

Study Abroad and Engagement at the Local and Global Levels: The Stories Behind the Numbers

Journal of Studies in International Education
2021, Vol. 25(4) 407–424
© 2021 European Association for
International Education
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/10283153211016276
journals.sagepub.com/home/jsi



Jae-Eun Jon¹  and Gerald W. Fry²

Abstract

In this study, we address the question of whether and how the internationalization of higher education, particularly its study abroad aspect, has contributed to the common good. Much of the past discussion on study abroad impact has been largely concentrated on outcomes at the personal level. Using qualitative data from the Study Abroad for Global Engagement project, this study analyzes how former study abroad participants contributed to the global common good at the levels of local, glocal, and global communities. The findings show that many chose to practice global engagement, such as civic engagement, philanthropic activities, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity, for the common good, as the result of study abroad. This article concludes with discussion of implications for research, theory, policy, and practice.

Keywords

Study Abroad for Global Engagement, study abroad impact, global engagement, global common good, the United States

I ride my bike to work to save penguins.

¹Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Republic of Korea

²University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Minneapolis, USA

Corresponding Author:

Jae-Eun Jon, College of Education, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Cheonjanganro 9-11, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul 02450, Republic of Korea.

Email: jejon@hufs.ac.kr

—A former study abroad participant
in Antarctica (CIEE Study, 2009)

Introduction

In the past several decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the international mobility of students and scholars, reflective of the growing importance of the field of international education. While this area has many facets, a central element is student mobility that has also increased significantly as shown in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) and UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS, 2020) statistics. Related to this trend, numerous studies have documented the positive outcomes of study abroad. However, research on study abroad impact has been largely limited to outcomes at the personal level, such as improved language abilities; intercultural competence; identity, career, and employability; and personal development such as confidence, independence, and agency (e.g., Fry et al., 2009; Institute of International Education [IIE], 2017; Roy et al., 2019; Varela, 2017).

This critical limitation in the research on study abroad inspired Paige et al. (2010) to think about the broader benefits and value added of study abroad that go beyond individual benefits and relate to enhancing the common good. We developed and designed the Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) project to examine rigorously this kind of impact with a national survey in the United States, spanning five decades (Paige et al., 2009, 2010).

Inspired by this project, we address directly the question of whether and how higher education can make a meaningful difference through internationalization as reflected in student mobility. In terms of the current global context, there are four burning issues: (a) global warming (Pierre-Louis et al., 2020), (b) growing inequalities and disparities (Piketty, 2019/2020), (c) violent conflicts and turbulence, contributing to large migration flows, and (d) rising ultranationalism and nativism (Kashani, 2019; Pomeroy, 2020). Given these circumstances, our primary research question is as follows:

Research Question: How can study abroad contribute to participants' active engagement and agency in support of local and global communities, in addressing the global problems and issues just articulated?

It is important to note, however, that we are not arguing that study abroad per se can significantly influence the resolution of any of these burning global issues. In this study, we address our research question through a qualitative research approach to understand the stories behind the numbers and how former study abroad participants are often making a difference in support of local and global communities. We are particularly interested in how study abroad may have enhanced participants' ability to make independent decisions in reframing their agency in rethinking their own future life trajectories, but, more importantly, how "to pursue a better future" (Miller, 2017).

Interestingly, Otto Scharmer (2018) in rethinking theories of leadership calls for active agency to shift from an egocentric to an eco-centric mindset. We also examine this issue through our qualitative data.

Literature Review

To address a call for more accountability in higher education, extensive research has been undertaken to assess the outcomes of study abroad (Roy et al., 2019; Varela, 2017). For example, a meta-synthesis of 72 studies on study abroad impact indicated significant positive cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral changes (Varela, 2017). Given space limitations, we can highlight only a few such studies. As previously mentioned, most are constrained by looking at the individual benefits of study abroad, reflecting a limited human capital perspective. Some look primarily at short-term and relatively immediate outcomes, whereas others look at long-term outcomes.

