

**High School Study Abroad: What Do World History Students Really Learn?**

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**Abstract:**

Study abroad is recognized as a means to teach global citizenship to students, but little empirical research exists to support the notion. This qualitative research study details how a large, urban, public high school implemented a study abroad program to enrich its Advanced Placement World History course. The diverse school collaborated with a local community college to allow students to participate in a weeklong European study abroad exploring art, architecture, and historic sites. Student interviews demonstrate that study abroad, as a global education enrichment, extended comprehension and enriched classroom learning and could be integrated into many disciplines. Further, the study reveals the value of the program in meeting the needs of 21st century learners and their self-perceptions as members of the global society. The study provides insight for school leaders, study abroad coordinators, and teachers and suggests future research and study abroad implications for the field of global citizenship.

**Key words:** study abroad, high school, global citizenship education, qualitative, enrichment, self-perception.

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**Introduction**

Study abroad is touted as a vehicle for teaching students how to function as citizens of a global society, evidenced by former First Lady Michelle Obama's remarks during a visit to China:

The benefits of study abroad are almost endless. First of all, it's going to make you much more marketable here in the United States, because more and more companies are realizing that they need people with experiences around the world, who can speak different languages, who can transition easily into other cultures and people who bring to their jobs a sensibility and a sensitivity for other people. It will also make you more

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<http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

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compassionate. We could always use more compassionate, young leaders out there in the world, people who are willing to step outside their comfort zones and be open to wiping away misconceptions. (CNN, 2014)

Empirical research can help educators understand the challenges and possibilities of study abroad as a mechanism to promote Global Citizenship Education (GCE). However, GCE lacks documentation that might inform school program implementation (Myers & DiCicco, 2015). This article aims to address the current gap in empirical research by presenting a case study that examines the learning perceptions of 10 high school students who participated in a short-term study abroad program at a public high school. We also intend to contextualize the GCE movement by placing it in the World History classroom, including the addition of an online Art Appreciation component, with the purpose of increasing student understanding of different people and perspectives. This article describes the case study and offers insights into challenges schools may face integrating GCE into the social studies curriculum via a study abroad program. The goal of the study was to provide a rich, interpretive account of student thinking to inform current GCE endeavors based on study abroad.

The following questions guided this research: “What have students experienced in the study abroad program as it relates to the arts and world history?” and “How has the study abroad experience impacted student understanding of their global citizenship?” Although this was a single case in one high school, the story of students’ perceptions of their learning in this program revealed its success in meeting the goals of preparing students to be competent workers in the global economy and active participants in global society capable of understanding people different from themselves.

This case also illustrated how one school was able to initiate an arts-based study abroad program during a time of test-based accountability and standards alignment to successfully broaden the World History curriculum. As argued in the article conclusion, as long as the dominant educational approach is defined by either curriculum narrowing or workforce preparation, a vision of global citizenship education based on the principles of cosmopolitanism and social justice will remain idealistic and unattainable.

### **Historical Context in the Literature**

In this section, we outline the literature that informs the historical context for the case study of a high school’s study abroad program. We begin by considering the lack of GCE in the narrative of accountability and alignment to standards. We then discuss how the narrative behind the 21st

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century skills movement includes a version of GCE, which Marshall (2011) characterizes as the technical-economic agenda.

### **GCE and Accountability**

After more than a decade of reform aimed at closing the achievement gap between middle- and low-income students, between Caucasian students and African-American and Latino students, and between rich suburban schools and poor rural and inner city schools, U.S. schools are mired in a situation that prescribes test-based accountability to state and national mandated academic standards as a cure-all for the effects of structural inequality in education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hursh, 2007; Ravitch, 2013). Enacted by President Johnson in 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is a landmark piece in the federal government's commitment to educational equity. Title I of the act makes federal funds available to school districts with low-income students (ESEA, 1965). In the 2001 reauthorization, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates that schools and districts meet "Adequate Yearly Progress" benchmarks measured by performance on statewide standardized assessments to receive Title I funding (NCLB, 2001). The law garnered more impact with the Obama administration's funding of Race to the Top (RTTT) educational grants for states (RTTT, 2016).

Subsequent to the enactment of NCLB and RTTT, the achievement gap among U.S. students has not closed. Additionally, the policies promote a series of negative externalities that include teaching strategies focused on memorization rather than critical and analytical thinking, teaching to a standardized test, and de-professionalization of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gunzenhauser & Hyde, 2007). Moreover, these policies' emphasis on "basics" have the unintended consequence of narrowing the curriculum by taking attention, time, and resources away from foreign languages, social studies, and other subject areas (Ravitch, 2010; Tanner, 2013).

