choices in healthcare, enhanced problem-solving capacity, and generally, left a significant impact on participants' lives. Several participants mentioned their study opportunity inspired them to get internships, work abroad, or that the experience reinforced their decision to practice or study in their chosen healthcare field (Drum et al., 2022). Thus, the intersectionality of ELT and the global interdependence required from employees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, provide even more depth to this research study. Many theorists, like Alice Kolb, David Kolb, Angela Passarelli, and even John Dewey describe the linear relationship between fostering global competencies and study away opportunities which are theoretically driven by ELT. Drum et al.'s (2022) study is just one of many studies that show the correlations between study away, ELT, and employability.

However, there are many gaps in the research, despite the similarities and linear relationship of study abroad experiences and knowledge gains impacting employee favorability in workplaces.

## **The Problem**

**Identifying the Gaps.** There are many research gaps in the literature previously conducted and reviewed by researchers in preparation for this study. One of the biggest areas of study missing from the literature is the measurement of workplace skills and whether individuals solely gain these skills from their study away experiences. Similar to the global skills and workplace skills mentioned previously in this research, it is key many entities respect and understand the value of study away experiences and the skills students can gain through the opportunity to immerse in new cultures (Burgett, 2022; Calley, 2021; Drum et al., 2022; Farrugia & Sanger, 2017; NAFSA, 2020). At question is the specificity of where interpersonal, cultural, and communication-based competencies are derived from. Are these skills students exceedingly gain from study abroad experiences and then take to the workplace? Or, do students receive these skills throughout life and not through these experiences? Previous research by Dewey (1897), Kolb 1984), and Passarli and Kolb (2012) suggest experiences provide students and employees with such skills. Whether these are just gained from study away, remains unknown.

Further, while many employers and researchers may recognize that study away is beneficial to student development, employers may not consider it a high priority for new hires. Harder et al. (2015) found the large employers they interviewed "were not explicitly looking for global perspectives and experience" and that "cultural and global competencies were not vital

criteria to be successful in securing employment or maintaining employment.” Rather, those were skills employees should be willing to learn on the job over time (Harder et al., 2015). The literature instead puts the onus of explaining the value of a study abroad experience on the student rather than the employer recognizing the potential benefits to their organization (Harder et al., 2015; Vetter & Wingenbach, 2019). Largely missing from the literature is the perceived value of study abroad experiences by international companies with not only international locations but where international teamwork and travel is common. Will employers at these locations be more readily able to identify the value of study abroad experiences on employee skill development? As employees and an employer at large, does hiring individuals with study abroad experience provide favorability in the hiring process?

de Guzman et al. (2016) proclaimed there are negative consequences when cultural competence is not something workplaces strive for in their employees. Specifically, the result of employees with poor cultural awareness may be stereotyping, developing biases, and cases of microaggressions- consistent acts of bias displayed consciously or implicitly (de Guzman et al., 2016). “Stereotyping, bias, and incidences of microaggressions not only affect the victim [employee] but also contribute to a hostile environment for everyone so that people in the broader setting (e.g., workplace) might feel invalidated or even intimidated and abused” (de Guzman et al., 2016). Employees lacking active listening, empathy, and engagement for other coworkers may result in serious misunderstandings and incoherence among team members (de Guzman et al., 2016).

These are the gaps which the researchers in this study aim to address. With more than 150 million employees across the U.S. and even more around the world (ILO, 2008), researchers believe it will be key to understand study away and how it may contribute to employability.

## **Conclusion**

The researchers aim to build on previous research by understanding how the knowledge gained through experiential learning processes translates to tangible skills employees and employers may find helpful and desirable in the workplace. In short, study away experiences are important, foster skills, etc. but which skills are perceived to be unique to employers when hiring potential new employees? Will having cultural competencies aid prospective hires' favorability when applying for open job postings? Likewise, if students or employees are found to have global competence, will employers recognize this competence comes from study abroad experiences? These are the main objectives which researchers aim to address. In short, the purpose of this study is to build on previous research and recognize skills which students and employees may find impactful from experiencing such international study abroad experiences. Specifically, the following research questions (RQ) will be addressed:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in those who previously studied away valuing study away experience in potential new employees?

RQ2: Is there a difference in those who previously studied away views of skills developed through study away programs?

## METHODS

The research questions will seek to be understood and answered through means of a survey given to one non-governmental international organization. The main goals are to gauge the perceived skills employees have received from their past international study away experiences and how that relates to their current job. Even if employees have not personally experienced a study away experience or have never been outside of their country of origin, they will have the opportunity to offer their opinions on the anticipated skills individuals may receive from study abroad opportunities. Likewise, if global competency skills are perceived as favorable, will hiring decisions and employment benefits occur? Understanding how much weight individuals would place on hiring employees with study away experience will be a critical stance to determine during this study.

### **Research Design**

To best understand the impact and perceptions around study abroad experiences, researchers will use a mixed methods convergent design as a map for collecting research as seen in Figure 1. This method was chosen to be able to collect both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously while also ensuring anonymity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) justify this design in numerous ways. First, dual types of research allow investigators to collect numerical data which will confirm or deny the hypothesis but also have verbal responses to back up quantitative information. Mixed methods research “encourages the further ‘mining’ of the data beyond the results yielded by either quantitative or qualitative databases” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pg. 231). Additionally, this method is suitable for “studying the complex problems of today that require gathering numbers and hearing the voices of individuals” (pg. 231).

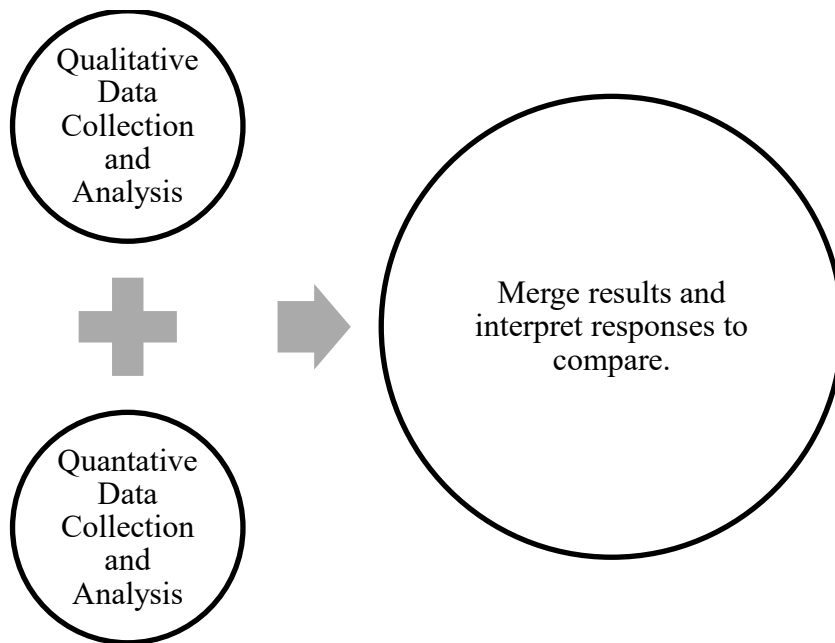


Figure 1. As adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018) this figure explains the collection method that will occur in this research study, (pg. 232). The figure above indicates qualitative and quantitative data will be collected simultaneously while merging results and responses to add depth to the research study.

The Creswell and Creswell (2018) model is globally respected model becoming more prevalent among researchers to dually interpret the results of both types of research. This research design allows for the depth of the research to be expanded with rich rigor while also reaching saturation at a faster pace (Tracey & Hinrichs, 2017). Drum et al. (2022) implemented this style of research design in their research and found “that merging the qualitative data with the quantitative data can help provide more comprehensive, detailed data on the long-term impact of the study abroad program.” With the context of the audience for data collection, researchers found this research design and methodology was the best fitting and most appropriate. Before collecting or implementing any methods, researchers obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This study was approved by the IRB committee on August

31, 2023, and received IRB#- FY2024-42 approval from the university (Appendix B). Following the completion of IRB approval, researchers implemented research design procedures. The following methodology section will explain the participants, procedures, variables, and methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis used for this research study.

