Research on the Impact of Study Abroad on Career Skill Development

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Content

• Overview of study
• Descriptive & qualitative
• Quantitative
• Findings
• Discussion
Current Age

- 20-25: 268
- 26-30: 61
- 31-35: 43
- 35-40: 15
- 41-50: 121
- 51+: 203

Learning Abroad Center
University of Minnesota
Gender

Female 520
Male 187

Males 26%
Females 73%
Did study abroad enhance your interest in academic study?

- **YES 76%** (544)
- **NO 23%** (167)

“...living on my own just kind of snapped me into focus and when I got back from study abroad I was a lot more focused on school, I did a lot better in the classes”.
School Psychologist
Did study abroad influence your subsequent educational experiences?

“Completely. I never would have done the Peace Corps if I hadn’t studied abroad. I never would have gone into Public health if it weren’t for my time in the Peace Corps”.

Epidemiologist
Did study abroad reinforce your commitment to study language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>456</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My ability to speak French has gotten me the ability to work on projects that I wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise. And it’s certainly influenced the way I look at the world and the way I look at what I want to do.

Aerospace Engineer, Founder/Owner of Design Company
To what extent do you think your education abroad experience contributed to an increased self-confidence?

“It helped with self-confidence and professional confidence. And it gave me a way to demonstrate that I had international experience working with people”.

Investigator, Environmental Protection Agency
To what extent do you think your education abroad experience has had a lasting impact on your worldview?

“When you are speaking with people who have a completely different background from you, a different life, you have to put aside all assumptions. And when you have that experience, you can take that with you to every interaction you have professionally and personally”.

Foreign Service Officer, State Department
To what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile for the enhancement of your ability for teamwork?

“I’ve been active in scouting here so took part as a scout leader while I was there as well. I found that spending time with the kids there was the best way for me to practice and learn more Spanish”.

Chaplin, VA Hospital
To what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile for the enhancement of your ability to appreciate & interact with individuals different from yourself?

“It definitely opened my eyes to the feeling of being a stranger in a new place and of having all of these little daily things that I took for granted at home being really difficult. That’s definitely helped me in my professional life when I worked with immigrant families. And you know just understanding and being more open to what they’re going through and how hard it is”.

School Psychologist
To what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile for the enhancement of your interpersonal and communication skills?

“It helped me to get better at talking to people, talking to people I didn’t know, talking to People in a wide variety of socio-economic status, people who have absolutely no money to people who were in a position to give money to charity”.

Investigator, Environmental Protection Agency
To what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile for the enhancement of your ability to learn new ideas quickly?

“...if you work in international affairs in diplomacy, problems in the work environment can come up at any time. Your work isn’t restricted to 9-5 you are always representing your country in diplomacy specifically”.

Foreign Service Officer, State Department
To what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile for the enhancement of your ability for creative and innovative thinking?

“It created an interest in thinking broadly, thinking globally”.
Finance Manager, Agriculture Risk Management Company
To what extent do you consider your study abroad experience was worthwhile for acquiring skill sets that influenced your career path?

“The flexibility you learn the adaptability. Your ability to show that you can adapt to other people, not making other people adapt to you, that in the workplace is a huge skill set for me to have”.

Epidemiologist
What impact do you think your education abroad experience had on obtaining your first job?

“They [employers] had confidence that based on my experience [abroad] I was going to 1) succeed, and 2) actually be comfortable in that environment. I think it certainly helped”.
Vice Present of Logistics, Neiman Marcus
What impact do you think your education abroad experience had on your long-term career prospects?

“To work in a role where you have visibility to what’s going on in other countries, and you might be designing programs that may impact people in other countries and you’ve got colleagues all over the world in dozens of countries, including Spanish speaking, so it’s always been important to me to maintain a global role. I think it’s fun and interesting to have that perspective. It continues to resonate to this day”.

Global Human Resources Manager
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of study abroad programs</th>
<th>Impact on obtaining first job</th>
<th>Long-term prospects</th>
<th>Type of work tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>once</td>
<td>46%*</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or over</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*strongly or very strongly agree
Quantities Analysis

Independent variables
• Gender
• Race/ethnicity
• Age
• Location of SA program
• Language of instruction
• Class standing
• Duration of SA program

Key outcomes
• Impact in first job
• Interpersonal and communication skills
• Teamwork
• Long-term career prospects
• Learn new ideas quickly
• Interaction with individuals different than yourself
• Creative and innovative thinking
• Acquire skill set that influenced career path
• Self-confidence
• Worldview
Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Found no significant differences between men and women across all 10 key outcomes.
### Race/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Found no significant differences for race/ethnicity across all 10 key outcomes
Age

Teamwork

- 20-25, n=266
- 26-35, n=319
- 36-45, n=86
- 46-59, n=22
- 60+, n=7
Location

Long-term career prospects

- Australia/New Zealand: n=22
- Middle East: n=7
- Africa: n=22
- Europe: n=200
- Asia: n=32
- Latin America: n=79
Took classes in language other than English

![Bar chart showing long-term career prospects, learn new ideas quickly, and skill set influencing career. The chart compares the outcomes for those who took classes in a language other than English (red) and those who did not (blue). The numbers of participants are indicated as n=190 for the non-participants and n=167 for those who took classes.](chart.png)
Class standing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Long-term career prospects</th>
<th>Learn new ideas quickly</th>
<th>Worldview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad student</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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</table>

Freshman n=33  Sophomore n=86  Junior n=150  Senior n=58  Grad student n=19
Duration

- Communication
- Long-term career prospects
- Learn new ideas quickly
- Interaction with others
- Skill set influencing career
- Self confidence

>1 month n=119
2-3 months n=80
4-6 months n=123
7-12 months n=26
year+ n=9
Impact

- Epidemiologist
- Aerospace
- Foreign Service Officer
- Investigator, Environmental Protection Agency
- School psychologist
Skill & Task Disconnect

Are the tasks that employers ask you to do related to your experience abroad? “No, not directly”. How often do you use the skills you learned abroad? “Everyday I rely on the skills I learned abroad”.

“I wouldn’t say that it influenced my tasks”. How often do you draw upon those skills? “I would say everyday both personally and professionally”.

Study Abroad for Interview

When I was younger as described it as sort of stepping out of my comfort zone. I was comfortable working with different kinds of people... my career has since proven that I can do those things, now I focus on the cultural, higher level global awareness.

Commercial Product Manager
Program Development

• Personal characteristics VS program components
• Freshmen
• Career skill development on site
• Language
• Duration
### STAR Technique

**Question:** Tell me about a time when worked within a successful team and what contributed to team success.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>S</strong></th>
<th><strong>Situation</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During my study abroad experience in Senegal I was assigned to a middle school classroom. On the first day we thought we would shadow the instructor and help students with questions.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>T</strong></th>
<th><strong>Task</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We arrived and the teacher informed us that she wanted us to teach the two hour class on verb tenses on our own. We had five minutes to reference the workbook, but no other instructions. Also, we didn’t speak the dominate language of the class, French.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A</strong></th>
<th><strong>Action</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We got together and decided to break the lecture into three parts: the lesson, a worksheet, and a game. I had experience teaching so I started while my peers created the game and we added pictures to bridge the language gap.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>R</strong></th>
<th><strong>Result</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We shared the time and had a successful two hour class. We managed time pressure without letting it overwhelm us. By working in a team structure we broke down a difficult situation so individuals could use their strengths.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion & Questions