

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

Globalization and international trade issues play a prominent role in news coverage, politics, and the macroeconomy. There is a range of views regarding the costs and benefits of globalization, with some groups standing to benefit while others fear they will be harmed. This paper uses survey data to examine recent trends in students' views of globalization at a small college in southern Arkansas. Student responses were divided by classification, selected major, and gender. ANOVA and Mean Differences analysis were used to generate student response means for each group. Overall, students were observed to view globalization positively, although there were some differences among various groups. Results showed that graduate students hold the most favorable view of free trade. This may be due to varying exposures to news media and classroom discussions regarding these issues. Additionally, male students showed a more positive view of globalization when compared to their female counterparts. These results largely supported previous studies and the authors' expectations. Business students' viewpoints on free trade, however, were not noticeably different than those of science or liberal arts majors and were noticeably less positive than those of education majors, contradicting previous findings.

Key Words: international trade, economic education, globalization

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Introduction

Thomas Friedman defines globalization as the increased interconnectedness among countries in economics, politics, and culture. His work highlights the rapid rate of change that has occurred and discusses the need for ongoing U.S. workforce education and training initiatives to remain competitive. He explains that increases in the trade of goods, technologies, automation, and information have greatly expanded over the past few decades, opening new avenues for economic growth and expansion. This integration has led to large increases in the global productive capacity as access to resources improves and the expanding supply chain becomes more flexible. On the other hand, an increasing alignment with global sourcing and product demands could amplify the negative effects of region-specific economic, political, and societal disruptions on global economic development (Friedman, 2006).

As this global integration occurs, some groups have benefited while others have not. Additionally, perceptions about the relative value of gains and losses from globalization vary greatly, as is documented in the literature. Some have embraced the concept of globalization, discussing the increase in diversity and multiculturalism observed in various communities. Some

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have celebrated the rise in consumer choice and technological advancements, which have led to higher standards of living (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025). Others have had different experiences regarding increased market openness. Concerns about rising inequality and a feeling of being “left behind” are commonly expressed by workers, especially in areas that have observed economic decline over the past few decades (Verbeke et al., 2018). Industrial shifts have altered the employment landscape, with fewer manufacturing opportunities and an increase in service and office-oriented jobs available (Silver et al., 2020). As continuing education and training programs are reduced over time, people are becoming increasingly worried about job security. Concerns about the loss of culture and national character, as well as fears of rising immigration, have contributed to this apprehension regarding globalization efforts (Horne & Davaadorj, 2021; Kayani et al., 2013).

The differing perspectives on globalization have fueled a strong debate in the U.S. and elsewhere regarding the benefits of increased interdependence. This topic can be an influential factor in voting polls for both state and national elections (Lake & Nie, 2023). Given that globalization can be a controversial topic among certain groups, it is essential to gauge community sentiment and monitor current attitudes toward increased integration. The purpose of this paper is to examine the perceptions of college students regarding globalization and the responsibilities of government at a small state college in Arkansas.

Literature Review

Globalization is a term that elicits strong feelings among many individuals. Depending on several factors, such as location, education, income expectations, and job availability, people often support or resist this continued approach toward economic integration (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025). One major factor that divides those who view globalization positively relative to those with a negative outlook is how they perceive changes in their neighborhood (Silver et al., 2020). Some view increased integration as a positive effect, resulting in greater national unity (Horne & Davaadorj, 2021). However, others do not feel a part of it and worry that global integration will lead to a lower standard of living due to lower wages and higher unemployment (Janavaras et al., 2008; Kayani et al., 2013).

Many individuals and communities have experienced gains from globalization efforts over the past few decades. Increases in trade and investment have led to higher average standards of living, more consumer choice, technology improvements, and increased job availability in certain industries such as services, health care, and education (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025; Chowdury & Suki, 2012; Kayani et al., 2013; Kobrin, 2020; Yarema, 2017). Educational opportunities have greatly expanded as countries welcome students from around the world to their universities, leading to a thriving education and research sector (Bound et al., 2021).

