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STUDY ABROAD IMPACT IN THE MID-TERM: INFLUENCE ON PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN

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IELR-82

International Education

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for a Master of International Education
at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

May 1, 2024

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	5
<i>Introduction</i>	6
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	8
Human Capital and Cultural Capital Theories	9
Cultural Dimensions Theory and Generational Theory	11
<i>Literature Review</i>	12
Internationalization in Japan	12
Study Abroad	13
Skills and Knowledge	15
Work Culture in Japan	17
Generational Differences	18
<i>Research Design and Methodology</i>	19
Participants and Sampling	20
Data Collection	23
Data Analysis	25
Researcher Positionality	25
Ethics and Credibility	26
<i>Findings</i>	27
Survey Findings	27
International Experience.....	27
Career Choice	28
Impact on Professional Development.....	29
Interview Findings	35
Job Hunting and Japanese Work Culture	35
Personal Growth and Professional Development	36
Cultural Dimensions.....	38

<i>Limitations</i>	39
<i>Discussion</i>	40
Impact of Study Abroad on Professional Development	41
Generational Influence	42
Implications for Japanese Government and Companies	42
Implications for International Educators	43
Recommendations for Further Research	44
<i>Conclusion</i>	44
<i>References</i>	47
<i>Appendices</i>	52
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter	52
Appendix B: Informed Consent	54
Appendix C: Participant Survey	60
Appendix D: Interview Questions	66
Appendix E: Code Book	67

Abstract

This mixed methods research study explores the impacts of studying abroad for Japanese individuals and examines how these experiences shape their professional development in the mid-term. This research also investigates whether there are any discernible generational differences in these impacts between older millennials and younger millennials. Data collection consists of a survey with seventeen participants and in-depth interviews with four participants. The findings suggest that participants reported that studying abroad had a transformative impact on both older millennials and younger millennials through the development of skills, including cross-cultural communication, cultural competence, global understanding, and language, and had a relatively positive impact on participants' professional development in the mid-term. However, some of the skills and knowledge gained through study abroad do not always align with the skills and knowledge used in participants' professional work, such as problem-solving and leadership. These findings also demonstrate that younger millennials have had greater opportunities for international exposure and are less risk-averse and more individualistic, whereas older millennials tend to be less individualistic and value long-term orientation when making decisions regarding their professional development. This research provides valuable insights for international educators to narrow the discrepancies between skills and knowledge gained abroad and used in the workplace. These efforts will have meaningful impacts on participants' professional development in the mid-term. Consequently, these efforts align with the Japanese government's internationalization strategies and support Japanese company's efforts to hire globally-minded individuals.

Keywords: cultural capital, human capital, generational theory, internationalization, Japan, professional development, study abroad

Introduction

Over the last decade, the Japanese government has prioritized internationalization initiatives, aiming to enhance the global competencies of Japanese citizens and position the country competitively in the global economy (Integrated Innovation Strategy, 2023). Among these strategies is the active promotion of studying abroad. The number of students studying abroad from Japan has slightly increased each year, with a peak in 2018 totaling 80,566 students (JASO, 2023). The Japan Revitalization Strategy (2014) hoped to increase the number of Japanese students studying abroad by 2020 to approximately 100,000 students. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a dramatic decrease, with only 18,374 students studying abroad in 2020. The number of students studying abroad has slowly increased in the last few years with 34,000 students studying abroad in 2022 and 66,007 in 2023 (JASO, 2023). The Japanese Ministry of Education hopes to meet its goal of 100,000 students studying abroad by 2027, as they strive to expand opportunities for Japanese citizen to enhance their global competencies and gain international experiences (MEXT, n.d.).

Despite this setback, the Integrated Innovation Strategy (2023) developed by the Japanese government seeks to find strategies to stay competitive in the global economy. Such strategies include government grants and scholarships like the Tobitate scholarship, which encourages more students to study abroad. This strategy also suggests that Japan should continue to develop high-level human resources that promote international brain circulation within the workforce (Integrated Innovation Strategy, 2023). However, some hindrances, such as job hunting, often make it challenging for Japanese students to study abroad (Porter & Porter, 2020). Porter and Porter (2020) attribute this to the overlapping timeline of job hunting and studying abroad, often occurring during students' third year of college. Despite the Japanese government's efforts to

promote global competence skills and career development, students still prioritize job hunting over international experiences like studying abroad. As a result, it is unclear whether it is accessible for students to study abroad and whether these skills gained from studying abroad are widely recognized and valued within Japanese companies.

According to the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (2022), the three top skills for Japanese workers are taking action, the ability to think things through, and working on a team. These are all skills that can be obtained through study abroad (Franklin, 2010). However, within Japanese companies, great emphasis is placed on company loyalty and workers' character rather than their skills due to the norm of employees joining a company right out of college and remaining at the company until retirement (Rear, 2022). However, this trend of company loyalty is changing among the younger generations, especially millennials (Nae, 2017). The millennial generation, also known as Generation Y, includes individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). As Japan's workforce continues to age, millennials will make up a greater percentage of the workforce in Japan. As a result, it is crucial to understand the needs of the younger generation as they encompass a greater proportion of the workforce and acknowledge the skills and knowledge that they bring to their positions.

In my mixed methods research study, I explored the ways in which studying abroad has impacted Japanese individuals' professional development and discussed how the skills and knowledge gained from their experiences abroad impact their current careers. My research explored the following questions: How does studying abroad impact the professional development and career choice of Japanese individuals in the mid-term, and what are the factors that contribute to these effects? Are there any discernible variations in these impacts between older millennials and younger millennials?

This study is important because it sheds light on the ways in which studying abroad and international experiences influenced Japanese individuals and how this experience has impacted their professional development in their early careers. Understanding the intersecting dynamics of international experiences and career choices is crucial as internationalization continues to shape our global economy. My research provides valuable insights into the real-world implications of studying abroad for Japanese individuals, contributing to a broader understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of internationalization initiatives. As Japan further develops its international efforts, my research can be used to understand better ways to meet the needs of Japanese students and early professionals entering the job market. This can bridge a gap between the Japanese government's internationalization efforts and company needs. Additionally, the comparison between older and younger millennials provides a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of individuals' international experiences through the evolving societal and economic factors that impact each generation differently. This study provides valuable insights into the intersection between international experiences and professional growth within the Japanese context, adding to global discussions regarding education policies, internationalization strategies, professional development, and global competitiveness.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical grounding for this research draws upon human capital theory, cultural capital theory, cultural dimensions theory, and generational theory to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of studying abroad for Japanese individuals regarding their professional development. Becker's (2009) human capital theory and Bourdieu's (2006) cultural capital theory highlight how the skills and knowledge gained through education and experiences while studying abroad enhance participants' professional development. Hofstede's

(1980) cultural dimension theory, in combination with Strauss and How's (1991) generational theory, focuses attention on the intersectionality of the cultural context of the Japanese workplace and society and the generational differences between older and younger millennials. These theories provided valuable insights into participants' experiences and offered context for understanding how studying abroad can influence the trajectory of career paths and professional development in Japan.

Human Capital and Cultural Capital Theories

Human capital theory suggests that education enhances professional development and employability through the development of skills, knowledge, and qualifications (Becker, 2009). This theory provided a useful framework regarding the acquisition of skills and knowledge that participants gain through study abroad and their impact on career development in the context of Japan. Through study abroad, this opportunity can increase the development of skills such as language proficiency, global competence, and cross-cultural understanding (Sobkowiak, 2019). Similarly, as the Japanese government continues to emphasize the development of global competency skills to compete in the global economy, the acquisition of these skills from study abroad should be reflected through professional development and career advancement.

Similar to human capital theory, cultural capital theory suggests that as individuals gain cultural skills and knowledge, this contributes to their success in professional and personal experiences and contributes to their social mobility (Bourdieu, 2006). In his theories, he explores varying expressions of cultural capital. These include embodied cultural capital, which is typically associated with socialization and one's upbringings; institutionalized cultural capital, which is linked to formal education; objectified cultural capital, which includes the tangible objects embedded in cultures such as books, jewelry, and art; and the roles of social networks

and connections which grant access to influential social circles and increase one's cultural capital. This theoretical foundation helps explain how studying abroad enhances students' cultural capital through education, language acquisition, cultural understanding, global competence, and building social networks. Bourdieu (2006) additionally discusses how the cultural preferences, education, and knowledge that society values are formed and perpetuated by the elite class, meaning that the dominant culture and knowledge that society values often reflect the values of higher socio-economic classes and lead to further social stratification.

When discussing human and cultural capital theories, it is important to acknowledge great disparities in access to study abroad and international education programs, primarily driven by financial barriers and the high cost of study abroad programming. Rivera (2016) highlights this point well in her book *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* by discussing how financial limitations significantly influence educational and career opportunities for students. As a result, the cost of studying abroad, including tuition, travel, housing, and living expenses, creates a barrier for individuals from lower-income backgrounds (Rivera, 2016). This financial disparity restricts access to transformative international experiences but also perpetuates social, cultural, and economic inequalities. Addressing these disparities is crucial for increasing more equitable international education opportunities, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds the same opportunities for the development of human and cultural capital.

Taken together, these theories demonstrate how the skills, knowledge, and experience gained from studying abroad influence the career trajectory and professional development of Japanese individuals in the mid-term. However, it is essential to consider the individuals who benefit from studying abroad and incorporate more accessible study abroad programming for individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Cultural Dimensions Theory and Generational Theory

Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory, combined with Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory, provided insight into the intersectionality of cultural and generational influences on behavior, values, and attitudes in Japan. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory was used to understand the norms and motivations within Japan's cultural context. The three key areas that were explored in this research are uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and motivation toward achievement and success (Hofstede, 1980). Japanese culture is often characterized as moderately high towards uncertainty avoidance, meaning that Japanese are less likely to engage in risky behavior, and this preference can result in long processes for making change (Hofstede, n.d.). As a result, Japanese students are less likely to study abroad due to this uncertainty, and changes in the workplace toward greater internationalization efforts may take time. Furthermore, Japan has a score of 100 on the long-term orientation dimension, meaning that Japanese society values long-term commitment and persistence (Hofstede, n.d.). This can be demonstrated in the Japanese workplace since many people remain at the same company for life. Lastly, Japanese culture is highly motivated toward achievement and success, and this can provide useful insight into whether studying abroad is valued as an achievement towards success or if job hunting is deemed to be more important in Japanese society.

Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational theory was useful in providing insight into the second research question, which explores any discernible variations in impacts from study abroad on professional development between older millennials and younger millennials and illustrates how generational differences may arise within the findings. For instance, older millennials tend to be more long-term committed and remain in the same career compared to younger millennials. Similar to Hofstede's long-term orientation theory, this theory provided

essential insights into the perspective of older and younger Japanese millennials. Additionally, older millennials place greater value on job loyalty and stability compared to younger millennials, who value diversity, social responsibility, and flexibility (Strauss & Howe, 1991). By exploring how these generational tendencies interact and complement Hofstede's cultural dimensions, my research used these theoretical lenses to inform our understanding of Japanese society. These theoretical approaches provided critical insights into how cultural and generational influences shape the perspectives and experiences of Japanese individuals, providing a valuable theoretical contribution to my research.

Literature Review

There is an abundance of research in the field of international education about the impact of studying abroad on students' intercultural competence (Maharaja, 2018; Nguyen, 2017; Sobkowiak, 2019), personal development (Black & Duhon, 2006; Maharaja, 2018; Kauffmann, 1984), and academic achievement (Cardwell, 2020; Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012); however, there is little research on the influence it has on individuals' professional development after graduating. I used relevant research in the field to gain a deeper understanding of the internationalization efforts in Japan, the motivations of why Japanese students choose to study abroad, the skills gained from studying abroad, the work culture in Japan, and generational differences to position my research. Each of these areas was useful for understanding the experience and influence that studying abroad has on Japanese individuals in the years following their undergraduate graduation and the early stages of their professional careers.

Internationalization in Japan

Comprehensive internationalization is defined as “a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research,

and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units” (Hudzik, 2011, p. 6). This definition of internationalization embodies the well-rounded commitment that higher education must ensure when incorporating internationalization strategies.

In recent years, Japan’s government has placed significant emphasis on increasing internationalization efforts in higher education, including increasing inbound and outbound international student mobility, conducting global research, and building partnerships with international institutions (Kuroda et al., 2018). Despite these efforts, it is unclear whether these government initiatives have increased the international competitiveness of Japanese higher education institutions (Ota, 2018). Sugimura (2015) discusses three areas for internationalization improvements at higher education institutions: increase research regarding internationalization at universities; increase funding for international programs and joint degree programs overseas; and improve evaluation systems for assessing internationalization efforts at universities. With a growing push for internationalization in higher education institutions in Japan, there will continue to be a shift in the need for global perspectives within Japanese society. Looking ahead, this shift will have a significant influence on the skills and knowledge that younger generations bring to the workforce.

Study Abroad

Cultural and societal factors influencing Japanese students to study abroad and deterring them from studying abroad play a significant role in the internationalization efforts in Japan. Porter and Porter’s (2020) study examines the perspective of Japanese study-abroad administrations and discusses the tendencies of Japanese students when deciding to study abroad.

They discuss how inward tendencies and the cultural influence of conformity greatly influence Japanese students' decisions when studying abroad. Japanese students tend to be more risk-averse and prefer staying in their comfort zone (Katori, 2016). However, the cultural influence of conformity can both increase study-abroad participation and detour students from studying abroad, depending on the influence of their peers, family, and professors (Porter & Porter, 2020). Job hunting is also a significant influencer when considering studying abroad (Sugimura, 2015). Job hunting in Japan begins in students' junior year of college, and they are typically hired right after graduation. However, if students are studying abroad, this can prevent them from participating in the job-hunting process and, as a result, place them behind their peers after graduation. This conflicting schedule of job hunting and studying abroad can often deter students from studying abroad as they prioritize their future careers (Porter & Porter, 2020). Thus, Japanese universities need to better support their students who want to study abroad in order to meet the country's internationalization plans and growing comprehensive internationalization efforts in higher education.

However, Shimmi and Ota (2018) demonstrate how there has been an increase in the participation of Japanese students in short-term study-abroad programs in recent years. They attribute some of this growth to the expansion of government initiatives for the promotion of internationalization efforts, such as grants and governmentally funded programs. The benefits of short-term programs include no conflict with job hunting, economic affordability, and lower required levels of language skills, allowing a broader population of students to participate. However, they note that though there is an increase in participation, short-term programs may not significantly increase their global competence and language skills compared to long-term programs. Although short-term programs may be a solution for increasing internationalization

efforts, these programs may not result in a deep cross-cultural understanding that will contribute to raising the global competencies of Japanese citizens as intended by the Japanese government's Integrated Innovation Strategy.

Skills and Knowledge

Hanada's (2019) study explores the characteristics of study abroad programs that contribute to cultivating intercultural competence in Japan. For the purpose of this research, intercultural competence is defined as "an individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad" (Johnson et al., 2006, p. 530). The findings demonstrate that the program type, prior language learning, and pre-departure support have a significant influence on students' intercultural success (Hanada, 2019). The research also shows that Japanese students do not gain intercultural competence skills just from studying abroad. In order to gain these skills, students must have proper support from study abroad staff, and pre-departure orientation and post-study abroad activities greatly increase the likelihood of students developing intercultural competence skills. Similarly, Katori (2016) found that studying abroad increased students' personal growth and identity awareness and increased Japanese students' global perspective. However, they note that these traits have more significant development with post-study abroad activities and reflection. Other studies show that Japanese students who study abroad are more likely to succeed in international environments and tend to be more internationally mobile after graduating (Tanabe, 2019).

Another significant skill gained from studying abroad is language development. Sakamoto's study (2018) explores the global communicative competence of Japanese students studying a foreign language. The challenges discussed for developing these skills include

language anxiety, low self-confidence, and a focus on grammatical accuracy (Sakamoto, 2018). Due to these challenges, Sakamoto (2018) suggests that pedagogical models should be customized for Japanese language learners to achieve the most success in developing global communicative competencies. The survey results show that Japanese students placed greater importance on intercultural competence than on linguistic competence for effective intercultural communication.

Additional research by Paige et al. (2009) and DeGraaf et al. (2013) highlights how important it is to examine the long-term impacts of studying abroad on students' career outcomes and can be used as a point of comparison for the current study. Although these studies do not examine Japanese students specifically, they provide unique insight into the long-term impact of studying abroad. Paige et al. (2009) conducted a study on the long-term impacts of mobility experiences, and their study shows that 60.5% of their participants enrolled in advanced degree programs since graduating. Furthermore, approximately 35% of the participants said studying abroad contributed significantly to their careers, and approximately 40% said that studying abroad somewhat contributed to their careers. Lastly, their findings show that approximately 38% of the participants said that their current career is internationally orientated. These findings indicate that study abroad may impact academic and career choices in the long term. Another study by DeGraaf et al. (2013) that explores the long-term impact of studying abroad on personal and professional development shows similar findings. This study's findings show that studying abroad significantly impacts career choice or major, and many participants considered studying abroad as a strong resume builder. Their study further discusses how studying abroad can greatly benefit individuals' personal development through the increase in global awareness, maturity, self-confidence, and accomplishments that often result from abroad experiences.

Work Culture in Japan

Japanese work culture plays a vital role in how skills and knowledge are valued within society. Rear's (2022) research examines Japanese workplace values and managers' perspectives on the qualities and abilities employers look for in new hires in mid-sized firms in Japan. It is common in Japan for employees to join a company after graduating college and remain at that company until retirement. As a result, Japanese managers place value on communication, cooperation, and flexibility (Rear, 2022). The article discusses how even though Japanese society is beginning to shift away from collectivism and more towards individualism, managers continue to emphasize characteristics that create harmony within the workplace. Many of the skills the managers discussed as crucial for workers were personality-based rather than hard skills since it is implied that they will work together long-term. These are skills that can be gained through study abroad (Franklin, 2010). Additionally, it is common for companies to change employees' positions every few years within the company. This provides employees the opportunity to gain a well-rounded understanding of the company and create a greater collectivist nature. Takahashi's (2015) findings show that this regular rotation of positions tends to reduce employee turnover in large Japanese companies and results in high retention rates.

Porter and Porter's (2020) research on the perspective of study abroad administrators showed that four participants of the study discuss how some Japanese companies evaluate potential employees on whether they are "globally-ready" or "globally-minded" (Porter & Porter, 2020, p. 63). This demonstrates a shift in some Japanese companies that value global perspectives and understanding. However, four participants in this research found that "inward-minded" company attitudes are very prevalent, making it challenging for students who studied abroad to find a job after returning from studying abroad (Porter & Porter, 2020, p. 63). One

participant even indicated that “in extreme cases, students with study abroad experiences are negatively classified as individuals who failed to adjust to life in Japan . . . Returnees can be seen as too individualistic” (Porter & Porter, 2020, p. 63). This contradiction between employers seeking globally-minded individuals, whereas other employees viewing study abroad experiences as a negative attribute, demonstrates the need for further research into the career development of post-study abroad students.

This literature shows that despite changes in societal perspectives, the workplace in Japan has not adjusted as quickly. As a result, personality skills are valued more highly. However, this may continue to shift and change as internationalization efforts continue to increase in higher education and as younger generations with differing values enter the workforce.

Generational Differences

Examining generational differences highlights the unique values, behaviors, and attitudes that shape each generation and illustrates the significant influence they have in society and even the workplace. Nae’s (2017) research shows that Japanese millennials tend to be more creative, versatile, and technologically savvy; however, they are also more self-centered and lack an adventurous spirit. This research further discusses how Japanese millennials are seen as inward-looking and insecure, and are less interested in aspects such as status, career, marriage, and family in comparison to previous generations. These characteristics mean that they are less likely to seek high-status jobs and tend to place less of a priority on getting married and starting a family. This type of attitude may significantly influence the traditional Japanese work culture since millennials are more individualistic and place less of a priority on career aspirations.

