Student Perception and the Value of Studying Abroad

A Look at Michigan State University Undergraduate Business Students

Travis Roy

May 2014

Institute of International Education
Department of Education

"No one who has lived through the second half of the 20th century could possibly be blind to the enormous impact of exchange programs on the future of countries..."

– Bill Clinton, former US President

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

– Mark Twain

{Abstract}

The multitude of existing research conducted within the field of study abroad programs generally reinforces the popular understanding that the practice not only broadens the mind, provides valuable experiences and enhances stagnating perspectives, but also contributes to a skillset that is becoming increasingly necessary for success in the globally focused world of today. Despite the evidence supporting their effectiveness, relatively few undergraduate students in the United States choose to participate in some form of study abroad program. The following analysis will examine the potential reasoning of why this is so.

Through the administration of questionnaires and interviews along with a comprehensive review of existing research, the following pages examine the attitudes and inhibitions of undergraduate university students as they relate to studying abroad and to what extent these perceptions fall in line with the escalating importance of multicultural competence. Used as an exemplifying case of American undergraduate students, Michigan State University's Eli Broad College of Business furnished the sample of participants used in this study.

Largely supported through the data obtained from the conducted interviews, undergraduate students are seen to place a high value on the personal and cultural benefits acquired through study abroad participation while relegating academic focus to a somewhat tangential position. Factors such as a student's previous international travel experience and awareness of available programs are seen to influence these perceptions to some degree. Despite the significant value placed on such programs, a large percentage of students express concern over a variety of barriers prohibiting them from pursuing enrollment. The financial commitments associated with the participation in a study abroad program were almost unanimously considered to be a serious burden on individuals. These concerns were supplemented and at times exacerbated by other factors such as a student's availability of time, willingness to suspend important personal relationships and needed class credit.

Covered in detail below, these findings are seen to support and corroborate much of the existing research that has been previously conducted within this field while providing additional insight by way of student testimony.

{Acknowledgments}

{Abbreviations & Terms}

Abbreviations

AERA - - - - - - - - - -	American Educational Research Association
AIFS - - - - - - - - - -	American Institute for Foreign Study
GPA - - - - - - - - - - -	Grade Point Average
IIE - - - - - - - - - - - -	Institute of International Education[1]
IU - - - - - - - - - - - -	Indiana University
MSU - - - - - - - - - -	Michigan State University
SA - - - - - - - - - - - -	Study Abroad
SRC - - - - - - - - - - -	Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)
US - - - - - - - - - - - -	United States [of America]

Terms

American - - - - - - -	A citizen of the United States of America.
Broad - - - - - - - - - -	Shorthand for the 'Eli Broad College of Business'. When referred to in the shorthand form throughout the text, *Broad* will be italicized. *Broad* is pronounced as rhyming with 'mode'.
Senior - - - - - - - - - -	Denotes any student who has completed 88 credit hours or more. The overwhelming majority of these students are in their 4th academic year of undergraduate studies.
Study Abroad - - - - -	University-organized programs taken for credit either partially or completely in a country other than that of where the student is enrolled (does not include full degree programs, students studying independently, etc.).
Survey - - - - - - - - -	'Questionnaire' will be considered synonymous with 'survey'.

---

[1] Refers to the independent, not-for-profit organization operating in the United States. Not to be confused with the department of the same name at Stockholm University.

{Table of Contents}

1. Introduction

Prior to the widespread development of aviation, the quickest and most efficient method of traversing the ocean was by way of passenger ship. In 1907, the British ocean liner the Mauretania set the record for the fastest eastbound crossing of the Atlantic Ocean with a time of four and a half days, a record which it held for over 20 years (Tyne and Wear Archives, n.d.). In present times, less than a hundred years from the Mauretania's heyday, the same trip can be made in six and a half hours through the convenience of commercial flight. The world is shrinking. Nations previously accustomed to large degrees of separation are now closer than ever as a result of rapid technological advancements, improved infrastructures and ever expanding communication networks. With the heightened interaction between vastly different societies and a rapidly expanding focus on the global marketplace, the attainment of international experience while cultivating a broad cultural view is not only becoming increasingly important in the interest of tolerance and understanding, but is playing a progressively fundamental role in almost every aspect of gainful future employment. In addition to enhancing valuable international skills, an experience abroad is shown to contribute extensively to the improvement of cultural understanding within the domestic limits of the United States as more than 30 percent of the American population now consists of ethnically diverse minorities (U.S. Census Bureau as cited in Lee, Therriault & Linderholm, 2012).

An increasing awareness of this shift towards a more culturally diverse and international mindset can be seen through a variety of different indicators, one of which being the growing number of students choosing to participate in the many study abroad (SA) programs offered at universities across the United States (US). While student interest and increased participation reflects an acknowledgment of the importance of such programs, it is surprising that overall participation rates remains relatively small with fewer than 10 percent of students choosing to study abroad during their undergraduate years (IIE: Press Release, 2013).

With such extensive research validating the positive effects of studying abroad on personal outlook, academic performance and career development, it would appear strange that there remains such variance between students choosing to study abroad and those foregoing the experience. Within the confines of the following pages, a closer look will be taken at the benefits of study abroad programs and the mismatch of undergraduate student participation as a result of levels of awareness, wavering attitudes and a variety of inhibitions. This will be accomplished through a review of existing literature covering the effects of study abroad programs coupled with empirical data collected by means of questionnaires and interviews from undergraduate students enrolled in the Eli Broad College of Business (*Broad*) at Michigan State University (MSU).

1.1 Background

The term "study abroad" has a very precise meaning to some, while to others it is more of a general concept. In order to avoid being overly specific or too vague, a definition landing somewhere in the middle of these two extremes seems to work best: "Study

abroad programs constitute all educational programs that occur in a foreign country outside of the geographical boundaries of the country of origin, offering students the opportunity to earn academic credit through international experiences" (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Kitsantas, 2004, as cited in Lee, et al. 2012, p. 768). While this particular definition is relatively new, the idea has held a respectable degree of prominence within the US over the past century and a half and, as a more general concept, can be traced back nearly a thousand years (Lee M., 2012). The origins of the US study abroad programs seen today can arguably be credited to the efforts of Indiana University (IU). In 1879, students of IU were invited to study a variety of subjects in Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France and England over their summer breaks as trips the University advertised as "summer tramps", although no credit was offered (Indiana University, 2013). In 1923, the University of Delaware started their "Junior Year Abroad" program by sending eight junior level students to France, by way of ocean-bound vessel. This is considered by many to be the foundation that the more structured, modern day study abroad programs in the US have been built upon (University of Delaware, n.d.).

Over the next 70 years, participation in study abroad programs was seen to be moderately inconsistent due to the two World Wars, the Vietnam War and the Cold War. Previously popular destinations became all but impossible to visit and funds that might have otherwise been spent on the promotion and implementation of SA programs were reverted to the war effort (Lee M., 2012). While the various wars drained resources, alienated parts of the world and fostered pro-American sentiment and nationalistic attitudes among Americans, it alternatively exposed more citizens to the global stage, resulting in the increased awareness of world issues while also emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding.

Consistent and significant growth in study abroad programs started to make itself evident in the late 1980's and early 1990's as a result of an increase in the level of technology, stronger infrastructures, broader communication and an ever-rising emphasis on tourism (ibid.). The burgeoning growth afforded a heavy increase in the variety of activities available to participating SA students, producing a wider selection of classes, potential for lab work, onsite fieldwork, internships, humanitarian relief efforts and many other options to choose from (Harvard University, n.d.). As a consequence of both national and program level advancements, the number of students studying abroad grew from 71 thousand in 1990 to 283 thousand in 2012 (see Figure 1).
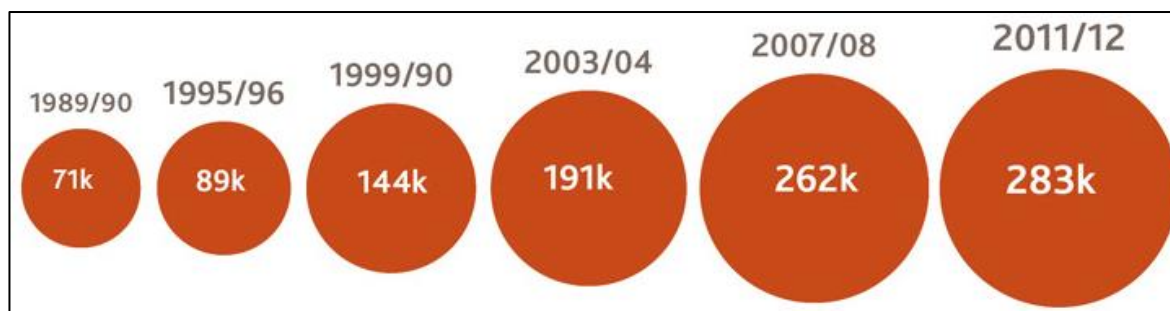

Figure 1. Number of US students studying abroad in relation to year (IIE: Open Doors Report, 2013).

While these rising participation numbers and the wider availability of study abroad programs can largely be credited to the collective efforts put forth by a sizeable number of US universities, certain institutions have played a greater role than others. Contributing heavily to the research and development side of study abroad programs, Michigan State University developed the *Institute of Research on Overseas Programs* in 1957 with the focus of improving international student programs at universities across the US (MSU: Research, n.d.). As a result of the institute's findings along with a dedication to a multitude of program options with wide availability, MSU was named a national leader in student enrollment and number of study abroad programs offered for the past six consecutive years (MSU: About us, n.d.).

1.2 Aim & Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students in relation to study abroad programs and to identify to what extent those perceptions fall in line with the escalating importance society is placing on multicultural competence. In pursuit of this aim it is first necessary to explore the documented benefits of study abroad programs and to subsequently identify students' (a) basic level of awareness of available programs; (b) perceived value of those programs; and (c) obstacles inhibiting participation as relating to an experience abroad. A heavier focus will be concentrated around these last two points as they are seen to bear the heaviest relevance of the three objectives.

1.3 Research Questions

The above stated aim and objectives give rise to several applicable research questions that maintain relevance throughout the course of the study:

- In what ways have study abroad programs been shown to veritably benefit students?

- To what extent are students aware of the study abroad opportunities available to them?

- What value do students associate with study abroad participation and in what ways does this value take form?

- What obstacles do students see as obstructing their ability to participate in a study abroad program?

- How accessible do students perceive study abroad programs to be as a result of identified obstacles?

1.4 Research Approach

Elements of both case study and cross-sectional design are used in the exploration of the above-mentioned aim, objectives and research questions. Within the case study design, MSU's Eli Broad College of Business provides an exemplifying case in that the department is reasonably representative of the collective enrollment of undergraduate business students attending universities across the US (Bryman, 2012). This group is homogenous enough to be analyzed in a broader context while allowing for a heightened focus on variables more likely to fluctuate. With MSU's largest enrollment in study abroad programs belonging to the Eli Broad College of Business, the level of

awareness, general knowledge and opportunity in relation to these programs is likely to be more pronounced than in other fields of study.

Through the review of existing literature, the distribution of questionnaires and the administration of interviews, relevant data is collected, analyzed and presented in the sections below. The use of these three methods in conjunction with one another will aid in filling potential gaps that might otherwise occur through the concentrated use of a singular approach, ultimately resulting in the increased likelihood of well-rounded results. The largely qualitative data collected is prone to providing a greater level of insight into the thoughts, opinions and perceptions of undergraduate students towards study abroad programs than an exclusively quantitative approach. As a result of the implementation of these techniques, the greatest amount of relevant and applicable data is obtained.

1.5 Limitations

Throughout the course of the research, every attempt was made towards accuracy, precision and an attention to detail in the anticipation of achieving significant and usable results. Despite this, certain factors may remain that limit the overall comprehensive and precise nature of the research. These factors deserve due attention and it is hoped that as a result of their consideration readers will retain the freedom to arrive at their own conclusions in regards to the exhaustiveness of the conducted research. Several of the decidedly more significant factors that may be proven to impact research processes or resulting data are as follows:

Delivery method – As it was all but impossible to put the subjects of this study in a position of obligatory participation, a small risk for potential bias may be present in the resulting dataset. The likelihood of students sharing specific personality traits and characteristics unique to those who choose to engage in such a study voluntarily is expected to be miniscule.

Research Parameters – This study is limited to a specific department contained in a singular university, making it improbable that any data sample will provide a completely comprehensive and precise portrayal of the nation's attitudes as a whole. This is potentially attributable to the likelihood of institutional and regional differences.

Time – Arguably the most significant of the limitations, time constraints noticeably restrict the depth and scope of this study, prohibiting the research process from being taken to the extent desired. Due to the eternal nature of revisions, refinements and improvements, it can be presumed that an increased allowance of time may have resulted in slight enrichments to various sections of the conducted research.

Questionnaire Response Rate – The physical presence of the researcher on MSU's campus in order to oversee the distribution of questionnaires was an impossibility due to geographical extremes, resulting in the unavoidable use of electronic communication. Amidst the use of the Internet and email for the distribution of questionnaires, enticing participation proved extremely difficult despite the implementation of various motivational techniques. As a result, the achieved response rate is much too low to provide comprehensive and conclusive comparable data. However, some responses were consentient to the extent that they were still useful to the analysis conducted within this study.

Obtained Interview Sample – Despite numerous attempts to obtain student interviewees for participation, the final sample retrieved was much smaller than originally planned. A number of additional tactics were applied in an attempt to increase participation such as offering monetary compensation, contacting additional students and resigning to the use of snowball sampling. Even with the implementation of these strategies, a surprisingly low number of students agreed to be interviewed. The low number of interview participants, while not ideal, still managed to offer a great deal of insight and information.

Available Literature - Attempts were made to include reference to the existing body of research already conducted on both those who have, as well as those who have not, studied abroad. This proves to be somewhat difficult as there is a wide variety of work focusing on students who have participated in a SA program but considerably less work oriented towards students who have not. Thus the included content may seem more heavily weighted towards the benefits and experiences of active past participants as opposed to the attitudes of non-participants. While this may be true, it is merely a reflection of the available literature existing in a disproportionate manner.

The conscious consideration of these limitations along with measures taken to reduce their impact have been deemed sufficient to drastically reduce unwanted error and inaccuracies throughout the course of research.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Many practical barriers to studying abroad have been identified by students and universities across the United States and beyond. While these barriers command consideration and require the implementation and use of various strategies to overcome them, they have proven to be largely surmountable. Despite the variety of available approaches to overcoming these barriers (scholarships, credits, reduced travel costs, etc.), there are still many university students, varying from the outwardly adverse to the overly enthusiastic, who complete their undergraduate degree devoid of an international experience. This study is an attempt to gain insight into the attitudes and inhibitions of students in order to gain a clearer understanding of the disconnect between the known benefits of study abroad programs and the relatively low participation rates.

A sizeable amount of studies have been conducted on study abroad programs, students who have participated and the positive effects these programs can have on individuals, communities and the country as a whole. While this approach is useful and beneficial in many respects, it unintentionally averts focus from a large group that would perhaps profit from increased consideration: those who did not study abroad. With this in mind, the following pages maintain a concentration of focus on both students who have chosen to participate as well as those who have not in order to obtain insight into relevant similarities and differences between the two groups.

In addition to taking this approach, the selection of a university that is well established in the study abroad arena allows for the elimination of factors that might otherwise impede research such as a lack of program options, availability, advisory support and general knowledge offered in accompaniment of such programs. By conducting research at a university that is largely secure in these areas, the possibility of these factors manifesting themselves as reasons for not participating in a study abroad program is less likely, allowing for an increased focus on remaining unknown

variables. In other words, the probability of students offering predictable responses on questionnaires or during interviews is seen to be, to at least some degree, lower.

Along with a better understanding of student attitudes and the constraints perceived to be insurmountable to an experience abroad, is the opportunity to inspire action. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide useful insight into the perceptions and opinions of undergraduate students towards studying abroad along with helping to solidify and reinforce the body of research already conducted within this field.