Additionally, growth in consumer choices for online shopping, dining, social media communications, and streaming options for internet-based entertainment has been an extremely popular benefit related to economic expansion and integration (Fandrejewska et al., 2022; Maskey & Simmons, 2014). Lastly, individuals with relatively favorable job prospects tend to view economic integration positively, believing that their actions will exert some control over their surrounding market conditions (Streur, 2018).

The U.S. has observed a backlash to economic, political, and sociocultural globalization efforts over the past several years, particularly following the Great Recession of 2008 (Ghemawat, 2016; Kobrin, 2020). Increases in income inequality and the outsourcing of jobs have led to growing discontent among workers (Dluhosch, 2021; Hoekman & Nelson, 2018;

Lübker, 2004). Reductions in state and local programs offering training and education for displaced workers have occurred over the past few years, making recovery more challenging (Friedman, 2006; Silver et al., 2020). Some individuals describe the degradation of traditional culture and family traditions as economic integration expands (Horne & Davaadorj, 2021; Kayani et al., 2013). Other experiences involve environmental damage and a deteriorating quality of life in areas affected by outsourcing or resource extraction (Cabolis, 2018; Demirdjian, 2005; Hernandez-Arriaza et al., 2023; Maskey & Simmons, 2014).

In addition, the politicization of the subject in news and social media since 2008 has led to further division among individuals and a heightened protectionist outlook (Ghemawat, 2016; Walter, 2021). The current U.S. administration has adopted a protectionist stance, implementing higher tariffs on imports from several countries, including Canada, Mexico, China, South Africa, Thailand, and members of the European Union. Countries are responding to these actions with reciprocal tariffs on U.S. exports (Findlay & Roelfsema, 2025; Burkhart & Hammond, 2025). Time and future research will tell if this escalation in protectionist actions and rhetoric will lead to shifting views on globalization or further ideological retrenchment.

Both sides of the globalization experience and debate should be discussed in educational settings to help these divided groups find common ground for compromise. Some studies have discussed the need to rebalance perceptions and focus on labor and societal gains (Kobrin, 2020; Rodrik, 2018). Other recommendations include shifting the focus from global governance to national governance and sovereignty, while maintaining integrated relationships with other countries (Lübker, 2004; Rodrik, 2018; Walter, 2021). Curriculum changes can be designed and improved to help these conversations occur, fostering an educational environment for understanding and developing informed views that align with the aim of global citizenship (Emmanuel & Delaney, 2014; Hayden et al., 2020). Ghemawat (2016) demonstrates that higher education levels in a country are correlated with lower levels of nationalism and foreign influence. In addition, several studies observe more positive views of globalization among college students, particularly upper-level students majoring in business or economics (Breedon & Lephardt, 2005; Hernandez-Arriaza et al., 2023; Maskey & Simmons, 2014; Walker et al., 2011). Lastly, male students also tend to hold a more favorable overall view of globalization than female students (Burdina et al., 2016; Hernandez-Arriaza et al., 2023).

College students provide a useful population cohort to gauge current perceptions of increased globalization (Breedon & Lephardt, 2005; Burdina et al., 2016; Demirdjian, 2005; Horne & Davaadorj, 2021; Maskey & Simmons, 2014; Streur, 2018; Walker et al., 2011; Yarema, 2017). Many college students have heard these issues discussed by their families, the media, and in some high school and college classes. Students' perceptions are then often influenced by the views of others close to them or voices they frequently hear. As students progress through their studies, they develop opinions about controversial issues such as globalization and the role of government. It is essential to monitor these opinions over time to determine how they align with broader national sentiments. This study aims to assess current perceptions of college students regarding globalization and its effects on the U.S. using a survey instrument to gauge students' views on open-market-related statements and their potential impact on the U.S. economy.

The following section discusses the methodology used in this study, including a description of the student survey instrument and an overview of the data sample. Results will then be discussed for each part of the survey, showing various findings and considering the data

for various student cohorts. Lastly, we summarize the findings and discuss possible future research opportunities in this area.