**Recruitment.** Prior to collecting data, researchers targeted an audience that best fit the object of the research questions. Researchers chose one faith-based non-profit organization to focus research study efforts on. This organization is based in the United States and delivers resources domestically and internationally to more than 55 countries across the world from Greece, Puerto Rico, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Egypt, and more (Anonymous, 2023). Their impact can be seen in various efforts, but specifically in ways that allow countries and communities to overcome, develop, and grow through disasters and devastating events. The non-profit organization mobilizes resources from churches, agencies, businesses, other nonprofit organizations, and any other entities which desire to support their mission of feeding the world. More than 200 million people have been served through meals, agricultural services, women's empowerment, disaster relief, and other rural and community initiatives and events since the organization was founded in 1994 (Anonymous, 2023).

To provide such a worldwide impact, it takes a strong foundation of leadership officials and capable employees. The nonprofit organization employs more than 360 individuals in the U.S. and 183 employees around the world (Anonymous, 2023). Researchers chose to solely focus data collection on this one organization due to the magnitude and scope of the employees and individuals served through the organization. Researchers wanted to survey a company focused on international travel when employing the methodology. The mission of this organization aligns with the vision of this research and the typical intent of study away

opportunities which is to expand individuals' horizons through education, service, and international development. With a like-minded goal and vision, it was important to researchers to choose a quality audience versus a high yield of responses that may or may not have been as receptive to this study's initiatives. Hence the reasoning behind choosing one organization/workplace to work with during the parameters of this study.

**Procedures.** To collect responses, researchers employed a Qualtrics survey with both qualitative and quantitative questions to measure the perceived impact study away opportunities had on the skills gained and the weight study away carries when hiring new employees and students. The survey instrument, located in Appendix C, has 18 questions in total. Of these, 11 questions pertain to RQ1 and RQ2 with few questions on location and length of international experience, if completed. Seven questions were asked to gauge the demographics of participants. After the survey instrument was completed, and accepted by the review committee, it was tested for reliability and validity by employing a pilot survey.

Finally, the survey instrument was advertised and sent to the research audience utilizing the organization's weekly newsletter sent via email. The initial release of the survey occurred on February 15, 2024, and remained in the weekly newsletter for three weeks. Ultimately, the survey closed, and data collection ended on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. After the survey closed and responses were collected researchers began analyzing the data gained from survey responses. Specific survey questions can be seen in Appendix C and will be further discussed upon analysis.

**Participants.** The non-profit organization's newsletter audience at the time of survey exposure was approximately 543 individuals from U.S. teams and international teams in a variety of program countries (Anonymous, 2023). This anonymous organization conducts professional development sessions, leadership training, disaster services abroad, and other



international development career-based experiences for their employees. Thus, individuals having studied abroad during high school or college are not the only group of research participants this study is intended for. Moreover, employees who have studied abroad and/or worked abroad during their careers were the intended participant responses, but all experiences of employees were gauged and reported.

On average, it took participants approximately 34 minutes to complete the survey. Actual survey respondents included about 11% of the target audience or employees of the organization. Researchers received 63 responses, with 44 of these being completed survey responses. The demographic reported is based on the 44 complete responses. The average age of participants was 34-44 years old. Of the 44 participants, 58% identified as female ( $n = 25$ ) and 42% as male ( $n = 18$ ). A majority of the survey population was white, 86%, ( $n = 38$ ), with some identifying as black or African American ( $n = 1$ ), Asian ( $n = 1$ ), or other ( $n = 2$ ). Education levels ranged from some college but no degree to graduate or professional degrees, with the majority having received a bachelor's degree at 45% ( $n = 20$ ), the second most amount of respondents having a graduate or professional degree representing 39% ( $n = 17$ ), 11% of participants having some college but no degree ( $n = 5$ ), and 2% holding an associate or technical degree ( $n = 1$ ). Most participants, 91%, currently reside in the United States including Puerto Rico ( $n = 40$ ), though 2% in Asia ( $n = 1$ ), 2% in Africa ( $n = 1$ ), and 2% in Western Europe ( $n = 1$ ). Lastly, the average length of time worked for the organization was between 1-5 years. Responses ranged from 16% working less than a year ( $n = 7$ ), 50% between one year and five ( $n = 22$ ), 18% between five years and 10 ( $n = 8$ ), and 14% working for the organization more than 10 years ( $n = 6$ ). Refer to Table 3 for organized survey demographic information.

Table 3. Survey Respondents Demographic Information

Demographic	n
<b>Age</b>	
18-24 years old	2
25-34 years old	11
35-44 years old	12
44-54 years old	10
55-64 years old	6
65+ years old	2
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	25
Male	18
<b>Race</b>	
White	38
Black	1
Asian	1
Other	2
<b>Education Level</b>	
Some college, no degree	5
Associate or technical degree	1
Bachelor's degree	20
Graduate degree or above	17
<b>Residence</b>	
North America	40
Africa	1
Asia	1
Western Europe	1
<b>Length of Employment w/ Organization</b>	
Less than a year	7
Between 1 year and 5	22
Between 5 and 10 years	8
More than 10 years	6

Upon the closure of the survey, investigators began analyzing and reviewing the data collected. Next, researchers separated variables and data by method- quantitative and qualitative, respectively.

### **Quantitative Phase**

**Variables.** Researchers used the quantitative methods described here to quantify and interpret the information participants provided. When looking at RQ1 (Do those who previously studied away place a higher value on study away experience in new employees?) participants were asked, What weight would you place on hiring an employee with study abroad experience? It is proven that study abroad provides invaluable skills (Drum et al., 2022). This question aims to understand if this will impact hiring decisions.

To answer the second RQ, Is there a difference in those who previously studied away views of skills developed through study away programs, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with statements about skills study away participants gain from international experiences. Responses were ranked on a Likert scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree.’ Skills were modeled after skills mentioned in the literature, specifically the cultural superpowers suggested by a local university (Education Abroad, 2022). For example, this question stated ‘Those participating in study away or similar career-based global experiences are likely to gain \_\_\_ than those who do not participate in a study away program. Statements filling in the blank were ‘Globalized. Awareness of global context and world endeavors,’ ‘Curiosity. Yearning to learn more of what you do not know,’ and ‘Teamwork. Working with others no matter the differences to achieve similar goals and objectives.’ Researchers chose to ask these questions as a means to develop and understand what employees' experiences said about their feelings toward skills developed from study abroad based on their own study away experience. A complete list of variables and their descriptions can be found in Appendix D.

**Analysis.** To analyze the quantitative portion of data to answer the RQ’s various methods of analysis were used through SPSS statistical software. First, descriptive statistics were run to understand participants, their differences, and more. Descriptive statistics allow researchers to be

sure data is sound and does not violate the assumptions of anticipated statistical techniques, quantify the characteristics of participants, and address researchers' particular research questions (Pallant, 2020). Descriptive statistics showed that 65% of participants completed a study away program while in college ( $n = 36$ ). While 46% of respondents said they had participated in an international experience with the organization/their employer ( $n = 23$ ). Further, when asked ‘what weight would you place on hiring an employee with study away experience,’ 98% had a preference in some capacity ( $n = 43$ ). Using ordinal data taken specifically from Likert scale questions, as the dependent variable, researchers were able to compare two or more independent variables to explain the relationship between variables. With such a majority indicating a hiring preference, there was a lack of variance which forced researchers to analyze the data in a manner different than expected. Instead of a logit regression, researchers employed an ordinal regression. This was done using the equation:

$$Z_i = \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X} + v_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_{i1} + \beta_2x_{i2} + \dots + \beta_kx_{ik} + v_i, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