A major study on short-term outcomes is the Georgetown research that focused on how study abroad contributes to the development of intercultural sensitivity (Vande Berg et al., 2009). In a subsequent study, by Salisbury et al. (2013), they examined how study abroad influenced intercultural competence, but found relatively little impact. This substantiates the Georgetown study's finding on the significance of intervention (Vande Berg et al., 2012).

Concerning long-term studies, the studies by International Education of Students (IES), a 50-year retrospective longitudinal study involving 17,000 alumni (Dwyer, 2004; IES, 2016), and IIE (2017) confirmed how study abroad enhances critical 21st-century skills and career prospects. The IIE (2017) study, based on a survey of more than 4,500 alumni of their diverse programs, showed significant gains in 11 of 15 critical 21st-century skill areas. The top five skills were intercultural capabilities, curiosity, flexibility/adaptability, confidence, and self-awareness, as well as significant gains in interpersonal and problem-solving skills (IIE, 2017). Moreover, long-term studies (Fry et al., 2009; IES, 2016; IIE, 2017; Paige et al., 2009) demonstrated study abroad participants' greater likelihood to pursue graduate studies.

Thereafter, with the SAGE study as a pioneer, there has been a shift toward more studies focusing on long-term impact going beyond individuals' benefits. The studies now to be described reflect this new focus.

The major long-term study is the SAGE project, based on a sample of more than 6,000 former study abroad participants (Paige et al., 2009, 2010). The quantitative findings of the SAGE project indicated that participants tended to attribute their global engagement to their study abroad experiences (Paige et al., 2009, 2010). Their voting in an election, making purchasing decisions based on the social or political values of a company, voluntary simplicity, philanthropic activities, and social entrepreneurship for improving education and communities were the most salient behaviors (Paige et al., 2010). Based on the SAGE data, Horn and Fry (2013) also showed that location, type, and duration of study abroad were significantly related to participants' engagement in volunteering for international development. In addition, program depth, reflecting the intensity of study abroad experiences, demonstrated significant

influence in explaining global engagement behaviors (Paige et al., 2010). However, our study is the first in which the qualitative data on global engagement from the SAGE project have been systematically analyzed. The major weaknesses of the SAGE study were its reliance on the self-report of impact, the underrepresentation of diversity in study abroad, and lack of a systematic analysis using control group data. To mitigate and address these problems, the following steps were undertaken in the original SAGE study: (a) we collected both quantitative and qualitative data to validate findings, (b) we purposively sampled African Americans in addition to random sampling, and (c) we extended the time frame for the project by a year to collect the control group data quantitatively from the same participating institutions. It should also be noted that the typical respondent in the SAGE studied abroad for a semester or longer, whereas currently short-term study abroad is more popular.

Inspired by the SAGE project, researchers at the University of Wisconsin did a similar study of their study abroad alumni, addressing the limitation of the SAGE study by including a comparison group, that is, alumni who did not study abroad (Murphy et al., 2014). Based on quantitative data alone, they overall confirmed the findings of long-term impact on global engagement, notably in terms of civic engagement, voluntary simplicity, and philanthropy; However, for some domains (e.g., knowledge production, social entrepreneurship), study abroad and comparison groups did not show significant differences (Murphy et al., 2014). In addition, Millora's (2011) qualitative study showed how study abroad participants develop civic and global engagement. In a recent study on global engagement by Canadian scholars, findings on study abroad impact are also consistent with the SAGE study (Sherman et al., 2020). Their conclusion states that study abroad can extend "the student's global mindedness into the realm of responsible civic action at both the local and global levels" (p. 17).