Methodology

Our sample comprises 433 students enrolled at a rural state university in southern Arkansas. Specifically, this sample consists of 167 freshmen, 93 sophomores, 90 juniors, 53 seniors, and 30 graduate students. Responses were collected from students representing different majors across the four colleges, including business (36.4%), liberal and performing arts (19.4%), education (15%), and science and engineering (33.6%). The results here show a value greater than 100% due to some students double-majoring. Table 1 below shows these descriptive statistics for this study.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Student Classifications and Majors

Student Classifications (n=433)		Majors	
Freshman	167	Business	36.4%
Sophomore	93	Education	15%
Junior	90	Liberal & Performing Arts	19.4%
Senior	53	Science & Engineering	33.6%
Graduate	30		

The survey instrument used in this study is modeled after the survey discussed in Janavaras et al. (2008). Demographic data were collected, including the majors, genders, classifications, and travel abroad opportunities of the student respondents. Our survey is comprised of fifteen statements that assess the impact of globalization on U.S. workers, consumers, producers, and global markets.

Students were instructed to rate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the 15 survey statements, using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Statements 1-8 focus specifically on globalization's perceived impact on U.S. economic markets, while statements 9-15 relate to global markets. The statements are included in multiple tables provided in the following sections.

To facilitate comparisons between various groups, our analysis identified mean differences and the corresponding test statistics. One-way analysis of variance, or ANOVA, is used to compare students by their classification and major. Independent-Groups T-Tests are used to compare business and non-business majors, as well as male and female student responses. Similar comparisons can be seen in Janavaras et al. (2008), Burdina et al. (2016), and Teather & Etterson (2023). The following section provides survey results and comparisons between the various groups discussed.

Results

Table 2 below presents the one-way ANOVA results, showing the average responses per statement by student classification. Student classifications include freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students. The survey prompts are included in the table to facilitate observation and comparison of responses. Resulting F-statistics are significant at the 5% or 1% significance levels for fourteen of the fifteen statements provided.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA Results for Student Classifications

	Freshman (N=167) Mean (SD)	Sophomore (N=93) Mean (SD)	Junior (N=90) Mean (SD)	Senior (N=53) Mean (SD)	Graduate (N=30) Mean (SD)	F-stat
U.S. Markets						
1. Globalization has a positive overall impact on the U.S. economy.	3.57 (0.76)	3.68 (0.77)	3.57 (0.94)	3.58 (1.12)	4.30 (1.24)	4.62**
2. Globalization has a positive overall impact on U.S. workers.	3.37 (0.82)	3.42 (0.85)	3.22 (1.05)	3.11 (1.14)	4.00 (1.34)	4.77**
3. Globalization contributes to the creation of new U.S. job opportunities.	3.64 (0.79)	3.58 (0.95)	3.44 (0.97)	3.47 (1.05)	4.07 (1.11)	2.90*
4. Globalization contributes to the job security of U.S. workers.	3.05 (0.78)	3.23 (0.98)	2.94 (0.94)	2.79 (1.03)	3.83 (1.23)	7.37**
5. Globalization has a positive impact on U.S. consumers.	3.74 (0.85)	3.77 (0.85)	3.61 (0.96)	3.55 (1.07)	4.53 (0.82)	6.96**
6. Globalization contributes to a greater number of product options available to U.S. consumers.	3.92 (0.83)	3.96 (0.83)	3.98 (0.83)	3.74 (1.11)	4.67 (0.84)	5.89**
7. Globalization contributes to the number of high-quality products available to U.S. consumers.	3.53 (0.79)	3.54 (0.96)	3.49 (0.90)	3.34 (1.21)	4.27 (1.02)	5.29**
8. Globalization contributes to lower product prices for U.S. consumers.	3.12 (0.97)	3.34 (0.99)	3.37 (1.00)	3.43 (1.08)	4.43 (0.94)	11.22**
Global Markets						
9. Globalization benefits relatively wealthy countries more than lower-income countries.	3.41 (0.84)	3.35 (0.83)	3.30 (0.87)	3.26 (1.04)	3.30 (1.26)	0.38
10. Globalization contributes to faster rates of climate change.	3.29 (0.76)	3.13 (0.91)	3.14 (0.93)	2.77 (0.95)	3.00 (1.17)	3.70**
11. Globalization makes international communication easier and cheaper.	3.41 (0.79)	3.54 (0.73)	3.49 (0.80)	3.47 (1.09)	4.37 (0.89)	8.68**
12. Globalization contributes to global political stability.	3.18 (0.82)	3.38 (0.86)	3.18 (1.00)	3.26 (1.11)	3.87 (1.11)	4.03**