Here the dependent variable was the question ‘What weight would you place on hiring an employee with study away experience’ measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Independent variables included in the model were international work experience, age, gender, education, study away experience, and combined skills gained from study away. In the equation above,  $x_{ij}$  denotes the  $j^{\text{th}}$  attribute of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  respondent,  $\boldsymbol{\beta} = (\beta_0, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_k)$  is the parameter vector to be estimated, and  $v$  is the error disturbance term. Participants’ weight placed on hiring an employee with study abroad experience is modeled in terms of the net benefit ( $Z_i$ ) as follows. Participant  $i$  will *not prefer* hiring individuals with study away experience if  $Z_i$  is lower than some threshold negative value (i.e.,  $Z_i \leq -\mu_1$ ), *prefer slightly* if  $Z_i$  is negative but greater than  $-\mu_1$ , *prefer a moderate amount* if  $Z_i$  is positive but lower than some threshold positive value (i.e.,  $0 \leq Z_i \leq \mu_2$ ),

*prefer a lot* if  $Z_i$  is positive but lower than some threshold positive value (i.e.,  $0 \leq Z_i \leq \mu_2$ ), and *prefer a great deal* that employees be hired having previous study away experience if  $Z_i$  is greater than  $\mu_2$ . Formally, participant  $i$ 's attitude towards study away (denoted by  $Y_i$  where  $Y = 1$  implies *would not prefer*,  $Y = 2$  implies *prefer slightly*,  $Y = 3$  implies *prefer a moderate amount*,  $Y = 4$  implies *prefer a lot*, and  $Y = 5$  implies *prefer a great deal*) can be expressed in probability terms as follows:

$$P(Y_i = 1) = P[Z_i \leq -\mu_1],$$

$$P(Y_i = 2) = P[-\mu_1 < Z_i \leq 0],$$

$$P(Y_i = 3) = P[0 < Z_i \leq \mu_2],$$

$$P(Y_i = 4) = P[0 < Z_i \leq \mu_3], \text{ and}$$

$$P(Y_i = 5) = P[Z_i > \mu_4].$$

Under this assumption that the error term in the equation follows the standard normal distribution, the above model shows a complete ordinal regression model. In this setting the probabilities that  $Y_i = 1, 2, 3, 4,$  and  $5$  are given by:

$$P(Y_i = 1) = \Phi(-\mu_1 - \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i),$$

$$P(Y_i = 2) = \Phi(-\boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i) - \Phi(-\mu_1 - \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i),$$

$$P(Y_i = 3) = \Phi(\mu_2 - \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i) - \Phi(-\boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i),$$

$$P(Y_i = 4) = \Phi(\mu_3 - \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i) - \Phi(-\boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i), \text{ and}$$

$$P(Y_i = 5) = 1 - \Phi(\mu_4 - \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{X}_i)$$

In this model  $\Phi$  is the cumulative function of the standard normal distribution. The  $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ -vector and the  $\mu$ 's can be jointly estimated using the maximum likelihood (ML) procedure which yields consistent and asymptotically efficient estimators. The marginal effects of the independent variables can be estimated using the estimated coefficients of the model.

Further, RQ2 (Do those who previously studied away have a more favorable view of skills developed through study away?) was analyzed through means of factor analysis using the equation,  $X = \mu + \Lambda f + e$  on Q7. Factor analysis is a unique type of data analysis that reduces the variables into similar clusters of data (Pallant, 2020). This took variables like “adaptability” or “curiosity” from the survey and grouped them into similar dimensions to gauge similarities, differences, and the significance between factors. There were 14 variables used to create such data clusters or themes.

With the creation of a scale variable, an independent-sample t-test was employed to analyze data in comparison to the cultural skills group variable. This type of t-test is commonly used to compare the means of two groups of participants (Pallant, 2020). Thus, researchers were able to compare the means of the independent variable (e.g. respondents who had studied away in college versus those who had not) in relation to the dependent variable (e.g. the skills scale variable, SuperPower). This was completed using the equation:  $T = (X - \mu) / S / \sqrt{n}$ . Results from this method of analysis, along with the other means of data analysis will be discussed in the results section of this thesis.

Next, researchers moved to sift through the qualitative data for further connections in relation to the research questions.

## **Qualitative Phase**

**Variables.** The qualitative portion of this research were specifically designed to provide enhanced depth to the quantitative outcomes of RQ1 and RQ2. Within the survey instrument, participants were asked What if any impacts did your study away experience have on the skills needed for your career at Anonymous? Do you believe that study abroad experiences help

prepare students for careers at Anonymous? Please explain. Do you believe study abroad experiences provide necessary skills for working at Anonymous? Please explain. and Do you believe study abroad experiences are necessary to thrive at Anonymous? Please explain. Researchers used these survey questions to qualitatively answer and support the research questions. These survey questions were asked to gauge the demand and weight employees place on study away, especially if they have previously studied away or completed a similar experience within the organization. It should be noted these questions were not required, so the number of responses may differ from the number of quantitative responses. The written responses from the four qualitative survey questions and answers from a 'final thoughts' section were combined and analyzed for themes.

**Analysis.** Qualitative means such as coding and thematic analysis were used to highlight and relate individual written responses to survey questions. Thematic analysis is a concept that allows researchers to mine through responses and data to highlight the major themes of what respondents communicate (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tracey, 2013). After combining all the responses, the researchers' first step was to independently open-code each interview transcript line-by-line. Line-by-line analysis allows for the data to be observed thoroughly by reviewing every word within the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tracey, 2013). Upon reviewing the open-coded responses, researchers came together to create a codebook. The creation of a codebook ensures reliability between both researchers and the qualitative data (Tracey, 2013). Focused coding was then used to identify participants' thoughts and perspectives about study away experiences that correlated to each code. This was used to further explain, mine, and attempt to reach saturation in the data. Saturation can be defined as reaching the point of sufficiency with the contention that no new data can be found, themes and categories have

emerged and developed well, and the data has a meaningful relationship to the research questions asked (Tracey, 2013).

Additional steps were taken to ensure the data was subject to quality qualitative data and themes. This was achieved through Tracey and Hinrichs's (2017) eight “big tent” suggested criteria for qualitative quality. There were several strategies used to establish credibility in the findings from this research. These criteria include but are not limited to, worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Tracey & Hinrichs, 2017). These criteria establish the fact that the data is well thought through, themes have emerged, and the results are descriptive and representative of a solid job well done (Tracey & Hinrichs, 2017). As researchers followed these steps in collecting data, similar patterns, and codes combined to develop specific themes from qualitative responses to enhance the understanding of the research questions. These will be discussed in the results portion of this research paper

In short, researchers in this study used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to better understand and interpret the data from the survey instrument. Using quantitative methods like ordinal regression, factor analysis, and descriptive statistics researchers were able to analyze data to reach a rich rigor in study results. Saturation and rigor are also desired for the qualitative portion of this research. To achieve such results, researchers used thematic analysis to open and focus code in hopes of mining for themes and similarities among the responses from the survey instrument. Though these methodologies have been followed with the utmost specificity, limitations, and biases may still coexist. Design controls have been implemented to minimize these and create assumptions that have enabled researchers to continue creating informed research decisions.



**Limitations.** It should be noted that researchers in this study may have a bias toward the topic and aim to identify such bias when presenting this research to the academic community. Bias may be present throughout the methodology, findings, and discussion as each of the researchers in this study has studied away or had some other form of international experience. These include hosting and attending faculty-directed collegiate education abroad opportunities, receiving foreign degrees, and living and residing in foreign countries. Each party involved in this research has experienced some form of cultural awareness which may create potential bias. Further limitations may be from the use of a single organization to collect data. By focusing and gathering information from only one non-profit organization, it narrows and naturally limits the generalizability the study is able to have. While interpreting the results and various significances of this study, it will be key to keep in mind that many of the individuals employed by this non-profit are similar, and like-minded, and may not have the quantity of variety a study with many individuals from several organizations or companies may have. Likewise, the nature of the non-profit is service-oriented and faith-based. As mentioned previously, researchers specifically chose to work with a sole organization because of the positive consequences and specificity this organization offered in terms of the research conducted in this study.