The data in Nae’s (2017) study also demonstrated that Japanese millennials are risk-averse, which corresponds with Hofstede’s cultural dimension. In contrast to the more optimistic

millennials in Western countries, Japanese millennials are more somber, which is attributed to long working hours, frequent and often mandatory drinking parties with bosses and coworkers, changes to positions within the company, and work-life imbalance. However, it was noted that some gender roles are beginning to shift as more women enter the workforce and men are taking on some of the household responsibilities compared to older generations (Nae, 2017). This study demonstrates the shift in attitudes toward work culture for Japanese millennials, and this may greatly impact Japanese companies since millennials will make up a large population of the workforce in Japan as the population continues to age.

Research Design and Methodology

To respond to this study's research questions, I employed a mixed methods research approach. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact that studying abroad has had on Japanese individuals' career paths and professional development in the mid-term. The data collection process consisted of both online surveys and in-depth online interviews. The online survey incorporated both open-ended questions, a qualitative data collection strategy, and closed-ended questions, more appropriate for quantitative methodologies, to gain insights into the impact of studying abroad on the professional development and career choices of Japanese individuals. In-depth interviews were utilized as the primary qualitative strategy for capturing the lived experiences of participants and capturing the impact of study abroad on their professional development from their own perspectives and voices (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used two research questions to frame this research: How does studying abroad impact the professional development and career choice of Japanese individuals in the mid-term, and what are the factors that contribute to these effects? Are there any discernible variations in these impacts between older millennials and younger millennials?

These research questions were informed by human capital and social capital theories, as well as the intersection of cultural dimension theory and generational theory. Human capital theory, which explores how education leads to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and experiences, informed this study by examining how studying abroad contributed to participants' professional development since graduation. Similarly, social capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of building social connections and cultural capital, guided the exploration of the social connections and networks that participants made through studying abroad and their careers. Cultural dimension theory allowed for the exploration of cultural nuance in Japan, such as communication styles, work culture, and societal expectations. Lastly, generational theory provided a foundation for understanding the factors that influence older and younger millennials and their impact on their career trajectory. These theories, in conjunction, provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors that influence the impact of studying abroad on Japanese individuals' career paths and professional development in the mid-term.

Participants and Sampling

For the purpose of the study, participants were Japanese millennials who studied abroad during their undergraduate university. The millennial generation, also known as Generation Y, includes individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). Millennials were specifically selected for this research to show insight into the early career paths of individuals and to explore how studying abroad influenced this professional development in the mid-term. For the purposes of this research, older millennials will consist of participants born between 1984 and 1989, and younger millennials will consist of participants born between 1990 and 1996. These years were selected due to the implementation of the Ad Hoc Council on Educational Reform, which began in 1984 and was Japan's third comprehensive education reform (MEXT, 2001). The education

reforms were made to better prepare students for entering the twenty-first century and included a curriculum that valued children's individuality, implemented entrance exam reforms for high schools and universities, and incorporated an educational framework that cooperated with societal norms (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020). Further reforms were implemented in 1990 with the National Curriculum Standard, which emphasized learning independently and allowed children to "think, judge, and express themselves" (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020, p. 89). Due to these distinct educational reforms, my research will define "older millennials" as individuals born between 1984 and 1989 and "younger millennials" as individuals born between 1990 and 1996.

The sample population was selected through criterion, convenience, and snowball sampling. The criteria for participating in my research consisted of Japanese millennials who studied abroad during their undergraduate university studies. I reached out to potential participants through email, Facebook, Instagram, and Line with a letter of recruitment (Appendix A). Snowball sampling was used to gain a greater participant pool.

Seventeen participants completed the online survey and four of those participants partook in the in-depth interview. It is important to note that fifteen participants are currently employed, and two are unemployed. Additionally, all participants are currently living in Japan. Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of the demographics of the survey participants and interview participants. Table 1 shows that participants are evenly distributed between the generations, with nine younger millennials and eight older millennials. However, most of the participants are female, with thirteen females and four males. The table also provides information regarding participants' study abroad location, including all study abroad programs that they participated in during their undergraduate education. A majority of the participants studied abroad in the United States. Participants' duration of their study abroad varied; however, a majority studied abroad for less

than a year. The table also shows that participants work in diverse industries, but many work in travel and tourism. Table 2, which provides information about interview participants, also demonstrates that there is an even distribution of participants from each generation. Similar to the survey participants, there are more females than males, with three females and one male, and all participants currently work in diverse industries. All interview participants studied abroad in the United States; however, Miki studied abroad in multiple locations.

Table 1

Survey Participant Demographics

Age	<i>Number of Participants</i>	Industry of Employment	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Younger Millennial	9	Service Industry	2
Older Millennial	8	Travel Agency	2
Gender		Tourism	2
Female	13	Airlines	2
Male	4	Manufacturing	2
Study Abroad Destination		Start-up	1
United States	11	City hall	1
Canada	3	Construction	1
United Kingdom	1	Trading Company	1
China	1	Education	1
Thailand	1	Art	1
South Korea	1	Consulting	1
Finland	1	Academic Majors	
Study Abroad Duration		English	7
More than one year	2	Business	5
One year	3	Cultural Studies	4
Less than one year	7	Architecture	1
Less than six months	5		

Table 2*Interview Participant Demographics*

Generation	Participants Pseudonym	Birth Year	Gender	Undergraduate Major	Study Abroad Location	Current Industry
<i>Older Millennial</i>	Keiko	1990	Female	English Language	USA	Manufacturing
	Chisa	1991	Female	English Language	USA	Higher Education Staff
<i>Younger Millennial</i>	Miki	1992	Female	Business	USA, China, South Korea, Finland	Trading Company
	Kaito	1996	Male	Business	USA	Art Industry

Data Collection

Once electronic informed consent was received through Microsoft Forms (Appendix B), initial data collection was done through an online survey offered in both English and Japanese (Appendix C). Survey data provided background information on participants and basic information regarding study abroad experience and professional experiences. The survey was divided into four sections. Section 1 collected data on participants' study abroad experiences. This section consisted of questions about where participants studied abroad and for how long, and multiple-choice questions about the skills and knowledge gained from studying abroad, where participants could select as many responses as possible that apply. This section also included open-ended questions asking participants to expand upon their study abroad experience. Section 2 explored participants' work experiences and asked participants whether they are employed, what industry they are in, and their position. A Likert scale was used to ask to what

extent studying abroad impacted their professional development and career choice, with a follow-up question that asked participants to elaborate on their choice. This section also included multiple-choice questions about the skills and knowledge that they use in their workplace. The final question of this section was an open-ended question that asked participants to describe the specific ways in which studying abroad influenced their professional development with specific reference to their job. Section 3 collected participant demographic information. Section 4 asked if participants were willing to participate in the in-depth interview and asked their availability.

Participants had the option to complete the survey in Japanese or English. Eleven participants responded in Japanese, and six responded in English. The survey responses in Japanese were compiled into a document and ensured that all identifying information was removed before sending them to the native Japanese translator. Then, the document was sent in a secure file through email and translated from Japanese to English by a native Japanese speaker. Following the translation, all survey responses were compiled for data collection.

Participants who agreed to be interviewed participated in a one-time in-depth online interview via Google Meet. The interviews were semi-structured and followed the main interview structure (Appendix D) but allowed for further questions to be asked to dive deeper depending on what participants shared about their experiences. The interviews consisted of two sections, one discussing participants' study abroad experience and one discussing their professional development and work experience. All questions were open-ended and allowed participants to share their unique perspectives and experiences. The interview provided an opportunity to gain further insights into participants' study abroad and professional experiences and explore the perceived impact of studying abroad on their professional lives from their own perspectives and voices. I conducted the interviews in virtual meetings on Google Meet in a

secure and private location. They were audio recorded, with the consent of the participants, to allow for accurate transcriptions of each interview. Since all participants have a proficient understanding of English, all interviews were conducted in English. The interviews allowed for a greater understanding of the participants' experiences and enhanced the richness of the research data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical analysis, including the mean, mode, and frequency distribution. Qualitative data analysis began with verbatim transcription of each interview. Member checking was utilized to ensure that participants' experiences and perspectives were interpreted accurately. Additionally, the open-ended questions from the survey were translated and compiled into a document for data analysis. The data was then coded using Dedoose through deductive coding, informed by the research's theoretical foundation, followed by inductive coding to allow for themes to form from the data itself (Appendix E). Following the coding process, the data was separated into older and younger millennials for data comparison.

Researcher Positionality

Having lived with Japanese students as part of a host family when I was younger, I was always interested in learning more about other cultures. This led me to work in the field of international education, and I currently live and work in Japan. Though I have experience living, working, and engaging with Japanese students, I am aware that my positionality and biases influence my research. Working in Japan since graduating from college gives me some insights into Japanese work culture; however, as a White U.S. citizen, I have unintentional biases and differing perspectives. Additionally, I am researching a culture that is different from my own, and I am aware that this may impact my research. To mitigate my biases, I was open-minded,

mindful of cultural differences, and communicated in a respectful and ethical manner with participants.

Ethics and Credibility

Throughout the development and research process of this study, ethical considerations were placed at the forefront of my research. Firstly, the study had IRB approval prior to any data collection to ensure that the research meets ethical standards. All necessary documents, such as the informed consent form and survey, were included in both English and Japanese to meet ethical standards and ensure understanding. All personal identifiers were removed from the data, and pseudonyms were assigned to participants to conceal their identities. Furthermore, member checks and peer feedback were used to minimize bias. Lastly, due to the cross-cultural nature of the research, it was necessary to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect for the values and norms of Japanese society. I acknowledge the importance of respect and privacy in Japanese culture and demonstrated this in my research by protecting participants' identities and personal information. Additionally, all communications via email or online interviews were approached with respect and understanding of cultural norms prevalent in the context of Japan.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the data was triangulated through multiple sources, namely surveys and in-depth interviews. This provided multiple data points and allowed for deeper data analysis. When collecting data, interviews were standardized to allow for constancy and minimize researcher bias. Member checking was utilized to ensure that participants' experiences and perspectives were being interpreted accurately. Peer debriefing was incorporated through the sharing of findings and gaining feedback from peers within my capstone seminar course at SIT and from a research advisor. Also, to maintain an audit trail, all

notes, drafts, documents, and recordings were stored in a secure folder on OneDrive to ensure participant protection.