2. Key Concepts & Theories

In the following section, a variety of concepts and theories relating to and directly impacting the domain of study abroad will be explored. Discourse will begin with the increasing necessity of study abroad programs and their role in the development of the international mindset needed to survive the changing demands of the international marketplace due to the rising influence of globalization. This is followed by a brief foray into the integration of study abroad programs into university structures, providing useful context on the changing tides of university involvement. The university integration of such programs leads into a discussion of the impact of social, cultural and economic capital as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, on an individual's decision to participate. In addition to looking at how acquired capital effects the decisions of students prior to a study abroad program, it is also important to look closely at the specific impact that these programs have on their participants upon returning to the United States. This is accomplished through the review of multiple studies analyzing cognitive function as well as the personal perceptions of individuals upon the completion of their programs. Finally, a review of well-established barriers to study abroad programs is provided along with a very limited discussion of potential solutions.

2.1 Globalization

It is all but impossible to explore the attitudes held by students in relation to studying abroad without taking into consideration the increasing impact of globalization on today's society. Regardless of the widely varying opinions as to the finer points of the term's definition, "globalization" is indisputably a substantial and impactful contributor to the rising importance of studying abroad. Globalization is often shrouded in a heavy layer of ambiguity; however, this section will avoid the temptation of unnecessarily and tediously pursuing an overly specific interpretation of the term and instead focus on a brief overview. For the purposes of this paper, it is enough to retain a macro perspective and thus arrive at a relatively general and broad consensus as to the effects of globalization.

As mentioned earlier, advancements in technology, communication and infrastructure are facilitating the ease of travel and intercultural integration. As this continues, attributes such as knowledge, understanding and cultural tolerance will be of paramount importance in the development and maintenance of peace, commerce, productivity and advancements of all types. When taking this into consideration as it relates to an educational context, the market driven demand for these attributes requires

a shift in focus and significant updates to not only the curriculum taught in universities, but also in the manner in which it is taught (Green; Waks, 2006).

The implementation of study abroad programs is often considered one of the most efficient tools in providing students with the necessary skills to survive and thrive in the globally focused atmosphere of the 21st century. As the establishment of these programs has already been seen at universities across the US, students may benefit from a shift in focus from the somewhat peripheral position held by current study abroad programs to a heavier integration within core curricula. This is likely to increasing the awareness and motivation of students, fostering in them a strong desire to acquire these needed skills (Goodman & Berdan, 2013).

While the need for a shift in curriculum focus might be acknowledged by some, or even many, universities across the United States, reports from the OECD point towards a lack of follow through by American institutions in comparison to other world regions. Of the world's enrollment of international students during 2010, 52.7 percent originated from Asia, 23.1 percent from Europe, 11.6 percent from Africa, 6.1 percent from Latin America and the Caribbean, and only 2.7 percent from North America (OECD, 2013). While arguments can be made that geographical convenience, population and other factors may distort the impact of these statistics to some degree, they still offer a useful illustration of the presence of internationally focused education.

2.2 Program Integration

Following the trends of globalization, universities have attempted to update their class offerings and curriculum to reflect this shifting dynamic. Indiana University's (IU) Kelley School of Business has implemented a variety of practices to redirect attention to world issues. Like many other universities, IU began by integrating international aspects into many already existing classes as well as designing new curricula with a largely global focus. While aiding to a certain degree, the new curricula provided students with little exposure to global topics and left out students enrolled in majors of a different lean, such as accounting. Also, despite the globally centered curriculum, students didn't seem to be taking an increased interest in the wide variety of available study abroad programs (Sideli, Dollinger & Doyle, 2003).

The Kelley School of Business didn't see an increase in study abroad interest until they managed to shift student perception so that students began to view these programs as intrinsic to their degree requirements. The school managed this through the implementation of three new methods, the first of which was the "International Dimension Requirement" or IDM. Students had several options as to how they could fulfill this globally focused requirement, one of which was the completion of a study abroad program. The second method offered a "field specialization option" to the core curriculum, allowing students the possibility of choosing an *international* field specialization. The required credit hours for this specialization could be achieved through the participation in a study abroad program with added benefit of providing a jumpstart on completing the IDM requirement. The third method was offering an "International Studies Concentration" which could be added to any major, providing the student with additional credentials upon completion. Once again, studying abroad would be counted towards the completion of the "Concentration".

To supplement the above shifts in curriculum, the Kelley School of Business puts into practice other methods for encouraging students to study abroad. To name a few, they solicit the help of returnees (previous study abroad participants) to encourage enthusiasm, hold informative meetings, erect displays across campus to inspire, maintain a significant web presence and employ knowledgeable advisors to aid in student decision. All of these approaches play a significant role in shifting the view of studying abroad from a superfluous, time consuming luxury to an integral, important, and exciting way to fulfill degree requirements (Sideli, et al., 2003). In addition, the university states that despite the variety of domestic based methods they have implemented, "*our most successful efforts to internationalize students has been by facilitating overseas experiences through organized study abroad programs*" (Sideli, et al., 2003, para. 1).

2.3 Capital

When considering capital in relation to education, the different forms can be seen as having a relevant impact on an individual's situation prior to, during, and after attendance to a higher education institution. Capital already possessed affects *choice* by limiting or expanding it, while the desire to acquire new capital affects *motivation* by encouraging or suppressing it (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2008). Well before an individual enrolls at a university, a multitude of decisions have to be made: whether to seek a higher degree in the first place, which university to attend, what program to pursue and, in this case, whether to participate in study abroad program. In describing the 'student-choice construct', Edward P. St. John (as cited in Salisbury et al., 2008) explains that the way in which individuals advance through a series of decisions such as these, is heavily influenced by the amount of human, social, cultural and economical capital they possess (see Figure 2 for diagram).

Human capital can be seen as the collection of "productive capacities" held by an individual. Consisting of traits like understanding, skills, knowledge and talents, the quantities already possessed can heavily affect the options available to a student while influencing their future choice through various levels of desire to acquire additional productive capacities. The potential amassing of human capital can be a significant driving factor in a choice to study abroad (Salisbury et al., 2008).
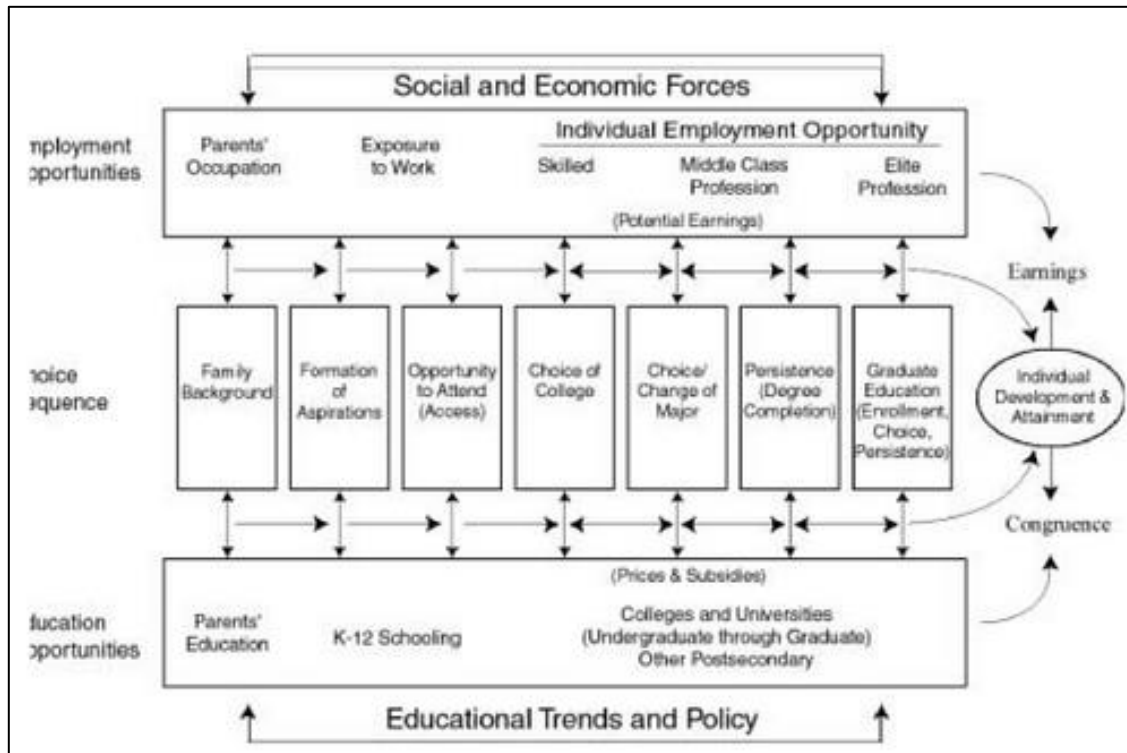
Figure 2. Diagram of Student-Choice Construct (St. John & Asker, 2001).

Social and cultural capital also maintain heavy associations with an individual's decision to participate in a study abroad program. One's possession of social capital influences their progression through the student-choice construct by situating the individual in a certain, often socioeconomic, context. Pierre Bourdieu and J.C. Passerson assert that values, beliefs, attitudes, aspirations and perceptions obtained throughout life, account for a large part of decisional influence. Cultural capital, while not necessarily the most influential, may perhaps be seen as the most directly connected form of capital in relation to the type of benefits one hopes to acquire from a study abroad program. The language, cultural knowledge and educational credentials that often make up cultural capital, are present within an individual in close association with the status of their parents (as citied in Salisburdy et al., 2008). It's relatively easy to see that an experience abroad would significantly contribute to these forms of capital.

Lastly, economic capital is often used to quantify the value of education in that it is directly convertible into monetary form (Bourdieu, 2006). An individual's ability to afford certain schools, costs of relocating, and living in a new city can all impact choice. Potential economic capital can also have a large affect on choice, which can be seen through commonplace questions such as: What is my earning potential upon graduation?

Collectively and individually, these forms of capital play a significant role in the decision making process explained by the student-choice construct. While the construct was originally theorized in a largely general sense relating to educational decision-making processes, it becomes directly applicable to the more specific area of study abroad. In relating to the choice involved in studying abroad, it consists of three main

9

stages: (1) *"the development of the predisposition or intent to study abroad"*, (2) *"the search for an appropriate study abroad program"* and (3) *"the selection of and departure for a particular location and program"* (Leerburger as cited in Salisbury et al., 2008, p. 5). The focus of the research conducted in the remainder of this paper closely examines the effects of the various forms of capital mentioned above and their impact on that of point number one.

2.4 Cognitive Development

Within the confines of this paper, it is necessary to demonstrate an association between international experiences and personally valuable attributes in order to establish solid grounds for the support and advocacy of study abroad programs. Luckily, the general research conducted on the positive effects of studying abroad has been quite extensive, covering a multitude of areas. Despite this however, certain areas of a more specific nature have seen less attention and focus. One such area is the effect of studying abroad on creative processes. In the increasingly globalized world of today, the ability to perform cognitively complex tasks with culturally diverse information is becoming more important (Lee, Therriault & Linderholm, 2012).

One recent US study provides impressive evidence that participation in a study abroad program increases creativity in both a culture specific and general manner. The study tested three groups of students, one group who *had* studied abroad, one group who *had not but maintained a desire* to do so, and one group that *had not and did not* want to, all of which had no significant variance in prior academic achievement (Lee et al., 2012). Prior to this study there were many preconceptions that individuals who studied abroad as well as individuals who had a strong inclination to study abroad, shared common traits such as a propensity towards learning a foreign language or lower levels of ethnocentrism which might contribute to a higher level of creativity (Goldstein & Kim as cited in Lee et al., 2012). However, through the inclusion of the group of students who had not studied abroad but maintained an aspiration to do so, the researchers were able to determine that a desire to study abroad or an interest in foreign cultures was not a significant indicator of pre-existing creativity. Instead, both groups of interested and uninterested individuals who had not studied abroad shared similar levels of creativity while those who had experienced a foreign culture first-hand were discovered to have significantly higher levels of creative thinking (Lee et al., 2012).

As is shown by the participants of this study who had studied abroad, the ability to mentally switch between multiple worldviews obtained through an immersive experience in another culture has been heavily associated with an increase in creativity (Lee et al., 2012). This has important implications as creative thinking has been shown to improve self-awareness, the ability to strategize, and the capacity to focus, all of which maintain a high level of association with overall intelligence (Kaufman; Nusbaum & Silvia as cited in Lee et al., 2012). While these findings are not absolutely definitive, Lee et al. adamantly assert that "it is possible that cultural experiences lead to creative thinking skills that not only promote the production of novel ideas and high quality innovations but also support higher-order reasoning and learning processes" (pg. 775, 2012).

Several longitudinal studies have also been conducted on the effects of studying abroad on learning outcomes. One such study is the *Georgia Learning Outcomes of*

Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative, or GLOSSARI, which was conducted at collective universities across the state of Georgia starting in 2000 and finishing in 2010. By covering a range of different areas such as academic performance, learning outcomes and program design features to name a few, the study reinforced previous findings that participation in study abroad programs is beneficial to student success. It was found that students in Georgia who studied abroad were 10 percent more likely to graduate on time than those who did not study abroad. It also concluded that the grade point average (GPA) of students who studied abroad, while higher to begin with, also increased more drastically from before to after participation compared to those who completed their degree entirely domestically (Sutton, 2010).

2.5 Social & Cultural Behavior

Along with the benefits of increased cognitive function, social and cultural behaviors have been shown to mature as a result of participation in a study abroad program. This can be seen through the analysis of the thoughts and opinions provided by those who have taken part in such programs. The American Institute for Foreign Study, or AIFS, is a not-for-profit organization that aids students with the selection and execution of study abroad programs. The AIFS started administering surveys to their participants upon their return from programs abroad in order to gain a better perspective on the impact of their organization by concentrating on such areas as the impacts on cultural understanding and world view, professional and career development, and personal growth and values (American Institute, 2013). Over 85 percent of program participants credited it with "developing [their] awareness of political, economic or social events around the world", while 56 percent said their study abroad experience directly aided in "developing skills and intercultural competencies that contributed to obtaining [their] first job after graduation" and 92 percent had "a better understanding of [their self] and [their] values" (AIFS, 2013, pp. 10-12).

In a similar study conducted by researchers at MSU, 437 students were asked a series of questions upon their return from a study abroad experience. In response to 33 questions of varying positive and negative lean, the one receiving the highest rated mean score resulted from students strongly agreeing with a statement saying they would recommend studying abroad to their friends. The response with the lowest rated mean score demonstrated that students disagreed with a statement that studying abroad was a waste of time (Ingraham, 2003).

It can be seen through these relatively simple studies that many students place an extremely high value on their international experiences. While the above examples tend to illustrate a more direct relationship between studying abroad and its effects, it has been largely surmised that the residual impacts, while difficult to explicitly connect to any one experience, can positively impact a wide variety of other seemingly unrelated aspects of personal welfare.

2.6 Common Barriers & Solutions

As studying abroad has yet to become a staple within academic curriculum, it is understandable that participation has seen rise to numerous barriers. Fortunately, many of these barriers have been reduced and often eliminated with the aid of time, research, education and various other advancements. The following section will introduce a few

of the more prevalent obstacles accompanied by limited discussion on solutions that may exist to help overcome them. It is also worthwhile to keep in mind that students who cite the following barriers as sufficient justification for not studying abroad could be providing either *"evidence of an active barrier to participation or a retroactive justification for the decision not to participate"* (Salisbury, et al.,2008, para. 7).

Personal safety. Concerns as to personal welfare and security often accompany the prospect of traveling to an unfamiliar country. Some students that consider undertaking study abroad programs have never set foot beyond the borders of the United States, making international travel somewhat daunting. While this concern can waver significantly depending on the country or location in question, it is easily overcome through the observation of area specific trends, the collection of relevant information and the conscious use of common sense and awareness (MSU: Health, n.d.).

Parents and Guardians. The option to participate in the overwhelming majority of study abroad programs at the university level comes well after most students are considered adults in the eyes of the US government, legally eliminating parental oversight. Of course, the lack of legality often does little to diminish parental influence over their children, resulting in the retention of a significant level of authoritative persuasion. While most parents are unlikely to outwardly prohibit their son or daughter from studying abroad, they can have a significant influence in the decisions being made (ICEF, n.d.). Most concerns can be alleviated by being well informed and understanding the potential risks while also being kept apprised of the benefits that specific programs have to offer. Many universities provide pamphlets, publish information online, and hold meetings so that all parties involved can make informed decisions (Riley, n.d.).