13. Globalization has positively impacted economic growth in free market economies more than it has in non-market-based economies.	3.41 (0.66)	3.42 (0.74)	3.48 (0.80)	3.43 (1.01)	4.10 (0.85)	5.38**
14. Globalization requires a strong regulatory infrastructure that protects private property rights.	3.30 (0.77)	3.37 (0.81)	3.38 (0.82)	3.45 (1.03)	3.93 (1.17)	3.62**
15. Globalization leads to higher income inequality.	3.20 (0.80)	3.20 (0.79)	3.17 (0.88)	3.04 (1.04)	2.53 (1.17)	4.16**

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.
Significance of 1% represented with **, while 5% significance is shown by *.

Graduate students demonstrate the most favorable view of globalization among all student classifications. This student group receives the highest mean in each case, except for statements 9, 10, and 15, which discuss potential negative impacts of globalization. Although the results are not significant for statement 9, mean differences are statistically significant for statements 10 and 15 at the 1% significance level. The strongest statistical results for U.S. markets are observed for statements 4 and 8, describing positive trade benefits for U.S. workers and consumers. Regarding global markets, our strongest statistical result is observed for statement 11, which says that globalization makes communication easier and cheaper. These results are statistically significant at the 1% level.

Upper-level students (juniors and seniors) responses present the least favorable views of globalization, providing the lowest means for ten of the fifteen statements. These observations did not support the authors' predictions that upper-level students would display a more favorable view of free trade. This could indicate greater exposure to news and other media regarding economic conditions and opportunities, compared to the mostly younger, lower-level student responses.

The overall interpretation of the relationship between education level and perceptions of globalization is unclear. The more favorable views on global integration displayed by graduate students support the authors' expectations and previous findings in the literature (Breedon & Lephardt, 2005; Ghemawat, 2016; Hernandez-Arriaza et al., 2023; Maskey & Simmons, 2014; Walker et al., 2011). However, the less favorable views of upper-level undergraduates, when compared to lower-level students, contradict these findings. One potential explanation is that graduate students are more likely to have traveled internationally. The survey included a prompt for respondents to report whether they had traveled or lived outside of the United States. Examination of the survey results revealed that this control variable had no significant effect on respondents' perception of globalization, thus failing to support the notion that exposure to international experiences explains the differences between graduate, upper-level, and lower-level students' views on global integration.

Next, we implemented ANOVA analysis for student responses by major category. The categories provide four areas of study that all students must select from when choosing their major. Table 3 below presents the means of student responses, separated by major (business, education, liberal arts, and science/engineering). Previous studies have shown that business majors tend to view globalization more positively due to their exposure to free trade concepts in business and economics courses (Burdina et al., 2016; Chowdury & Suki, 2012; Janavaras et al.,

2008; Silver et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2011; Walstad & Buckles, 2008). F-statistics and their corresponding significance levels are provided for each prompt in the table below, comparing the four major groups.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA Results for Students by Major

	Business (N=150) Mean (SD)	Education (N=51) Mean (SD)	Liberal Arts (N=73) Mean (SD)	Science & Engineering (N=136) Mean (SD)	F-stat
U.S. Markets					
1. Globalization has a positive overall impact on the U.S. economy.	3.61 (1.05)	3.94 (0.86)	3.59 (0.86)	3.58 (0.76)	2.19
2. Globalization has a positive overall impact on U.S. workers.	3.37 (1.01)	3.69 (1.10)	3.40 (0.97)	3.26 (0.91)	2.36
3. Globalization contributes to the creation of new U.S. job opportunities.	3.53 (1.05)	3.94 (0.93)	3.64 (0.89)	3.56 (0.82)	2.69*
4. Globalization contributes to the job security of U.S. workers.	2.99 (0.98)	3.59 (1.04)	3.08 (0.88)	3.04 (0.91)	5.34**
5. Globalization has a positive impact on U.S. consumers.	3.62 (1.00)	4.12 (0.89)	3.68 (0.90)	3.78 (0.87)	3.86*
6. Globalization contributes to a greater number of product options available to U.S. consumers.	3.81 (1.01)	4.18 (0.79)	4.03 (0.82)	4.04 (0.82)	2.86*
7. Globalization contributes to the number of high-quality products available to U.S. consumers.	3.47 (0.98)	3.80 (1.00)	3.59 (0.96)	3.52 (0.91)	1.66
8. Globalization contributes to lower product prices for U.S. consumers.	3.27 (1.02)	3.76 (1.14)	3.23 (1.03)	3.31 (1.03)	3.33*
Global Markets					
9. Globalization benefits relatively wealthy countries more than lower-income countries.	3.19 (0.94)	3.67 (0.84)	3.33 (0.88)	3.42 (0.86)	3.98**
10. Globalization contributes to faster rates of climate change.	3.05 (0.929)	3.08 (1.04)	3.18 (0.84)	3.19 (0.82)	0.76