Findings

The following section used data collected from seventeen survey responses and four in-depth interviews to explore the impact that studying abroad has had on the professional development and career choices of Japanese millennials since graduating. First, I present findings based on the survey data that examines participants' international experience, career choice, and professional development in the mid-term. Then, I present findings based on interview data that explore job hunting and Japanese work culture, personal growth and professional development, and the influence of cultural dimensions. In both sets of findings, findings are explored for older and younger millennials separately.

Survey Findings

International Experience

Findings on international experiences reveal that 65% of participants studied abroad during their undergraduate university for the first time, while 35% had experience studying abroad before. However, a noteworthy generational difference emerged as 50% of younger millennials indicated that they studied abroad before undergraduate university. However, only 15% of older millennials stated that they had studied abroad before entering university. This demonstrates that the younger millennials who participated in this study have had more opportunities for international exposure compared to the older millennials.

The qualitative survey data underscore the transformative impact of studying abroad. Both older millennials' and younger millennials' responses expressed a growth of global understandings and cultural nuances, particularly those who stated having little exposure to

English and international communities as a result of growing up in rural Japan. One participant stated that as a result of studying abroad, “The world I see has expanded, and I have a wider range of things to accept” (Survey participant, younger millennial). While another discussed how “Studying abroad gave me a global perspective and broadened my sense of values” (Survey participant, older millennial). Furthermore, many participants noted that studying abroad significantly contributed to their English language learning, especially native English phrases gained through their immersive experiences abroad. Echoing this point, another participant notes, “Not only did I learn English, but since I was in a homestay, it was a great opportunity to learn about different cultures, and I also gained important knowledge in English education” (Survey participant, older millennial). These findings demonstrate the diverse and enriching nature of international experiences, highlighting their pivotal role in professional development among both generations.

Career Choice

The data shows that the industries and career choices of the participants are diverse. However, there is a trend in the data indicating that individuals who study abroad may be more interested in working in more international environments. The highest occurring sector is within the service industry and travel industry, making up approximately 47% of the participants. A potential reason why participants may be drawn to these industries is because there are ample opportunities to engage with international communities and use English in these roles. This is shown in a quote from the survey when a participant states, “My decision was definitely affected by my study abroad experience. I decided to work at a travel agency because I like to talk about travel and love to talk with people from around the world” (Survey participant, older millennial).

Other participants discuss how studying abroad influenced their behaviors and attitudes, which led to their current career path. One participant stated that “the growth and development of my skills, particularly communication skills, English skills, and my interest in foreign countries gained through studying abroad, gave me confidence, which became a major driving force in my job search” (Survey participant, younger millennial). Another participant discusses how an attitudinal shift as a result of studying abroad greatly influences their professional development. The participant said, “The open-minded attitude and the ability to say what I want to say while accepting others, which I cultivated while studying abroad, are definitely needed in my current role” (Survey participant, younger millennial). These findings indicate that participating in study abroad impacted participants both academically and personally, resulting in a discernible influence on their career choices for both older and younger millennials.

Impact on Professional Development

When asked to rate the extent to which studying abroad impacted their professional development and career choice on a scale from one to ten, participants reported an average score of 6.7. When comparing across generations, there is not a huge differentiation from the overall mean. The mean for younger millennials is the same average of 6.7, whereas the older millennials are slightly lower at 6.6. This mean value suggests that international experiences have a moderately positive overall influence on career development, regardless of a participant’s generational status. The mode of responses was 7, which indicated that a significant portion of participants leaned towards a positive impact, which aligns with the mean. However, participants' responses varied, with the highest being ten and the lowest being 3 among both older and younger millennials. This is indicated by the high standard deviation of 2.3, meaning that there was a notable degree of variation in the responses of participants. While the overall

data suggest that studying abroad has a relatively positive impact on career development, the distribution of data indicates that there is diversity in how participants perceive the extent of the influence on their professional development.

Figure 1 and Table 3 provide an overall comparison between the skills and knowledge participants gained during study abroad and the skills and knowledge that they use in their current work. When examining this comparison, there were some discrepancies between the two, with the greatest difference being in the skill of cross-cultural communication. Ninety percent of participants said they gained cross-cultural communication through their study abroad experiences; in contrast, only 41% stated this is a skill they use in their professional work. Similarly, 77% stated they gained cultural competence and global understanding. However, approximately 45% stated they use this in their work. This indicates that participants are gaining extensive cultural and global knowledge, but few are able to utilize these skills in their professional work.

On the contrary, 29% of participants stated they gained problem-solving skills during study abroad, whereas 71% noted this was an essential skill for their professional work. This demonstrates that necessary professional skills might not always be perceived as skills gained through study abroad. Despite the fact that fewer participants noted problem-solving as a skill gained through study abroad, one participant stated, “I have always been weak at expressing my opinions, but through studying abroad, I have become able to speak out more actively and work on solving problems” (Survey participant, older millennial).

Similarly, 5% indicated that they gained leadership skills through study abroad, while 35% noted that leadership was a skill used for their work. This is a wide gap and could indicate that there are fewer opportunities to develop leadership skills during study abroad than in

professional work. Lastly, language was the only skill that was relatively the same, with 14 indicating it was a skill they gained abroad and 11 stating it is a skill they use for work. Many participants stated that language is a significant factor and influence in their study abroad experiences. This quote from a participant echoes the influence of language: “I think my experience studying abroad was useful in terms of language and cross-cultural communication, as I had to communicate with members from many different countries” (Survey participant, younger millennial). These findings demonstrate that studying abroad has a relatively positive impact on participants' overall professional development. However, some of the skills and knowledge gained through study abroad do not always align with the skills and knowledge used in participants' professional work.

Figure 1

Skills and Knowledge Gained from Study Abroad and Used in Work

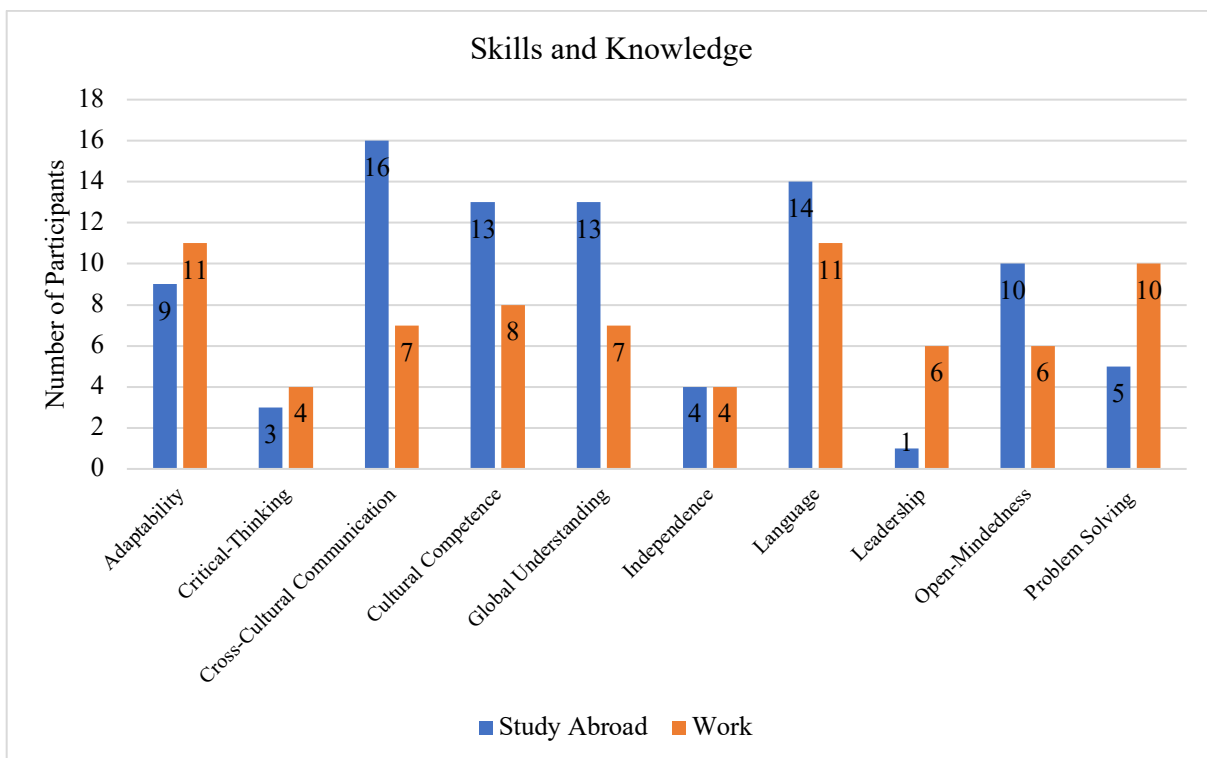


Table 3*Skills and Knowledge*

	Gain From Study Abroad		Used at Work	
	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Percent of Participants</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Percent of Participants</i>
Adaptability	9	53%	11	65%
Critical-Thinking	3	18%	4	24%
Cross-Cultural Communication	16	94%	7	41%
Cultural Competence	13	76%	8	47%
Global Understanding	13	76%	7	41%
Independence	4	24%	4	24%
Language	14	82%	11	65%
Leadership	1	6%	6	35%
Open-Mindedness	10	59%	6	35%
Problem Solving	5	29%	10	71%

Table 4 and Figures 2 and 3 provide insights into the generational comparison between the skills and knowledge gained from studying abroad and the skills and knowledge that they use in their professional life. As demonstrated in Figure 2 and Table 4, skills such as cross-cultural competence, global understanding, open-mindedness, and language are relatively similar between the two generations. However, skills such as independence and problem-solving are more prevalent for younger millennials compared to older millennials. It is noteworthy to mention that none of the older millennials mentioned independence as a skill they gained through study abroad. When examining how participants use these skills in their professional careers, younger millennials again tend to use skills such as independence and problem-solving more than older millennials. However, a higher proportion of older millennials reported using problem-solving skills in their work relative to their experiences during study abroad. This reflects the overall trend in the data, indicating that certain skills and knowledge gained from

experiences studying abroad may not necessarily align with skills and knowledge used in the workplace.

