

# Study Abroad and Development of Global Citizen Identity and Cosmopolitan Ideals in Undergraduates

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*This paper reports selected results from a broader study which focused on determining students' perceptions of the development of their global citizen identity within the context of an undergraduate global citizenship program, and what students believed were aspects of the program that contributed to this growth. Findings suggest that experiences with other cultures and places gained through program-organized study abroad were perceived as being the most important element in developing students' global citizen identities and practice of cosmopolitan ideals.*

Today's increasing focus on the phenomenon of globalization has revived discussion about individual and societal responsibilities. Scholars and academics, including those in higher education in the United States, are re-examining the philosophical origins of social constructs that appear to be grounded in principles deriving from those of the ancient Greek Stoics, especially those which contributed to early notions of cosmopolitanism. They are exploring how these concepts relate to contemporary life. These discussions are exemplified in Nussbaum's 1996 work, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, and contrast political citizenship, in which the citizen has a distinct, bounded, legal affiliation with a geographical state or locality (Dower, 2003), with the move toward a universal moral order (Fujikane, 2003; Benhabib, 2006).

Cosmopolitanism as it is received today is a concept which has several meanings. Nussbaum (1996) wrote "... we should make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect (p.9)." Extending that conception, Appiah (2006) stressed that while we should seek to come to an understanding that we share a common humanity, we must also recognize the legitimacy of differences – both among people and among different cultures. Others (Benhabib, 2006) go so far as to envision a world order, or even a global or super-national government based upon cosmopolitan norms.

Against this backdrop, educational leaders must consider that 21<sup>st</sup> century students have to prepare to live and work in an increasingly complex world. An educated person may need to develop the knowledge base, skills, and attitudes required to function in and contribute to a global society. Schools, colleges, and universities in the United States are developing specialized curricula designed to educate for global citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is appropriate at this time in history to reconsider the meaning of cosmopolitanism ideals and their relationship to the practice of global citizenship.

Nussbaum (1996) writes that in a cosmopolitan education students would be taught that they are citizens of the world, which they share with other human beings. What, then, is a global citizen?

Data gathered directly from students in this study suggest they perceive a global citizen to be the following: one who engages in activism; is open minded and accepting of other cultures in a respectful, tolerant and non-judgmental fashion; pursues knowledge and seeks understanding; feels part of the human community; and possesses a sense of awareness, which includes not only self-awareness, but also awareness of the interconnections between local and global issues and of the impact of one's actions on the world.

These findings derived from a doctoral dissertation which examined undergraduate students' perceptions of their global citizen identity development within the context of the Global Citizenship Program (GCP) at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. A further central tenet of the program follows from this: the exact means by which students come to construct their individual definition of the term is thought to influence how they will continue to live and practice their role as a global citizen throughout their lives.

### **Case Context**

The original study focused on four cohorts of students in the GCP. Cohort 1 students entered Lehigh University in the fall of 2004 and graduated in May 2008. Cohorts 2-4 entered in subsequent academic years. The GCP curriculum was conceived as a 'backpack' addition to students' regular programs to provide them with intellectual flexibility regardless of what college or major they were enrolled in at Lehigh. An underlying assumption of the program is that through a specialized curriculum students will experience a transformational process and 'become' global citizens. Among the mandatory components of the program were included the following three: academic coursework, study abroad, and experiential/co-curricular learning. The award of the Global Citizenship Program certificate itself requires completion of 23 to 27 credits of academic work.

First, GCP students must take several special courses during an intensive freshman year experience, including the *Globalization and Cultures* course, in the fall, and a practicum that prepares students for the freshman year intersession trip to another country. In spring of freshman year, all GCP students enroll in the *Global Literature* course, which seeks to explore the literary traditions of the country in which they had their intersession experience. During senior year, students must complete a three or four credit-hour capstone course and project. The academic component also includes fulfilling the GCP course requirements with what were called *Global Citizenship* (GC) courses. These courses are similar to so-called 'general requirement' courses but have been modified by faculty to include issues relative to global citizenship. Faculty interested in having their courses cross-listed as GC courses are required to participate in a training seminar, which is offered annually.