Schools and districts face obstacles to integrating GCE. First, schools have to balance contrasting public viewpoints of GCE curricula. Some people believe that it is unpatriotic to foster allegiance to the global community; however, research on integration of GCE in the World History classroom demonstrates that high school students develop national and global civic identities as they construct new meanings about citizenship (Myers, McBride, & Anderson, 2015). Second, teachers do not feel comfortable teaching courses that touch on world issues, especially when they have not had such exposure during teacher education programs; this may be ameliorated through professional development (Rapoport, 2010). Finally, curricular change is difficult to accomplish

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when there is no guidance or support at the national or local level, not to mention the current reward system that undermines deviation from a basic curriculum. Rapoport (2015) explains, “Because the concept of GCE is still ideologically and politically contested and not uniformly accepted, teachers need a curricular incentive to teach global citizenship-related ideas” ( p. 33).

### **GCE within the Context of 21st Century Skills**

Despite the curricular narrowing experienced in the current political climate, greater awareness of globalization and its effects pushes schools to recognize that teaching about the world, its systems, and its people is crucial for 21st century learners. There is a current interest, need, and support for GCE evidenced by surveys (UNESCO, 2013), scholarly writing, and research on the topic (DiCicco, 2016; Myers & DiCicco, 2015). There are trends of elementary and secondary schools renaming themselves as “international” and adding new courses, study abroad programs, and foreign language immersion programs (Parker, 2011). Non-profit organizations (e.g., Asia Society, P21) and international school networks exist to promote international education and produce reports and frameworks that advance GCE as essential for modern education (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; P21, 2014). For instance, Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) is a network of U.S. business, education, and government agencies that promotes an approach to GCE, advocating curriculum expansion beyond basic competency to include global topics and emphasizing collaborative skills, communication, and creative and critical thinking (Oxfam, 2015).

Accountability and the concept of 21st century skill sets as modern education reforms are policy responses to changes initiated by globalization. Globalization challenges localized national identities and highlights the need to broaden school curricula to include global issues, cultures, and languages. However, globalization also fuels the focus on international student achievement comparisons, sounding the alarm about the apparent decline of U.S. students relative to other developed countries. This appears to drive the increased need for the national government to control, manage, measure, and guarantee learning outcomes (Ravitch, 2013). In addition, schools are increasingly expected to work with and meet employers’ workforce needs to experience success within the global marketplace. Modern employers seek employees who graduate from school familiar with technology and fluent in a foreign language, who are creative, flexible, critical thinkers, and who are armed with cross-cultural skills and a positive disposition towards other people and cultures (Stewart, 2007). Within this context of career-ready education, GCE aligns with the technical-economic agenda. This integration is currently accomplished through courses and programs where students learn about other cultures and countries comparative to their

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home country. Students develop their human capital for the purpose of being able to find a job and engage in global society.

### **GCE and Social Justice: An Alternative Mission**

In this educational setting, many practices labeled GCE favor instruction for work readiness over citizenship education. In the U.S., this practice is related to the RTTT policy and is referred to as preparing students for college and careers (Stone & Lewis, 2012). However, there are GCE approaches that include promoting social justice initiatives, encouraging reflection on existing societal inequalities, and promoting engagement and learning about and with others, specifically in the Geography classroom (Advances in AP, 2016; Huckle, 2015). This critical GCE agenda embraces ideas such as the awareness of being part of a larger community with a strong commitment to social justice that would make the world a better place. GCE for social justice requires social studies educators to consider why, what, and how they teach. This includes an awareness of multicultural education beyond teaching about cultural diversity, focusing on how global relations of power and privilege, historically and in the modern day, have been shaped (Eidoo et al., 2011). This approach requires students to learn about other people and parts of the world, reflect upon how they construct knowledge about the world, think deeply about global issues, contemplate the consequences of their own actions, and act upon injustice (Evans, 2006; Rapoport, 2015; Rizvi, 2009). The social justice agenda recognizes knowledge of regional histories and cultural legacies as a precondition for reflecting upon, understanding, and analyzing complex issues. Rizvi (2009) brands this instruction as cosmopolitanism, in which GCE moves beyond a national perspective of world affairs and is directed towards the goal of creating global relations that are more just, democratic, and humane:

Indeed, it should be in our collective power to develop an alternative imaginary of global connectivity, one which is informed not by the universalizing logic of the market, or by the romanticized notions of global citizenship, but by our determination to develop a different conception of global relations, which views all of the world's diverse people and communities as part of the same moral universe. Such an imaginary requires the development of a sense of moral responsibility among students directed not only towards their families and nations, but also towards humanity as a whole. (p. 266)

As an ideal, GCE encourages students to adopt a critical understanding of globalization, to reflect on how they and their nations are implicated in local and global problems, and to engage in intercultural perspectives (Rizvi, 2009). Central to GCE for social justice is an idea of activism

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derived from students understanding that all people have rights and responsibilities towards others and for improving the world (Myers & Zaman, 2009). Such understanding enables citizens to develop an urgency and moral responsibility to take action upon an issue, i.e., planning an awareness campaign, advocating for minority rights, or providing assistance to people in difficulty. This agenda is reflected in programming promoted by the College Board, iEarn, OXFAM, and UNESCO, all of which produce a variety of curriculum materials, guides, and programs to support teachers committed to this approach.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Stimulated by globalization, GCE is increasingly part of discussions at all levels of education. Schattle (2007) identified features of global citizenship that result in educational goals to develop students to that end. Essentially, these features relate to how students perceive themselves: global citizenship identifies how a person functions in the world, not a nationality. Citizenship is grounded in self-awareness and in the awareness of others; global citizens practice cultural empathy and utilize principled decision-making while participating in their communities, local, national, and international.

This dialogue has led to a call for school structural changes to facilitate 21st century student learning. Changes include decreasing student seat time and fixed physical boundaries, creation of an environment to promote and support innovation within and beyond school walls, and utilization of technology to facilitate student learning that transcends the traditional brick-and-mortar building and school day (NASBE Study Group, 2010). This call is supported by national and international policy reports (Oxfam, 2015; P21, 2014; UNESCO, 2013; UNESCO, 2014; UNESCO, 2015) and scholarly publications (Myers & DiCicco, 2015).

Marshall (2011) identifies several different agendas behind the current call for GCE in schools. Among these is the “technical-economic” agenda, for which GCE forms a response to economic market demands of a shrinking world in an era characterized by globalization. In this agenda, teaching and learning about the world are pursued within the classroom to help students become competent and successful in the global marketplace. Instruction focuses on global environmental, humanitarian, and economic developments (Guttek, 2013). GCE seeks to balance individual and local interests with social and global interests (Pike, 2008; Schattle, 2007). Furthermore, GCE has been situated with the World History curriculum as a place where there are intersections between an interdisciplinary curriculum focused on student inquiry, interconnectedness, and perspective taking (Girard & Harris, 2013).

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In 2009, Frey and Whitehead concluded that GCE policies were at a formative stage of development, recommending that

State and national policy-makers, academics, business, and community leaders, working with “champions” at the school level, should expand their goals from international to global education to broaden access to study abroad, world languages, and critical perspective-taking in US schools, and look beyond immediate economic and security worries to ways that educators and students can positively impact the world beyond national borders. (p. 287)

### **Research Context**

Study abroad opportunities for language learners is not a new idea; indeed, participation in study abroad opportunities increased significantly during the past decade. Still, the majority of study abroad participants are found in higher education, and most of the research on the effects of study abroad experiences are focused there. For secondary students, there have emerged more summer programs and programs of shorter duration. Well-designed programs contain academic learning, socio-cultural experiences, sight-seeing, and community service (Wang & Peyton, 2015). From 1998-2008, the U.S. experienced a 130 percent increase in the number of high school students participating in a study abroad program; of these students, the majority were junior- or senior-year Caucasian girls traveling to Europe during the summer (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

The specific case study of Culture Studies High School attempts to provide an alternative to these statistics and illustrates the tension between educating for the global marketplace and social justice. We employed an interpretive research perspective because our goal was to collect rich, in-depth data of student perceptions of the study abroad experience and global citizenship. This case is an example of how, in the current education setting of test-based accountability and standards alignment, even good schools, with supportive leaders and dedicated teachers, are not able to teach GCE for social justice. The school’s initial effort to integrate teaching about the world in a comprehensive way across the curriculum fell short of comprehensive GCE, resulting in the addition of a specialized program of study serving a small minority of students.