Although both generations discussed gaining skills regarding global understanding and cross-cultural communication, Figure 3 and Table 4 show that older millennials are more likely to use skills such as global understanding and cultural competence. The findings showed that 67% of older millennials use global understanding in the workplace, compared to 11% of younger millennials. Additionally, a notable generational observation in the data is that none of the older millennials mentioned using critical thinking in their professional work, whereas 44% of younger millennials discussed this as a skill they use in their careers. These findings illustrate that there are some parallels between older and younger millennials in skills and knowledge acquired through study abroad and used in the workplace, such as language and global competence. However, the data also highlights generational discrepancies between workplace skills, as younger millennials tend to emphasize skills such as independence and critical thinking more than older millennials.

Table 4

Comparison of Older and Younger Millennials' Skills and Knowledge

	Gained from Study Abroad			
	<i>Older Millennials</i>	<i>Percent of Generation</i>	<i>Younger Millennials</i>	<i>Percent of Generation</i>
Adapaibility	3	38%	6	67%
Critical-Thinking	1	13%	2	22%
Cross-Cultural Communication	8	100%	8	89%
Cultural Competence	5	63%	8	89%
Global Understanding	7	88%	6	67%
Independence	0	0%	4	44%
Language	7	88%	7	78%
Leadership	0	0%	1	11%
Open-Mindedness	5	63%	5	56%
Problem Solving	1	13%	4	44%

Used at Work				
	Older Millennials	Percent of Generation	Younger Millennials	Percent of Generation
Adaptability	4	50%	7	78%
Critical-Thinking	0	0%	4	44%
Cross-Cultural Communication	3	38%	2	22%
Cultural Competence	5	63%	3	33%
Global Understanding	6	75%	1	11%
Independence	1	13%	3	33%
Language	5	63%	6	66%
Leadership	3	38%	3	33%
Open-Mindedness	4	50%	2	22%
Problem Solving	4	50%	6	67%

Figure 2

Comparison of Older and Younger Millennials: Skills and Knowledge Gained from Study Abroad

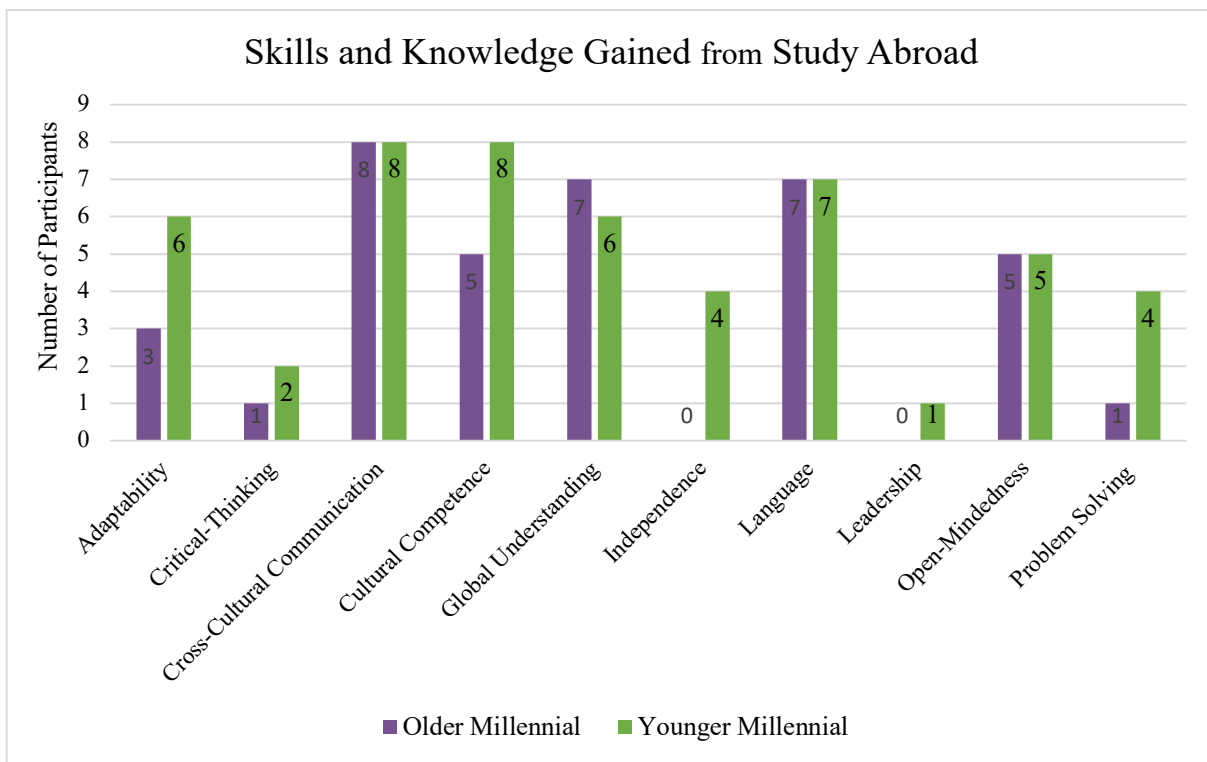
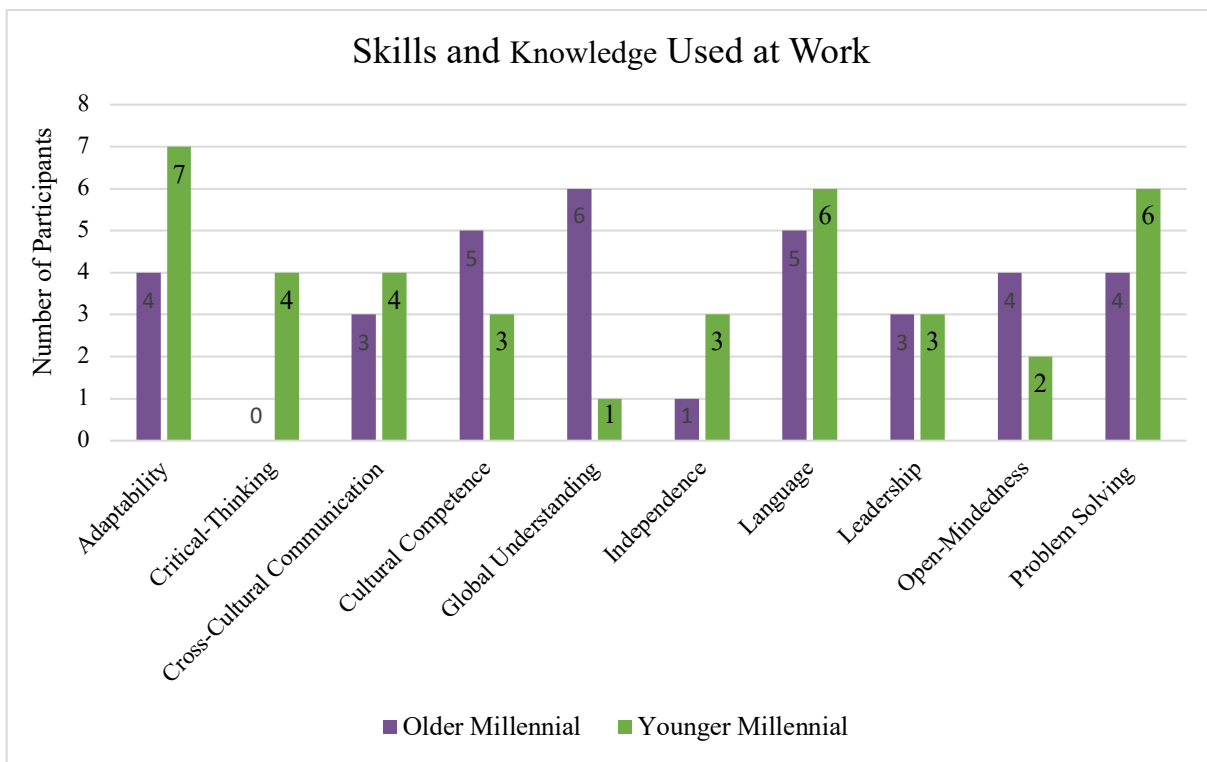


Figure 3

Comparison of Older and Younger Millennials: Skills and Knowledge Used in Work



Interview Findings

Job Hunting and Japanese Work Culture

Participants shared a common theme of facing challenges during their job-hunting experience in Japan, with both older and younger millennials sharing similar difficulties. Job hunting in Japan is a significant event that many college students participate in during their last year of college. Each year, large Japanese companies bulk hire new graduates, and large conferences are held to recruit new employees. Discussing her experience with job hunting, Chisa said, “Ah, it was hard. Yeah, I maybe sent 20 or 30 resumes. So it was very hard, and I went to many interviews” (Chisa, older millennial). She further discusses the numerous interviews and tedious process of both group and individual interviews that she went through

before being hired. Other participants shared their challenges with job hunting as well. After graduating from her undergraduate university, Miki worked for three years at a Japanese recruiting company in the United States. The following quote is her experience job hunting after returning to Japan:

So it was my first time to work in Japan, right? I never had a Japanese working experience because my first job for three years was in the States and finding a job in Japan for the first time was one of the most difficult and darkest times of my life... I wanted to work and use English. I kept applying but got rejections from at least a hundred companies. A lot of people get surprised because they think, 'Why, you got a degree in the State' and 'You have been working for three years for the same company in the State, why'? In my final interviews, for example, people said, 'oh, you don't have experience working in Japan' or 'maybe you are very different from people in my company now.' So it was really bad. It took six months (Miki, younger millennial).

Both of these experiences demonstrate the challenging process of job hunting in Japan. However, Miki's experience highlights how difficult it can be to get a job when you stray from the norm. Since Miki was not getting hired straight out of university, she discussed how many interviewers didn't value her experience working in the United States and were worried that she was not like the other employees because of this. This highlights that international experiences may not always be valued in Japanese work culture due to the norm of being hired right out of university and remaining with the company until retirement.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Another significant finding from the interviews was the impact that studying abroad had on the participants' personal growth and how this contributed to their professional development in the mid-term. All four participants discussed gaining a great sense of self and being more adaptable and confident as a result of studying abroad with no variation in older and younger millennials. Miki shares, "Especially since I'm more confident with what I can do. Because I have more adaptability, so I think, of course, doing something new is stressful, but I think I can

handle it, so it doesn't matter which country. I think I can survive anywhere” (Miki, younger millennial). All four participants discuss how this increase in adaptability and confidence helps them in their current professional roles, from giving presentations to working with international companies.