Second, two study-abroad experiences must be completed in the four-year program, including a mandatory faculty-led, structured intersession trip during the winter break of the first year. The second study abroad experience must be at least five weeks long and take place in a non-English speaking country.

Third, the experiential component mandates a minimum of two co-curricular activities per semester. Amongst other options, students can elect to live in Global Citizen House, an on-campus residence option with the mission of perpetuating the values of the Global Citizenship Program. They may also participate in the Global Citizenship Student Committee.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The GCP's mission is based upon the premise that young adult learners enrolled in the program will be transformed in their thinking about their relationship to the world and that the curriculum and pedagogy of the program will contribute to the development of a global citizen identity. The work of Mezirow, et al. (2000) on transformation theory provided the theoretical lens through which to examine both formal and informal program elements that may have contributed to students' perceptions of their growth as global citizens. Transformation theory holds that adult learners undergo a process of constructivist learning in which they experience deep shifts in their mental models, thereby coming to change perspective, become authors of their own knowledge, and increase personal agency. Daloz (2000) specifically outlines four key conditions that must be present in *transformative learning for social responsibility*: the presence of the other, reflective discourse, a mentoring community, and opportunities for committed action which contribute to the common good.

### **Methodology**

#### *The sample*

A critical case study approach was used in this exploratory research as well as a mixed-method case study design. Data sources in the original study included a survey of students in Cohorts 1-4, a document analysis of the GCP admissions essays for Cohorts 1-4, in-depth self-reflective interviews with Cohort 1 students, and a Focus Group interview with Cohort 2 subjects. Of twenty-one students in Cohort 1 fifteen agreed to participate in a one-on-one in-depth interview with the researcher. Sixty-five of ninety-five students (70%) in Cohorts 1 through 4 responded to the survey.

#### *Survey and interviews*

The survey consisted of 18 Likert-type questions derived from the literature concerning the process of transformative learning for social responsibility with regard to students' experiences in the GCP, and three open-ended questions. The results reported in this paper are derived from answers to the following open-ended question: "Give your definition of global citizen."

Interview questioning was intended to elicit students' perceptions of their global citizenship identity development as well as the indicators and/or factors that played an important role in that development, both within the program and outside of it. Responses to three selected, interrelated questions serve as the basis for data reported in this paper: 'What element of the program has been the most important in helping you to develop your identity as a global citizen?' 'What is the most important experience you have had at Lehigh?' and 'What has been the most important experience you had in the Global Citizenship Program?' Also included are interview reports of students' reflections on their global citizen identity development. The commentary included in the sections on findings consists of both verbatim and paraphrased transcriptions of student reflections. Pseudonyms were used to protect confidentiality

#### *Content analysis procedures*

The analysis of data in this qualitative research varied from method to method, and in the case of open-ended survey questions involved initial reading, sorting, and categorizing to allow salient themes to emerge. Phrases, terms, and descriptions based on the actual language of the subjects were used when possible. An external auditor was employed to provide a cross-check.

With regard to interviews, a guide was used which facilitated the grouping of different students' answers to common questions based on salient, emerging themes, and allowed for a cross-

individual analysis of varying perspectives on key issues. In most cases, a simple 'vote' count of answers to the questions sufficed. Responses were reviewed, sorted into categories, and a simple count of the answers was made. These were then converted to percentages. Quotations that were most illustrative of each category were chosen and used to give voice to the participant (Maxwell, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; Patton, 2002).