11. Globalization makes international communication easier and cheaper.	3.40 (0.89)	3.94 (0.97)	3.41 (0.80)	3.58 (0.78)	5.82**
12. Globalization contributes to global political stability.	3.21 (0.95)	3.82 (0.84)	3.11 (0.97)	3.26 (0.90)	7.02**
13. Globalization has positively impacted economic growth in free market economies more than it has in non-market-based economies.	3.39 (0.82)	3.86 (0.83)	3.40 (0.72)	3.49 (0.71)	5.15**
14. Globalization requires a strong regulatory infrastructure that protects private property rights.	3.22 (0.89)	3.86 (0.92)	3.42 (0.90)	3.40 (0.72)	7.18**
15. Globalization leads to higher income inequality.	2.99 (0.86)	2.78 (0.90)	3.05 (0.85)	3.36 (0.84)	7.37**

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. Significance of 1% represented with **, while 5% significance is shown by *.

The results in Table 3 indicate that students majoring in education-related disciplines exhibit the most favorable attitudes toward globalization, as reflected in their responses. Mean differences were statistically significant at the 5% and 1% significance levels for eleven of the fifteen statements included. In ten of the eleven cases, education majors showed the highest degree of positivity regarding globalization. The strongest significant difference between the two student groups is observed for prompt 15, which states, “Globalization leads to higher income inequality.” This relatively negative statement regarding globalization received the lowest mean from education majors, thus indicating the most favorable perceptions of free trade-related concepts relative to other student groups. The results observed do not support earlier studies, suggesting that trade-related opinions may have undergone a general shift over time among student groups (Ascione, 2023; Camera, 2023). To explore this finding further, student responses are next observed and compared between business majors and non-business majors.

In previous studies, observations have shown that business students are more likely to hold positive views regarding the economic impacts of globalization both domestically and on a global scale (Burdina et al., 2016; Janavaras et al., 2008; Silver et al., 2020; Walstad & Buckles, 2008) relative to other majors. Table 4 below shows the mean differences between business and non-business majors from this study.

Table 4: Mean Differences for Business and Non-Business Students

	Business (n=156) Mean (SD)	Non-Bus (n=277) Mean (SD)	Difference (t-stat)
U.S. Markets			
1. Globalization has a positive overall impact on the U.S. economy.	3.63 (1.04)	3.66 (0.82)	-0.03 (-0.32)
2. Globalization has a positive overall impact on U.S. workers.	3.36 (1.00)	3.36 (0.97)	-0.002 (-0.02)
3. Globalization contributes to the creation of new U.S. job opportunities.	3.53 (1.04)	3.64 (0.86)	-0.11 (-1.18)
4. Globalization contributes to the job security of U.S. workers.	3.00 (0.97)	3.14 (0.94)	-0.14 (-1.44)
5. Globalization has a positive impact on U.S. consumers.	3.64 (1.00)	3.82 (0.87)	-0.18 (-1.97)*
6. Globalization contributes to a greater number of product options available to U.S. consumers.	3.83 (1.00)	4.05 (0.81)	-0.22 (-2.52)*
7. Globalization contributes to the number of high-quality products available to U.S. consumers.	3.47 (0.97)	3.60 (0.93)	-0.12 (-1.29)
8. Globalization contributes to lower product prices for U.S. consumers.	3.28 (1.02)	3.39 (1.05)	-0.11 (-1.1)
Global Markets			
9. Globalization benefits relatively wealthy countries more than lower-income countries.	3.20 (0.94)	3.43 (0.87)	-0.23 (-2.62)**
10. Globalization contributes to faster rates of climate change.	3.04 (0.92)	3.20 (0.88)	-0.14 (-1.82)
11. Globalization makes international communication easier and cheaper.	3.41 (0.88)	3.59 (0.84)	-0.18 (-2.13)*
12. Globalization contributes to global political stability.	3.21 (0.94)	3.32 (0.94)	-0.11 (-1.13)
13. Globalization has positively impacted economic growth in free market economies more than it has in non-market-based economies.	3.39 (0.81)	3.53 (0.76)	-0.15 (-1.87)
14. Globalization requires a strong regulatory infrastructure that protects private property rights.	3.22 (0.87)	3.49 (0.84)	-0.27 (-3.20)**
15. Globalization leads to higher income inequality.	2.99 (0.85)	3.21 (0.90)	-0.21 (-2.41)*