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was the impact of internships and networking while studying abroad. Keiko and Chisa, who are both older millennials, participated in internships as part of their study abroad program. However, all four participants had opportunities to volunteer while abroad. Keiko shared her experience with her internship in the following passage.

I took part in an internship, during which I visited an Institution of Arts, School for Disabilities. At first, I was very nervous, but they gave me a warm welcome. Their attitude toward making artwork was very strict and passionate. I was so impressed with them. I learned the importance of working hard on everything, and I took this with me into my career (Keiko, older millennial).

Keiko was able to learn a lot through the internship and take that knowledge with her as she started her career in Japan. Others also expressed that studying abroad exposed them to new subjects and areas of interest, which led to their career after graduating. Kaito discusses that his experiences visiting art museums and exploring art management classes while studying abroad sparked his interest in working in the art industry. He shares, “If I didn't study abroad, I don't think I said I want to work in the art industry. It's really impacted my career choice” (Kaito, younger millennial). Exposure to different work cultures and new experiences abroad greatly impacted the career trajectory of all participants.

Lastly, all participants discussed varying degrees of networking while abroad, including making connections with friends and professors, attending job conferences, and getting support from the study abroad office. All participants discussed how making connections with people from around the world was valuable for professional development. Kaito discussed how, at the

time, he was just making friends and connecting with students and professors while studying abroad, but many of those connections have been useful networks as he builds his career. Miki also shared that seeing her friends around her participating in internships and jobs was a useful resource and encouraged her to do the same. Miki says, “Yeah, all those friends really impacted me, and that really contributed to my professional development” (Miki, younger millennial). Overall, all participants were able to grow personally throughout their study abroad experiences, significantly shaping their current professional lives.

The most notable generational difference was that Keiko and Chisa, who are older millennials, participated in study abroad programs that integrated internships into their study abroad experiences. Whereas the younger millennials, Kaito and Miki, had to self-select to participate in volunteer opportunities, such as Japanese language tutoring. Meaning that the older millennials were exposed to structured internship opportunities, while the younger millennials discussed networking with friends and professors as a significant influence in their professional careers.

Cultural Dimensions

The most pronounced generational differences among the four participants were observed within the cultural dimensions. All participants noted that studying abroad made them more confident; however, Kaito and Miki, who are both younger millennials, demonstrated a greater individualist mindset than Keiko and Chisa. Keiko explains this well in the following passage.

In general, Japanese people are not ready to express their feelings and opinions in front of others. They put the importance on taciturnity, which means they think it is important to be silent, to leave it unsaid, even if they have their own thoughts and opinions. While Americans think that they should express their opinions clearly (Keiko, older millennial).

Though she makes this point, Keiko discusses how she is able to be more confident at work but still tends to support the collective. Whereas Kaito shares, “I think I gained in a way

too much of an individual mindset. I love doing things by myself. I love doing things that I want. And it sounds selfish, but I can't do things that I don't want to do” (Kaito, younger millennial). He further explains that through his experiences abroad, he was able to explore different ideas and values and how his experience abroad greatly impacted his career trajectory after returning.

Another noticeable generational difference was regarding long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. Both Keiko and Chisa, older millennials, demonstrate greater tendencies towards long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance compared to Kaito and Miki, younger millennials. An example of this is demonstrated in how Keiko chooses to work in her family business to maintain its longevity. Similarly, Chisa recently entered her second job working at a university and intends to work there until retirement, she states, “I don't want to change jobs anymore” (Chisa, older millennial). However, when discussing changing positions or applying to jobs in other countries, both Kaito and Miki were very open to relocation or starting a new position. Both of the younger millennials discussed in their interviews how their experiences during study abroad opened them up to new perspectives and opportunities, and because of this, they both want to continue to expand their international experiences. Miki shares that she has considered jobs abroad and says, “I could work in the Japanese company in Vietnam or Japanese company in Sri Lanka or something so I can keep working and getting new experiences.” (Miki, younger millennial). These findings demonstrate that younger millennials are less risk-averse and individualistic, seeking opportunities that older millennials may not. Whereas older millennials tend to be less individualistic and tend to value long-term orientation over taking risks.

Limitations

The greatest limitation of this study is the number of interview participants. Despite seventeen participants taking part in the online survey, only four of those participants were

willing to participate in the online interview. This could be a result of busy work schedules and the tendency for Japanese individuals to be more risk-averse and more private. Another limitation regards generational differences. With only four participants, it is challenging to make assumptions about a whole generation. As a result, the findings in this paper only reflect the experiences of the participants. Additionally, this study's age gap between younger and older millennials is small. More participants with a greater diversity in age would contribute more substantial data to draw conclusions. Another limitation of this study stems from the language barrier. As a result, some statements may miss the cultural and linguistic nuance that was stated in Japanese. Finally, among the participants that engaged in the research, a majority of them were female, with thirteen females and only four males. Even though more females tend to study abroad more often compared to males, greater diversity in the gender of participants could lead to different perspectives and experiences.

Discussion

This study examined the impact of studying abroad on professional development for Japanese millennials in the mid-term. Human capital and social capital theories, as well as cultural dimension theory and generational theory, provided a valuable lens for examining participants' experiences in this context. Human capital theory and social capital theory help to identify the skills and knowledge, as well as social connections and networks, gained from studying abroad while exploring the impact this has on participants' professional lives. Cultural dimension theory and generational theory help situate the data within the context of Japan and provide a foundation for understanding the factors that influence older and younger millennials and their impact on their career trajectory. Together, these theories provide a holistic

understanding of the factors that shape participants' study abroad experiences and how this impacts their professional development in the mid-term.

Impact of Study Abroad on Professional Development

The findings highlight the expansive impact that studying abroad had on the participants' professional development among both older and younger millennials. All participants, both in the online survey and in-depth interview, reported transformative study abroad experiences, including enhanced cross-cultural competence, improved language skills, and greater confidence and adaptability. These outcomes are consistent with the literature in the field on the impacts of studying abroad (Sobkowiak, 2019; Tanabe, 2019). However, the survey findings also show a discrepancy between the participants' skills gained abroad and the skills and knowledge used in the workplace. While a substantial majority of the participants noticed a gain in cross-cultural competence and global understanding from studying abroad, very few consider this a skill they use in their current profession. This raises the question about the skills and knowledge gained from studying abroad and the practical application in the workplace.

Additionally, the impact of studying abroad on participants' career choices was evident in both the survey and interview responses. Although this did not impact all participants, it had a substantial impact on those entering the service and travel industry and provided new opportunities for exploration, which is evident in Katio's experience. Many participants expressed increased interest in working with international communities or using their English language skills in their careers. This is reflected in relevant research regarding the long-term impact of studying and global engagement (DeGraaf et al., 2013; Paige et al., 2009).

While comparing the data from older and younger millennials, the findings illustrated that there are some parallels between the skills and knowledge acquired through study abroad

and used in the workplace, such as language and global competence. However, there were some generational differences between workplace skills since younger millennials are more likely to use skills such as independence and critical thinking compared to older millennials. These findings could suggest that Japanese companies' values are shifting and encouraging skills such as critical thinking and seeking globally-minded employees (Porter & Porter, 2020).

Generational Influence

A fascinating element from the findings suggests that younger millennials were more likely to have previous international experience before studying abroad in their undergraduate university compared to older millennials. As a result, younger millennials had more opportunities to engage with diverse communities and gain more experience in global understanding compared to their older counterparts. This may be a result of the increased internationalization efforts emphasized by the Japanese government (Integrated Innovation Strategy, 2023).

The in-depth interviews provided further insights into the generational differences between younger and older millennials. The findings showed that younger millennials had a more individualistic mindset and were less risk-averse. In contrast, older millennials were more focused on long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance, reflecting a more traditional approach to career stability. These findings are consistent with current research in the field regarding generational characteristics and differences among Japanese millennials (Nae, 2017).

Implications for Japanese Government and Companies

As the Japanese government continues to promote internationalization strategies to compete in the global economy and Japanese companies seek to hire well-rounded employees, the findings from my research provide valuable insights to bridge the gap between these two goals. As noted in the findings, younger millennials tend to have more international exposure

prior to studying abroad during their undergraduate studies, which may correspond with the increase in government initiatives through scholarships and the promotion of studying abroad. This demonstrates that younger generations are beginning to have greater access to international education opportunities. As a result, the government should continue to promote these internationalization initiatives while increasing global understanding in their domestic educational programs as well.

Furthermore, to connect these government strategies to the work culture in Japan, Japanese companies should recognize and value the skills that individuals gain from international education programs. As a way to bridge the gap, companies could incorporate global competence training to promote diverse ideas within their company. A coordinated effort between government agencies, educational institutions, and companies to increase and value global understanding and cross-cultural competence skills and knowledge will be essential for Japan to promote internationalization strategies in the future.

Implications for International Educators

As study abroad programs and international education continue to expand, it is essential to explore potential areas of growth that support the needs of Japanese individuals. The findings of this study showed that skills, including problem-solving and leadership, were utilized in the workplace, but few participants mentioned these as skills they gained from their experiences abroad. This suggests that essential workplace skills are not being perceived as skills gained through international education programming. With this in mind, education abroad programs should incorporate aspects such as experiential learning, internships, and reflection that allow for the development of these skills. Research in the field shows the importance that reflection can

have on the acquisition of global understanding and cross-cultural competence skills (Hanada, 2019; Katori, 2016). This can be used as a tool to further develop problem-solving skills.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research on this subject could consist of a longitudinal study of the long-term impact of studying abroad on professional development. This would provide deeper insights into the lasting influence of studying abroad. The incorporation of a longitudinal approach would allow researchers to analyze participants' career trajectories and evolution over time. This would provide unique insights into the impact of international education experiences and their influence on professional development over a long period of time.