Moreover, as to the limitations of the study, it is important to mention the specifics of the survey distribution which may have limited a diverse group of respondents. The survey titled, 'Tracing Global Experiences to Employer Favorability' could have been eye-catching to only individuals with travel experience. Researchers indicated they were collecting responses from all individuals to gauge more variety in opinions, but with the mention of global experiences and definition of study away immediately upon entering the survey, respondents could have been intimidated. Thus, limited variance in the responses could have been due to this limitation.

**Design Controls.** Despite the limitations that occurred throughout the study, researchers have made attempts to influence and guide the design of the study to limit bias as much as possible. This was primarily conducted through means of a pilot survey employed before collecting any official data. The pilot survey was sent to employees of an international-focused office at the university level. The pilot survey received 10 responses where face validity, cohesion, and reliability were tested. To measure reliability, researchers used Cronbach's Alpha, a test used commonly throughout the social sciences to understand how well-made, credible, and reliable the survey instrument might be (Robinson, 2023). The survey instrument independently created by researchers for this study achieved a Cronbach's Alpha at  $\alpha = .981$ , a more than acceptable and respected score on this scale (Robinson, 2023). Whereas 1.0 would be the highest percentile, it is notable to have excellent reliability in this study.

Further, the researchers ensured sound data would be collected through working with the Anonymous organization. This organization has a leadership hierarchy, like many, and researchers followed the appropriate chain of command to advertise and post the research survey in the organization newsletter. The research proposal, consent letter, and survey were sent to the education department, through the research approval board, and forwarded to the human resources vice president to publish in the newsletter. Even before publishing this research thesis, the organization reviewed and consented to confirm the accuracy and legitimacy of the data collected and information shared.

Adding to consistency, researchers were sure to keep the foundation of the research the same through each component of data collection. The major lens used throughout this study was based on experiential learning theory. ELT is the foundation of this study from the literature review to the discussion, and even in the creation of the survey instrument, variables, and more.

ELT influenced researchers in the methodology chosen to answer RQ's and lead the study. The experience-based nature of this research can be seen in survey questions asking if participants have completed study away experiences through college or in the workplace. These questions translated to variables like "education study away" and "work experience away." Likewise, the relationship between study away and the natural experiential learning opportunity that it is, is shown in each aspect of this research study.

Finally, researchers who are a part of this study took specific procedures to ensure the appropriate terms and conditions were followed and represented honestly throughout this study. By working independently as researchers when coding and analyzing data, following statistical data steps, and honestly interpreting data to truthfully represent respondents, researchers take responsibility and pride in the information shared. Being able to accurately and truthfully share the findings is the ultimate goal for researchers, the university research committee, and the organization(s) who have been vital in contributing data to this research cause.

## RESULTS

After analyzing the data gathered from survey participants, researchers found intriguing and interesting quantitative and qualitative results pertaining to the impact of study away opportunities.

### RQ1 Quantitative

To answer RQ1 (Is there a significant difference in those who previously studied away valuing study away experience in potential new employees?), an ordinal regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of those having previously studied away and how much they value study away experience in new hires. The model contained six independent variables (participation in employer-based international experiences, age, gender, education level, combined skills scale variable, and participation in an educational study away). The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant,  $(6, N = 43) = 94.29, p = .011$ . The predictor variable, participation in employer-based international experiences, in the ordinal regression analysis was found to contribute to the model. The ordered log-odds = 1.51,  $SE = .43, Wald = 12.19, p < .001$ . The estimated odds ratio favored a positive relationship ( $Estimate = 2.75, 95\% CI (0.66, 2.35)$ ) for persons indicating their participation in employer-based international experiences. The odds ratio of 4.511 for participants in employer-based international experiences was greater than 1 indicating that participating in an international career experience the odds were 4.511 times higher that respondents would report a preference for new hires having experience to study away. Other variables or predictors were not significant. This is reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Ordinal Regression Analysis

Parameter		B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		Hypothesis Test			Exp(B)
				Lower	Upper	Wald Chi-Square	df	Sig.	
Threshold	Would not prefer = 1	0.990	1.7560	-2.452	4.431	0.318	1	0.573	2.690
	Prefer Slightly = 2	1.583	1.7379	-1.823	4.990	0.830	1	0.362	4.871
	Prefer a moderate amount = 3	2.857	1.7720	-0.616	6.330	2.600	1	0.107	17.415
	Prefer a lot =4	3.640	1.7884	0.135	7.145	4.143	1	0.042	38.103
Collegiate Study Away Participation		-0.129	0.3984	-0.909	0.652	0.104	1	0.747	0.879
Employer-Based International Experience		1.506	0.4315	0.661	2.352	12.192	1	<.001	4.511
Age		-0.097	0.1642	-0.419	0.225	0.349	1	0.555	0.908
Gender		0.231	0.4014	-0.556	1.017	0.330	1	0.566	1.259
Race		-0.041	0.1472	-0.330	0.247	0.079	1	0.779	0.959
Education Level		0.319	0.2063	-0.086	0.723	2.386	1	0.122	1.375
SuperPower		-0.009	0.0151	-0.038	0.021	0.348	1	0.555	0.991

## RQ2 Quantitative

For RQ2 (Is there a difference in those who previously studied away views of skills developed through study away programs?), the 14 questions gauging skills attained through study away participation were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Prior to performing PCA the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients around .9 or above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .92, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Pallant, 2020), and Barlett’s (1954) Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance,

supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. Principal components analysis revealed the presence of one component with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 80% of the variance. These variables were skills: adaptability, empathy, communication, globalized, knowledge, independence, teamwork, perseverance, self-awareness, courage, and confidence. Excluded from the component were optimism, courage, and curiosity. The component variables extracted using the factor analysis were used to create a new scale variable, SuperPower, to analyze along with other variables in the study.

Thus, as a means to use the new scale variable, SuperPower, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the combined preference of study away skills (SuperPower) for those who had participated in study away and those having never participated in study away. The output generated from this procedure is presented below in Table 5.

Table 5. T-test Analysis

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	7.481	.009	-1.584	42.00	.060	.121	-6.74	4.2	-15.32	1.84
Equal variances not assumed			-2.295	38.88	.014	.027	-6.74	2.93	-12.67	-.79

There was a significant difference in scores for those who had completed a study away program ( $M = 43.03$ ,  $SD = 14.99$ ) and those who had not completed a study away program ( $M = 49.77$ ,  $SD = 4.21$ ;  $t(42) = -1.58$ ,  $p = .027$ , two-sided). The magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference =  $-6.74$ , 95% CI [ $-15.32$ ,  $1.85$ ]) was small (eta squared =  $.024$ ).

### **RQ1 & RQ2 Qualitative**

Open coding and focused coding were employed to understand the written responses of survey participants to justify RQ1 and RQ2. Researchers highlighted five major themes within the data they felt represented responses from participants best. These open-ended answers proved to be detailed, raw, telling and gave a more visual picture of the quantitative data collected.

These five codes were: Prepared for Work, Ready to Travel, Laying the Foundation, Communication, and Ready for Missions. The focused codes or major themes researchers found are described and defined further in Table 6. Each theme found in the qualitative data pertains to study away and international experience in a unique way.

**Prepared for Work.** This code specifies the workplace relevance study away and international experiences give employees. Researchers defined this code with the intention that international experiences give participants chances to develop career-ready skills. Written responses matching this code included soft skills and hard skills that gave “I think my international experience makes me a more attractive professional candidate and is likely the reason I got a job [here];” “Having international experience equips one with soft skills and understanding needed to work effectively;” and “It made me adaptable, strategic, good at solving-problems, adventurous, and gave me a lot of cultural awareness.” Another participant said

My extensive international travel has most certainly helped me get where I am today. I don't have a traditional formal education (I was a year short of my degree), yet, my life experience filled a lot of the areas beyond what (a degree) would have offered my employer.