### Findings: Defining Global Citizen

| ATTRIBUTE                  | Cohort 1<br>(n=19) |      | Cohort 2<br>(n=22) |      | Cohort 3<br>(n=7) |      | Cohort 4<br>(n=17) |      |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------------------|------|--------------------|------|
|                            | %                  | Rank | %                  | Rank | %                 | Rank | %                  | Rank |
| Activism                   | 18%                | 1    | 17%                | 1    | 9%                | 4    | 21%                | 2    |
| Open minded / Accepting    | 15%                | 2    | 12%                | 2    | 39%               | 1    | 29%                | 1    |
| Knowledge / Understanding  | 15%                | 2    | 17%                | 1    | 9%                | 4    | 7%                 | 6    |
| Part of Human Community    | 14%                | 3    | 17%                | 1    | 17%               | 2    | 10%                | 5    |
| Flexibility / Adaptability | 13%                | 4    | -                  | -    | -                 | -    | -                  | -    |
| Awareness                  | 10%                | 5    | 11%                | 3    | 13%               | 3    | 17%                | 3    |
| Interest / Curiosity       | 6%                 | 6    | -                  | -    | -                 | -    | -                  | -    |
| Responsibility             | 5%                 | 7    | 9%                 | 4    | -                 | -    | -                  | -    |
| Misc.                      | 5%                 | 7    | -                  | -    | -                 | -    | 2%                 | 7    |
| Comfortable in World       | -                  | -    | -                  | -    | 13%               | 3    | 14%                | 4    |
| Engagement                 | -                  | -    | 8%                 | 5    | -                 | -    | -                  | -    |
| Self-Reflective            | -                  | -    | 6%                 | 6    | -                 | -    | -                  | -    |
| Skills                     | -                  | -    | 3%                 | 7    | -                 | -    | -                  | -    |

Note: Dashes (-) indicate that no attribute emerged in that cohort.

**Table 1. Attributes of a Global Citizen by Cohort**

Table 1 presents the findings, in percentages, of each attribute of a global citizen and its rank in terms of frequency of mention by cohort. Discussion of the results follows the table. Activism ranked as one of the top two attributes of a global citizen for all cohorts with the exception of Cohort 3, where it ranked fourth. All cohorts seemed to identify a core of five qualities that were important to them, although the rank order of their importance varied somewhat among cohorts: engages in activism; is open minded and accepting; pursues knowledge and seeks understanding; feels part of the human community; and is aware. A few members of each cohort mentioned responsibility; however, the frequency was much lower than that of the core qualities. Finally, five other qualities seemed to be cohort-specific: interest / curiosity, comfortable in world, engagement, self-reflective, and possessing concrete skills.

### Findings: Program Effects on Global Citizen Identity Development

Students reported that the most significant effect on their global citizen identity development came from experiences with other cultures and places gained through GCP-organized travel. 54% of interviewees identified GCP organized travel experiences as having been the most important in helping to develop their identity as a global citizen. Sixty-seven percent identified some aspect of the GCP, or combination of program elements, as being their *most important experience overall at Lehigh*, and nine interviewees (60%) said the most important experience that they had in the GCP was the intersession trip abroad. Selected excerpts from student interviews and commentary are discussed in the following section.

#### *Intersession trip*

The intersession trip was a requirement for all students in the program, the costs of which were

subsidized by the university. Students spent approximately two weeks during the semester break (December-January) traveling as a group with faculty members to an international location. They engaged in a structured schedule of experiences and activities. They prepared for the trip by attending a series of lectures and a practicum that focused on their country of destination, and served as an intensive orientation into the destination's culture and what they would encounter during the trip. In 2004, Cohort 1 students were split into two groups for the trip. One group traveled to Chile and the other to Hong Kong. For a number of students, this intersession trip was the first time they had either traveled abroad or traveled abroad without parents.

Students shared their perspectives regarding their experiences. According to Mark, the intersession trip to Chile "...still comes up five years later when talking with people that went on the trip or in other people's stories about that." He indicated that students who experienced the Chile trip together continue to recount and share stories based on their collective memories. Peter reported that the students in the Hong Kong group developed into a cohesive unit, and grew to love and respect each other. During our discussion, Peter and I agreed that as a result of the trip, students had formed what could be described as a learning community: a closely knit group of students and faculty who shared with, and learned from each other. For Mike, the Chile trip provided an opportunity to get out of the classroom and university and connect with another culture in ways beyond those experienced by tourists. He mentioned going out to farm fields and talking with union laborers and survivors of a torture camp. The experience helped him realize that "They're people. They're human beings...not like they are a museum exhibit."