Further research could explore generational differences beyond millennials. Comparing Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z would offer a nuanced understanding of change over time. Not only does this offer information beyond the millennial generation, but it allows for a holistic understanding of generational characteristics over time. This research would provide knowledge on the changing trends among generations regarding studying abroad and its influence on professional development.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods research study explored the impact of studying abroad on the professional development of Japanese millennials in the mid-term. The findings had three main takeaways. Firstly, studying abroad was seen to have a positive impact on most of the participants in regard to professional development. However, some of the skills and knowledge gained through study abroad do not always align with the skills and knowledge used in participants' professional work. Participants mostly noted enhanced cross-cultural competence and global understanding gained from their study abroad experiences. However, only a small

number of participants discussed using these skills in their professional careers. Conversely, problem-solving and leadership were recognized as essential skills for the workplace; nevertheless, few participants perceived these skills as skills they gained while studying abroad. Demonstrating that there is a gap between skills gained during study abroad and skills used in the workplace.

Secondly, the findings showed that there were some similarities between the skills and knowledge gained during study abroad for both older and younger millennials. These skills include language, global competence, and cross-cultural communication. However, there were some generational differences in the skills used in the workplace, with younger millennials emphasizing the use of independence and critical thinking more than older millennials. Though both older and younger millennials noted studying abroad had a relatively positive impact on their career development, the skills gained abroad and used in the workplace differ slightly. This indicates that there may be a shift in generational attitudes and behaviors that could be attributed to greater international exposure for younger generations.

Lastly, despite the diverse careers of the participants, many discussed how their experiences studying abroad impacted their career choices. Many of the participants chose to work in the service and travel industry to utilize their English language skills and work in an international environment. Other participants discussed how internships and networking while abroad provided them with new experiences and challenges and greatly impacted their career choices. Additionally, many participants discussed how studying abroad introduced them to new perspectives and opportunities that influenced their professions after graduating. Overall, both older and younger millennials noted how studying abroad offered numerous experiences for personal growth that resulted in a positive influence on their careers since graduating.

Although these findings represent a small proportion of Japanese millennials, they provide insights into the experiences of these participants and the impact that studying abroad has had on their professional development in the mid-term. This research offers unique insights for future Japanese government internationalization initiatives, aid companies seeking to hire globally-minded individuals, and assist international educators in effectively supporting the next generation of students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear Prospective Research Participant:

I am asking for your help and cooperation in my Master's capstone research project, conducted as part of my degree requirements through the School for International Training (SIT)'s Graduate Institute, with the goal of understanding the impact of studying abroad and its influence on professional experiences in Japan. The research is important in understanding the benefits and challenges that studying abroad provides post-graduation and within the workplace.

The project involves two tasks. First, you will complete an online informational survey, which will take about 15-20 minutes. The second task is an optional one-hour online interview that goes into greater depth about your study abroad and current work experiences.

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. All responses will be completely confidential, and I will anonymize your data before I analyze it; it will not be possible to match you with any information or data shared in any way. If you agree to participate, you may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time.

The questions that will be asked within the survey and interview have been approved by the SIT Institutional Review Board as well as my research advisor, Dr. Melissa Whatley. If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant and do not feel comfortable directly contacting the researcher Alex Kerns, please contact the research advisor Melissa Whatley at melissa.whatley@sit.edu.

You will receive an informed consent form electronically before initial participation. If you have any questions or concerns about the nature of this study, please contact Alex Kerns at alexandra.kerns@mail.sit.edu, School for International Training Graduate Institute, VT

Sincerely,

Alex Kerns
Graduate Student Researcher

尊敬なる研究参加者の皆様へ：

私は、日本における留学が専門的な経験に及ぼす影響を理解することを目的とした、私の SIT 研究プロジェクトにおいて、皆様の協力とご支援をお願い申し上げます。この研究は、修士号取得において必須条件であり、留学が卒業後および職場で提供する利点と課題を理解するために重要です。

このプロジェクトには2つのタスクが含まれます。まず、約 15-20 分かかるオンライン情報調査にご参加いただきます。第二のタスクは、留学および現在の職場経験について詳細に掘り下げるオプションの 1 時間のオンラインインタビューです。

この研究への参加は完全に自発的です。すべての回答は完全に機密となり、個人をどの情報やデータとも一致させることは不可能です。また、私がこのデータを活用する際には匿名にしたのちにそれを行います。参加を承諾いただける場合、特定の質問に回答しないことを選択できますし、いつでも承諾を取り下げ、参加を中止することができます。

この調査とインタビューで尋ねられる質問は、SIT Institutional Review Board および研究アドバイザー、Melissa Whatley 博士によって承認されています。参加者としての取り扱いに関する質問や懸念がある場合、また研究者の Alex Kerns に直接連絡することが快適でない場合、Melissa Whatley 博士にお問い合わせいただけます
(melissa.whatley@sit.edu)。

初回の参加前に、情報提供同意書が電子的に提供されます。この研究の内容について質問や懸念がある場合、Alex Kerns (alexandra.kerns@mail.sit.edu) に連絡していただくか、Vermont にある School for International Training Graduate Institute までお問い合わせいただければと思います。

敬具

アレックス・カーンズ

大学院生研究者

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Participant Informed Consent Form 参加者のための同意書

Title Of the Study: Study Abroad Impact in the Mid-Term: Influence on Professional Development in Japan
Researcher Name: Alexandra Kerns

My name is Alexandra Kerns, and I am a student in the SIT International Education program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of my MA in International Education. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, please sign this form and you will be given an electronic copy of this form.

SIT国際教育プログラムにてプログラムを履修中のアレクサンドラ・カーンズです。国際教育の修士号の一部を達成するために私が実施している研究に参加していただきたいと思います。あなたの参加は任意です。以下の内容をお読みいただき、ご不明な点をご質問の上、参加するかどうかご判断ください。参加する場合は、このフォームに署名してください。このフォームの電子コピーが提供されます。

Please read each section and indicate that you do or do not understand. There is an optional section at the bottom for any questions.

各セクションを読んで、それぞれの理解しているか理解していないかを明記してください。質問がある場合は、下部にある予備フォームに入力してください。

* Required

1. Purpose of the Study 研究の目的

The purpose of this study is to learn about the impact that studying abroad may or may not have on students' career paths and decisions after graduating in Japan. The research will ask questions about your study abroad experience and current work experience. I hope to explore the benefits and challenges of studying abroad for Japanese students after graduating and whether the skills and knowledge gained from studying abroad are useful in the workplace.

この研究の目的は、海外留学が学生の卒業後の進路やその意思決定に与える影響について知ることです。調査では、あなたの留学経験や現在の職歴について質問されます。日本人学生が卒業後に留学するメリットや課題、留学で得たスキルや知識が実際の現場で役立つのかなどを探っていきたいと考えています。 *

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

2. Study Procedures 研究手順

The study requires two tasks: completing an online survey and an optional interview. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate in the interview, it will be conducted entirely online and will be approximately one hour long. The interview will be audio recorded for data collection purposes with the consent of the participant. All data from the survey and interview will be anonymous, and information will be secure and protected.

この調査には、オンライン調査への回答とオプションのインタビューという2つのタスクが必要です。アンケートが完了するまでに約15～20分かかります。面接への参加を選択した場合、面接は完全にオンラインで行われ、所要時間は約1時間となります。インタビューは、参加者の同意を得て、データ収集の目的で音声録音されます。アンケートとインタビューのすべてのデータは匿名化され、情報は安全に保護されます。*

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

3. Potential Risk and Discomfort 潜在的なリスクと不快感

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and no penalties should you choose not to participate; participation is voluntary. During the interview, you have the right not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

この研究への参加にリスクはなく、参加しないことを選択した場合でも罰則はありません。参加は任意です。面接中、あなたはいつでも質問に答えなかったり、参加を中止したりする権利を有します。*

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

4. Potential Benefits to Participants And/or To Society 参加者および/または社会に対する潜在的な利益

There are no tangible benefits for participants to participate in this study; however, your participation in the study may provide insights into supporting future generations of Japanese students who choose to study abroad, as well as inform trends in current work culture in Japan.

この研究に参加する参加者にとって具体的なメリットはありません。ただし、この研究への参加は、日本の現在の労働文化の傾向を知るだけでなく、海外留学を選択する将来の世代の日本人学生をサポートするための洞察を提供できる可能性があります。*

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

5. Confidentiality 機密保持

The data will be accessible to me, the researcher, and a translator. The translator will translate any survey data from Japanese to English. All data will be anonymized before the translator translates it to ensure participant privacy.

データは私、研究者、翻訳者がアクセスできるようになります。翻訳者は、調査データを日本語から英語に翻訳します。参加者のプライバシーを確保するため、翻訳者が翻訳する前にすべてのデータが匿名化されます。

The data will be stored on a computer with password protection, and the data will be secured through a protected SIT account with data password protection. During data collection, I will ensure that online interview rooms are secure and private, and I will be in a private space when conducting interviews to protect participant information.

データはパスワードで保護されたコンピュータに保存され、データはパスワードで保護されたSITプログラムのアカウントを通じて保護されます。データ収集時、私はオンライン面接室が安全でプライベートであることを確認し、参加者の情報を保護するために面接を行うときはプライベートな空間で行います。

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. In the presentation of the findings, I will only use pseudonyms and information that you willingly share, with the understanding that it could be used in the research report. Before presenting any findings, I will provide a copy of the transcript for you to check and consent to all of the information stated in the interview.

この研究に関連して取得された個人を特定できる情報は機密として扱われます。調査結果の発表では、調査報告書で使用される可能性があることを理解した上で、参加者さま方が共有してくださった仮名と情報のみを使用します。調査結果を発表する前に、インタビューで述べられたすべての情報を確認して同意していただくために、記録のコピーを提供します。*

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

6. Future Use of Data 将来のデータの利用

The data will not be used beyond this study.