### **Case Study Methodology**

The study was a basic qualitative study, relying on participant interviews as the principal method of data collection, pulling from the qualitative paradigm to address the research questions.

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Participant interviews are a qualitative approach frequently seen in the field of education. Creswell (2007) explained that this type of research is performed to describe meanings for several individuals' lived experiences of a phenomenon. The interviewer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and then develops a description of the experience of all of the individuals. This description explains the "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it.

For this study, this was the most appropriate method to answer the intended research questions. The study design investigated a small number of students who reported on study abroad experiences, and their perceptions of the impact of those experiences on students' understanding of the social studies curriculum and the world. Participants were asked two broad questions: "What have you experienced in the study abroad program as it relates to the arts and world history? How has the study abroad experience impacted your understanding of global citizenship?" It was necessary to interview students about the study abroad and discuss their understanding of classroom learning as well as their perceptions about their knowledge. This design allowed researchers to look at specific students and compare students' experiences within similar situations. The researchers used recorded interviews to gather in-depth data from students. Participants were presented with interview transcripts and asked to comment as a form of subject review. These two research phases allowed for a significant amount of breadth and depth of data to be generated to address the research questions.

**Research Setting.** The setting for this study was Culture Studies High School (CSHS), a large, urban public high school in Florida. CSHS undertook a successful initiative to integrate Art Appreciation into its Advanced Placement World History curricular offering via an online dual-enrollment college course and a short-term study abroad experience. The European excursion encompassed the cities of Amsterdam and Paris, focusing on multiple museum trips to experience history and art. This study represented the second year of the program.

**Participants.** Research participants were 10 sophomore- and junior-year high school students, enrolled in both the Art Appreciation and AP World History classes, who attended the study abroad component and provided written consent to participate in this study, approved by the university institutional review board. Of the participating students, five were female and five were male; five participants self-identified as ethnic minorities including Asian (30%) and Latino (20%).

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Data Collection. The researchers employed multiple data sources: (1) student photos, (2) student journal entries, and (3) semi-structured participant interviews. We selected these data to provide a picture of the development and content of participants' thinking about their experiences and global citizenship. Participant pictures and journal entries identified initial themes, then student interviews were analyzed for greater detail about participant thinking.

Consistent with an interpretive approach, analysis of the observations, pictures, journal entries, and interviews was an inductive process. All student subjects participated in the interviews and recorded the trip with photographs, two students maintained written journals, and one student produced an electronic video journal. We coded the data by analyzing them for themes, keeping in mind the visions of global citizenship identified in the literature (Table 1). For example, one theme was "study abroad led to greater comprehension of the history and art curriculums," for which three primary codes arose from analysis of the three data sets: "history comes to life," "encountering art in person," and "overlap between the two disciplines." These codes were then compared with the academic literature to help see connections within the two broader perspectives of GCE. Interviews and journal entries were analyzed line by line for coding themes and each instance was recorded and quantified. We looked for patterns within the data themes, which included weighting the numbers of responses for each theme as a percentage of the sample to provide an indication of the strength and representativeness of each view.

Table 1. Coding Themes for the Meaning of the Study Abroad Experience

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Study abroad led to greater comprehension of the history and art curriculums

1. History comes to life
2. Encountering art in person
3. Overlap between disciplines

Study abroad enriches academic experience

1. See connection between art, history, and current events
2. Foundation laid in classroom, verified in field
3. Desire to participate in another study abroad

Study abroad connection to global citizenship education

1. 21st century skills
  2. Value of cultural proficiency
  3. Social justice
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Prior to interviewing subjects, we sent them an interview protocol:

1. Please tell me about your experience in your AP World History class.
2. How would you describe your learning in the online Art Appreciation class?
3. Please tell me how you would describe your study abroad experience. Could you tell me about the impact, if any, the trip had on enriching your class experiences?
4. Please tell me about how you first learned about the study abroad program. Can you tell me more about the specific things you learned in either class that you also saw on the trip? Could you tell me about the impact, if any, these observations had on your learning of world history?
5. Some people have indicated that they believe that enrichment programs can contribute to student learning. Talk about that.
6. Talk about how important the study abroad was to your learning. Which aspect of the trip was most powerful? Why do you feel this way?
7. Tell how your history and art appreciation classes supported your learning on the study abroad trip.
8. What could the school do to further enrich learning in the history and/or art class?
9. How could the school better the study abroad experience?
10. How did the study abroad experience influence your self-perception as a global citizen? Is there anything else you might like to tell me today about the study abroad experience?