Table 6. Code Book and Data Themes

Code	Definition	Example
Prepared for Work	International experiences give travelers chances to develop career-ready skills.	"I think my international experience makes me a more attractive professional candidate and is likely the reason I got a job."
Ready to Travel	Study away and similar experiences give participants travel-related skills.	"Experience to travel internationally with ease navigating airports and various countries."
Laying the Foundation	Educational travel gives students opportunities to deepen their emotional intelligence and contribute to a well-rounded, holistic individual.	"Studying abroad, whether as a child or as an adult will only expand your worldview. Regardless of how positive or negative your experience abroad is, you have grown leaps and bounds."
Communication	International experiences force explorers and students to learn the residential language, communicate with others in some form, and build relationships with those outside of their native culture.	"Learning Spanish allows me to take on simple responsibilities at work that otherwise would have to be hired out to a freelancer or a member on another team. I also can hold basic conversations with beneficiaries we meet while traveling. Story gathering is a large part of my job, and my ability to speak in a person's first language helps establish trust and a sense of understanding that I wouldn't have had otherwise."
Ready for Missions	Study away provides employees with the context needed to understand the surveyed organization, develop a deeper passion for service and international development, and cultivate the general perspective of a global citizen.	"I think cross-cultural experiences are the foundation that we build all of our work on. If we do not first seek to understand the cultures in which we work, we are ultimately failing in the work we do by approaching real challenges with our Western mentality that can ultimately bring more harm to the people we serve. Having cross-cultural experiences allows us to come in with humility learning that those in which we work have many assets to help address the challenges which they face."



These are just a few of the specific traits respondents used to describe the tangible skills participants believe study away and similar experiences provide individuals with as described by the code Prepared for Work.

**Ready to Travel.** Respondents also mentioned skills development related to the physicality of traveling. Here it was evident that participants recognized the skill travel requires and creates with experience. Under this variable, researchers were able to define the navigation and international skills going abroad gives travelers: “Experience to travel internationally with ease navigating airports and various countries.” Participants also mentioned patriotism and humility gained from their travels abroad. Others said they received a “broader awareness about different countries and cultures, [and] experience in new and sometimes uncomfortable situations regarding food and customs.” In short, study away and similar experiences give participants travel-related skills, represented by the theme Ready to Travel.

**Laying the Foundation.** On top of skills related to traveling and workplace preparation, participants confirmed how developmental study away programs were for creating well-rounded and emotionally intelligent citizens. Researchers defined this code with the intention that educational travel gives students opportunities to deepen their emotional intelligence and contribute to a well-rounded, holistic individual. Respondents said “I do believe it helps develop oneself into a more rounded person. There are some things a person cannot understand until they experienced them;” “Those who study and live abroad have a global perspective and "bigger picture" filter;” “There are MANY benefits to study abroad that make a very well-rounded person;” “The main things I learned from my time abroad were independence, confidence, teamwork, compassion, appreciation for different cultures, as well as a deeper appreciation for my own country;” and “I have not met anyone who did not have a life-changing experience

while studying abroad/going on a missions trip, but I think the passion they ignite can fade over time so a trip every few years can be valuable.” Many participants indicated study away opportunities were truly life-changing and shaped much of their life after experiencing life abroad.

Working/studying abroad changes the way you see the world. There is a large difference between taking trips abroad, and living in a new culture. I lived in Turkey as a single female at 18. The courage, determination, and resiliency I gained through that experience is something I'm not sure I would have gained otherwise.

Under this code, Laying the Foundation, researchers sought to highlight the individualistic qualities and characteristics of well-rounded scholars who study away and experience cultures internationally.

**Communication.** Another working concept that researchers noticed as a theme throughout the data was the specific communicative notions respondents frequently mentioned. Researchers defined this code in that international experiences force explorers and students to learn the residential language, communicate with others in some form, and build relationships with those outside of their native culture. Communication can be a tool for the workplace and international success, but researchers found this to be such a descriptive theme from participants that it was best to be mentioned within its own context due to the linguistic aspect of travel.

Learning Spanish allows me to take on simple responsibilities at work that otherwise would have to be hired out to a freelancer or a member on another team. I also can hold basic conversations with beneficiaries we meet while traveling. Story gathering is a large part of my job, and my ability to speak in a person's first language helps establish trust and a sense of understanding that I wouldn't have had otherwise.

Further, respondents said study away participants “May learn some basic language skills that may assist depending on job assignments. If their job keeps them stateside then much less so – I would imagine it assists with developing empathy and compassion for the people we serve in other countries;” “Being put in someone else’s shoes and empathizing with those in poverty would help to align someone with the heart of [...]and what we stand for;” “If you are able to acquire language while in the host country, this along with increased empathy, compassion, and an awareness of different cultures are potential resulting skills of living abroad;” and “Studying abroad and learning another language, or at least getting exposure to languages can be crucial.” Other phrases included in this fourth code, Communication, were based on gaining social awareness, having better understanding and listening skills, building relationships, and multi-language or bilingual skills.

**Ready for Missions.** Many of the previous codes indicate specific skills which have been useful and beneficial for employees of the organization respondents were gathered through. The final code, Ready for Missions, describes the background and intel individuals require when working with an international non-profit to the scale of the one mentioned throughout the study. Ready for Missions as defined by researchers is a code that indicates how study away and other international opportunities provide employees with the context needed to understand the surveyed organization, create a deeper passion for service and international development, and cultivate the general perspective of a global citizen.

I think cross-cultural experiences are the foundation that we build all of our work on. If we do not first seek to understand the cultures in which we work, we are ultimately failing in the work we do by approaching real challenges with our Western mentality that can ultimately bring more harm to the people we serve. Having cross-cultural experiences allows us to come in with humility learning

that those in which we work have many assets to help address the challenges in which they face.

Ready for Missions as a theme for this organization specifically means hiring individuals with the passion, desire, drive, and faithfulness to contribute to their mission, vision, and values every day. Many individuals indicated that it would be impossible to be a leading international organization and not have well-cultured and traveled employees. Quotes throughout this theme included “I honestly don’t think I would hire anyone that doesn’t have cross-cultural experience. It is vital to the work ’hat we do!” “Gaining global perspective is so valued, and often not done enough. I wish I would have done a study away semester during school;” “Being put in someone else’s shoes and empathizing with those in poverty would help to align someone with the heart of [...] and what we stand for;” and “Having experience in different places that forces you to expand your mind outside of life in America can make or break global relations.” Further, respondents highlight the criticalness of their study away or cultural experience related to earning and advancing in their jobs.

If it were not for my cross-cultural experiences I would not have gotten my job at [...]. As well, it has been my cross-cultural experiences that have allowed me to advance positions here... I believe everyone should have cross-cultural experience in the work that we do. I am a HUGE proponent of cross-cultural experiences to better understand the big world we live in.

Ready for missions as a theme is a huge concept concerning the data set within this research study.

In general, these five codes contribute to the development of tangible and physical skills as a result of international experiences. Further, researchers were able to match these skills with the context and preparedness it takes to work in such a developmental industry for citizens across

the globe. Specific implications related to this code, and others, will be discussed in much more detail in the following section.

## DISCUSSION

As obtained through the results, there are many implications and outcomes relevant to this research study and industries across the globe. This section will continue to interpret the findings of the survey and results and mention the specific contributions this study makes for academia and other organizations to consider.

### Key Findings & Interpretations

**Employee Preference.** After performing an ordinal regression on the data set used to answer RQ1, researchers found significant results and interpreted them in several manners. First, the majority of survey respondents preferred study away experience in some capacity when hiring new employees. On a scale of 'would not prefer' to 'prefer a great deal' the respondents all selected some kind of preference for study away experience. Thus, it can be generalized there is a strong agreement among the surveyed group that studying abroad can be an important resume builder and experience for new hires to have. This outcome is similar to the research found as a result of data collected through educational institutions (Bunch et al., 2018; Calley, 2021; Drum et al., 2022; Harder et al., 2015). Specifically, Harder et al. (2015) suggested employers would give prospective hires more attention if they had some from of cultural, international, or study away experience. The interpretation of Harder et al. (2015) reinforces the findings of this study.