Another line of research has documented the study abroad impact on the notion of global citizenship. For example, short-term study abroad programs facilitated participants' proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors, social justice orientation, and global knowledge and awareness (Mason & Their, 2018; Tarrant et al., 2014; Wynveen et al., 2012). Dolby's (2008) qualitative inquiry explored global citizenship among U.S. and Australian study abroad participants, and their negotiating national or global identities. Moreover, scholars revealed that global empathy, solidarity, and interconnectedness facilitate global engagement and citizenship (Millora, 2011; Sklad et al., 2016). Another important study, done from the perspective of political science and international relations, examined the impact of study abroad on nationalism (Jones, 2014). This research found that study abroad fostered an enlightened form of open, tolerant nationalism (Jones, 2014) and reduced minimization type thinking (Bennett, 2017).

Related to the important issue of the impact of study abroad on agency, Byker and Putman (2018) found that a program for American preservice teachers in South Africa widened participants' agency as future educators and citizens.

Importantly, however, most of the aforementioned studies employed quantitative methods and mainly used samples from only a few institutions. Stebleton et al. (2013), in particular, called for future research using qualitative data to provide a deeper

understanding of how study abroad influences global engagement. Responsive to this recommendation (Stebbleton et al., 2013), our study analyzes qualitative data from the SAGE project that includes diverse types of higher education institutions. We did examine possible other alternative data sets to analyze, such as those of the Michigan State study, the impact of study abroad; however, that study, similar to the 2009 CIEE study (Fry et al., 2009), focuses on benefits to individuals and their professional development (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). The rationale for the use of the SAGE data, despite its being old, is as follows: It used a national sample, including highly diverse institutions spanning five decades of study abroad participants with a large sample size of more than 6,000 individuals. It also included various types of study abroad. In this sense, the SAGE data are still exceptionally rich and valuable. Because this study builds on the earlier SAGE project, we use the term “study abroad” rather than the more encompassing education abroad. It should be noted that this study is grounded in the U.S. context of study abroad.

Conceptual Frameworks

Three major conceptual frameworks guide and inform this study. The first is that of the common good (Marginson, 2016; Noble & Ross, 2019). Unfortunately, the distinction between common and public goods has often been muddled (Quilligan, 2012). It is important to distinguish these two types of collective goods. Public goods are those produced by government funding, such as schools, roads, hospitals, and parks. Common goods are those that we, as humanity, share, most prominently water and air. They know no national boundaries. The concept of common goods was popularized by Garrett Hardin (1968) with his classic work “The Tragedy of the Commons” with the example of overfishing our seas. In recent years, a valuable literature has emerged, discussing the importance of the common good and how it should not be conflated with the public good (Cheng & Yang, 2015; Locatelli, 2018; Marginson, 2016, 2018; Marginson & Yang, 2020; Szadkowski, 2018; Tian & Liu, 2018; UNESCO, Director General, 2015). Marginson and Yang (2020) defined the common good as follows: “Here the common good lies in practices that contribute to sociable human agency, shared welfare and relations of solidarity, inclusion, tolerance, universal freedoms, equality, human rights, individual capability on a democratic basis” (p. 41).

Our key research question relates to how study abroad contributes to the common good, important impact that goes beyond the individual, the heart of the SAGE study, and its findings.

The second conceptual framework is global engagement which comprises four key elements, originally developed in the SAGE study (Paige et al., 2010). Table 1 provides an explanation of each component of global engagement in this study.

All of these key elements of engagement involve increased personal agency in working toward improving the common good (Byker & Putman, 2018; Jones, 2014). Agency is our third conceptual framework which provides valuable insights into understanding how study abroad contributes to global engagement and working for the common good. Agency is an important concept in contemporary sociology, but its

Table 1. Definition of Global Engagement Components.