Interviews lasted 20-60 minutes and explored in greater depth the students' perceptions of their learning and how they related that to global citizenship. Interview questions asked students to relate their experiences in the traditional social studies classroom, the online learning environment of the Art Appreciation class, and how the study abroad contributed to learning course content and the concept of global citizenship.

### **Findings**

Analysis of student photos, journal entries, and interviews revealed responses associated with the coding themes that emerged about their self-perceptions of learning on the study abroad

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trip. Students reported that the trip led to greater comprehension of world history and art content, enriched the academic experience, and connected with GCE (Table 2).

### **Greater Comprehension of History and Art Curriculums**

Students reported that the study abroad led to greater comprehension of the history and art curriculums as history literally came to life. A visit to the Anne Frank museum triggered a connection between history studied in the classroom and the trip experience. Mimi journaled,

In World History, you sit there and you take notes and you learn about it but you don't really experience it. And when I went on the trip to the Anne Frank House, I thought, "How can someone do this?" Everything felt so empty, but when I got to her room and I saw those cutouts, I thought at least there's some part of the world in here. And I thought, when I was her age, that's what I had on my walls, pictures of rock stars or whatever. And seeing those pictures made you realize that she really was just a normal, little 13-year old girl. Why didn't she deserve a normal life like the rest of us?

Significantly, personally encountering art was more powerful than seeing it in textbooks or online. Alice said that seeing the art was the most significant part of her trip:

I learned how important art is and how much of a story it tells to people for the future. It sets a precedent and without it, if art was prohibited, banned, and expression was banned, then we wouldn't be able to look back and reflect upon our political, social, economic decisions. So I came to value expression and speech, like people standing up for themselves. You come to value how much courage and honor that holds to be able to do that.

Students discussed disciplinary overlap between history and art. Amanda said,

In World History, the teacher wouldn't go into it, but she would show examples of those paintings and kind of talk about the artist a little bit, because that was an important part of that time period. And then I'll remember certain details that I learned in the art class and I like to know that I know a little bit more than everyone else about the painting and then once we got into the World War II era, they talked about post-impressionism and realism and all those art movements and I remembered I learned about them. It was really just interesting to like, see the connection between them.

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The literature supports embedding the study abroad experience in the World History curriculum (Myers, McBride, & Anderson, 2015), and students supported the study abroad experience as an extension of classroom learning in World History and Art Appreciation classes. Additionally, students reported increased ability to make curricular connections in other classes as a result of the trip.

### **Enriching the Academic Experience**

Students reported that study abroad enriches the academic experience, allowing them to see the connections between art, history, and current events. Jarid said, "It's really important to branch out and get that worldly perspective on everything. Like just walking out of the train and seeing a protest in Paris." He laughed and continued, "Like, wow, that's happening. I wonder why? And actually seeing it in person really, truly, makes a difference. Seeing your current events in person. Like we do them every other week, but to actually live it, it's a different story." The study abroad component enhanced the academic curriculum.

The foundation for learning history and art was laid in the classroom, then verified by students in the field. Mimi related this to the online art class:

We see it on a digital screen, but you wouldn't be able to experience how you feel, what you're thinking in the moment—it's better than sitting there and taking notes. I actually see the art work. I see what it means. It's not something just on a computer screen. I am really fascinated by this opportunity to see everything. It's not just a usual lecture, it's also like an experiment to me, like how different would I feel if I saw it.

Sebastian made historical connections studying the conclusion of World War I in his journal:

We recently learned about the Treaty of Versailles. And then we go to the Palace of Versailles where they actually made the treaty, it's a pretty cool thing, I'm not going to lie. To know that these leaders were all in this one place and looking back and I was like, wow, I was actually there.

Importantly, Anthony said that the study abroad experience helps retain information learned in the classroom:

You understand history better because you have things to visualize like when people talk about Paris and the Eiffel Tower and just France in general. You associate what you're learning. You have that connection that you can make. Even weird stuff. Like in

Amsterdam how they have the hooks on the buildings and you figure out what that means. I remember someone was moving and they moved upstairs in an apartment building. I'm like, why don't we just have one of those things that brings it down and you pick up all your stuff instead of going through an elevator. And I'm like, "Oh, we're not in Amsterdam."