Further, researchers found employees who participated in a workplace international experience were significantly more likely to place higher importance on preferring to hire someone with study away experience. In other words, those who completed a workplace international experience understand firsthand how beneficial cultural opportunities are, and

placed a high value on hiring employees with this global perspective. Moreover, participants suggested global competence was something employees at this organization would need to learn eventually.

Having to learn different global nuances during work can be challenging. Often, when working internationally, we are dealing with death, disaster, malnourishment, and much more. That is a lot to take in, cope through, and remain level-headed. If you add needing to learn culture, religion, and more to the middle of it, it can often be more than most can bear. Some people thrive with learning on the go, but most do not, so it will make it much more challenging to thrive in this setting.

Outright, this quantitative outcome shows that workplace professionals, especially those who have previously studied away or completed a similar program through their employer, do in fact value study away experience in new employees.

**Interpreting Grey.** In written responses, there was more variance in the opinions and weight the surveyed group placed on hiring preferences towards study away. Many participants noted how their study away or cultural experiences through the workplace had impacted them. Responses detailed the skills gained from study away like communication, travel, workplace readiness, and other cultural and foundational skills simultaneously seen as assets in the context of working with this organization. One respondent effectively summarized these ideas:

I think global influence is a wonderful skill for students to have. When I hire students, especially those who are just graduating, a major boost to their resumé is their involvement. It's often times hard to place college graduates due to the fact that they've never worked...Traveling abroad ... is an amazing experience to have that affords students the opportunity to grow in global thinking. It helps student[s] remove layers of ignorance to the world outside the US, and starts them down a path of understanding that we are not the only people who exist.

This particular respondent suggests having experiences that result in ‘global thinking’ allows students to be competitive in workplace settings. They suggest new hires must walk down the path of cultural exploration to truly gain the skills that make students and employees marketable in today’s competitive job market.

Other respondents did not feel as strongly about the necessity or urgency of study away experience in new hires. In fact, a good number of respondents replied ‘not exactly’ when asked if study abroad experiences were necessary to thrive in this organization’s workplace. These survey participants left room for the grey area and mentioned this topic simply was not black and white for them. Many written responses sounded like “I wouldn't use the word necessary, but I think my experiences have made me personally a better fit for ... than I would have been had I not had the [study away] experiences.” This notion of ‘not necessarily’ or ‘not exactly’ combined with ‘there’s some grey area’ prompted researchers to develop a qualitative code, Ready for Missions, to interpret this expression from participants. This theme suggests study away experiences gives individuals certain skills that then make them culturally competent or have a global perspective or working context for a global non-profit. Likewise, this was something researchers planned to specifically gauge through the survey and led to a deeper conversation about skill development acquired from international opportunities. This prompts RQ2 interpretations and findings.

**Skill Development.** Upon completion of a factor analysis, researchers were able to confirm specific skills which survey participants believe to be gained from study away experience or a similar global experience completed for work. The survey instrument listed 14 skills for participants to place an opinion on. Of these 14, 11 of them were grouped similarly, suggesting skills can be significantly developed through global experiences in coordination with



employers. Research the survey instrument was based on before distribution, highlighted 10 ‘cultural superpowers,’ as mentioned previously. These skills prove to be very similar comparatively and to other research which described skills gained from study away and skills desired to be effective in the workplace (Education Abroad, 2022; Farrugia & Stranger, 2017; NAFSA, 2020; Römgens et al., 2020). Table 7 shows the comparison of the skills from previous studies and the 11 skills employers significantly valued when hiring new employees.

Table 7. Comparative Skills Gained

Cultural SuperPowers from Study Away	Perceived Employable Skills
Adaptability, Empathy, Communication, Perseverance, Optimism, Self-Awareness, Courage, Confidence, Sense of Humor (Education Abroad, 2022).	Adaptability, Empathy, Communication, Globalized, Knowledge, Independence, Teamwork, Perseverance, Self-awareness, Courage, and Confidence

Thus researchers can generalize that participation in a study away opportunity or workplace global experience may result in the development or proficiency of these skills. Countless research studies claim the importance of study away at the educational level, however, being able to contribute to the conversation by adding skill development relevance to the workplace expands the opportunity for cultural competence to meet employees and companies across the globe.

Qualitatively, researchers found this skill development was confirmed by employees who had previously participated in a study away opportunity. Researchers heard from employees who believed their skills in communication and language, traveling, workplace readiness, and emotional intelligence were developed as a result of their away opportunity. These were all themes researchers coded upon interpreting the qualitative data for the research study. Participants specified skill gains in being more adaptable, compassionate, social, emotional, self-

aware, and more in tune individually. Responses looked like “The plethora of things I have learned from each culture coupled with the plethora of experiences I have had in each culture, inform everything I do. Absolutely everything.” Participants of study away continued to mention how valuable global experiences have been to their lives in general, but also to learning and knowledge gains.

**Learning without Borders.** One of the biggest factors enabling participants of global experiences to have such developmental opportunities is the international nature of what abroad experiences offer. Displacing yourself from the culture you have been familiar with and moving to a culture you might know nothing about can make or break an individual's identity. Fortunately, past literature suggests individuals soar to new heights, literally and figuratively, through cultural exposure (Calley, 2021; Harder et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2009; Strange & Gibson, 2017). The unique opportunity to learn, oftentimes, outside of the classroom is the physicality of what makes global experiences so key for creating cultural competencies that employees return to their country of residence with and share with others. Similarly, this is what Kolb (1984) and Dewey (1897) have suggested is so key for deep, meaningful learning to occur. Dewey (1897) proclaimed “I believe ..., that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing.” Researchers for hundreds of years have known that experiences give learners a developmental opportunity outside of the commonality and mundane nature that knowledge can be in a classroom setting. Passaerli and Kolb (2012) explored the relationship between experiential learning theory and study away and found many similarities in the base nature of these opportunities. These researchers also confirmed education in an American context has become a crisis focused too much on learning outcomes, and testing, and less centered on the

student. Thus, the implementation of study away opportunities in educational settings proves to be influential. With the research done in this study, it can be confirmed too that study away is influential in the workplace driving experiential learning and skill development. In both of these notions, survey respondents said “Since college degrees are a dime a dozen at this point, you must have experiences outside the classroom. It's a beautiful experience to leave the U.S. and go to another place to learn.” Experiential learning and study away have a substantial relationship which only proved to be stronger and momentous in the context of career development for employees who participated in this research study.

**Idealization.** As for those who have not participated in study away experiences or career-based international opportunities, there were still significant results found in the data set. Completion of an independent samples t-test showed that individuals having never participated in study away or global experiences had higher means when it came to valuing the skills related to cultural competence in the context of hiring new employees. Researchers were surprised to see this result as those who did study away measured rather neutral as to their preference in hiring persons with global exposure. Given the qualitative responses, researchers found survey participants with little to no international experience had an idealistic view of study away. Many individuals prompted they wished they had participated in a global opportunity like study away because they believe it has so many preparational benefits, especially for those wanting to work at a global non-profit. Quantitatively and qualitatively responses generalized similar outcomes. “Gaining global perspective is so valued, and often not done enough. I wish I would have done a study away semester during school. The positives are life-changing.” This idealization for study away translated to the increased value placed on the desire to hire employees with an experience that other team members might not have achieved.

Former participants of study away or not, researchers found study away opportunities have profound results on any employed member of society. For the global workplace, the goal is to continuously fill the holes of unknowing or inability with competencies and skills. Study away is one experience that covers many of these bases and overwhelmingly provides companies and organizations with marketable assets to their employees.