#### *Individual study abroad or international internships*

For others, the individual study abroad component was most meaningful. Trish talked about her experience studying in Milan, Italy. She said, "They weren't so welcoming to American students and people didn't speak English...So there is a point that I didn't really want to stay, and I wanted to come home and I was reflecting on everything that I had learned in Global Citizenship about how I had to be more open-minded to different cultures and such, and I really had to step outside of my box. . . . Once I got through it, it changed me a lot."

Janet talked about her study abroad trip to Ecuador that focused on microfinance. She came home with a new perspective on the potential effects of that type of economic development work after seeing how people would secure a microfinance loan to buy a television when they didn't even have electricity. "I [originally] thought microfinance was the most incredible thing that would bring people out of poverty, but really it could bring more people into poverty...that just kind of changed my whole perception of what development is and does it really work."

#### *Engagement with 'The Other'*

Students in Cohort 1 also discussed the opportunities they had for constructive encounters or engagement with those who are very different. Such encounters included experience of critical incidents and challenging or defining moments (referred to colloquially as 'ah-ha moments') on campus or during study abroad that may have moved them to a higher level of global citizen identity. A number of students told in-depth stories about their experiences.

Marcie, who majored in architecture, began her academic career at Lehigh without seeing any connections between her chosen field and global issues such as sustainability of the environment and stewardship of the planet. However, her experiences abroad changed her perspective. She said,

...at the beginning of college I remember being in one of my studios and really not accepting or...not seeing sustainable design or green architecture...as something I would be interested in. It really wasn't 'til going through these courses and seeing first hand architecture here and abroad, that this is something that not only was I interested in but was something that has an impact on local communities and also protects the global community.

She described these courses and study abroad experiences as enlightening moments that changed her career focus to include becoming "...involved in architecture that promotes better interior environments as well as protecting the natural world, which I think has ties to global citizenship."

Beth had a dangerous encounter with fire during her study abroad that made a lasting impression on her. She and several friends were visiting Portugal for a week and were riding on the Metro at night. Beth described how a man entered the car with a flame thrower and started screaming, and everyone ran to the front of the car,

...and I was sitting next to some woman and she was trying to talk to me and tell me it was OK and to calm down, and I couldn't speak Portuguese...But she started holding my hand and I guess it was just one of those things where I realized that we were communicating even though we weren't really communicating.

That incident had a significant impact on Beth and helped her realize that one needn't always speak the same language to feel a human connection with others.

Several other students specifically recounted defining moments with others that transcended language barriers. Valerie was in South Africa, traveling with friends along the coast during Easter break. They caught a ride on the back of a truck with some local women from a Xhosa village.

All I could say was, 'Hi, how are you?' and a few things that I've since completely forgotten, but I just remember it was one of the coolest things ever. They were so excited that I even tried, that I had any idea about their language, and I remember that was one of the focal moments of the whole trip, having that brief interaction.

Jen remembered attending her Creole teacher's church while she was doing research with a professor in the Turks and Caicos Islands during a summer study abroad.

I actually went to his church one weekend...and that whole experience was very different for me, 'cause it was all in Dominican Spanish and I didn't understand a word of it...they sat a lady next to us who knew English and Spanish and so she was translating the whole thing.

What did she learn from that encounter?

You know, generally people really just want to help you...and I just saw it time and time again, and I loved it...you know having that realization that people, even cross language barriers, or cultural barriers, it still exists...that urge, the want to help other people and the good in human nature.

## **Student Reflections on Global Citizen Identity**

### *Awareness*

Awareness is important, according to Marcie. She explained,

What you need to approach as yourself, if you're trying to become a global citizen, is first gaining an awareness of what it is to be a global citizen, and one of the things that we learned about gaining an awareness is just how you as an individual interact in your own culture and how your actions, or the actions of a business you work for, affects people in a different country and what kind of moral or personal responsibility you have as a citizen of the United States and also a citizen of the world. That's one change that I'd say has occurred [in me] in the past few years.