All study participants believed that the study abroad experience positively contributed to their learning, inside and outside the traditional classroom. The literature supports the need for academic enrichment in addition to curriculum acceleration.

Students considered the study abroad experience to have so much value that they reported a desire to do more of this type of academic work. Indeed, two students on this trip had already participated in a study abroad trip the previous year. Furthermore, all of the students saw study abroad opportunities as an important part of their post-secondary education. Sebastian said,

I will try to do that in college. In college it won't necessarily be like a teacher looking after me, so it would be a group of college students actually working towards something, with a goal in mind. So I think it will be an entirely different experience in which I will definitely try to venture out . . . would really like to expand in other places (beyond Europe).

Amanda, who has taken a number of guided trips in Europe, was on this trip as a first study abroad. She talked about her future studies: "I don't even care where I go (for college), because I'll do study abroad somewhere else anyways. . . . In Europe or somewhere abroad, I would be happier and probably able to expand myself more. So I think that travelling is very important to me." This experience cemented students' ideas of the importance of expanding the traditional classroom when given the opportunity to study abroad in college.

### **Connections to GCE**

Study abroad as a vehicle to increase comprehension and enrichment in classroom learning is valuable, but is it a contributor to GCE? The literature supports the value of GCE in relationship to building 21st century skills. Only one of these high school students had previously taken a fully online course. For these digital natives, study abroad was not about maximizing their 21st century skill sets; rather, it was an opportunity to further utilize them. Keanu and Anthony reported meeting with a friend in Amsterdam whom they had previously only known online via video gaming and associated chat rooms. Anthony stated,

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Meeting Myron in Amsterdam was really cool. Especially Amsterdam being so perfect for that, because he just walked outside of the trolley and saw us there, like the fact that it's a big well-known city, but still small enough that you can just find people like that. . . . We've talked to him for like years now online and it's been cool. We were just playing one of those online games and we just ended up talking to him for two or three years.

These students have the potential of experiencing the world and its people virtually; international travel enabled them to personalize those relationships. The students believed that there was an added value of cultural proficiency. Melissa compared the foreign experience to her home culture:

You had to absorb their culture and things about that place. So, it made you really realize how different they are from us. Their transportation, first of all, is completely different. Here you have to drive on the highway to get anywhere. There, a little train can take you anywhere. And also, how they speak English. Here, we would not have anyone who would speak Dutch. . . . They have a lot more of our culture than we have of theirs.

For students, the academic experience contributed to this sense of cultural learning. Alice explained,

In the beginning, I didn't really care much for art and I just thought it's a bunch of people getting together and expressing their own emotions. But now I see it more like, they're not just expressing themselves, but the people; what the people are experiencing at that time. Like it wasn't just a personal situation . . . I guess learning the way people live differently than Americans.

She also wanted to relate her study of history to her parents:

I wanted to explain things to them that were relevant to how they saw history. So, when we were in Paris, they were really looking forward to Paris and they really saw the colonization of the French really impacted their architecture in Vietnam. So being able to make those connections and talk to them about it was interesting because they were talking about how their grandparents knew how to speak French.

Amanda believed that cultural experiences trumped her learning, saying to future students:

Appreciate what you're seeing. I went on a trip to Germany with a few people who didn't appreciate the German culture. It was painful to listen to them complain. So I would just

tell people to have an open mind and not judge everything, and just let go of home for a week and just look at what's ahead of you and not think about all the other stuff that America has that this place doesn't.

Foreign experiences allowed students to appreciate their lives at home and abroad, increasing cultural literacy in both instances. Students communicated that the trip contributed to their self-perceptions in the world, taking important steps toward a critical stance. Sebastian remarked,

If anything, I feel more foreign. Because for me to say "I'm a part of the world" would be very prideful of me and almost rude to the other cultures, because they developed a culture for like years. And for me just to go in there and say, "Oh now I know about Amsterdam, or no, now I know about Paris" would be almost disrespectful to them. So I think, if anything, even though I know I'm a foreigner, I want to branch out more and learn their language, learn their culture . . . try to become a part of them and see if I can actually be able to go to a place and not be considered an American visitor, but simply another human being.

Alice related this disconnect as a challenge:

I felt very out of place when I was in Europe. I thought that I need to learn, like I need to know more. When you're there, you realize how much [social] capital you're missing out of . . . how much language means, the value of language and knowing how to communicate with people. A lot of times we take for granted the social media in the United States and journalism. And you go over there and you see all of our news on their newspapers. So I think being able to go there and see what I'm missing out on makes me want to become more active globally as a citizen.