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.
Significance of 1% represented with **, while 5% significance is shown by *.

Results in Table 4 indicate that both student groups generally agree that globalization benefits the U.S. and global markets. However, non-business majors exhibited a more favorable

view of globalization than students majoring in business. Non-business student means exceeded those for business students in 14 of the 15 prompts. Resulting mean differences were significant for six statements, as shown in Table 4 above.

The statement showing the strongest significant difference between the two student groups is statement 14, which states, “Globalization requires a strong regulatory infrastructure that protects private property rights.” Responses to this prompt show that business students expressed a higher degree of negativity to this statement compared to non-business students. Students' responses to statements 9 and 15 demonstrate that non-business students also consider the negative impacts of globalization more than business students. The mean differences observed for these prompts were significant at the 1% and 5% levels, respectively.

Table 5 below presents the resulting means and mean differences for male and female student responses collected. Results demonstrate an overall positive perception of globalization for both groups. Male student responses present the most favorable views for nine of the fifteen prompts. Mean differences are statistically significant between the student groups for statements 4, 6, 8, and 11.

Table 5: Mean Differences for Male and Female Student Groups

	Male (N=186) Mean (SD)	Female (N=233) Mean (SD)	Difference (t- stat)
U.S. Markets			
1. Globalization has a positive overall impact on the U.S. economy.	3.65 (0.93)	3.67 (0.84)	-0.02 (-0.23)
2. Globalization has a positive overall impact on U.S. workers.	3.32 (1.07)	3.41 (0.89)	-0.09 (-0.95)
3. Globalization contributes to the creation of new U.S. job opportunities.	3.56 (1.02)	3.61 (0.85)	-0.05 (-0.52)
4. Globalization contributes to the job security of U.S. workers.	3.00 (1.03)	3.19 (0.87)	-0.19 (-1.98)*
5. Globalization has a positive impact on U.S. consumers.	3.82 (0.98)	3.69 (0.87)	0.13 (1.46)
6. Globalization contributes to a greater number of product options available to U.S. consumers.	4.06 (0.91)	3.88 (0.87)	0.18 (2.05)*
7. Globalization contributes to the number of high-quality products available to U.S. consumers.	3.57 (1.02)	3.52 (0.89)	0.05 (0.50)
8. Globalization contributes to lower product prices for U.S. consumers.	3.46 (1.10)	3.25 (1.00)	0.20 (1.98)*
Global Markets			
9. Globalization benefits relatively wealthy countries more than lower-income countries.	3.32 (0.99)	3.38 (0.83)	-0.06 (-0.67)
10. Globalization contributes to faster rates of climate change.	3.04 (0.96)	3.22 (0.85)	-0.17 (0.94)
11. Globalization makes international communication easier and cheaper.	3.68 (0.91)	3.40 (0.80)	0.28 (3.38)**
12. Globalization contributes to global political stability.	3.29 (1.04)	3.27 (0.86)	0.02 (0.16)
13. Globalization has positively impacted economic growth in free market economies more than it has in non-market-based economies.	3.53 (0.86)	3.43 (0.72)	0.09 (1.21)
14. Globalization requires a strong regulatory infrastructure that protects private property rights.	3.41 (0.93)	3.39 (0.81)	0.03 (0.38)
15. Globalization leads to higher income inequality.	3.14 (0.98)	3.09 (0.79)	0.05 (0.52)

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.
Significance of 1% represented with **, while 5% significance is shown by *.