Allen stated, "I'm just aware of global issues...dealing with the environment, dealing with war, dealing with politics, things like that and I am more active in seeking out information than I was before." Another student, Mark, indicated that you can go out in the world and get lots of stamps in your passport, but that doesn't necessarily make you a global citizen. He added that one does not always need to travel or speak a different language, "...but I think it's more about being engaged and kind of thinking about global issues and being respectful and sensitive of other peoples' cultures." Jim remarked, "Sure I have 100% grown as a person, grown to understand different cultures and how different people live...It's really opened my eyes and just made me a really curious person, someone who loves to ask questions and learn about different things."

### *Activism*

Engaging in activism was perceived to be an important attribute of a global citizen by the time Cohort 1 students reached graduation. The concept of activism itself depended on the individual's interpretation and included both idealistic and pragmatic approaches to engagement. An idealist might define activism as taking action to help a community from an altruistic rather than egotist personal stance. A pragmatist might consider activism as taking the initiative to learn about others in order to enhance one's own personal insights or career possibilities.

Prior to entering Lehigh Beth defined the main facets of a global citizen as the ability to appreciate diversity, being open, and realizing that others have different points of view. She added, however, "I think another huge thing is the ability to act and not only acknowledge that there are other cultures and other people and ways that they think is different, but to actually do something..." When asked what led her to see the aspect of global citizenship in which you must translate your ideas and ideals into some kind of action, she responded that in the program students talked about how "...to really be a global citizen you have to interact with the world and that without acting you can't interact with the world." The program led her to realize that while it is good to be open and accepting of others, one will never have an effect on the world unless one opts to "...actually do something."

Alexis felt that as much as she had learned about other cultures through the program, she kept coming back to what she had written in her essay about the importance of taking action.

It stands out that I kept saying [in my admissions essay] that you take action, and I still feel like that's the main point of being a global citizen...taking the action to become a better person within society. Not a *better* [italics added] person, but just a more active person.

Janet noted she had originally believed a key element of global citizenship was being aware of the global world. She went on to say, however, that what she learned through the program helped her to be an activist in her own community.

I think what I've learned about the world around me has impacted my ability in the classroom, dealing with students from various different backgrounds, many of them who are first year Americans, first generation American citizens. So I do feel that my experiences abroad and in the GCP have broadened my perspective and my knowledge about the world, which has allowed me to really give back to the community here....I mentioned in the last sentence of my paper [admissions' essay] that making it a part of your everyday life, and still knowing about what's going on maybe in places very far, but really bringing it locally into our country.

Mark reflected on how his four years in the program led him to the following conclusion:

...you can't really go and understand other places if you don't understand where you come from, and you can't be actively engaged in another place if you're not engaged where you actually are at the time....like I love to travel and love to go abroad and things, but I also now really love just to get very engaged in where I live and explore my locality and that. I've met a lot of great things and great culture here in my backyard even if I live in rural America or something.

In other words, for Mark, one needn't "go out into the world to be a global citizen. More important was being active no matter where one happened to be located.

Others embraced a more pragmatic view of activism. Mike, for example, was a business major, and early on had identified the importance of globalization and the movement of business overseas. He believed the program would be worthwhile in developing his career. "By going through the program I'm more aware of global issues, aware of interconnectivity," he stated. He said the intersession trip to Chile during freshman year had an impact on him. The trip "... definitely made me view things in a much larger perspective...and definitely made me go out and do things and not just think about them." After graduating he spent two months traveling around Southeast Asia, and volunteered in an orphanage in Cambodia. "These opportunities don't happen unless you are willing to take that step out the door."

## **Discussion**

Interviews with Cohort 1 members indicated that study abroad experiences, in particular interactions and reactions they had directly with those from other cultures, had the greatest effect on their global citizen identity development. Daloz (2000) specifies the importance of encounters or engagements with others who are very different through experiencing critical incidents, defining moments (Light, 2001), or, as I called them in interviews, "ah-ha" moments. In Daloz's (2000) model, these constructive encounters with difference and /or diversity help break down the 'us' versus 'them' barriers and move us to a sense of trust and community with 'The Other.' These experiences resonate and align with ideas expressed by Daloz et al. (1996) of "...experiences which take the individual from the home and out into the world and back again" (p.38).