Students recognized that in order for them to contribute globally, they needed more time and personal effort to engage critically.

Table 2. Findings Summary for the Meaning of the Study Abroad Experience

<b>Findings: Study abroad led to...</b>	<b>Documented by students</b>	<b>Supporting student quotations</b>
<b>Greater comprehension of the history and art curriculums</b>		
History comes to life	10	"I can connect where things are now. When you're there and in museums, you realize that history happened exactly where I am. Like the

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		Anne Frank House – she was right there, in that spot. And so you remember it more.”
Encountering art in person	6	“Seeing <i>The Night Watch</i> was just amazing. You see a picture of it in a book, and it’s beautiful, in full color, and Rembrandt’s glory... for whatever reason I hadn’t translated in my head that the thing was the size of a room. It’s huge! I’m blown away by how you get to even paint something that big.”
Overlap between disciplines	4	“When I see the actual painting, I think, tell me your story. And just by looking at that painting, it’s telling me everything that I’ve been taught, but just in their pictures, in their image.”
<b>Enriched academic experience</b>		
See connection between art, history, and current events	7	“Just walking out of the train and seeing a protest. Like ‘Wow, that’s happening.’ Actually seeing it in person makes a difference. Seeing your current events in person . . . we do them every other week, but to actually live it is a different story.”
Foundation laid in classroom, verified in field	10	“I saw pictures of the Notre-Dame Cathedral and the flying buttresses on the website. I didn’t really understand the concept... couldn’t you just build more panels or something to keep it straight up? We everyone got together in front of the church, held hands and I swung on it. Then I saw the church and oh, I see it now!”
Desire to participate in future study abroad	9	“It’s something I’d really like to do again. I felt like I learned a lot about culture and history. I want to learn more.”
<b>GCE Connections</b>		
21 <sup>st</sup> century skills application	2	“Our friend in Amsterdam went on Twitter and found out about what happened at our school yesterday.”
Value of cultural proficiency	8	“It feels a lot better to think that I can go anywhere in the world that I want and to know

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		that I can be comfortable in these other places, is really comforting.”
Social justice	3	“When I went to Paris and Amsterdam, I saw different cultures and thought, everyone is different. It helped me because it showed me that I shouldn’t judge them, I should be more open to them, and I should accept that there are different things out there.”

### **Conclusion**

This analysis demonstrates that the study abroad initiative to facilitate increased student learning can be judged successfully within the context of expanding comprehension between the art and history curriculums and enriching the academic experience for participating students. Indeed, it proved to be a worthy counter to curricular narrowing and could be viewed as a first step towards students becoming global citizens. As a vehicle for GCE, students reported that the study abroad experience demonstrated the value of increasing social capital in a global society and the application of 21st century skills in preparation for the workforce.

Students did not see a residual impact in the area of social justice, which may be expected in a short-term study abroad experience focused solely on history and art. However, students reported that their experiences were heightened by the ability to personally meet people previously only contacted via the Internet. Further, their comments indicated that they were taking important steps that enabled them to see themselves as citizens of the world. Their humility and increased sensitivity to others helped them recognize the insufficiency of the short trip—in fact, it spurred them to desire greater cultural contact and longer-term study abroad experiences as they move forward in their educations, enabling them to become more critical global citizens. To that end, we would also judge the short-term high school study abroad as successful in opening the door to a wider range of experiences that would move students further along the GCE spectrum.

In an era of increasing nationalism, contributing to research that could inform funding and admission to study abroad programs in both secondary and higher education is beneficial. These programs allow students to appreciate the world’s art, architecture, and historical sites, giving them access to a different way of knowing and experiencing humanity.

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**Future Research and Recommendations**

Future studies of high school short-term study abroad trips would be valuable to school leaders, study abroad coordinators, and teachers. This case study was conducted with students participating in an accelerated curriculum; it would be worth exploring the impacts of such programs with non-accelerated students. Such studies could systematically examine how trips integrate student learning in the curriculum beyond explicit trip preparation and follow up. Further research would demonstrate if these experiences engage students to transfer what they learn across the curriculum, not confining learning to the class on which the trip is focused. It would also be valuable to ascertain if short-term opportunities inspire students to pursue longer-term experiences in higher education, potentially engaging them to become active citizens working for social justice in globalized settings.

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