Finances. Money is a significant concern for most people and is regularly cited as one of the primary reasons for foregoing an experience abroad. While some amount of savings or income is beneficial, the issue is all too often inaccurately perceived as an insurmountable obstacle. Through a variety of scholarships, loans, grants and other forms of aid, the financial barrier can be reduced to an almost insignificant level (NASFA, 2003). Scholarships alone come in a variety of different forms such as merit-based, student-specific, destination-specific, program-specific and subject-specific. Scholarships may cover part, or all, of the program fee as well as assist in paying for flights, meals, books or accommodation (StudyAbroad.com, n.d.). According to one source, just over half of participating students plan to use some form of financial aid, while the majority of the remaining individuals were unaware of the possibility (see Figure 3) (ibid.).
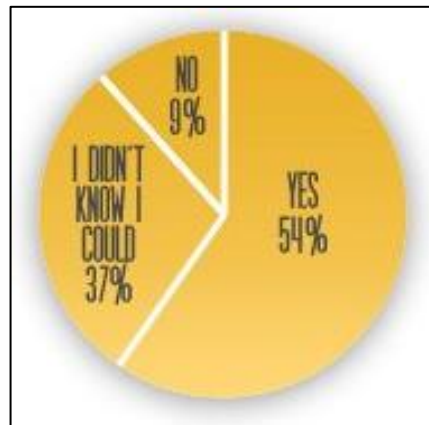
Figure 3. Number of students who will use financial aid (StudyAbroad.com, n.d.).

In addition to scholarships, there are other forms of fundraising that can be used to offset the costs incurred through a SA program. The possibilities are extensive; students in the past have solicited financial aid from civic groups, professional clubs, various foundations, high-school alumni associations, heritage groups, media outlets, fraternities, sororities, charities and religious organizations to name a few (MSU: You Can't Afford, n.d.). In addition to seeking out various forms of financing, students may also consider programs of a different length or look into the option of seeking out some form of work while on their program to help offset costs (NASFA, 2003).

Deferred graduation date. Students often present concerns that participation in a study abroad program might delay their date of graduation, which in turn could result in lost wages and the postponement of certain life goals. While this may be true in a limited number of circumstances, the vast majority of schools design their programs so that credits taken in classes abroad can be applied towards graduation. In addition, there are often options for programs of shorter duration or that can be taken over the summer months to help fit a variety of schedules. With this barrier weighing heavily on the particulars accompanying specific universities, students should speak to their academic counselor; students are often able to develop a plan that won't affect their date of graduation (University of Maryland, 2013).

The language barrier. Many students are under the common misconception that they must be relatively fluent in a foreign language to be eligible to study abroad. While some background in another language may be required for certain programs, the requisite tongue can vary widely in conjunction with the nature of the program and destination. This may limit certain options in specific circumstances but is by no means an insurmountable barrier to participation. In many situations, becoming proficient in a foreign language is a large reason for undertaking a study abroad program to begin with (University of Maryland, 2013).

Social attachments. Many students see participation in a study abroad program as separating them from family, significant others, friends as well as interrupting their social life. This can be a large deterrent for many who fear they will "miss out" while away. This barrier of course depends heavily on the personality and social situation of the individual in question. Students citing this as a concern should be reminded of the temporary nature of such programs along with the potential to enrich their social lives

through the cultivation of new and interesting friendships over the course of their travels. Students also sometimes find it feasible to coordinate SA program enrollment with an interested friend at a similar point in their academic career in order to offset the anxiety of being absent from other important relationships.

Fear and anxiety. This is less of an individual barrier to studying abroad and more of an element that exists throughout all the obstacles mentioned above. Conveniently, students who are plagued with fear and anxiety are most likely already familiar with the solution: education. The more well informed and knowledgeable a student can be about a program, the more excitement will take the place of fear and anxiety (Luong, 2013).

While the above concerns are most certainly valid, they are not impossible to overcome for the vast majority of students. The one reoccurring theme present within many of the solutions listed above is that of 'information'. The more well informed an individual is the less existing obstacles will prove to be a hindrance (ibid.).

3. Research Context

It is important to step away from theory for a moment in order to obtain a clear view of the specific climate and setting in which the research presented below is taking place. Starting with an overview of the present status of study abroad enrollment in the United States and moving on to the more specific examination of the particulars of MSU, a usable context is established upon the world's stage.

3.1 National Study Abroad Climate

The United States attracts more international students than any other country in the world with 819,664 students[2] hailing from countries all over the world for the 2012/2013 school year. These international students stimulate the US economy, provide unique personal perspective and promoting cultural understanding (IIE: Press Release, 2013). Unfortunately, between the years 2000 and 2011, foreign students at the undergraduate level choosing to study in the US fell from 23 percent to 17 percent (OECD, 2013). In contrast, outbound US students studying abroad has drastically increased in recent years with 283,332 students[2] choosing to undertake classes internationally in the 2011/2012 school year (IIE: Press Release, 2013). Of these students, 86 percent are at an undergraduate level, 13 percent at a graduate level and one percent at a doctorate level when undertaking participation in study abroad programs (IIE: Open Doors Report, 2013). In the face of these encouraging trends remains the fact that less than 10 percent of college undergraduate students in the US participate in some form of study abroad program (IIE: Press Release, 2013). While pleased to see the rising numbers, the president and CEO of the Institute of International Education[3] (IIE), Dr. Allen E. Goodman, still maintains that "we need to increase substantially the number of U.S. students who go abroad so that they too can

---

[2] This number includes all international students studying at all levels of education.
[3] Refers to the independent, not-for-profit organization operating in the United States. Not to be confused with the department of the same name at Stockholm University.

gain the international experience which is so vital to career success and deepening mutual understanding" (ibid., para. 7).

It would be hard to argue that there is a single discipline that could not be enhanced by an international experience, however, there are undoubtedly certain fields of study where studying abroad plays a more direct and obvious role in complementing the already established core curriculum. The benefits of studying abroad for business and management students are difficult to ignore with international commerce taking on such a global perspective in recent times. Of students who choose to study abroad, 21 percent are enrolled in the field of business and management, second only to the Social Sciences where 23 percent of students enjoy an experience abroad. After these two disciplines, the numbers for third place decrease drastically with only 11 percent of humanities students studying abroad at some point (IIE: Open Doors Report, 2013).

With almost 200 countries surrounding the globe, students are left with a wide variety of choice in choosing a destination country. While it's no surprise that Europe is a leading destination, other regions of the world are becoming increasingly popular, such as Asia (see Figure 4).
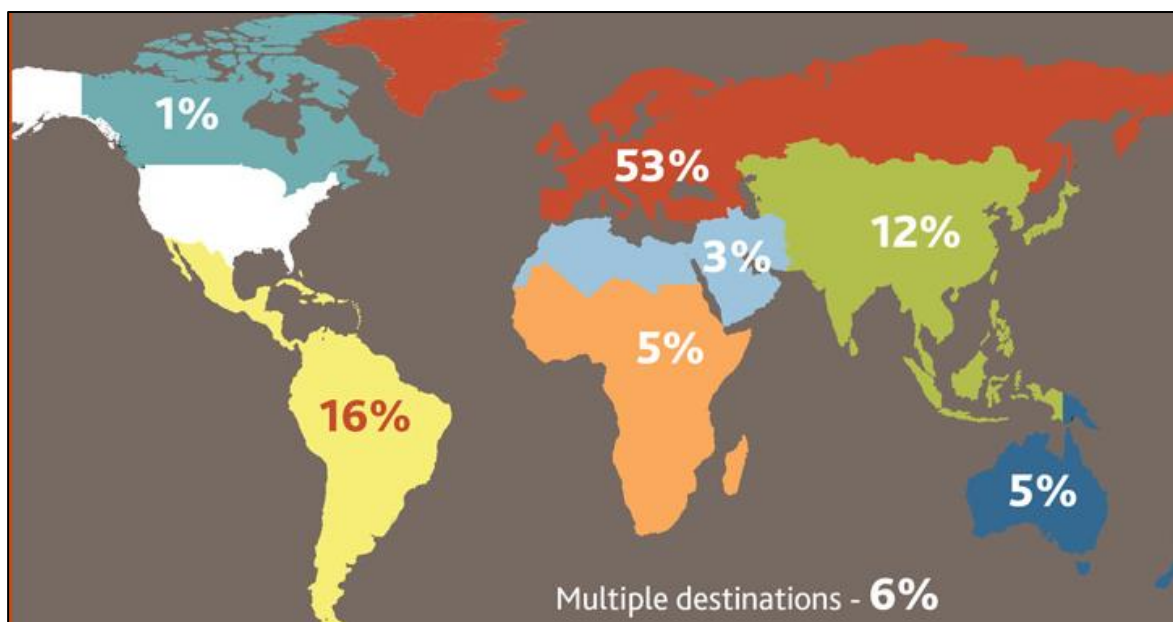
Figure 4[4]. Host regions of US study abroad students (IIE: Open Doors Report, 2013).

Despite more students choosing less conventional locations, 32 percent of all US study abroad students travel to just three countries: the United Kingdom (12 percent), Italy (11 percent) and Spain (9 percent).

Another important aspect of study abroad programs to consider is their duration. The vast majority of students, at 59 percent, undertake short-term programs, defined as a summer or eight weeks or less. Mid-length programs of one or two quarters or one semester, make up 38 percent of students while long-term programs only account for

[4] This is a color image. Any reproduction in grayscale or black and white may render the image unintelligible.

three percent of students studying for a full academic or calendar year (see Figure 5) (IIE: Open Doors Report, 2013).

Figure 5. Participation by duration of study abroad programs[5] (IIE: Open Doors Report, 2013).

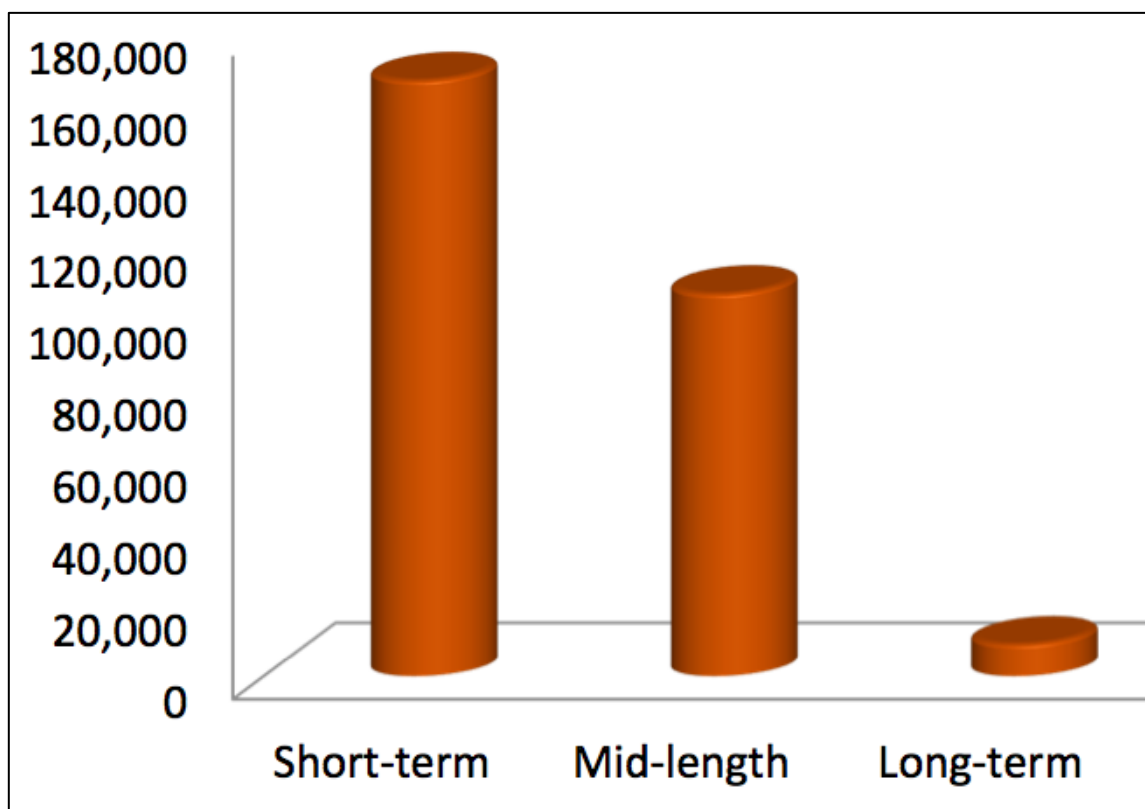Generally speaking, the longer the program, the more immersive and intensive it will be, providing the participant with the maximum opportunity to learn, experience and gain insight into a culture different from ones own. Of course, with the increasing length of a program comes the increasing significance of opportunity cost. Ultimately it is up to a student to decide what length of program is the best fit for their personality, schedule and personal preferences.

However, as study abroad programs have yet to become a staple in the undergraduate core curriculum, the focus of program administrators and faculty remains less on the duration of time spent abroad and more on increasing overall participation rates (ibid.).

The Institute for International Education recently enacted a five-year initiative, Generation Study Abroad, to promote studying abroad on a nationwide scale. Their goal is to double participation in SA programs to approximately 600,000 students by the year 2019 through the implementation of specific targets. These targets vary from obtaining pledges from 500 institutions to significantly expand their SA enrollment to having 10 US universities commit to requiring all of their attending students to study abroad (Generation, 2014). Several schools find themselves already out in front of this

---

[5] Excludes full-degree programs.

newly proposed initiative; the Maryland based *Goucher College* and the small Californian liberal arts school, *Soka University of America,* have both already started to require every undergraduate enrollee to travel abroad as part of the mandatory curriculum to graduate (Sheehy, 2013). As this is quite an extreme scenario at present, it is no surprise that Michigan State University has yet to require this of their students and is unlikely to anytime soon. Nonetheless, MSU still manages to harbor one of the larger study abroad departments in the United States.

3.2 Michigan State University Profile

Michigan State University is located in East Lansing, Michigan, a largely rural region of the United States (see Figure 6). In 1857, through grants from the federal and state governments, the college opened as one of the nations first scientific agricultural institutions. In the years since, MSU has expanded its focus from solely agricultural education to include a myriad of other disciplines (MSU: History, n.d.). The university's undergraduate enrollment for the Spring 2014 semester was 35,478, making it one of the largest higher education institutions in America (Students by major, 2014).

Figure 6. Location of MSU within the United States (Nations Online Project, n.d.).

The selection of Michigan State University as a backdrop for this research, besides being the alma mater of the author, is due in part to the already high percentage of the student body that participate in study abroad programs. This can be largely attributed to the wide variety of options available to students as a result of MSU being

> *a national leader in study abroad, offering more than 294 programs, on all continents and in over 60 countries. Programs are offered every session,*

including winter break, and range from two weeks to an academic year. In many instances, costs do not exceed a semester's study on campus (MSU: Study Abroad, n.d., para. 2).

The large availability of program options, extensive choice in destination countries, varying program durations and lack of superfluous costs, goes a long way in eliminating many of the commonly cited barriers to study abroad programs. This allows for research to be concentrated on factors inhibiting attitudes and motivation towards studying abroad that might be less widely known. The largest portion, 17.9 percent, of the 2,577 MSU students who studied abroad in 2012 came from the Eli Broad College of Business (MSU: Study Abroad, n.d.). *Broad*, with a total undergraduate enrollment of 6,276 for the spring of 2014 offers undergraduate degrees in *Accounting, Finance, General Management, Hospitality Business, Human Resource Management, Marketing* and *Supply Chain Management* (see Table 1 for enrollment numbers).

Table 1. Student enrollment by major in the Broad College of Business – Spring 2014.

	Total Students			Freshman (1st year)			Sophomore (2nd year)			Junior (4th year)			Senior (4th year)		
Major	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Accounting	**1,080**	537	543	299	169	130	317	161	156	223	97	126	**241**	110	131
Human Resource Management	**188**	148	40	64	52	12	54	42	12	33	28	5	**37**	26	11
Finance	**1,489**	426	1,063	458	138	320	417	124	293	292	77	215	**322**	87	235
Hospitality Business	**824**	523	301	177	118	59	193	120	73	204	132	72	**250**	153	97
Supply Chain Management	**1,258**	444	811	304	107	197	318	113	205	305	108	197	**331**	116	215
General Management	**550**	183	367	292	93	199	188	70	118	32	9	23	**38**	11	27
Marketing	**887**	443	444	304	149	155	290	143	147	126	64	62	**167**	87	80
Broad Business Total	**6,276**	**2,704**	**3,572**	**1,898**	**826**	**1,072**	**1,777**	**773**	**1,004**	**1,215**	**515**	**700**	**1,386**	**590**	**796**

(Students by major, 2014, p. 2).