Global engagement	Operationalized definition
Civic engagement	Includes behaviors related to the issues of domestic and international importance, such as organizing or signing petitions, voting in an election, and making a purchasing decision because of the social or political values of a company
Voluntary simplicity	Indicates “the effort to lead a more modest, simple lifestyle,” such as “riding a bike to work, taking a job that pays less but contributes more to the common good, or being motivated to use recycled products and to practice active recycling” (p. 51)
Social entrepreneurship	Is defined as “involvement in creating a new organization (for-profit or not-for-profit) which has social objectives as its primary goal” as well as “influencing a for-profit organization, from within, to channel an increasing portion of its surpluses and/or profits for the good of the community” (p. 50)
Philanthropy (both time and/or money)	Consists of volunteer work and monetary donations in various areas, including education, environment, health, poverty, and youth organizations

Source. Paige et al. (2010).

roots go back centuries to Enlightenment philosophical thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant. Then in the 19th century, thinkers such as Marx noted how economic and religious structures constrained agency. In today’s modern world, there are many external factors that limit and constrain agency, such as customs, culture, social and parental pressures, economic conditions, and oppressive governments. There are three genres of agency, namely, individual, proxy, and communal (Hewson, 2010). The first and third are most relevant to our current study. In addition, Amartya Sen’s influential conception of development as freedom and capabilities approach relates directly to agency (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009; Sen, 1999a, 1999b). Sen emphasizes individuals trying to make a difference in the world and being someone who brings about change, a phenomenon clearly demonstrated in “our stories behind the numbers” in this study. We share in our findings many examples of contributions to the common good. Sen also stresses the freedom to participate in political, economic, and social activities, also directly related to our findings. The Brazilian educator Paul Freire (1970) called for taking action for social justice. In addition, as individuals become exposed to different paths of life and ways of thinking through study abroad, they develop agency in rethinking their life choices. Thinking in terms of agency, study abroad can be considered as a potentially liberating activity (Adams, n.d.).

Method

The original SAGE project used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, with quantitative research followed by qualitative research (Creswell, 2019). The SAGE project investigated study abroad alumni’s global engagement, focusing on their actual behaviors (Paige et al., 2009, 2010). In the original SAGE study, in total, 6,391

participants who studied abroad between 1960 and 2007 took an online survey. They were recruited from more than 20 diverse higher education institutions and two study abroad providers in the United States. Questions in the survey asked about participants' behaviors across global engagement components as well as their education and careers.

This study used data from the qualitative research segment of the original SAGE study. Individual interviews were conducted to explain and understand with more depth the quantitative results. Among those who volunteered for interviews in the original study, 125 were randomly selected, in addition to sampling purposively 10 African Americans who were underrepresented in the initial sample. A total of 53 interviews were completed by phone, after pilot interviews including individuals who did not participate in the survey. Interview questions asked about previous international exposure, motivation, overall study abroad experiences, structure of study abroad programs, and study abroad impact, particularly on their global engagement. In each interview, the research team probed participants' survey responses related to their global engagement.

The interview sample included 40 females and 13 males, and by race/ethnicity, 46 Whites, six African Americans, and two Asian Americans. By institutional type, 24 attended liberal arts colleges, 14 had studied at master's or doctorate-granting institutions, and 15 studied abroad through study abroad providers. Related to time period, 25 studied abroad in the 2000s, 15 in the 1990s, seven in the 1980s, four in the 1970s, and two in the 1960s. By study abroad destination, 30 studied in Europe, four in Latin America, two in Asia, three in Africa, and one in Australia. In addition, 13 studied abroad in multiple countries, but not exclusively in one continent. By duration, 26 stayed for less than 6 months, 22 for 6 to 11 months, and five for more than 1 year.

For data analysis, an NVivo program was used to facilitate collaboration among researchers and the management of research data. First, three researchers who conducted interviews performed structural coding based on interview questions individually using NVivo (Guest et al., 2012; Saldaña, 2013). Their results were merged into one NVivo file. Second, a lead coder elaborated and refined the codes on global engagement, focusing on participants' actual behaviors in relation to their prior study abroad experiences. Through revising codes along with reading the whole transcripts of interviews numerous times, the initial list of codes was organized into four key components of global engagement. These components were identified in this study, not from the original SAGE study. Third, pattern coding was conducted applying the global common good framework (Miles et al., 2019). At this stage, global engagement components were restructured in their relation to the global common good at the local, global, and global community levels. In the description of findings, all participants are given pseudonyms.