In their interviews students reported that becoming aware of different perspectives, ideas, and ways of responding to issues was the key to developing an understanding of global citizenship. During their four years students developed a nuanced understanding of both unawareness and

awareness with regard to a variety of issues. They learned how important interacting with 'The Other' is to the development of *self-awareness*. Further, through their development of this awareness of self and others, students came to recognize the importance of activism in promoting change or developing broader perspectives about issues, and to see activism as one of the responsibilities of being a global citizen. Appiah (1996) has described cosmopolitanism as being a sentiment more than an ideology... "an adventure and an ideal" (Appiah, 2006, p. xx). However, for students in this study the practice of global citizenship appears to be the means through which to realize and bring to fruition those cosmopolitan ideals.

### **Conclusion**

Globalization has moved the world community toward the recognition and practice of universal moral imperatives and reconsideration of the meaning of cosmopolitanism and the practice of global citizenship in today's world. Colleges and universities have created specialized programs to help develop students who can succeed in a 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. The data in this study contribute to an understanding of how this challenge can be met.

This study has many implications for all undergraduate education programs attempting to address broad issues of moral and civic development and education, and also to those programs simply hoping to change student attitudes and identity in relation to some kind of global perspective. Findings in this study may form the nucleus of a future research agenda to inform the current national discussion centered on the importance of intercultural experiences in developing globally minded and competent students, in particular through study abroad.

This discussion is exemplified in the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2009, which was approved by the United States House of Representatives in June of that year. The long-term goal of this initiative is that within ten years one million American college students will study abroad in any given year. Currently only one percent of American students study abroad. Given these disappointing statistics, the foundation seeks to implement the following: increase participation in quality study abroad programs, increase numbers of underrepresented populations of American students in study abroad programs, expand study abroad locations to more diverse locations in developing countries, and make study abroad "...a cornerstone of today's higher education" (NAFSA Website, 2009). The implication is that through study abroad American students will develop the cosmopolitan ideals, skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to become effective global citizens.

Moral and civic education has been a part of the public school fabric of the United States since 1845, when Horace Mann encouraged the implementation of state-funded education (Parker, 1998). Colby et al. (2003) asserted at the time that the moral and civic are inseparable, and such education in colleges and universities will become increasingly important as we move deeply into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How does this philosophy compare with educational practices in colleges and universities throughout the world? Future researchers may want to consider this question.

In his recent study, Schattle (2009) identified five ways individuals move toward becoming global citizens: through experiences during the childhood years, immigration experiences, political and social activism, professional opportunities, and educational programs. He said, "...traveling abroad to participate in educational programs has served a pivotal step in the lives of many self-described global citizens" (p.15). Indeed, students in my current study identified constructive engagement with those who are different, particularly during study abroad experiences, as being a key program element in driving forward the development of their self-ascribed global citizen

identity. Their voices fill an important gap in our knowledge of how best to develop initiatives that promote the cultivation of cosmopolitan ideals which, if translated to practice, become the defining element of global citizenship.

### Endnotes

1. For example, Grudzinski-Hall's (2007) study of 25 institutions of higher education in the United States which offer global citizenship programs provides a close look at this trend and the challenges of implementing programs to educate for global citizenship at the undergraduate level. Her sample included the following: Lehigh University; Drake University; Drury University; University of Michigan; University of Rhode Island, International Engineering Program; Virginia Commonwealth University; University of Wisconsin-Madison; Ohio University; Franklin Pierce College; Binghamton University; Boston College; Bradley University; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Rutgers University; Duke University; Elizabethtown College; Haverford College; John Carroll University; Macalester College; Mount Holyoke College; Pacific Lutheran University; Rochester Institute of Technology; Tufts University; University of Missouri-Columbia; and the University of Washington.

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