It is this largest discipline of students studying abroad in which the research presented later in this paper is conducted. The commonality of the discipline is expected to allow for an increased likelihood of an accurate representation of students across the United States.

There are a variety of different study abroad 'models' or styles of programs offered at MSU, however, the two primary structures are Faculty-led programs and Co-sponsored programs. Faculty-led programs are much like they sound in that they are coordinated and overseen by an MSU faculty member. These faculty members act as the students guide as well as evaluate and grade the participating students (MSU: Academic Matters, n.d.). There are two sub-sects of this style of program; the first

being embedded faculty-led programs in which students generally attend classes on MSU's campus for the first part of the semester in preparation of an excursion abroad which takes place later in the semester. The second style is stand-alone faculty-led programs, which are conducted entirely abroad and can range from a portion of a semester to the whole semester (MSU: Models, n.d.). Unlike the Faculty-led programs, Co-sponsored programs do not enlist the supervision of an MSU staff member. Students are enrolled directly with the host institution where they attend classes designed and implemented as a part of that university's curriculum (MSU: Academic Matters, n.d.).

As MSU offers a wide variety of SA programs across most disciplines, the enrollment requirements can fluctuate as a result of differing circumstances. For some programs, participation is simply subject to the same considerations as any on-campus class would be such as field of study and prerequisites. Other programs have limited availability, are not in alignment with conventional scheduling and can be restrictive based on merit (MSU: Models, n.d.).

4. Research Methods

As the essence of this study is largely exploratory in nature, a predominantly inductive approach is used in the pursuit of answers to the above research questions. Taking it a step further, an abductive approach might be said to be a more relevant descriptor as any theoretical account obtained retains its usefulness from preserving a hold on the specific reality of that contributing participant. Despite the heavy concentration on an inductive or abductive approach, it is not to say that some deductive elements will not be used, as with most situations it is nearly impossible to adhere strictly to one process without some help from the other (Bryman, 2012). Complimenting this approach will be the significant use of qualitative methods, which fall in line with achieving the aim and objectives of the research. A much smaller focus is directed towards the use of quantitative methods, which remain in the capacity to provide support and balance to the qualitative data.

4.1 Research Strategy

When taking into consideration the topic of student attitudes and inhibitions towards studying abroad, a platform allowing for a wider range of original responses and for the possibility of enlightenment through previously unforeseen elements is extremely advantageous. A qualitative approach not only allows for this but also provides students with an adequate medium to convey the subtleties of the human condition through inflection, tone and emotion, all of which contribute to the quality, depth and richness of the data obtained. Possibly the most heavily utilized method of conducting qualitative research is that of the interview. The popularity of this method is not the result of random occurrence, but rather of the flexibility, efficiency and accuracy that is offered through the employment of the interview process, making it ideal for this study (Bryman, 2012). In his book *Social Research Methods,* Alan Bryman states one of the greatest benefits of conducting interviews: "qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphases in the research as a result of significant issues that

emerge in the course of interviews" (2012, p. 470). With this in mind along with providing the perfect method for accurately capturing the sensibilities of those participating in this study, online video interviews have been conducted and the content analyzed in both real time and retroactively through the review of the accompanying (recorded) audio.

While qualitative methods are arguably sufficient for the purposes of this study, elements of a mixed-method approach prove to be advantageous in the avoidance of excluding valuable and relevant data. The ancillary use of quantitative components helps to solicit accurate and easily interpreted responses, which complement the facilitation of data collection, analysis and ultimately the presentation of results. The somewhat reserved use of this method is ideal for portions of research not requiring the flexibility and depth accompanying a qualitative approach. This quantifiable portion of the study was conducted through the distribution of emails to potential participants asking them to complete an online questionnaire containing largely closed questions.

4.2 Research Design & Sampling

4.2.1 Self-Completion Questionnaires

A self-completion questionnaire was distributed to 250 senior level MSU students, all of whom were enrolled in the Spring 2014 semester with the Eli Broad College of Business. The sample of 250, slightly less than 20 percent of the 1,386 *Broad* students studying at a senior level, was deemed sufficient due to the homogeneous nature of the population. Sampling only students in their final years of undergraduate studies helps to avoid the individuals who may still have plans to undertake a student exchange program, with the possible exception of those who may yet pursue a Master's or Doctoral degree. A slight variation on the simple random sampling method was used to create the sample ultimately used (Bryman, 2012). Every possible combination of a two-letter sequence was entered into a spreadsheet (i.e. aa, ab, ac...zx, zy, zz) resulting in 676 total combinations. Each of these two-letter combinations was assigned a random number between 1 and 1,000,000. The software available to generate random numbers was not capable of assigning *unique* random numbers, so a large range was used to aid in the reduction of the possibility of repeat numbers. The list was then reordered numerically from the smallest to largest integer, resulting in a randomized list of two-letter combinations. Starting at the top of the randomized list and working down, each two-letter combination was used to search MSU's online student database for the last name of students who satisfied the conditions of (1) possessing the necessary credits for classification as a senior; (2) being enrolled in the Eli Broad College of Business; and (3) had either a US or no home address listed (eliminating students currently in the US on foreign study abroad programs). The process was stopped when 250 participants who met these criteria were identified.

Using this technique, the author acknowledges the potential of sibling bias through the increased likelihood of including members of the same family due to a heavy focus on student surnames (ultimately as a result of the sporadic and low response rate, this is not deemed to be a relevant concern). Several students who met the above requirements had voluntarily removed their contact information from the online database, allowing for the extremely low possibility of these particular students sharing personality traits that would directly affect their attitudes towards the practice

of studying abroad. This is deemed an acceptable level of sampling error, as it is unlikely to present undue influence on results. As these few concerns were considered acceptable, this method of sampling was not only decidedly appropriate, but necessary due to the organizational stylings of the student database as well as time constraints. As a result of having to analyze each student individually to ensure the meeting of the necessary requirements, the more comprehensive approach of reviewing the records of all 49,000[6] enrolled students in order to gain a truly random sample or implement a stratified random sampling approach, was not realistic (Bryman, 2012).

Emails (see Appendix I) were sent that contained a brief explanation of the study and invited the selected students to participate via a link to the online questionnaire hosted on a third party website[7] specializing in the creation and administration of questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed to be brief and easily completed in order to encourage the highest possible rate of participation. Students had the possibility of being directed down different survey paths resulting in between 6 and 27 questions, depending on the responses provided. The questionnaire consisted of closed questions utilizing the Likert scale and one to three open questions. The questionnaire and various branching options are illustrated in Appendix III.

4.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

To supplement the largely quantitative questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted as a means of collecting qualitative data. As a result of high logistical costs, face-to-face interviewing was not economically feasible. Using the same sample of 250 students as described in the previous section, emails were sent inviting the sample to participate in a brief online interview for 15 dollars[8] in compensation in order to facilitate responses. Despite the offering, agreement to participate was much lower than expected. In order to obtain additional participants, the use of snowball sampling was implemented with the few students who had agreed to be interviewed. It was believed that this method would not only add validity to the request for participation, but also increase the potential number of respondents. Unfortunately very few additional participants were obtained through the use of this method. In an attempt to further increase the number of potential interviewees, an additional 100 students were contacted with invitations to participate in the study. Ultimately, out of the 350 total students invited to participate, only five interviews materialized. Respondents who agreed to take part were asked to complete the questionnaire in order to provide the researcher with a base level of knowledge in relation to the interviewees' attitudes and inhibitions as they relate to study abroad programs. This allowed for the tailoring of interview questions to the particulars of each individual's personality and outlook (Bryman, 2012).

As the nature of questions asked during interviews varied quite widely depending on the particular participant, no formal interview guide was constructed. What might more accurately be described as a set of 'memory prompts' was designed for each individual with direct consideration of the unique responses provided on their questionnaire. Through the use of these 'memory prompts', structure was provided if

---

[6] The database includes Master and Doctoral level students (not solely the 35,478 undergraduate enrollees).
[7] Fluidsurveys.com
[8] USD

needed while leaving a wide berth for flexibility within responses. With more reserved candidates, various methods of probing were used to stimulate dialogue but kept to a minimum to avoid undue influence (ibid.). In addition to the actual content collected from the interviews, attention was also paid to non-verbal queues and their implications.

4.3 Analysis of Data

The data collected from the interviews was fruitful in capturing the unique viewpoints of the contributing students in the context of what they see to be relevant and important (Bryman, 2012). The analysis of the data collected form the interviews along with the limited data acquired as a result of the returned questionnaires is discussed below.

4.3.1 Questionnaires

The response to the invitation to complete a brief questionnaire within the original sample of 250 students resulted in a very poor[9] response rate, approximately 10 percent, despite attempts at re-soliciting participation. With this rate of response not proving to be adequate enough to draw a sizeable amount of conclusive information, only very limited portions of the data obtained are used. Alan Bryman addresses this issue by stating that it is "important to be open about the limitations of a low response rate in terms of the likelihood that findings will be biased" (2012, p. 200). He continues on to say, "it seems likely that, given that there are likely to be limits on the degree to which a survey researcher can boost a response rate, more and more effort will go into refining ways of estimating and correcting for anticipated biases in findings" (ibid.). With this in mind, the completed questionnaires can still be seen to provide useful data, as long as the possibility of bias is kept in the forefront of ones mind.

The Questionnaires take on a largely supplemental role in supporting the data collected from interviews as a result of their low response rate. Several closed questions received responses that were consentient enough to be considered to provide value. Responses to several open ended questions also granted some helpful data, offering opinions and personal situations that ultimately provided useful and applicable testimony. The majority of the information utilized from the received questionnaires is analyzed following a univariate approach. Bivariate analysis was deemed largely inappropriate, as any immerging relationships between data would be unverifiable due to the limited response (Bryman, 2012).

4.3.2 Interviews

In order to elicit the most value from the conducted interviews, a thematic analysis approach was implemented. While this approach is sometimes criticized for its lack of specificity and thus harboring an inability of its use to be definitively identified, it still provides useful methods for data analysis. As the name suggests, thematic analysis concentrates focus on the emergence of themes from the collected data. A common accompaniment to this approach is the use of "Framework", a method of organizing data through the utilization of a matrix that collects and compares developing themes and sub-themes (Bryman, 2012).

---

[9] It remains impossible to confirm but it is largely speculated that many email invites to participate in the study, both via questionnaire and interview, were blocked by anti-spam filters.

Through the course of conducting interviews, an iterative approach was adopted in order to ensure that newly emerging themes and concepts were allowed the necessary attention while preserving the original focus of the research. As each interview was completed, the conversation was subsequently transcribed, reviewed and modestly coded. Upon their completion, the transcribed interviews were reexamined in more detail and the developing themes were solidified and arranged as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Main and Sub-themes emergent from interviews conducted.

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Description
Previous Experiences	-	Impact of previous experiences abroad.
Awareness	-	Exhibited general or specific knowledge of SA.
Perceived Value →	Personal & Cultural Value	Perception of personal and cultural value acquired through SA participation.
	Academic Value	Perception of the classes and curriculum offered while on SA or as preparation for SA.
	Career Value	View of SA in relation to future career prospects.
	Program Length	View of SA worth in relation to program duration.
Obstacles →	Financial	View of financial barriers associated with SA.
	Time	View of time considerations affecting SA.
	Social	View of social needs and obligations affecting SA.
	Deferred Graduation	View on possible deferred graduation as a result of SA.
	Other	Peripheral issues affecting SA.

The individual data compounding these themes and sub-themes was then collated into a framework matrix for structure and comparison. The responses making up this data did not solely consist of directly addressed subject matter but also implied details of a more abstract nature. Discussions of one topic were often found to be very revealing about others. This data can be seen in the complete matrix in Appendix IV.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Taking into consideration that the research undertaken for the purpose of this study is largely associated with two different countries, adherence to multiple codes of ethics was strictly practiced. As a significant portion of the data collected involves citizens of the United States, the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) standard of ethics were followed throughout the course of the undertaken research in order to protect the rights of participants as well as to alleviate any potential concerns. With the compilation of data, supervision, institutional support and substantiation of this research paper taking place in Sweden, the Vetenskapsrådet, or Swedish Research Council's (SRC), report on *Good Research Practice* was also followed.

The email inviting students to participate in this study for both the questionnaire and interview included a disclaimer covering other ethical issues as can be seen in Appendix I and II, respectively. While the researcher retains a list of the 250 students invited to participate, the questionnaire portion of the study remains largely anonymous, as it is not possible to identify all of the specific individuals who returned a completed questionnaire. The identities of the interview participants are known to the author; however, no names are included within these pages in order to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of each individual.

5 Presentation & Discussion of Research Findings

The emerging themes and sub-themes resulting from the thematic analysis (see Table 2) have been divided into sections below in order to maintain clarity and simplicity. As they proved to have a heavy impact on subsequent areas of focus, the influences of previous travel experiences on an individual's perception of SA programs is presented first. This section is followed by student awareness in relation to available SA opportunities as a result of similar reasoning. Discourse will then move on to the two preeminent areas of focus, the first of which identifies various forms of value perceived to be associated with SA programs and concludes with discussion of the obstacles seen to hinder participation.

As the majority of the ensuing discussion revolves around the interview subjects, it is advantageous to keep in mind some basic characteristics associated with these individuals. Of the five interviews conducted, two of the students were male and three were female. Two of these individuals had not participated in a SA program and had also not traveled abroad to any significant extent. Two other individuals had not participated in a study abroad program but had traveled abroad quite extensively. The final individual had participated in a study abroad program. For ease of reference, this information is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Basic characteristics of interviewed students.

Student	Gender	Has studied Abroad?	Has traveled extensively?	Expressed desire to study abroad?
Student 1	Male	NO	NO	YES
Student 2	Male	NO	NO	NO
Student 3	Female	YES	n/a	n/a
Student 4	Female	NO	YES	YES
Student 5	Female	NO	YES	NO

While the sample size is much smaller than desired, it remains fortunate that it provides a great deal of breadth and significant variety through the inclusion of both individuals who have and have not studied abroad as well as those who have and have not previously traveled to any great extent. The varying perspectives offered by these

students will be presented largely through the use of transcribed quotes and subsequently analyzed, discussed and compared. The quotations that appear in text have been very lightly edited in order to remove distracting filler words. Absolutely no content was eliminated that would affect the intended meaning of the quotation. During the transcription of the interviews, each time a change in speaker occurred (between interviewer and interviewee), the passage was assigned a sequential number for ease of reference. The number of that conversational exchange (denoted by "x.") within the transcription of each interviewed participant is provided within parenthesis following each quotation referred to below. The transcribed interviews will not be provided along with this paper due to their ungainliness, but may be provided upon request.

5.1 Previous Experiences

During the collection of data, it became apparent that certain factors played a significant role in the shaping of the attitudes and perceptions held by the involved students, the most prominent and heavily recurring of which was their previous international travel experiences. Two of the students interviewed and some of those responding to questionnaires had traveled extensively or had lived abroad prior to, or during, their university years. These experiences add significantly to the individuals' cultural capital and can be seen to impact their perceptions in a somewhat more counterintuitive manner than expected. Both students who had traveled extensively but had not participated in a study abroad program spoke highly of the potential positive impacts of such programs, but often relegated their use to those less well traveled. It is difficult to look past the perceptual implication this has for the relevance of curricula integrated with such programs. Academic elements of a program appear to take a backseat to experiencing different cultures and seeing new places.

Those individuals with previous travel experience in some ways manage to convolute the focus of the study by introducing an excessive amount of unknown variables. It is difficult to obtain the personal travel history of every participant let alone accurately categorize and integrate those experiences into an analysis. It would likely be much easier to limit the investigation to those who had only traveled abroad on a study abroad program along with those who have never been outside of the United States; however, this level of specificity is a near impossibility considering the resources available in the context of this study. Nonetheless, as this is not conceivable, the additional insight provided as a result of these personal experiences will be welcomed as it shapes the individuals perceptions towards study abroad programs. It is asked that this be kept in mind through the presentation of the following sections, as while it is a widely impactful factor, it is largely immeasurable within the confines of this paper.