**Assets Acquired.** Typically speaking, assets might be money or things, but the idea of having knowledge can be powerful too. In the context of this research study knowledge and skills gained through study away experiences have proved to be beneficial for many individuals. In general, the wide range of skills participants gain from study away allows them to be incredibly appealing to the hiring eye on paper. Being able to travel, communicate, understand diversity and equity, and have the emotional intelligence to effectively work with teammates seems few and far between employees these days. However, this is not the case if employers look to study away experiences to increase skill development in their hiring pools. A survey participant said, “Having cross-cultural experiences allows us to come in with humility learning that those in which we work have many assets to help address the challenges which they face.” Further, already having these skills lets employees focus on the customers or audiences they serve. This contextual idea was made apparent from the responses researchers interpreted from both quantitative and qualitative data. The idea of having the specific context to work in a deeply international and culturally competent setting is the notion behind the theme Ready for Missions. It was evident to researchers that this entity requires employees be well-rounded, holistic, and honest representations of the organization. Being able to start a role with a full toolbox of skills allows for ease of working through projects and challenges the company faces. “I think that a study/work abroad experience will provide better context to what ... does and will

greatly enhance the employee experience. Knowing that you're part of a bigger picture and putting faces to "programs" gives meaning to the tasks of the job," said one respondent. Thus, knowledge and skills are powerful when it comes to hiring individuals in today's global workforce environment- with this, come specific implications for individuals and groups outside of this study.

## **Implications**

The general purpose of this research study expands to audiences worldwide. Understanding the implications of using international experience for educational and working purposes will be crucial to mitigating and purposefully curbing the effects of globalization and innovation. Ensuring employees have the necessary foundational skills and cultural competencies to interact effectively will be specifically important for organizations and educational entities.

**Students.** As mentioned previously, study away and international experiences have many implications not only for individuals but also for the entities providing the education. In secondary schools and universities, it will be key to continue promoting study abroad experience opportunities with the intention that students remain competitive for jobs and roles that require or could benefit from having cultural competencies. Likewise, if study away may not be feasible for educational operations, employing experiential learning theory-based classroom strategies could be one way of ensuring youth are confident, capable, and culturally aware to contribute to society upon graduation or entry to the working world of the globe.

**Employees.** In the workplace, the implication stands that worldwide economic profit and job market weigh on the shoulders of employees controlling and generating such income. This

topic spans assets of all kinds- monetary, knowledge, and experience and is truly relevant to every industry as 1/6 of employees today have some connection to international affairs or trade (ILO, 2008). Being able to function in a capacity where employees are capable of meeting the necessary requests of customers and those they serve is another crucial function to keep global efforts afloat.

### **Future Research**

After completing this research study, researchers were able to address specific gaps in previous academic research, yet academia prevails and there is still more room for continued research. Much of the results accomplished in this research were based on study away experiences and ideas conjured from educational-based experiences and then converted to understand what this looked like from an organization or workplace's standpoint. For researchers looking to specifically expand on this study, future research should include a broader sample of employees at various companies, businesses, etc. This study was narrow and targeted and serves as a case study for companies that explicitly value international competencies at first glance. Obviously, after further analysis, it was clear the organization studied places significant weight on study away experiences and international exposure due to their global action and response missions. One employee noted "I was just in an interview when a person was not given the job because they hadn't traveled aboard." Thus, expanding this audience to additional industries involved in international scenes could be incredibly opportunistic to further generalize the results of this study.

Other data expansion may come in the form of hiring committees. This survey pool was not distributed to human resources employees who might make hiring decisions versus general

employees in other departments. Understanding exactly what hiring committees from many different industries are looking for and valuing may provide many insights. It has the potential to further focus when teaching and training potential new hires but also students and youth.

Moreover, the future of the workplace lies within our youth and the skills they have. Employing strategies to collaborate with diverse entities or in problem-solving areas, in general, might be a goal the workforce wants to see more of in 21st-century youth. Putting this into action begins in classrooms with experience-based strategies and targeted knowledge-gaining opportunities (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). This stays relevant from age three through high school, college, and even ages beyond that. Experience-based learning is life-long and does not end with our youth.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study was to gauge the effect of study away experiences on employability and favorability in hiring employees, and the preferability in skills study away opportunities provide individuals. Whether a student, teacher, employer, or employee, global experiences provide learners with a competitive advantage in the workplace. Globalization demands employees engage in multicultural conversations and move their organizations to the next tier of competitiveness if they want to continue meeting the needs of society (Vetter & Wingenbach, 2019). Through each industrial sector; agriculture, business, education, communication, etc.; individuals must be proficient in global competence (Harder et al., 2015). Understanding how critical, or not, study away and experiential-based learning theories are to developing global competence may be a driving factor in how businesses, especially those involved in global relations, conduct their goals, objectives, and motivations.

Thus, no matter the age, industry, or hemisphere of the world, cultural competence has a seat in every room. For example, an agricultural survey in particular has a lot of potential since every person eats every single day. If agriculturists around the globe had study away experience or expanded cultural competencies would our food systems be more sustainable or globally driven? If lawmakers used study away experiences to gain increased skills in communication, education, empathy, cultural awareness, and exploration, would legal standards, rules, and regulations change or reflect the opinions of members of worldwide populations? If the competencies and skills gained by students and employees through study away could be achieved through more opportunities would there be increased understanding or empathy in the world? These are questions that can only begin to be asked at the surface level.

Through this research study context and foundational skills have succeeded in providing participants of international experiences with flexibility, adaptability, teamwork, confidence, perseverance, and more. “[Study away] taught me to be quick thinking when outside of my comfort zone, to accept people, to see what real need is and what being happy with what you have looks like,” one survey respondent expressed. How and what would these skills and feelings do to other industries? Study away experiences continue to bring continents closer together while physically being far apart. This topic of global employability will remain impactful for those continuing to represent the innovative, globalized world now, and in the future.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Definition of Key Terms

**Cultural Competence.** Cultural competence “is the ability of a person to effectively interact, work, and develop meaningful relationships with people of various cultural backgrounds” (de Guzman et al., 2016).

**Employability.** Employability is a concept that establishes how capable persons are to be employable, gain employment, or be compensated for their working efforts.

**Experiential Learning.** Experiential learning theory suggests learning at high levels occurs not only through lectures or classroom direction but also through the transaction of interacting with others (Dewey, 1897; Kolb 1984).

**Global Competence.** Global competence is known as the construction of sets of skills, attitudes, and values that foster cultural awareness (OECD, 2020).

**Globalization.** Globalization represents the result of trade and technology making the world more connected.

**Social Capital.** Social capital can be defined as the internal and external goodwill gains or assets we may have from our relationships, connections, and social networks (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Eggerman, 2023).

**Study Away.** Study away and similar terminology can be defined as programs students and adults participate in giving them an introduction or residence in some cases, to a country for some time as an educational effort to increase awareness of other cultures, languages, geographic settings, and people unlike those of our native familiarity and as opposed to a vacation.

## Appendix B. Human Subjects IRB Approval

Date: 10-26-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY2024-42

Title: Tracing Global Experiences to Career Success

Creation Date: 8-22-2023

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Christine Sudbrock

Review Board: MSU

Sponsor:

### Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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### Key Study Contacts

<b>Member</b> Christine Sudbrock	<b>Role</b> Principal Investigator	<b>Contact</b> csudbrock@missouristate.edu
<b>Member</b> Sarah McCord	<b>Role</b> Primary Contact	<b>Contact</b> mccord18@live.missouristate.edu

## **Appendix C. Qualtrics Survey Instrument Sent to Anonymous Organization**

### Tracing Global Experiences to Employer Favorability

#### Introduction

You have been asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the study and the procedures involved. The investigator will also explain the project to you in detail. If you have any questions about the study or your role in it, be sure to ask the investigator.

If you have more questions later, Dr. Christine Sudbrock or Sarah McCord, the persons mainly responsible for this study, will answer them for you.

You may contact the investigator(s) at:

Primary Investigator: Dr. Christine Sudbrock: CSudbrock@MissouriState.edu

Primary Study Contact: Sarah McCord: McCord18@live.missouristate.edu

Taking part in this study is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you may stop at any time. If you decide to stop, you do not have to give a reason and there will be no negative consequences for ending your participation. By taking and completing the survey you will have given your consent to be involved in the study.

