

**An Empirical Study on the Motivation to Study Abroad for World Enlightenment,  
and the Impact it has on Global Competency**

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**Abstract**

*The main objectives sought after through an undergraduate business degree have expanded in recent times, but international business market advances continue to focus on fostering global competency, realized as the highest indicator of future success. Meta-competency, composed of cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal goals, is also needed to succeed in the business marketplace whether public or private, because of the essential need for clarity in regard to historical and judicial fact (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Semaan & Yamazaki, 2015). Findings from this research show that it is possible to determine amongst a group of 100 business students, who the top 15 most successful will be during an abroad journey. By using the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), along with the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) assessment, this study allows business professionals the capability of scientifically narrowing down possible candidates to interview, saving time and money. This test should be used before any mission involving international or intergalactic travel, because it is recommended that any responders answering more than a two for motivation in entertainment be postponed enrollment for any study or work abroad opportunity. These candidates should be offered global perspectives coaching by a mentor.*

**Keywords:** *Global Competency, Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA).*

## **Introduction**

Most of the previous literature on increasing global competency indicates a need for experiential learning (Mason & Thier, 2018). Experiential learning describes an interactive way in which people can achieve both, academic, and relational objectives for understanding the world better. Recent publications have indicated that increasing global competency takes experiential learning one step further, to transformational learning (Mikulec, 2019).

Transformational learning happens when specific events cause deep thought and reflection (Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou, 2010; Mikulec, 2019). Studies have shown that an individual, through cognitive reasoning and reflection, can change, and move away from values once held (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Mikulec, 2019; Reardon, George, & Enigbokan, 2015).

Findings have also shown that experiences can shine a new perspective on political and or humanitarian events, fostering an increase in empathy and acceptance (Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015).

## **International Business**

Global competency factors such as global mindset, open-mindedness, emotional stability, cultural empathy, and flexibility have already shown up in the corporate business environment. In fact, global mindset has shown to have a positive relationship with trust, leader-member exchange, and organizational commitment (Reardon et al., 2015; Story & Barbuto, 2011). In multinational organizations, open-mindedness and emotional stability have shown the strongest relation to higher levels of expatriate adjustment (Reardon et al., 2015; Sharma, 2011). Cultural empathy has shown to predict personal adjustment abroad, while flexibility is strongly correlated to global social adjustment (Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015; Sharma, 2011).

The problem right now is that organizations need to know if a candidate is qualified to

understand global issues in relation to international/intercultural relationships (Li, Olson, & Frieze, 2013). Estimating global competency (Li et al., 2013), in relation to student motivation for electing to study abroad, is of interest to business professionals for many reasons (Bhandari, 2018). Although the demand for an international education has risen to an all-time high, the factors that drive student flows continue to shift (Bhandari, 2018). Business leaders need to identify high-potential, low-risk individuals for abroad opportunities (Bhandari, 2018).

### **Review of Literature**

**Rogers's (2000) Theoretical Program Logic Model** can be used to assess student outcomes from internationalization, where outcomes are one step beyond outputs. Rogers's model shows how the outcomes of internationalization efforts, relate to long-term impacts (Deardorff, 2006). **The Pedersen (2010)** study found that students do not develop global competency without intentional pedagogical intervention. One solution is transformational triggers; experiences, planned or unplanned, that change a person's view of the world (Mikulec, 2019). Transformational triggers can be built into abroad curriculum, or they can occur naturally (Mikulec, 2019). **Scholars have proposed adding** an output of internationalization to Rogers's Model for number of **pedagogical transformational triggers** put in place. Triggers that have been used in the past to foster intercultural learning include (a) museum tours, (b) landmark visits, (c) siteseeing tours, (d) local restaurants and shopping venues, (e) guided tours, and (f) interactive conferences (Mikulec, 2019).

**Past studies have reported on** the relationship between **global competency and variables, including (a) prior language study, (b) prior study abroad experience, (c) class composition, (d) student housing, (e) cultural similarity between home and host cultures, and (f) time spent with host nationals versus other US nationals** (Braskamp, Braskamp, &

Glass, 2015; Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Braskamp & Engberg, 2011; Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015; Semaan & Yamazaki, 2015; Sharma, 2011; Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012). Other past studies have been related to intercultural development and study abroad with regard to **gender, program length, the extent to which students were immersed in the local culture, and also the presence of a cultural mentor** (Engle & Engle, 2004; Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015; Sharma, 2011; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Contrary to Vande Berg et al. (2012), most findings reported that participation in study abroad was positively associated with the ability of students to understand: (a) the complexities of global issues, (b) how to apply disciplinary knowledge in a global context, (c) how to develop linguistic and cultural competency in another language, and in (d) how to work with people from other cultures (Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015; Sharma, 2011).

### **Research gap**

Global Competency levels have never before been measured alongside motivational reasons to go abroad. In the advancement of learning in higher education, the motivation to study abroad for reasons: personal growth, career development, world enlightenment, and entertainment have not been explored. The core differentiation in global competency is motivation to study abroad for world enlightenment.

### **Objective of the study**

To study the motivations in relation to study abroad and global competency objectives and outcomes.

### **Research methodology**

The research design is a quantitative study. The statistical test, a multiple linear regression. Linear regression is an advanced correlational technique, therefore, the research

design is also correlational (Jackson, 2011). The data was collected using random sampling through the company SurveyMonkey. Respondents included 150 undergraduate students enrolled fulltime in a 4-year university studying business in the United States.

### **Findings, results, and discussions**

Organizations that market goods and services are realizing the need to appeal to diverse consumer preferences, especially in recruiting team members for their workforce (Hercog & Van de Larr, 2017; Sharma, 2011). Understanding culture groups and learning how to communicate and relate to various groups of people based on race, age, sex, income level, historical oppression, and the like are keys to having high customer and employee satisfaction rates (Hercog & Van de Larr, 2017; Sharma, 2011). Abroad trips help individuals learn how to gain such skills and foster a value-added position within the community (Hercog & Van de Larr, 2017; Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015).