5.2 Awareness

Student awareness of SA programs is not easily gauged. What constitutes awareness? Simply knowing that your university offers some form of study abroad? Or is it necessary to have specific knowledge as to a multitude of program details? There may not be a definitive method for discerning a student's level of awareness in relation to study abroad opportunities, but through a look at responses provided by individuals, a general idea can be formed. This brief sojourn into the level of awareness of students is

useful in establishing existing personal connections with the concept of studying abroad.

A student's level of awareness suggests a connection to the perceived value associated with study abroad programs along with the intent to participate. Student 2 expressed the least knowledge of available programs as well as a low level of intent towards participation; when asked if he had considered any study abroad programs during his time at MSU he responded with, "I have not actually", and later on mentioned, "I'm not really aware of all the classes offered abroad" (x. 013 & 029). While agreeing with the questionnaire statement that SA programs are personally worthwhile, he felt that academically, time was better spent enrolled in classes on MSU's campus. This is in stark contrast to Student 1 who had participated in the first portion of a study abroad program, showing a strong level of intent to participate as well as acute awareness of available opportunities. He also strongly agreed that SA programs are personally worthwhile and disagreed that time was better spent in classes on MSU's campus as opposed to abroad.

Student 4 and 5 exhibit a level of awareness that can be seen to fall in between the above two cases, as does their expressed value and intent to study abroad. While no explicit knowledge of the specific SA programs offered was mentioned through the course of the interviews, both stated that they had seriously considered studying abroad at various points during their undergraduate studies. Along with illustrating intent, these considerations imply a somewhat more than general awareness of the study abroad programs offered. As will be discussed later, these two individuals generally hold favorable opinions of studying abroad, but not without several slight reservations.

Attempts to delve deeper into an individual's awareness level of SA programs were made but were found to provide little in the way of additional useful data. It was discovered that for the purposes of this study, there were a limited amount of facets to explore beyond the initial inquiry as to how conscious a student is of study abroad opportunities. It should also be noted that 'awareness' could be considered a barrier or obstacle on a more abstract level as those unaware of the opportunities available to them are, of course, unlikely to be in the position to consider them as opportunities, resulting in an obstruction of sorts.

5.3 Perceived Value

Previous international experiences along with varying levels of awareness relating to SA programs provides a base on which to evaluate the values students associate with program participation. Much of the following discussion can be seen to corroborate the findings presented in *Key Concepts & Theories* (Section 2) earlier in this paper. The impact of Globalization, benefits of cognitive development, advancement of social and cultural behaviors, and attainment of various forms of capital can all be seen to legitimize and influence the values placed on study abroad programs by the students interviewed.

The interviewed students were seen to associate value with study abroad programs in a variety of different respects, but several were seen to emerge with more prominence than others. It is likely that there are various approaches to categorizing the different forms of value one might attach to participation in a SA program, however, in the pursuit of simplicity the division will be kept to two main and two subsequent areas

of discussion. The first of the two main areas consists of the personal and cultural value perceived by students while the second deals with the academic value perceived. Not standing on its own, but more of a combination of certain elements of these two main areas of consideration, the first subsequent area concerns the value seen to be applicable to career development. This is followed by the somewhat peripheral discussion of the impact of program length on perceived value.

5.3.1 Personal & Cultural Value

Whether speaking of past experiences or potential ones, the element of personal and cultural value arose as a central theme in the attitudes conveyed towards study abroad programs. While every student who responded to the questionnaire along with those interviewed tended to agree with the personal and cultural merits offered through studying abroad, it was not unanimously agreed upon as the best method for an individual to obtain such cultural capital.

Student 1 and 2, who had not studied abroad or traveled extensively, agreed with the questionnaire statement, "I believe participation in a study abroad program to be a personally worthwhile endeavor". Student 1 expressed a great deal of interest in a business program in Japan and explained his desire to participate: "I plan to go to Japan one way or another […] but I would like it to be study abroad" (x. 032). This same student maintained his enthusiasm for such programs through the anticipation of further studies: "Sometime in my academic career I would like to go on one [SA]" (x. 034).

Student 4 mentions that she "really wanted to [study abroad]" (x. 036). While she hadn't had the opportunity to enroll in a SA program during her undergraduate years, she largely credits her interest to previous experiences: "I lived abroad for about 7 years […] which was actually really cool" (x. 020). She goes on to say that living abroad is "the best thing I think I've experienced because I've met so many different people from different cultures and I got to get to know a completely different culture from mine" (x. 030). As a result of these past overseas experiences, she has gained a favorable opinion towards the potential of study abroad programs. She mentions that when speaking to friends considering studying abroad,

> *I tell them that they should definitely do it, especially if they haven't done it before because you do learn a lot from going somewhere new even if they do speak the same language and it's kind of similar. It's just people act differently and you see a different way of doing things, so I always tell people that if they get the opportunity, they definitely should because you do learn a lot from it* (x. 046).

Student 3 who had studied abroad for two weeks in London shared the same view, mentioning that despite the similarities between England and the United States such as speaking the same language as well as practicing comparable customs, there were still many cultural differences that were valuable to experience.

Student 5, who had also spent a significant amount of time overseas but had never participated in SA, speaks of the cultural benefits of her experiences: "my favorite part about going abroad is that you see a whole different type of lifestyle that you would never see here probably" (x. 079). While she clearly places a great deal of value on her past experiences abroad, she mentions that an actual study abroad program

doesn't provide any significant benefits in her opinion: "I would rather just go to another country on vacation with my family or friends" (x. 061).

Despite the low response rate, the questionnaires retain some legitimacy when considering student opinion towards the personal value offered by studying abroad. Of the 13 respondents who had not studied abroad, there were zero negative responses, only two were neutral and the remaining individuals either agreed or strongly agreed to the personal worth offered through a study abroad experience[10] (see Figure 7).
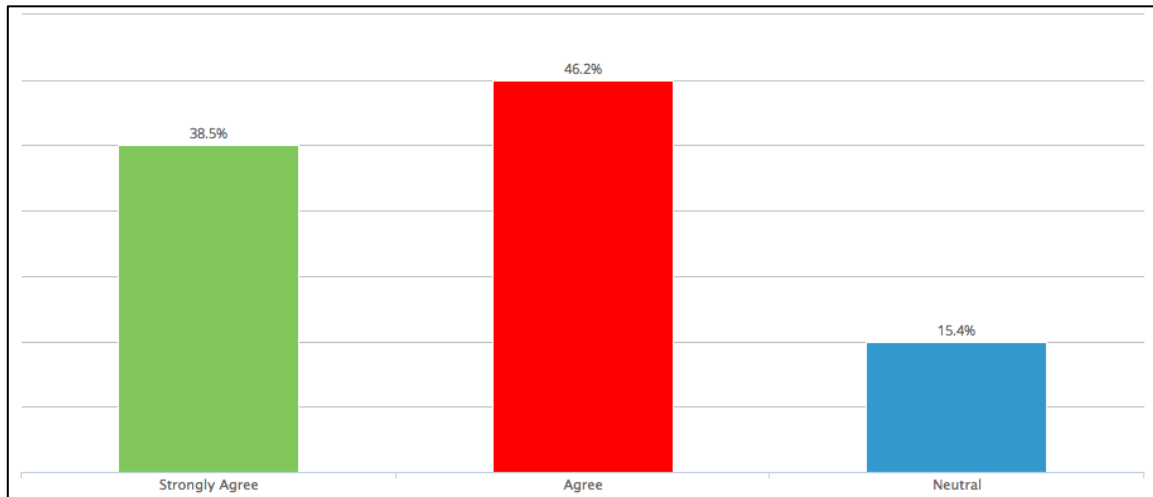

Figure 7[11]. Questionnaire response by percentage to the statement: *I believe participation in a study abroad program to be a personally worthwhile endeavor.*

Through the questionnaire responses and the answers resulting from the conducted interviews, it can be seen that most individuals share similar sentiments as to the personal and cultural value of an international experience. However, this shared agreement begins to waiver when applying these values specifically to a study abroad program. It can be seen that study abroad programs provide students with a vessel in which to obtain these decidedly valuable personal and cultural experiences, but are not necessarily seen by all to be the most effective vessel.

For many, one of the more sizable attractions to SA programs over independent travel is that of convenience along with the structure and guidance they provide. It can be suggested that individuals with means and past experience to support them, possibly see less of a benefit to studying abroad as they are more likely to achieve these cultural experiences independently of a structured academic program. Student 5, in expressing a preference towards personal international travel over university-sponsored programs, adds weight to this view; she speaks of why she is able to travel to the extent she does and the convenience of having family abroad: "they've dispersed. It's nice for me, I don't have to pay for hotels" (x. 083). In addition to simply being an alternative method of gaining an international cultural experience, this preference of approach also

---

[10] Out of a Likert scale consisting of 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'.
[11] The possible responses of 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' were omitted from the figure as they both carried a value of 0.

suggests a significant lack of importance being placed on the academic elements that accompany study abroad programs. As the academic factor plays a defining role in what constitutes an international experience as "study abroad", it is an area of focus that warrants significant discussion.

5.3.2 Academic Value

While the data collected would suggest that the student value placed on SA curriculum lags well behind personal and cultural experiences as a reason for participating in a study abroad program, academic benefits still manage to retain a respectable degree of influence. Much of the data relegating academic value to a second chair position arises not as a result of directly stated sentiment, but more as a result of the absence of it. Nevertheless, several of the interviewed students do explicitly express their satisfaction of the offered curriculum.

Student 1 had enrolled in a study abroad program that combined preparatory classes on MSU's campus, culminating in a short-term study abroad experience in Japan. The classes maintained a heavy international business focus specific to Japanese business culture. In speaking of classes leading up to an overseas experience he mentions that he "thought those were pretty great" (x. 026). While this particular student was unable to follow the program through to its conclusion in Japan due to financial reasons, his studies would have focused on "how specific companies do their work as opposed to their American counterparts" (x. 22). He maintained a heavily positive view of the curriculum he would have undertaken abroad, expressed through his demeanor and an unmistakable enthusiasm along with multiple statements that he "thought that [the class content] was very interesting" (x. 022).

Student 3, who had participated in a short-term study abroad experience as part of a marketing class, spoke highly of the curriculum abroad. As a result of her time in London, she was able to look at the marketing strategies of businesses first hand, affording her genuine insight into international marketing techniques. While she found the classes abroad valuable, she did classify the academic portion of her experience as secondary to the experience of being fully immersed in another culture.

Student 5 who had seriously considered studying abroad didn't express much knowledge in relation to the specific curriculum offered by various study abroad classes, however, she did harbor some preconceived notions about certain destinations and disciplines: "I feel like our school has really good programs in Italy and England for business classes" (x. 055). Despite touting the quality of such programs, she goes on to say,

> *The classes really I don't care about there. They're pretty easy when you take them there […] I would take more difficult classes on study abroad cause it's all condensed in two weeks to a month so they make it a little bit easier* (x. 057).

This statement also suggests that some students may consider studies undertaken as part of a study abroad program to be less intensive than classes offered on MSU's campus and thus potentially thought to provide a lower quality of education. While some students may see this in a positive light as an opportunity to pass difficult classes with relative ease, others may see this as a waste of time and as being cheated out of relevant knowledge. Seemingly in support of the ladder possibility, Student 2 disagreed with the questionnaire statement, "I feel my time is better spent in classes on MSU's

campus than in classes that are a part of a study abroad program". Other students who responded to the questionnaire expressed concern that the academic portion of study abroad programs can even have a tendency to devalue the experience. "The schedules are pre-planned a[nd] leave little room to do what you want to", was one response to a question asking students to identify what disadvantages they associate with SA programs.

This aversion to the importance of the academics offered as an essential element of SA programs can be seen in the subtext of other statements as well. When asked what country she has an interest in visiting as part of a study abroad program, Student 5 mentions, "I would definitely go probably somewhere in Europe, cause I've never been to Europe" (x. 055). While there is certainly nothing awry with this response, it remains relatively likely that the primary focus of this student's potential SA experience would prove to be less concerned with academics and maintain a heavier concentration on cultural aspects. This same sentiment was largely expressed by the other interviewees as well through an absence of enthusiasm and focus toward academic aspects of programs.

Ultimately, as a result of questionnaire and interview responses, academic value can be seen to be of secondary importance to that of personal and cultural experiences. However, it is understandable that enthusiasm increases when discussing cultural aspects over the academic. Academic particulars, while certainly maintaining a variance from the typical campus classroom to a unique setting abroad, still retain their relative predictability and structure. While academics are a necessary and important element in what makes a study abroad program what it is, the cultural aspect is likely to be what entices and allures students to participate.

5.3.3 Career Value

While considering study abroad programs in relation to future career development, the applicable value extracted from such programs is often seen in the context of both the cultural and academic knowledge obtained. While containing both academic and cultural elements, career value is not necessarily the sum of both these parts; it merely makes use of elements from both divisions.

As presented in section 2, forces such as globalization are propelling the need for increased attainment of cultural and social capital, advanced cognitive functions and international understanding in the work place. While it would be difficult to identify a business that would not benefit from their employees possessing these skills, it becomes doubly important for individuals considering a career specifically focused on international commerce. Four out of the five students interviewed considered an internationally based career that would involve spending a significant amount of time overseas as a strong possibility in their potential future employment.

Student 1, who was enrolled and participated in the on-campus stages of a study abroad program, saw the preliminary classes he attended as a unique way to gain applicable skills in anticipation of a future internationally based career. With a desire to focus his business career towards US–Japanese relations, the class along with the accompanying experience in Japan would have provided him with valuable insight into prospective future careers and likely allowed for networking opportunities.

Unfortunately, this student was ultimately unable to participate in the study abroad portion of the class due to financial concerns.

Even those without specific plans to work internationally still exhibited a strong consideration towards international career prospects. "I'm really open to it", stated Student 3, who had participated in a study abroad program; "I'm really down for wherever a company would send me", a notion she largely attributes to her study abroad experience along with previous travels (x. 012). She considers her study abroad experience in London to be a valuable asset to her future career possibilities. Having the opportunity as part of a marketing class to visit English owned and operated companies, she was able to gain a first-hand perspective as to the differences in the techniques and approaches used by a country that differs from her own.

Student 4, who had not participated in an undergraduate study abroad program but spent the majority of her high-school years attending a school abroad, mentions when talking about a future career that "those skill sets that you learn dealing with different people are something you can use for the rest of your life" (x. 046). As a result of these experiences, she places a great deal of importance on keeping her options open for an international career: "one of the things I look at when I'm looking for jobs in the future [is that] I definitely want to have that opportunity to go abroad again" (x. 048).

Student 5, when asked about career aspirations, expressed an even more extreme possibility by mentioning that she "would actually be open to just living permanently somewhere outside the US" (x. 069). Only student 2 refrained from expressing future career ambitions although he was not explicitly asked, resulting in an indeterminate opinion as opposed to an adverse view. While one can conclude that the extent of aspirations towards an internationally based career certainly vary to some degree, the interest displayed by the interviewed students appears to convey the sentiment that some form of prior experience abroad is a valuable asset going into the increasingly volatile job market.

5.3.4 Program Length

Through the course of the conducted interviews, the length of time students devote to a study abroad program arose as a somewhat peripheral issue. It did not appear to be a vastly significant concern to the individuals being interviewed despite surfacing in several various responses. The length of a study abroad program was cited both as affecting value as well as contributing to the possible obstruction of pursuing a SA experience.

Student 2, while discussing academic and cultural value, mentions the effect of program length on the impact of a study abroad experience: "I actually went abroad during high-school for a week, two weeks and I didn't really get the full experience of it. […] I didn't really see anything beneficial to it unless I was there for a longer period of time" (x. 015). Another student, who was not interviewed but returned a questionnaire, responded to a question asking what disadvantages were associated with SA programs with: "Less general learning for short programs". While these comments imply there is an added value associated with longer program duration, many students find protracted programs to incite other problems, most commonly dealing with available time, social issues and added financial concerns.