Regarding U.S. markets, the largest mean difference is observed for statements 6 and 8, indicating a more favorable view of trade among male students compared to females. The strongest results are observed for global markets in statement 11, which states, “Globalization

makes international communication easier and cheaper.” The mean difference in this case is significant at the 1% significance level, showing that male students hold a more positive opinion of free trade concepts and outcomes. This observation aligns with the authors’ expectations and supports the findings of Burdina et al. (2016) and Hernandez-Arriaza et al. (2023).

Conclusion

Student responses were divided into various groups to compare results and map current views of free market approaches to international trade. By examining student attitudes toward globalization, we can assess how student perceptions align with national sentiments regarding international exchange. Observations were surprising in a few cases, such as student major and gender, each of which displayed unexpected patterns in student views toward globalization.

Overall, student perceptions of globalization are largely positive, showing a familiarity with economic concepts of free trade and its potential impact. Of the fifteen survey prompts, thirteen are clearly positive statements about globalization, while prompts 10 and 15 are not clearly positive statements. For each of these thirteen positive statements, overall mean responses were greater than 3 out of a possible 5, indicating mean agreement with the positive statement about globalization in each case. Further, student responses were divided into thirteen subsample groups by major, classification, and gender. Eleven of the thirteen subsample groups had mean responses greater than 3 out of 5 on all thirteen positive statements about globalization. Perceptions vary slightly among student groups, but overall, they present a positive view of free trade concepts.

Graduate students held the most favorable views of globalization relative to other student classifications. This finding may suggest that students who have attended college for the longest period have had more exposure to classroom instruction involving open market approaches to international trade. Additionally, lower-level students exhibited more positive views toward globalization than their upper-level counterparts. Although unexpected, this finding may imply that current perceptions are less stable than in previous years, possibly due to the large amount of media coverage on trade and protectionism during the time the sample was collected. The protectionist view of the current administration has largely portrayed globalization as having a negative impact on domestic workers and consumers. This negative viewpoint may have led to a shift in student outlooks that was not previously observed.

Although perceptions are generally positive for each student group, education majors demonstrated a higher degree of positivity toward globalization compared to business majors. Some studies have observed that students’ news reading behavior is somewhat influenced by class discussions (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Head et al., 2019). This finding may suggest that disciplines such as business, science, and humanities discuss more current events through recent news, whereas education classes may be more structured around teaching pedagogies and learning strategies, involving less current news-related information (Patfield, Gore, Prieto, Fray, & Sincock, 2025; Vikas & Mathur, 2022). If so, education majors might be less open to influence by patterns in media coverage (Chard, 2013).

Both male and female student groups generally held a favorable view of free trade. However, results suggest that male students hold a more positive view of globalization relative to female students. This observation supports earlier findings, suggesting that factors such as greater perceived economic security among male students, as well as relatively high representation in business-related fields, lead to more favorable views of free trade among male students.

Ultimately, concepts such as globalization and its effects need to be discussed in the classroom. Educators should integrate and reinforce trade-related concepts through lessons to align with and contribute to conversations regarding the impact of international trade in the U.S. and across the globe. Classrooms can help to foster a learning environment where students can openly discuss their opinions and process their own viewpoints regarding economic principles. Open and information-based discussions can help equip students with knowledge and skills, as well as an understanding of varying perspectives and experiences (Emmanuel & Delaney, 2014).

There are several opportunities for future research expansion. First, a longitudinal study that tracks student perceptions throughout their college experience would allow observations regarding changes in viewpoints. This would allow researchers to gauge whether and when students' perceptions shift, as well as observe the direction and magnitude of the shift. Additionally, responses from students at multiple higher education institutions would help increase the sample size and expand the overall results. According to USAFacts (2025), south Arkansas is in a relatively politically conservative region. Expanding the study area would allow for a larger range of student viewpoints, providing a more comprehensive view of college perceptions nationwide.

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