Intercultural competency is increasingly necessary as collaboration and coordination are needed to help leaders in the workforce, efficiently and effectively meet goals (Bird et al., 2010; Reardon et al., 2015). Companies have expanded operations to countries all over the world, as experts in each field navigate toward operation centers (Reardon et al., 2015; Sharma, 2011). Hence, it is highly likely that workers will engage with individuals from different cultures, languages, and political points of view (Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015). Such demands require a stretch in perceiving and interpreting factors and should consequently lead to organizations acting in ways that realize global responsibility (Bird et al., 2010; Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015). Intercultural competency is important across all disciplines so that the global community can synergistically work toward peace, sustainability, and other core values (Bird et al., 2010; Mikulec, 2019; Reardon et al., 2015; Semaan & Yamazaki, 2015).

**Table: 1 Regression Analysis**

Analysis of Variance for GPI Full Model					
Source	DF	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-Value	P-Value
Regression	4	4.05	1.01	7.88	0.00 ***
Person Growth	1	0.06	0.06	0.48	0.49
Career Development	1	0.14	0.14	1.06	0.30
World Enlightenment	1	1.18	1.18	9.21	0.00 ***
Entertainment	1	0.09	0.09	0.71	0.40
Error	145	18.62	0.13		
Total	149	22.67			

\*\*\* significant @ 99%

  

Coefficients					
Term	Coef	SE Coef	T-Value	P-Value	VIF
Constant	2.907	0.19	15.60	0.00	
Person Growth	0.0421	0.06	0.69	0.49	2.29
Career Development	0.0523	0.05	1.03	0.30	1.86
World Enlightenment	0.1322	0.04	3.04	0.00	1.63
Entertainment	-0.028	0.03	-0.84	0.40	1.04

**Table 1 shows World Enlightenment significant with 1.18 Adj SS in the analysis of the multiple regression data.** This means that it is possible to identify people who are statistically more likely than others to be successful in abroad situations by testing for top world enlightenment motivation scores.

### Suggestions

In Kazakhstan, people are sent abroad so they can help the nation transition from a state within the Soviet Union, to an independent, democratic nation with a market-based economy (Ahmad, Hassan, & Al-Ahmedi, 2017). The United States could incorporate a more systematic, transparent, and competitive process for recruiting and selecting abroad candidates, based on predetermined criteria. Proper selection tools may point toward readiness, and maturity for accepting the challenges one will undertake overseas (Ahmad et al., 2017).

## **Conclusion**

The study revealed that undergraduate business students who are highly motivated by world enlightenment, and unmotivated by entertainment, have the best chance of success while living, working, or studying while in a foreign country. The test could be used for parents, universities, or governments deciding on whether or not to provide assistance for individuals wanting to go abroad, or by businesses needing a way to reduce the number of applicants to interview face-to-face. Findings from the study indicate that a relationship exists between motivations to study abroad, and cultural intelligence. Therefore, human resource managers have a tool that gives a ranking order for overseas opportunities. These outcomes can help managers understand which employees are qualified to understand global issues in relation to international/intercultural relationships. The research was able to identify one positive and one negative variable to which a ranking order can be established amongst participants.

The findings of this study are of value to organizations with an interest or stake in global collaborations (Carbone, Wigle, Akseer, Barac, Barwick, & Zlotkin, 2017). The substantial reciprocal development that occurs among professionals working globally will likely be enhanced by the outcomes of this study because candidates will begin at a higher base level than average. It is predicted that outcomes will yield valuable data and subsequent analysis useful for American businesses.

## **Scope for future research**

Some interesting ideas for future research would be to include more demographic questions. For example, number of languages spoken, ethnicity, and years of military service.

Other ideas include open-ended questions such as, How can we diversify ourselves, and our exposure to the global business environment? Do study abroad type experiences create a personal competitive advantage? Does perspective taking help to predict and understand the worldwide consequences of a business decision? Will such consequences affect the long-term adaptability and survival of an organization?

Intercultural aptitude and motivational group pairings may yield fruitful results if measured and analyzed in future research studies. One question may be, Does student motivation to study abroad influence what benefits they realize from participation? Future analyses should seek to identify and measure global competence in participants, months after they have been on a study abroad trip.

Using the holistic model of competence, a post trip survey can be used to determine if certain events qualify as transformational triggers, and if growth in global competence (how much) took place. Open-ended questions in the future should ask respondents, “What triggers highlighted a new perspective toward international ideas/events?” Other fill in the blank questions may include: “Which triggers caused you to relate to others?” and “How did triggers foster your understanding in that there may be more than one applicable way to think about something?” Future investigations should also ask test subjects if the experience led to a more effective and appropriate understanding of how to behave and communicate in intercultural situations. Finally, future evaluations should include questions pertaining to overall program satisfaction, and overall value.

Future studies will be important because they may lead toward effective ways for students to gain global competency on a budget. If future studies focus on transformational triggers to be identified and measured, universities can better structure abroad learning



experiences. Future research should investigate the short-term and long-term effects on students' global competence from study abroad, by investigating cultural growth in using a follow up survey. It is recommended that a follow-up survey be given six months following the abroad trip, in hopes of gathering the final piece to Rogers's (2000) model, long-term impacts of internationalization efforts. This model can be adapted for future studies in other countries, or in using different variables. Future research should aim at measuring transformational triggers in abroad programs, increasing visits to new countries with new cultures to explore, and in finding an increased number of survey participants from more diverse areas if possible.

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