Concerns raised regarding program duration also extend from having an effect on the perceived value offered by study abroad programs to becoming an obstacle for consideration when contemplating participation. Student 5 explains her complication with shorter-term programs: "Problem was […] those were always during the summertime and my internships would start right after school" (x. 045). This same student went on to mention that longer-term programs also were not an option for her, as they would have impacted her social life to an extent she was unwilling to endure during her undergraduate years. While both short and long-term programs can be seen to impact an individual's perception and willingness to pursue a SA program, multiple other factors arose that appeared to have a more significant effect on students.

5.4 Obstacles to Participation

As was introduced in section 2.6 above, there are many commonly cited barriers to enrolling in a study abroad program. The data collected as a result of the interviews and questionnaires largely supports the validity of these previously discussed obstacles. However, a unique and personal perspective is provided as a result of reviewing, aggregating and analyzing the comments obtained throughout the course of the interviews, offering insight into the significance of relevant obstacles. Obstacles bearing statistical polarization on the returned questionnaires along with those frequently mentioned during the interviews are presented below in rough hierarchical structure. Those perceived by students to have most heavily impeded their ability to participate in a study abroad program are presented first, abating to those infrequently mentioned or those merely considered an inconvenience.

5.4.1 Financial Concerns

It comes as no surprise that the most heavily cited hindrance to participation in a study abroad program revolves around financial concerns. This reason was cited by those who had not studied abroad as a major reason for not doing so, as well as by those who had studied abroad as one of the largest obstacles they had to overcome in order to participate. It is unanimous between the five students interviewed that finances were a significant concern involving any consideration of a SA program. While the response rate to the distributed questionnaires was much too low to make significant statistical comparisons, the results in regards to financial impedance were consentient to the extent it bears relevance. Out of 10 respondents who had not participated in a SA program but had considered the prospect, all 10 felt that financial concerns were of an 'average' or greater concern[12] (see Figure 8).

---

[12] Out of a Likert scale consisting of 'None', 'Very little', 'Average', 'Significant' and 'Very much'.
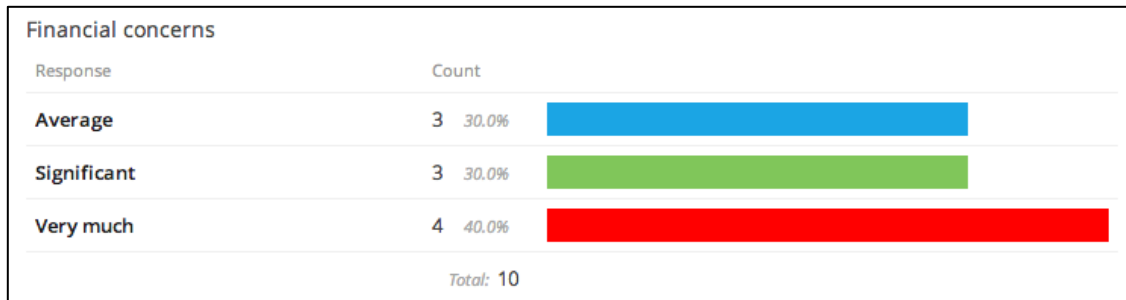
Figure 8[13]. Questionnaire response to the following request (of students who **had not** studied abroad): *Please indicate to what extent the following factors played a role in your decision NOT to study abroad: | Financial concerns.*

Though not perfectly accordant, questionnaire respondents who had studied abroad showed similar concerns over financial issues when making their decision to study abroad. Seven out of these ten students cited financial considerations as being of an 'average' or greater difficulty to overcome pursuant to a SA program (see Figure 9). Again, as a result of a poor response rate, these figures cannot be considered definitive proof of the financial burden study abroad programs often lay on students, but they do suggest support of this already well-established concern.
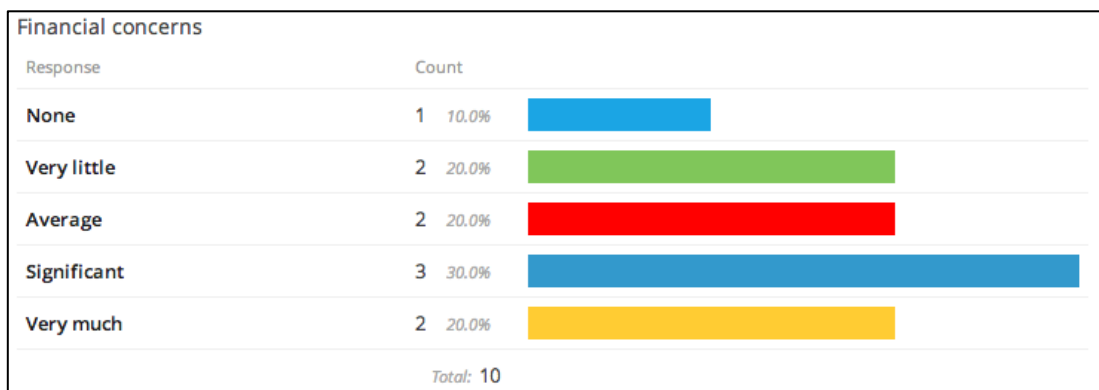

Figure 9. Questionnaire response to the following request (of students who **had** studied abroad): *Please indicate to what extent the following barriers were difficult to overcome when deciding to study abroad? | Financial concerns.*

It is also worth briefly mentioning that another aspect emphasizing financial concern might be seen in the number of students who utilized the opportunity to recapitulate their monetary concerns when filling out the questionnaire. Despite already being asked to rate the difficulty of overcoming financial barriers in the closed-question portion, four respondents chose to restate that financial concerns were a primary prohibiting factor in pursuit of studying abroad later on in the questionnaire.

The comments provided as a result of the conducted interviews offer additional insight into what the questionnaire data already suggests. Student 1 had enrolled in a

---

[13] The possible responses of 'None' and 'Very little' were omitted from the figure as they both carried a value of 0.

study abroad program and attended preliminary classes, but regretfully explains, "I had to drop out because I couldn't afford the […] program fee for the rest of it" (x. 026). He goes on to say that he explored various tactics to help offset the costs of the program such as scholarships: "I applied to a couple […] but it was not enough for me to actually go on the trip; […] I had to pay my own way" (x. 028 & 030). When asked if any other obstacles contributed to his dropping of the program, he reiterated, "in my case it was just mainly financial concerns" (x. 040). Student 4 mentions that she would consider the possibility of financial aid as well: "I would have to look into possibly applying for scholarships […] figuring out the difference between staying here for a semester and studying abroad, if it's similar and how much more that would be" (x. 040).

The other interviewees largely cited similar concerns over program fees with Student 2 adding that the costs involved with travel preparation as well as meals and expenses while on a program were also a deterrent. In concurrence with the limited data provided above by the questionnaires, Student 3 cited the program fee as being quite substantial and constituted the largest barrier she had to overcome in order to participate in a study abroad program.

While the vast majority of the collected data points to the costs associated with study abroad programs as being the predominant obstacle to overcome, most of the students interviewed maintained the view that significant value was still offered for the money spent. Student 5 disagrees, declaring: "I think the money I'd pay for study abroad is not worth it because for that money I could probably spend double the amount of time there [abroad] if I wanted to" (x. 061). While this statement may be true, it tends to overlook the potential academic worth of participating in a SA program. It is thus perhaps not very accurate to presuppose that leisure travel and studying abroad should directly equate in a fiscal sense.

5.4.2 Time Considerations

As a result of the collected data, time appeared to impact the decisions of students to study abroad in two different ways. The first being in the more immediate and definitive sense of simply either having enough available time to allocate towards a SA program or not. The second way time appears to impact a student's decision is on a more macro level, manifesting in the form of perceived potential opportunity. As available time is a commodity that many university students lack due to significant academic responsibilities, active social lives and jobs among other things, it is no surprise that many individuals have difficulty making room in their schedules to participate in a SA program. Interview responses along with several statements contained in the returned questionnaires show how a lack of time, other obligations and limited program availability can be a great hindrance.

Leading up to her study abroad experience, Student 3 cited time as her largest concern, second only to financial hurdles. As an optional addition to the class, a study abroad trip was only offered over the Christmas holiday, which required her to cancel previous engagements with family in order to take part. Student 4 asserts, "I didn't plan it out early enough; […] in the summer I do internships and that kind of conflicts. […] I really wanted to but I just haven't had the time to do it (x. 036). Similarly, Student 5 cites internships done over the summer months as a significant obstacle: "I just never

had that chance to do it; or I'd of had to cut my internship short but I didn't want to do an 8 week, because I'd rather do a 12 week internship" (x. 045).

Another student who returned a questionnaire cited a lack of time along with other obligations as his primary reason for not studying abroad:

I was on the hockey team at MSU and we were in season in the fall and spring and had to train in the summer. I always wanted to study abroad but it wasn't practical due to the fact that I had to prepare for the next season. Time constraints and having to be on campus in the summer also played a big role in me not being able to study abroad.

While collegiate level athletes may only constitute a small segment of students, this testament illustrates the types of scheduling conflicts many undergraduate students often face. Highly engaged students may possess a greater tendency to pursue study abroad programs but may in turn run the increased likelihood of being hindered by ambitions taking the form of previous commitments to other activities such as athletics, various clubs, groups, and internships.

Not all inhibiting obligations that were mentioned revolved around academics, some consisted of a more personal nature. One student, when asked if there were any additional barriers that were difficult to overcome leading up to a study abroad experience, responded via questionnaire, "I have children, so coordinating adequate care while I was abroad". Despite the statistical improbability of concerns of this nature being widespread within the undergraduate community, this remains a convincing attestation to the ability of perseverance in the face of demoralizing obstacles.

As stated at the beginning of this section, time was seen to affect student motivation towards undergraduate participation in SA programs in a different manner as well, through a perceived potential of opportunity. On multiple occasions during the interviews, students made reference to the possibility of future opportunities in which to study abroad. While the intention is surely there, life often gets in the way and the chance to study abroad may or may not ultimately materialize.

Student 1, who had to drop out of his program due to financial concerns, mentions in regards to study abroad, "there are a lot of opportunities. I'm not too worried about it" (x. 036). While many students are most likely sincere in their expectations of future participation, this outlook carries with it the increased likelihood of diminishing prospects. The idea that opportunity is plentiful led many of the students interviewed to mention SA participation as a possibility through further academic studies, although none of them were conclusive in a decision to pursue a higher degree. Student 1 alludes to the prospect of pursuing this route: "sometime in my academic career I would like to go on one [a SA program]" (x. 034). It seemed to be largely ignored by many students that most alternatives to this approach might constitute an international experience but, for the most part, cease to fit the definition of 'study abroad'.

Student 2 had the same feelings towards the availability of future opportunities by reasoning, "if I were to study abroad it would be [during] graduate studies" (x. 029). He adds that in addition to seeing studying abroad as a continually available option, participation at a Master's level would be less likely to result in the same level of social interference that it would at the undergraduate level. While closely related to time

constraints, concerns over missing out on the vibrant social life that often accompanies university attendance at an undergraduate level appear quite frequently in the responses provided by students and thus will be covered in the following section.

5.4.3 Social Concerns

Many students convey a certain level of apprehension towards study abroad programs as a result of the uneasiness associated with potentially missing out on an intensively social part of their lives. Others seem less concerned with the actual social activities they might possibly miss and more with how a prolonged absence will impact relationships upon their return. This is exacerbated by the fact that most students consider studying abroad during their junior or senior years, which is often at a time when they are more likely to have cultivated valuable friendships they are hesitant to put on hold. These relationships accompanied by the acute awareness of an impending graduation can result in many students feeling afraid to miss out on their last years of university before 'real life' sets in.

Student 2 goes to the extent of presenting 'missing out' on the social aspects of university as less of a barrier to overcome and more of a complete deterrent: "[I would] not [study abroad during my] undergraduate because undergraduate is when you have the most fun, hang out with people, hang out with friends" (x. 029). While this view was seen to be more of an extreme, others cited social considerations as an increasing concern in direct relation to the longevity of the potential SA program:

> *I wanted to do a semester […] but then I don't want to miss football season the first semester, and then second semester I just didn't want to be away, just because, that's when you feel like you're kind of out of it when you come back* (x. 063).

Being unable to participate in social activities not only appears to be a concern relating to the duration of ones absence but can also be seen here to have a potentially lasting effect on relationships well beyond returning to the US. Another student who returned a questionnaire agrees, "I am really close with my friends here and to spend a semester or summer away from them would hurt our relationships […] it separates you from those who didn't go". Student 4, who had not studied abroad during her undergraduate years but experienced a similar situation due to her family moving overseas mentions that one of the most difficult aspects of the process was "leaving all [her] friends behind and getting used to being uncomfortable".

Concerns also arise regarding the social dynamics created through participation in a study abroad program. In addition to missing out on social activities while being away, one student expressed concern with meeting other students while on a study abroad program: "I would do it at least with one friend that I knew really well" (x. 057). While enrolling in an SA program with a friend can be a great way to garner support and relieve anxiety, it can often be difficult to coordinate as a result of the need to synchronize schedules and align aspirations. Unlike other forms of international travel which might necessitate a heavier focus on individuality, many study abroad programs offered have a support network built into their structure through the sharing of experiences with other participating students, faculty and associated individuals abroad.

In addition to the explicit statements offered expressing social considerations, many of the students resonated a sense of not fully grasping the impact these concerns may have on them. Financial concerns or reservations in regards to available time constitute very definitive problems. In a fiscal sense, either a student has the resources to apply to the costs associated with a study abroad program or they do not. A student either has, or can make, enough room in their schedule to allow for time to study abroad, or they cannot. The reservations arising as a result of social concerns are a considerably more abstract concept. Unfortunately this makes the extent of social concerns largely difficult to measure and analyze and thus equally difficult to identify possible solutions.

5.4.4 Deferred Graduation

While seemingly of little concern to most, several of the interviewed students expressed uneasiness over the ability to acquire the credits needed to graduate as a result of enrollment in a study abroad program. It was inconclusive as to whether these students had conducted a definitive investigation as to the applicatory validity of credits earned upon the completion of such courses or if their responses were based heavily on speculation.

Two of the students interviewed who had admittedly not looked extensively into the specific credits offered as part of a SA program still maintained impressions that the limitations in classes offered might cause delays in graduation. Student 2 mentions the advantages of pursuing classes on campus: "You can't take all the classes you need for your degree at the time when you're abroad as opposed to at MSU" (x. 029). Student 5 expresses the increased potential burden of undertaking classes abroad: "I never felt like I wanted to do it with school cause then the credits and stuff wouldn't get messed up" (x. 041). Both of these students convey the general feeling that credits offered as a result of classes taken abroad can have the potential to be inapplicable to graduation requirements. Another student who returned a questionnaire goes on to express the difficulty of matching cultural interests with academic interests; when asked what other significant factors played a role in a decision not to study abroad, he responds: "finding a study abroad program in the country of my choice with the specific classes I needed. I did not want to take unnecessary classes". Yet another questionnaire respondent who had studied abroad mentioned one of the most difficult obstacles for him to overcome was: "finding a program that gave credits that I actually needed, so that it would actually help me get closer to graduation, not put me behind".

Student 3, who had studied abroad, expressed an 'average'[14] level of concern regarding deferred graduation prior to her experience abroad. During her interview she goes on to mention that since the culmination of her SA program in London, no complications have arisen as a result of the credits she earned overseas (x. 003). This tends to suggest the possibility that concern over credits earned abroad resulting in delayed graduation might carry a high level of significance in theory, but looses credibility in reality. Without a deeper look into each potential SA participant's individual academic situation along with a review of the full range of programs offered through MSU, it is not possible to definitively determine if concerns regarding deferred graduation are well-founded.

---

[14] Out of a Likert scale consisting of 'None', 'Very little', 'Average', 'Significant' and 'Very much'.

5.4.5 Other Areas of Concern

While the most heavily cited barriers to SA programs have been addressed above, several additional areas of interest bear discussion as a result of data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires. Briefly discussed will be the concept of accessibility, parental and guardian influence and finally, safety concerns.