#### Purpose of this Study

The reason for this study is to collect data to explore how global experiences, like study abroad opportunities, impact career readiness. This study aims to pinpoint various skills individuals receive from these abroad experiences and understand the weight placed on studying when hiring individuals.

#### Description of Procedures

If you agree to be part of this study you will be asked to complete a short, online survey. Participants' time commitment is estimated to be around 15 minutes. This process will

include the following: 1. Completion of a survey with both open and close ended (Likert scale) questions. a. The survey will include questions collecting demographic, educational travel experiences, and perceptions of international opportunities and their impact towards career readiness. i. Educational travel experiences, international exposures, study away opportunities, and global experiences are terms used synonymously throughout this study. These terms can be defined as programs students and adults participate in that allow them an introduction/residence to a country for a period of time as an educational effort to increase awareness of other cultures, languages, geographic settings, and people unlike those of our native familiarity. It should be noted that the opportunities discussed here are not vacations, but rather lengths of time where individuals are engaged in learning, awareness, and growth. These can range from a week to three months, three to six months, six months to a year, and greater than a year, less than three years, and five years or more for the categorization of this study. Following the submission of the survey, participants will have minimized involvement in the rest of the research process. Participants will have no known interactions with researchers unless they reach out without anonymity. This study will be performed through the use of online measures.

What are the risks?

There are no known risks to participants as a result of engaging in this study, however participants may find some questions to be hard to answer, reflective, or drawing upon previous experiences. Additionally, in order to minimize these risks no identifiable information will be collected.

What are the benefits?

You may not benefit directly from this study. However, the information from this study will contribute to the research in academia regarding the success and/or lack of impact international experiences like study away programs have on the employability and career readiness of those participating in such programs. Understanding what impacts the skills of those seeking employment will only allow us to best enhance and better prepare for the



readiness of those participating in such programs. Understanding what impacts the skills of those seeking employment will only allow us to best enhance and better prepare for the globalization of the workforce today.

How will my privacy be protected?

The results of this study are confidential and only the investigators will have access to the information which will be kept in a locked facility at the University. No personal identifying information will be collected, and only aggregate information will be shared with those outside of the research team, nor will your name or email address be collected through completion of this survey. All information gathered during this study will be destroyed three years after the study ends.

Consent to Participate

If you want to participate in this study, Tracing Global Experiences to Career Readiness, you will be asked to sign below: I have read and understand the information in this form. I have been encouraged to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns or complaints about this research, or you want to talk to someone other than the researcher, please contact MSU's Office of Research Administration at (417) 836-5972 or [IRB@missouristate.edu](mailto:IRB@missouristate.edu). Regular office hours are M-F 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., after hour messages will be returned the next business day.

By continuing to the survey, I agree voluntarily to participate in this study on.



Please note: Study away, and study abroad are use synonymously throughout this survey. When thinking about Study Abroad experiences, the main purpose is to spend time in another country focused on educational topics such as language learning, technical/subject based learning, cultural exposure, etc. of varying lengths. These are not to be confused with international vacations were the main purpose is leisure activities.

Prior to working at \_\_\_\_\_, did you participate in study abroad, a student exchange program, or other international educational experience(s)?

Yes

No

Have you participated in a \_\_\_\_\_ ; trip or worked outside of your country of residence while employed at \_\_\_\_\_

No

Yes

In what region of the world did this take place?

North America

Latin America/Caribbean/South America

Africa

Asia

Western Europe

Eastern Europe/The Middle East

Please answer indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements.

Those participating in study away or similar career based global experiences are likely to gain \_\_\_\_\_ than those who do not participate in a study away experience:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Adaptability. Ambiguity allows participants to be flexible and adjust in situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empathy. Participants can see other perspectives and put themselves in others' shoes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication. Working with those of other native languages and cultures aids individuals in listening, nonverbal, and verbal skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Globalized. Awareness of global context and worldly endeavors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge. Bettered professional and educational knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independence. Learning to embrace individuality and solo adventures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork. Working with others no matter the differences to achieve similar goals and objectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perseverance. Pushing onward despite downfalls, struggles, or challenges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Optimism. Seeing the brighter side of situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Optimism. Seeing the brighter side of situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-awareness. Recognizing and regulating emotions, beliefs, motivations, a sense of purpose, and strengths and weaknesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Courage. Willingness to try and experience new things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence. Reflection and learning from global experiences can foster the sense to overcome anything and do anything.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of humor. Taking difficult or uncomfortable situations and finding the humorous side.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curiosity. Urning to learn more of what you do not know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

All else being equal, what weight would you place on hiring an employee with study abroad experience?

	Would not prefer	Prefer slightly	Prefer a moderate amount	Prefer a lot	Prefer a great deal
I would prefer a new hire with study abroad experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you believe that study abroad experiences help prepare students for careers at  
Please explain.

Do you believe study abroad experiences provide necessary skills for working at  
Please explain.

Do you believe study abroad experiences are necessary to thrive at  
Please explain.

How old are you?

Under 18

18-24 years old

25-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55-64 years old

65+ years old

How do you describe yourself?

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer to self-describe

Prefer not to say

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be

White or Caucasian

Black or African American

American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Other

Prefer not to say

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school or less

High school diploma or GED

Some college, but no degree

Associates or technical degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)

Prefer not to say

Who is your employer?

In what region of the world do you currently reside?

USA including Puerto Rico

Latin America/Caribbean

Africa

Asia

Western Europe

Eastern Europe/The Middle East

How long have you worked for ?

Less than a year

Between 1 year and 5

Between 5 years and 10

More than 10 years



## Appendix D. Quantitative Variables and their Descriptions

Quantitative Variable	Description
EducationStudyAway	1= completed a study away program while as a student 0= did not complete study away as a student
EduSALong	Length of the study away 1= 2-3 weeks, 2= 1 month, 3= less than 3 months, 4= 3-6 months, 5= around 1 year, 6= 1-3 years, 7= greater than 3 years, 8= more than 5+ years
EduSAReg	Location of educational study away 1= North America, 2= Latin America/Carribbean/South American, 3= Africa, 4= Asia, 5= Western Europe, 6= Eastern Europe/Middle East
Skills	Skills developed because of study away 2= yes, 1= maybe, 0= no
WorkAway	0= no- has not worked internationally, 1= yes, did work internationally with current employer
WorkAwayReg	Location of workplace international experience 1= North America, 2= Latin America/Carribbean/South American, 3= Africa, 4= Asia, 5= Western Europe, 6= Eastern Europe/Middle East
HiringPref	Prefer a new hire with study away experience 1= would not prefer, 2= slightly prefer, 3= prefer a moderate amount, 4= prefer a lot, 5= prefer a great deal
Age	Participant age 1= under 18, 2= 18-24, 3= 25-34, 4= 35-44, 5= 45-54, 6= 55-64, 7= 65+
Gender	Gender 1= male, 2= female, 3= third gender
Race	Race 1= white, 2= Black/African American, 3= American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native, 4= Asian, 5= Pacific Islander, 6= other, 7= prefer not to say
Edu	Highest level of education 1= some high school or less, 2= high school diploma or GED, 3= some college but no degree, 4= associate degree or technical degree, 5= bachelor's degree, 6= graduate or professional degree, 7= prefer not to say
Reside	Current residence 1= North America, 2= Latin America/Carribbean/South American, 3= Africa, 4= Asia, 5= Western Europe, 6= Eastern Europe/Middle East
TimeWorked	Length of employment with surveyed organization 1= less than a year, 2= between 1 year and 5, 3= between 5 years and 10, 4= more than 10 years
SuperPower	Combined skill variable component= adaptability, empathy, communication, globalized, knowledge, independence, teamwork, perseverance, self-awareness, courage, confidence