データはこの研究以外には使用されません。*

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

7. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal 任意参加と退会

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

あなたの参加は任意です。参加を拒否した場合でも、罰則が課せられたり、本来受けられる権利が失われることはありません。あなたはいつでも同意を撤回し、ペナルティなしで参加を中止することができます。この調査研究への参加を理由に、あなたは法的請求、権利、または救済を放棄するものではありません。*

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

8. Researcher's Contact Information 研究者の連絡先

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at (alexandra.kerns@mail.sit.edu) or my advisor/supervisor at (melissa.whatley@sit.edu)

この研究についてご質問がある場合、またはさらに詳しい情報が必要な場合は、私 (alexandra.kerns@mail.sit.edu) または私のアドバイザー/スーパーバイザー (melissa.whatley@sit.edu) までご連絡ください。

- *
- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

9. Rights of Research Participant - IRB Contact Information 研究参加者の権利 - 治験審査委員会の連絡先情報

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by the SARB or SIT IRB. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at: irb@sit.edu

すべてのSITの倫理基準を維持するために、この研究はSARBまたはSIT IRBによって審査され、承認されています。研究参加者としてのあなたの権利または研究一般について質問、懸念、または苦情があり、研究者に連絡できない場合は、治験審査委員会にご連絡ください。
(irb@sit.edu)

School for International Training, Institutional Review Board, 1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676, Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676, USA irb@sit.edu +001-802-258-3132 *

- I understand. 理解しました。
- I do not understand. 理解できません。

10. CONSENT TO QUOTE 引用への同意

I may wish to quote from the interview with you either in the capstone paper or presentation. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in order to protect your identity.

論文またはプレゼンテーションのいずれかで、あなたとのインタビューから引用をする可能性があります。身元を守るため、ペンネーム（偽名）を使用させていただきます。

If you agree to consent to be quoted from an interview, please type **YES** in the box.

If you do not agree to consent to be quoted from an interview, please type **NO** in the box.

インタビューの内容を引用することに同意する場合は、ボックスに「はい」と入力してください。

インタビューの内容を引用することに同意しない場合は、ボックスに「いいえ」と入力してください。

(Please note that participation in an interview is optional.) (面接への参加は任意ですのでご了承ください。) *

11. Consent to Record 記録への同意

If you agree to consent to be audio recorded from an interview, please type **YES** in the box.

If you do not agree to consent to be audio recorded from an interview, please type **NO** in the box.

インタビューの内容を引用することに同意する場合は、ボックスに「はい」と入力してください。

インタビューの内容を引用することに同意しない場合は、ボックスに「いいえ」と入力してください。

(Please note that participation in an interview is optional.) (面接への参加は任意ですのでご了承ください。) *

12. (Optional) Do you have any questions? Please write them here and one of the researchers will contact you as soon as possible.

(オプション) ご質問はありますか?ここに書いていただければ、研究員の一人ができるだけ早くご連絡させていただきます。

13. "I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older."

「私は上記を読み、その内容を理解し、研究に参加することに同意します。私は自分が18歳以上であることを認めます。」

Please type your first and last name and the date in the box below to give your consent.

同意するには、下のボックスに姓名と日付を入力してください。

*

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

 Microsoft Forms

Appendix C: Participant Survey

Study Abroad Impact in the Mid-Term: Influence on Professional Development in Japan

Thank you for taking the time to complete my survey.

Please dedicate 15 to 20 minutes to filling out the survey questions below.

Please feel free to respond in English or Japanese.

Gathering this information will help inform my research for my SIT Master's Capstone. My research aims to explore the impact that studying abroad has on the careers and lives of Japanese students in the mid-term.

アンケートにご協力いただきありがとうございます。

以下のアンケートの質問に記入するのに 15 ~ 20 分を費やしてください。英語または日本語でご回答ください。

この情報を収集することは、SIT修士のキャップストーンの研究に情報を提供するのに貢献します。私の研究の目的は、留学が中期的に日本人学生のキャリアや生活に与える影響を調査することです。

* Required

Study Abroad 留学

1. Where did you study abroad in university? 大学ではどこに留学しましたか? *

- United States アメリカ
- Canada カナダ
- United Kingdom イギリス
- Australia オーストラリア
- Other

2. How long did you study abroad while in undergraduate university? 大学の学部時代にどれくらいの期間留学しましたか? *

- Less than one month 1ヶ月未満
- One month 1ヶ月
- Less than six months 6か月未満
- Six months 6ヶ月
- Less than one year 1年未満
- One year 1年
- More than one year 1年以上
- Other

3. Briefly describe your study abroad experience (academic, personal, challenges, benefits, work while abroad) あなたの留学経験を簡単に説明してください (実際の学業、個人的なエピソード、課題、利点、海外での仕事等) *

4. Did you study abroad before university? 大学前に留学しましたか? *

- Yes はい
- No いいえ

5. If yes, please list when, where, and for how long you studied abroad before university. 「はい」の場合、大学入学前に、いつ、どこで、どのくらいの期間留学したかを記載してください。

6. What skills and knowledge did you gain from studying abroad? Select all that apply 留学によってどのようなスキルや知識が得られましたか? 該当するものをすべて選択

- Language 言語
- Cultural Competence 文化的能力、理解
- Global Understanding グローバルな理解
- Cross-Cultural Communication 異文化コミュニケーション
- Open-mindedness オープンマインド
- Problem-Solving 問題解決能力
- Adaptability 適応性
- Independence 独立性
- Leadership リーダーシップ
- Critical-thinking 批判的思考
- Other

Work Experience

7. Do you currently work? 現在働いていますか? *

- Yes はい
- No いいえ
- Other

8. What industry do you work in? どの業界で働いていますか? *

9. What is your position? あなたの立場は何ですか? *

10. To what extent do you think studying abroad impacted your professional development and career choice? 海外留学はあなたの専門能力開発やキャリア選択にどの程度影響を及ぼしたと思いますか? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at all likely

Extremely likely

11. Please elaborate on why you selected that choice for question 10.
質問 10 でその選択肢を選択した理由を詳しく説明してください。 *

12. What skills and knowledge do you use in your workplace? Select all that apply
あなたは職場でどのようなスキルや知識を活用していますか? 該当するものをすべて選択

- Language 言語
- Cultural Competence 文化的能力、理解
- Global Understanding グローバルな理解
- Cross-Cultural Communication 異文化コミュニケーション
- Open-mindedness オープンマインド
- Problem-Solving 問題解決能力
- Adaptability 適応性
- Independence 独立性
- Leadership リーダーシップ
- Critical-thinking 批判的思考
- Other

13. Please describe the specific ways in which studying abroad influenced your professional development with specific reference to your job. (language, global perspective, international opportunities, etc.)

あなたの仕事に具体的に言及して、海外留学があなたの専門能力の開発にどのような影響を与えたかについて具体的に説明してください。(言語、グローバルな視点、国際的な機会など)

*

Demographics 人口動態

14. What is your nationality? 国籍はどちらですか? *

- Japanese 日本人
- Other

15. What year were you born in? 何年に生まれましたか? *

16. Gender (性別) *

- Female (女性)
- Male (男性)
- Prefer not to answer. (回答しない)
- Other

17. Do you live in Japan now? は今、日本に住んでいますか? *

- Yes はい
- Other

18. Undergraduate Institution 大学 *

- Kobe Women's University 神戸女子大学
- Tokyo International University 東京国際大学
- Konan University 甲南大学
- Other

19. Highest Level of Education 教育の最高レベル *

- Undergraduate University 大学
- Graduate University 大学院大学
- PhD 博士号
- Other

Interview 面接

20. Are you willing to participate in a one-hour interview? 1時間の面接に参加してみませんか? *

Yes

No

21. If yes, please provide an email for me to contact to schedule an interview. 「はい」の場合、面接のスケジュールを設定するための連絡先として電子メールを入力してください。

22. What time works best for you? 何時ごろが一番ご都合が良いですか?

Morning 朝 (7:00-12:00)

Afternoon 午後 (12:00-17:00)

Evening 夜 (17:00-20:00)

23. When is the best time of the week for an interview? 面接に最適な時間帯はいつですか?

Weekdays 平日

Weekends 週末

Final 最後に

Thank you for completing the survey. Your answers are valuable for my research. If you answered yes to participating in an interview, I will be in contact with you shortly.

If you have any questions or want to reach out to me, you can email me at: alexandra.kerns@mail.sit.edu

アンケートにご協力いただきありがとうございます。あなたの回答は私の研究にとって貴重です。面接への参加に「はい」と答えていただいた方には、すぐにご連絡させていただきます。

ご質問がある場合、または私に連絡したい場合は、alexandra.kerns@mail.sit.edu までメールをお送りください。

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 Microsoft Forms

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Study Abroad Experience

- a.) What motivated you to study abroad?
- b.) Were there any specific experiences during your study abroad that significantly contributed to your personal growth? Please explain.
- c.) Were there any specific experiences during your study abroad that significantly contributed to your professional development? Please explain.
- d.) What three skills or traits do you think you gained from studying abroad?
- e.) Did studying abroad impact your language proficiency or cross-cultural competence? Please provide specific examples.
- f.) How has study abroad impacted your career choice?
- g.) Did study abroad provide any opportunities for networking or making professional connections?
- h.) Would you recommend studying abroad to others for career development?

Professional Experience

- a.) Did you participate in job hunting in Japan? What was your experience like?
- b.) How did studying abroad impact your experience job hunting?
- c.) Did you apply or consider applying to international companies or jobs outside of Japan?
- d.) Have you experienced any challenges transitioning from studying abroad and an academic environment to the professional world?
- e.) What is your experience like at your workplace?
- f.) Can you provide specific examples of skills or experiences gained abroad that you find valuable in your career?
- g.) Has studying abroad impacted your professional development or career choice? In what ways?

Are there any other experiences or reflections that you would like to share?

Appendix E: Code Book

Parent Code	Child Code	Parent Code	Child Code
<i>Challenges</i>	Adapting to Different Work Environments	<i>Professional Development</i>	Business Travel
	Cultural Adjustment		Career Advancement
	Job Hunting Challenges		Entrepreneurship
	Language Barrier		Higher Education
<i>Cross-Cultural Experiences</i>	Cultural Awareness		Internships
	Global Perspective		Job Challenges
	Host Family		Job Hunting
	Multicultural Experience		Networking
<i>Cultural Dimensions</i>	Collectivism		Potential Relocation
	Individualism		<i>Skills and Knowledge</i>
	Japanese Work Culture	Critical-Thinking	
	Long-Term Orientation	Cross-Cultural Communication	
	Uncertainty Avoidance	Cultural Competence	
Career Goals	Global Understanding		
<i>Motivations</i>	Cultural Exposure	Independence	
	Language Proficiency	Language Proficiency	
	Adaptability	Leadership	
<i>Personal Growth</i>	Increased Confidence	Open-minded	
	Open-mindedness	Problem-Solving	