Accessibility to study abroad programs could possibly be seen as the collective presence or absence of obstacles relevant to an individual's personal situation in pursuit of enrollment. Most of the elements that would make up this collective, such as the obstacles discussed in the previous sections, would seem to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy in their association with enrollment in a study abroad program. They are independent factors that affect the accessibility of such programs. However, certain other factors, such as competition and a limited number of available spaces can sometimes present a more direct impedance to participation. Student 3 explains how these factors affected her enrollment:

> *I would say that a lot of students had trouble getting into the program cause it was really competitive. […] I applied really early so I was fine with that, but students had trouble getting in if they applied right before or after the deadline (x. 006).*

These accessibility concerns are not necessarily applicable with all SA programs but it does present a legitimate concern for students enrolled in particular classes. These concerns were not expressed by any of the other students interviewed, possibly because most of them had not taken their interest in studying abroad to a point were these issues would arise.

In the literature reviewed in preparation for this study, parental or guardian influence as well as personal safety were cited as potential barriers to study abroad participation for some students (ICEF & MSU: Health, n.d.). The data collected as a result of the questionnaires would say otherwise. Students were asked to what extent a variety of factors played a role in their consideration of study abroad participation. Once again, despite the limited response rate, the data regarding parental influence and safety concerns was consentient enough to be seen to provide relevance.

In situations involving both those who had not studied abroad as well as those who had, not a single individual expressed a level of concern exceeding 'average'[15] when asked about parental influence (see Figures 10 and 11).
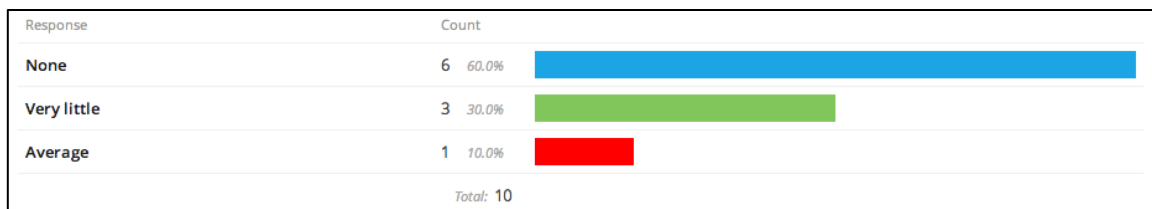
Response	Count		
None	6	60.0%	
Very little	3	30.0%	
Average	1	10.0%	
	Total: 10		

Figure 10[16]. Questionnaire response to the following request (of students who **had not** studied abroad):
Please indicate to what extent the following factors played a role in your decision NOT to study abroad: | Concerns expressed by your parent or guardian.

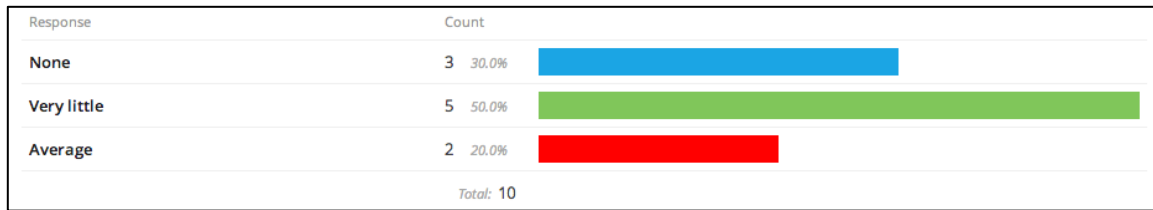| Response	Count	
None	3	30.0%
Very little	5	50.0%
Average	2	20.0%
	Total: 10	

Figure 11[15]. Questionnaire response to the request (of students who **had** studied abroad): *Please indicate to what extent the following barriers were difficult to overcome when deciding to study abroad: | Concerns expressed by your parent or guardian.*

When students were asked the same question only in regards to personal safety, 19 of the 20 students responded with an 'average' or lower level of concern. Only one student, who had not studied abroad, cited personal safety as an above average concern at the level of 'very much'. Unfortunately this student did not choose to elaborate on why this was so.

Any other potential barriers impacting student decisions to study abroad that were addressed through the course of the interviews or questionnaires did not supply enough useful data to draw any insightful conclusions.

6 Summary of Findings & Conclusion

In an attempt to accentuate the decidedly more relevant topics and findings discussed above, a succinct review is provided. Subsequent to the summary of main findings will be the conclusion, offering the author's final thoughts.

6.1 Summary of Findings

In the following paragraphs, the main findings from the data presented above will be discussed. It should be kept in mind that not all of the material covered above will be revisited. Most of what is discussed serves the purpose of corroborating the already existing research included in the earlier stages of this paper.

It has been established that participating in a study abroad program provides numerous advantages and benefits to students. Studying abroad can broaden cultural understanding and offer unique academic experiences, which can in turn situate students in an advantageous position when entering today's workforce. Despite all the known benefits of studying abroad, a significantly greater amount of students refrain from enrolling in a program than students who choose to participate. It is with this disproportionate division that the motivation for this study is found. Though the analysis of the obtained responses, the values and obstacles seen to hold the highest level of significance to a student's participation in a study abroad program were identified and compared with preexisting research.

---

[16] The possible responses of 'Significant' and 'Very much' were omitted from the figure as they both carried a value of 0.

An individuals *previous travel experiences* were found to have a significant impact on the value placed on SA programs as well as motivation to participate. Students who had extensive previous experience travelling internationally were seen to appreciate the goal in which SA programs are designed to accomplish and touted them as being a great tool for providing students with first-hand cultural experiences. It was also found that *personal and cultural benefits* are the main focus of the vast majority of students choosing to participate in a study abroad program. As corroborated by the data resulting from this study, the benefits of an immersive cultural experience abroad are almost unanimously agreed upon. However, previous overseas experience seemed to have an inverse affect on motivations to enroll in a SA program, most likely due to other opportunities available to well-traveled individuals that might be seen as more economical or allowing for a greater level of independence and preference.

The *awareness of students* to available study abroad programs is difficult to determine without additional personal information. The limited sampling done would appear to agree with obvious associations between a student's awareness and both the value placed on SA programs along with the intent to participate. The more specific the knowledge of available programs, the more likely a student has seriously considered studying abroad and thus through the transitive property, is increasingly likely to find the program valuable.

The *academic value* associated with study abroad programs is often seen to take a largely secondary position to that of personal and cultural benefits. Even with being relegated to second chair, most of the interviewed students agree that the curriculum offered is advantageous in its content and application. The academic benefits combined with the personal and cultural benefits give way to positive *career prospects*. Almost all of the students interviewed had entertained the idea of working internationally on some level and saw international experiences (not necessarily exclusive to study abroad) as an essential element to a successful future career.

The *length of a study abroad program* plays a significant role in the selection of programs and the likelihood of student participation. Brief programs are more likely to be seen as a inefficient use of time and resources while programs of approximately a semester or longer in duration are seen as too drastic of a commitment. Through participation in a more mid-length program, students are seen to find the correct balance of an immersive experience while reducing strain on domestic commitments and social obligations.

The most heavily cited reason for foregoing participation in a study abroad program is that of *financial insufficiency*. Though not explored deeply enough within the confines of this paper, scholarship opportunities were either overlooked or fell short in their ability to provide sufficient aid. The prominence of the financial concerns set forward by students reiterates the significance and importance that proper aid and support as it relates to funding has on the potential participation in SA programs. While financial concerns remain the pinnacle of obstacles for students to overcome, still other pronounced factors remain. Scheduling conflicts and prior obligations result in difficulties *appropriating the necessary time* needed for participation, contributing heavily to hindering student enrollment in SA programs. The availability of *potential future opportunities* appears to have a large yet widely unrealized impact on many students. The belief that there will be plenty of other opportunities in the future is likely to be unfounded. It will certainly be true for some, but for many it fits the classic definition of procrastination.

Most students seem to harbor reservations resulting from *social obligations* when considering a SA program. One's undergraduate years are often cited as an apex of social interaction, leaving many students to dismiss any activities that would result in the removal of their presence from such an atmosphere. Unfortunately, falling more towards the abstract end of the spectrum, it is difficult to accurately identify the level in which an individual's social life contributes to the dejection of studying abroad. This in turn makes offering solutions equally as difficult.

It is uncertain if *deferred graduation* is a legitimate concern or if it is more likely to be the result of misunderstanding. A sufficient assessment of this factor would require a detailed analysis of individual student class schedules along with associated program requirements. Despite the validity of this obstacle, some students still perceive it to be a hassle not worth dealing with in pursuit of their degree. The vague possibility that complications may arise in applying credits earned abroad towards graduation often seems to be enough to deter many individuals from taking initial steps in pursuance of studying abroad.

While not appearing to be a sizable problem, *competition* and a limited number of available spaces can result in a direct barrier to participation in some SA programs. Similar to the concerns over deferred graduation, this particular potential obstruction depends heavily on the specifics of the classes under consideration. The potential issues of parental influence and safety were found to likely be quite inconsequential according to the limited results. This is not to say these factors aren't important, as some students contemplating participation in a study abroad program may still find them directly applicable to their personal situation.

6.2 Conclusion

The numerous benefits associated with participation in study abroad programs are well documented and are reinforced through the findings presented in this study. Just as previous research has identified that students heavily associate a significant broadening of cultural knowledge and understanding along with increased career potential with participation in a study abroad program, the new data obtained here goes a long way in strongly reinforcing this sentiment. In addition to supporting established perceptions of value, the preeminent existing barriers that remain and still inhibit student participation to studying abroad were also found to fall in line with that of previously conducted research, namely the lack of available time, not wanting to miss out on social activities and most prominently, financial concerns.

Despite the sample being relatively small and somewhat specialized, this study's correlation with the findings of previous works reinforces the likelihood that it is largely representative of the US undergraduate community as a whole. The broader implications of which underscore the value of and problems facing participation in study abroad programs across the nation. The constantly advancing need for increased cultural aptitude and understanding can be largely satisfied through the aid of increased enrollment in study abroad programs. In order to facilitate attendance, undergraduate students first have to understand the value of such programs as essential to their future success. In addition to fostering an appreciation and desire for the value of an experience abroad, the alleviation of numerous existing obstacles is paramount to the success of study abroad programs.

As it was stated at the beginning of this paper, the main objective is to investigate to what extent the perceptions of undergraduate students towards studying abroad seem to fall in line with the increased international focus present in the world of today. The evidence would support that students place a sufficient amount of importance on multicultural competence but are often prohibited from the means to pursue it. Without continued dedication to the establishment and growth of study abroad programs, there is little chance of identifying additional effective solutions to the barriers still standing in the way of participation such as limited time, inapplicable credits, active social lives, and of course money. While there are likely a variety of personally specific solutions to combat this array of obstacles, the universally suited 'attainment of information' is perhaps the most effective response. Through being well informed, no arising barriers should be exclusionary to an individual's pursuit of studying abroad.

As the world changes through the blurring of borders and an increasing focus towards multiculturalism, educational practices must change along with it. The increased implementation of comprehensive study abroad programs is both reflexive of recent shifts in cultural perception as well as anticipatory of the changes expected to come. Whatever may transpire in the years ahead, the practice of studying abroad is sure to be a part of it.

{References}

American Institute for Foreign Study. (2013). *AIFS Study Abroad Outcomes: A View from our Alumni, 1990 – 2010*. Retrieved March 20, 2014 from http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/AIFS_Study_Abroad_Outcomes.pdf.

Bourdieu, P. (2006). The forms of capital. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, Globalization & Social Change* (pp. 105-118). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods: Fourth Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Generation Study Abroad. (2014). *About the Initiative*. Institute of International Education. Retrieved April 24, 2014 from http://www.iie.org/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad/About.

Goodman, A. E. & Berdan, S. N. (2013). It Is Essential. The New York Times. Retrieved April 5, 2014 from http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/10/17/should-more-americans-study-abroad/every-student-should-study-abroad.

Green, A. (2006). Education, globalization, and the nation state. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, Globalization & Social Change* (pp. 192-197). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Harvard University. (n.d.). *Enrichment programs: study abroad*. Retrieved February 1, 2014 from https://college.harvard.edu/academics/enrichment-programs/study-abroad.

ICEF Monitor. (n.d.). *Family a powerful influence on study abroad decisions*. Retrieved April 28, 2014 from http://monitor.icef.com/2012/10/family-a-powerful-influence-on-study-abroad-decisions.

Indiana University. (2013). *Early history*. Retrieved January 5, 2014 from http://overseas.iu.edu/about/history/history_early.shtml.

Ingraham, E. C. (2003). Documentation and assessment of the impact of study abroad. *Advances in International Marketing*, 13: 1-21. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1474-7979(02)13002-X.

Institute of International Education. (2013, November 11). Open Doors 2013: International students in the United States and study abroad by American students are at all-time high [Press release].

Institute of International Education. (2013). *Open Doors report on international educational exchange*. Retrieved on January 5, 2014 from http://www.iie.org/opendoors.

Lee, C. S., Therriault, D. J. & Linderholm, T. (2012). On the cognitive benefits of cultural experience: Exploring the relationship between studying abroad and creative thinking. *Applied Cognitive Psychology,* 26: 768–778. doi: 10.1002/acp.2857.

Lee, M. (2012). The History of Studying Abroad. *Go Overseas*. Retrieved January 5, 2014 from http://www.gooverseas.com/go-abroad-blog/history-study-abroad-part-1.

Luong, M. (2013). *Lack of information provides barrier to study abroad.* Retrieved April 29, 2014 from http://www.collegiatetimes.com/news/state/article_25f08208-03fb-574a-b5a4-2d95dcd386a6.html.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *About us.* Retrieved January 12, 2014 from http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/about.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *Academic Matters*. Retrieved April 23, 2014 from http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/studenthandbk/academic_matters/courses.html.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *Health, safety and security concerns in study abroad.* Retrieved January 15, 2014 from http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/safety.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *History*. Retrieved January 13, 2014 from http://www.msu.edu/morrill-celebration/history.html.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *Models*. Retrieved April 23, 2014 from http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/program_development/steps/framing/models.htm.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *Research*. Retrieved January 12, 2014 from http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/research.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *Study abroad*. Retrieved January 5, 2014 from http://uas.broad.msu.edu/academics/studyabroad.

Michigan State University. (n.d.). *You Can't Afford Not to Go!* Retrieved April 24, 2014 from http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/shared/afford.html.

NASFA: Association of International Educators. (2003). *Securing America's future: Global education for a global age.* New York.

Nations Online Project. (n.d.). *Blank map of the United States*. Retrieved January 13, 2014 from http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/usa__blank_map.htm.

OECD. (2013). *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en.

Riley, M. (n.d.). *Study Abroad: A 21st Century Perspective - Volume 1.* American Institute for Foreign Study Foundation. Retrieved April 24, 2014 from http://www.aifsfoundation.org/riley.htm.

Salisbury, M. H., Umbach, P. D., Paulsen, M. B. & Pascarella, E. T. (2008). Going global: Understanding the choice process of the intent to study abroad. *Research in Higher Education*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-008-9111-x.

Sheehy, K. (2013). 10 Colleges where the most students study abroad. Retrieved January 13, 2014 from http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/2013/02/26/10-colleges-where-the-most-students-study-abroad.

Sideli, K., Dollinger, M. & Doyle, S. (2003). Successful recruitment of business students for study abroad through program development, curricular integration and marketing. *Advances in International Marketing*, 13: 37-57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1474-7979(02)13004-3.

St. John, E. P. & Asker, E. H. (2001). The role of finances in student choice: A review of theory and research. In M. B. Paulsen & J. C. Smart (Eds.), *The Finance of Higher Education: Theory, Research, Policy & Practice* (pp. 419-438). Agathon Press.

Students by major - undergraduate (Michigan State University Office of the Registrar, Comp.). (2013). East Lansing, MI: Author.

StudyAbroad.com (n.d.). *Study Abroad Scholarships*. Retrieved April 24, 2014 from http://www.studyabroad.com/scholarships.aspx.

Sutton, R. C. & Rubin, D. L. (2010). *Documenting the Academic Impact of Study Abroad: Final Report of the GLOSSARI Project*. Retrieved March 25, 2014 from http://glossari.uga.edu/datasets/pdfs/FINAL.pdf.

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. (n.d.). *Mauretania: Service*. Retrieved January 12, 2014 from http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/mauretania/story-service.html.

University of Delaware. (n.d.). *Our history*. Retrieved January 5, 2014 from http://www.udel.edu/global/studyabroad/information/brief_history.html.

University of Maryland. (2013). *Perceived Barriers*. Retrieved January 15, 2014 from http://www.international.umd.edu/studyabroad/3070.

Waks, L. J. (2006). How globalization can cause fundamental curriculum change: An American perspective. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, Globalization & Social Change* (pp. 835-849). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

{Appendix I}

Dear MSU student,

Hello, I am a former graduate of MSU and currently a graduate student at the Institute of International Education at Stockholm University, Sweden. I am conducting research for my Master's thesis of which the focus is to explore the attitudes, perceptions and motivations of *Eli Broad College of Business* undergraduate students towards study abroad programs. I would be eternally grateful if you could find a moment to answer a very brief questionnaire (link below). I had originally planned a sole attempt at appealing to your sense of empathy by pleading that you may, someday, need the favor returned, you know, 'pay it forward' or 'karma' or whatever it is you want to call it. However, somewhere along the way I thought it might also be nice to do something a bit more palpable and a little less abstract. So with that in mind, **for every person who completes the below questionnaire, I will personally donate one dollar to the Cancer Research Institute** (only for initial recipients of this email, please don't forward). Now, I know that amount of money is not exactly going to move mountains but as a student, and with Sweden's propensity for being an expensive country, that's about all I can afford.

Regardless of your further participation, thank you for taking the time to read this. For those able to help out, a link to the questionnaire can be found at the bottom of this email. The questionnaire should only take approximately 3 to 6 minutes to complete, depending on your answers. I would also be more than happy to provide anyone who participates with a copy of my completed work upon request. Best of luck in your studies!

 Sincerely,

 Travis Roy

Taking part in this study is voluntary and participation may be withdrawn at any time. Any and all answers provided will be completely anonymous and every effort will be made to adhere to the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) code of ethics. All students invited to participate in this questionnaire have been selected at random. **If you should have any questions whatsoever, please do not hesitate to contact me at**

travis_roy@yahoo.com. If you should have questions regarding the validity of this request or inquiries about Stockholm University's Master's program in International and Comparative Education, please contact my thesis advisor, professor Ulf Fredriksson at ulf.fredriksson@edu.su.se. For more information regarding Study Abroad opportunities at Michigan State University, please contact osapa@isp.msu.edu.

To take this brief questionnaire, please click here: http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/travis-9nD/study-abroad-opinions

(Please do not forward this questionnaire to others, as you are part of a selected sample group, thanks!)

{Appendix II}

Hello,

If you're able to participate in a 5 minute interview via Skype, I'll PayPal you $15.
(as long as you are not currently in the US as part of a foreign study abroad program)

I'm a graduate student at the Institute of International Education at Stockholm University, Sweden and am conducting research for my Master's thesis of which the focus is to explore the attitudes and perceptions of *Eli Broad College of Business* undergraduate students towards study abroad programs. I'm a bit short on interviewees and would like to offer 15 dollars if you're able to participate. It should only take about 5 minutes and I would just be asking various questions in regards to your thoughts on study abroad programs. I'd PayPal you the 15 dollars at the completion of the interview.

Email me at **travis_roy@yahoo.com** or **trro3794@student.su.se** if you're able to help me out! Thanks so much!

Also, it would be a huge help if you could take a minute to complete the below questionnaire prior to the interview (takes about 3-4 mins). Please be sure to enter your email for the last question that asks if you would like to participate in the interview.

Sincerely,

Travis Roy

Taking part in this study is voluntary and participation may be withdrawn at any time. Any and all answers provided will be completely anonymous and every effort will be made to adhere to the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) code of ethics. All students invited to participate in this questionnaire have been selected at random. **If you should have any questions whatsoever, please do not hesitate to contact me at travis_roy@yahoo.com.** If you should have questions regarding the validity of this request or inquiries about Stockholm University's Master's program in International and Comparative Education, please contact my thesis advisor, professor Ulf Fredriksson at ulf.fredriksson@edu.su.se. For more information regarding Study Abroad opportunities at Michigan State University, please contact osapa@isp.msu.edu.

To take the brief questionnaire, please follow this link: http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/travis-9nD/study-abroad-opinions/

Please do not forward this message.

Opinions on Studying Abroad

By answering the following questions, you are agreeing to allow the author use of the resulting data. All participants will be kept strictly anonymous. Please answer all questions as accurately as possible. Unless otherwise specified, any mention of studying abroad or study abroad programs refers to the UNDERGRADUATE university level.

SECTION 1
Please answer the following questions.

What is your age?

What is your gender?
- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Other / Prefer not to specify

What major within the Broad College of Business are you currently enrolled?
- ○ Accounting
- ○ Finance
- ○ General Management
- ○ Hospitality Business
- ○ Human Resource Management
- ○ Marketing
- ○ Supply Chain Management
- ○ Other, please specify... _____

Are you a citizen of a country other than the United States who is attending MSU on a student visa?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Participants who answered "Yes" completed the section and were directed to the finish page. Participants who answered "No" continued on to "SECTION 2".

Are you currently, or have you previously, participated in a study abroad program of any length?

O No

O Yes, during high-school

O Yes, while at MSU (or both high-school and MSU)

> Participants who answered "No" continued to "SECTION 2". Those answering "Yes, during high-school" completed the section and were directed to the finish page. Those answering "Yes, while at MSU" completed the section and were directed to "SECTION 3b".

Do you plan to participate in a study abroad program as a part of further studies at a Master's or Doctoral level?

O Yes

O No

O Undecided

SECTION 2

For the following statements, please choose the response that you feel is most accurate.

I have specific knowledge of the various study abroad programs available to me.

O Strongly Agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly Disagree

The process of enrolling in a study abroad program appears to be quite difficult.

O Strongly Agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly Disagree

I regret NOT participating in a study abroad program.

O Strongly Agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly Disagree

> Participants who answered "Strongly Agree" through "Neutral" completed the section and were directed to "SECTION 3a". Those who answered "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" completed the section and were directed to "SECTION 3c".

I feel my time is better spent in classes on MSU's campus than in classes that are a part of a study abroad program.

O Strongly Agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly Disagree

While at university, I have seriously considered participating in a study abroad program.

O Strongly Agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly Disagree

I feel that there were significant barriers prohibiting me from participating in a study abroad program.

O Strongly Agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly Disagree

I believe that participation in a study abroad program is NOT important in the pursuit of a full-time career in my chosen field.

- O Strongly Agree
- O Agree
- O Neutral
- O Disagree
- O Strongly Disagree

I believe participation in a study abroad program to be a <u>personally</u> worthwhile endeavor.

- O Strongly Agree
- O Agree
- O Neutral
- O Disagree
- O Strongly Disagree

SECTION 3a

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. Thank you!

Please indicate to what extent the following factors played a role in your decision NOT to study abroad:

	None	Very little	Average	Significant	Very much
Financial concerns	O	O	O	O	O
Missing out on social activities	O	O	O	O	O
Concerns expressed by your parent or guardian	O	O	O	O	O
Time away from a significant other (boyfriend/girlfriend)	O	O	O	O	O
Lack of available time	O	O	O	O	O
Potential language barriers	O	O	O	O	O
Personal safety concerns	O	O	O	O	O
Possibility of a deferred graduation date	O	O	O	O	O
Possibility of non-transferable credits	O	O	O	O	O
Obligations to an employer	O	O	O	O	O

Are there any additional factors that played a significant role in your decision not to study abroad?

[ ]

Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

[ ]

The researcher will be conducting several brief interviews via skype as a continuation of the above questionnaire. For each person selected to participate, an additional $5 will be donated to the Cancer Research Institute. Would you be at all interested in participating?

○ Yes. My email address is: _____

○ No thank you.

SECTION 3b

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. Thank you!

Please indicate to what extent the following barriers were difficult to overcome when deciding to study abroad?

	None	Very little	Average	Significant	Very much
Financial concerns	○	○	○	○	○
Missing out on social activities	○	○	○	○	○
Concerns expressed by your parent or guardian	○	○	○	○	○
Time away from a significant other (boyfriend/girlfriend)	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of available time	○	○	○	○	○
Potential language barriers	○	○	○	○	○
Personal safety concerns	○	○	○	○	○
Possibility of a deferred graduation date	○	○	○	○	○
Possibility of non-transferable credits	○	○	○	○	○
Obligations to an employer	○	○	○	○	○

Are there any other significant barriers you had to overcome in order to participate in a study abroad program?

[ ]

Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

[ ]

SECTION 3c

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. Thank you!

What might be the main reason(s) for your low interest in participating in a study abroad program?

[ ]

If any, what disadvantages do you associate with participating in a studying abroad program?

[ ]

Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

[ ]

{Appendix IV}

NOTES: "x." refers to the number of the exchange in the transcribed interview conversation. The following is not exhaustive as only excerpts best encompassing an interviewee's thoughts and opinions have been provided. On several occasions, excerpts have been repeated if belonging to multiple themes or sub-themes. The following quotations have been edited for filler words and while every effort was made to avoid any manipulation of meaning, should be considered approximate.

Theme: Previous Experiences

Interview No.	Previous Travel Experiences
Interview #1 (NO SA)	None.
Interview #2 (NO SA)	*"I actually went abroad during high-school for a week, two weeks and I didn't really get the full experience of it. [...] I didn't really see anything beneficial to it unless I was there for a longer period of time"* (x. 015)
Interview #3 (YES SA)	n/a
Interview #4 (NO SA)	*"I lived abroad for about 7 years of my life because of my dads job"* (x. 020)
Interview #5 (NO SA)	*"I've travelled a lot and I was born in India"* (x. 037); *"I just never really studied abroad because I go around with my family usually"* (x. 039)

Theme: Awareness

Interview No.	Awareness of Available Programs
Interview #1 (NO SA)	*"it was exploration of Japanese business culture"* and how *"specific companies do their work as opposed to their American counterparts"* (x. 022); *"you did an introduction, meetings every week"* (x. 026); *"I looked into a couple of programs. I looked into a Luxembourg program […] Western Europe program and the Japan program"* (x. 40)
Interview #2 (NO SA)	When asked if considered any SA programs: *"I have not actually"* (x. 013); *"I'm not really aware of all the classes offered abroad"* (x. 029)
Interview #3 (YES SA)	When asked about SA enrollment process: *"I thought it wasn't very difficult cause I knew I had to do it so I had, kind of, searched them since I came here as a freshman"* (x. 006)
Interview #4 (NO SA)	*"I haven't really looked that much into it* [SA] *but I've heard from other people that it's a huge financial commitment"* (x. 040)
Interview #5 (NO SA)	*"I feel like our school has really good programs in Italy and England for business classes"* (x. 055)

Theme: Perceived Value

Interview No.	Personal & Cultural Value	Academic Value	Career Value	Program Length
Interview #1 (NO SA)	*"I plan to go to Japan one way or another* […] *but I would like it to be study abroad"* (x. 032); *"sometime in my academic career I would like to go on one* [SA]*"* (x. 034)	Speaking of class curriculum prior to SA: *"I thought that was very interesting"* (x. 022) and *"I went to those and I thought those were pretty great"* (x. 026)	*"Yeah,* [I'm] *anticipating doing business with Japan"* (x. 024)	
Interview #2 (NO SA)				*"I actually went abroad during high-school for a week, two weeks and I didn't really get the full experience of it. […] I didn't really see anything beneficial to it unless I was there for a longer period*

				of time" (x. 015)
Interview #3 (YES SA)		Did marketing research on London based business that she considered valuable (x. 001)	When asked about working overseas: *"I'm really down for wherever a company would send me [...] I'm really open to it"* (x. 012)	
Interview #4 (NO SA)	*"I lived abroad for about 7 years […] which was actually really cool"* (x. 020); *"[I] had to get used to the culture and everything so it was really great"* (x. 026); *"[Living abroad is] the best thing I think I've experienced because I've met so many different people from different cultures and I got to get to know a completely different culture from mine"* (x. 030); *"I really wanted to [SA]"* (x. 036); *"I think if I would study abroad I would want to go somewhere completely new"* (x. 038); Regarding friends and SA:*"I tell them that they should definitely do it, especially if they haven't done it before because you do learn a lot from going somewhere new"* (x. 046)		*"those skill sets that you learn dealing with different people are something you can use for the rest of your life"* (x. 046); *"one of the things I look at when I'm looking for jobs in the future* [is that] *I definitely want to have that opportunity to go abroad again"* (x. 048)	
Interview #5 (NO SA)	Concerning SA: *"I would definitely go probably somewhere in Europe…cause I've never been to Europe"* (x. 055); When asked what main goal for going on SA would be: *"just cause I want to see the country [laughs]. The classes really I don't care about there"* (x. 057); *"I would rather just go to another country on vacation with my family or friends"* (x. 061); Speaking of being abroad in India and UAE: *"it's a lot more community based as opposed to here"* (x. 077); *"my favorite part about going abroad is that you see a whole different type of lifestyle that you would never see here probably"* (x. 079)	*"I feel like our school has really good programs in Italy and England for business classes"* (x. 055); *"The classes really I don't care about there. They're pretty easy when you take them there […] I would take more difficult classes on study abroad cause it's all condensed in two weeks to a month so they make it a little bit easier"* (x. 057)	*"Eventually though, I do want to live abroad and do like two or three years abroad, that kind of thing, or I would actually be open to just living permanently somewhere outside the US"* (x. 069)	When asked about shorter term SA options: *"Problem was [...] those were always during the summertime and my internships would start right after school"* (x. 045)

Theme: Barriers

Interview No.	Financial	Time	Social	Deferred Graduation	Other
Interview #1 (NO SA)	*"I had to drop out because I couldn't afford the […] program fee for the rest of it"* (x. 026); speaking of scholarships: *"I applied to a couple […] but it was not enough for me to actually go on the trip"* (x. 028); *"I had to pay my own way"* (x. 030); *"in my case it was just mainly financial concerns"* (x. 040)	*"I plan to go to Japan one way or another [laughs] study abroad or not"* (x. 032); *"sometime in my academic career I would like to go on one [SA]"* (x. 034); Speaking of SA: *"there are a lot of opportunities. I'm not too worried about it"* (x. 036)			
Interview #2 (NO SA)	When asked what costs were of concern: *"preparations there and here or costs of the classes...and meals. Pretty much everything"* (x. 021)	*"if I were to study abroad it would be graduate studies"* (x. 029)	*"going for a semester you definitely […] lose all [of the] social aspect"* (x. 025); *"[I would] not [SA during my] undergraduate because undergraduate is when you have the most fun, hang out with people, hang out with friends"* (x. 029)	*"you can't take all the classes you need for your degree at the time when you're abroad as opposed to at MSU"* (x. 029)	
Interview #3 (YES SA)	Primary concern was the cost of the program, which was quite significant (x. 005)	Only being offered over the X-mas holidays, spare time was a serious concern (x. 004)	Only time program was offered was over X-mas holiday, making it tough to be away from family and friends (x. 004)	Deferred graduation was a significant concern prior to SA, however it never materialized into a problem (x. 003)	*"I would say that a lot of students had trouble getting into the program cause it was like really competitive"* (x. 006)
Interview #4 (NO SA)	*"I would have to look into possibly applying for scholarships […] figuring out the difference between staying here for a semester and studying abroad, if it's similar and how much more that*	*"I didn't plan it out early enough […] in the summer I do internships and that kind of conflicts […] I really wanted to but I just haven't had the time to*			*"I would have to look into possibly applying for scholarships […] figuring out the*

	would be" (x. 040)	*do it* (x. 036)			*difference between staying here for a semester and studying abroad, if it's similar and how much more that would be"* (x. 040)
Interview #5 (NO SA)	*"I think the money I'd pay for study abroad is not worth it because for that money I could probably spend double the amount of time there if I wanted to"* (x. 061)	*"I just never had that chance to do it, or I'd of had to cut my internship short but I didn't want to do an 8 week, because I'd rather do a 12 week internship"* (x. 045)	Concerning SA: *"I would do it at least with one friend that I knew really well"* (x. 057); *"I wanted to do a semester […] but then I don't want to miss football season the first semester, and then second semester I just didn't want to be away, just because, that's when you feel like you're kind of out of it when you come back"* (x. 063)	*"I never felt like I wanted to do it with school cause then the credits and stuff wouldn't get messed up"* (x. 041)	