Findings

Engagement for the Global Common Good at the Local Community Level: Practicing Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship

Significantly, just because they studied abroad, it did not mean that participants' meaningful subsequent experiences after return were only internationally oriented.

Interviewees mentioned that they were actively involved in working for the global common good at the local level through various dimensions of global engagement. Philanthropic activities and social entrepreneurship were the most salient among them. For example, participants volunteered and donated to assist disadvantaged groups and schools in their local areas. Participants' direct experiences and observations during study abroad motivated them to help and contribute to their local communities. Tina, for instance, explained that her volunteer work for refugee settlement came from developing respect for other cultures and sensitivity to others' needs during her study abroad. Henry experienced the sense of a larger family and community from studying abroad, in contrast to individualism in the United States. He learned "the sense of helping other people" in those cultures, recognizing a broader sense of the world and a need to make it better:

I joined a group that helped junior high aged students who were less privileged than most, and helped them get into quality private high schools. . . So, studying abroad has helped in kind of having your eyes opened, if you will, that there is more to the world than there is, and you should probably go out and help some people. It's an over-used cliché, not a sad one, but you're going to try and make the world a better place. (Henry)

Similarly, James realized his relatively advantaged position in the United States from studying in Europe and Africa. Accordingly, he felt capable of sharing and helping others through volunteering, stating, "I can share more of myself with the world and I have the time and the ability to do that." He explained that "for having seen Spain and having seen [Africa], I realized how wealthy and lucky I am to be here in the United States." He explained that without study abroad experiences, he would have compared himself with billionaires in New York where he lives. Instead, he was energetically involved in promoting the common good at the local level by providing group homes and helping adjudicated or troubled youth, the homeless, and those with mental illness.

In relation to social entrepreneurship, several participants started a socially responsible group in a local community. For example, Ellie set up a group to raise funds for diabetic patients by running a 1-day sports tournament yearly. She attributed her activity to her study abroad experiences from "recognizing that you're part of a global world and not just the U.S."

Engagement for the Global Common Good at the Glocal Community Level: Practicing Voluntary Simplicity

Participants' global engagement, related to the common good for local and global communities through practicing voluntary simplicity, is the most prominent finding in this study. As the result of study abroad, many individuals became aware of alternative, less materialistic ways of life and became open to rethinking the meaning of life and their ways of living. This is reflected in the opening quotation of our study where a former study abroad participant states that she rides her bike to save penguins (Fry

et al., 2009). Individual participants realized how their local actions and behaviors can have significant global implications. They explained that they gained an awareness of international connectedness environmentally, socially, politically, and economically or had it reinforced from study abroad. Their observations and experiences of other countries and how people live there led them to practice voluntary simplicity for the global common good of local and global communities. They were engaged in sustainable behaviors such as recycling, use of public transportation and locally grown food, and also maintaining simpler lifestyles in their consumption, housing, and jobs. These actions were both locally and globally (glocally) oriented. The following quotation illustrates this kind of behavioral change in practicing voluntary simplicity:

Then you come back to the United States and you're like, "oh my gosh, we are so wasteful and we don't even know it, and why do I need a washer and dryer this size, and I can't even get one smaller than that. Why do I need this big Sport Utility Vehicle while I'm driving in the city?" . . . You know so I definitely try to live a more modest simple lifestyle. My response saying that study abroad somewhat affected that. . . . My faith in combination with having been exposed to other cultures, having been outside of this country long enough to see, oh there's more than one way of doing things. (Clara)

Regarding recycling and purchasing decisions, Noah explained how he learned from study abroad in Europe that his local activities in the United States can have an impact on the global environment. He picked up the habits of recycling and making environmentally conscious purchases, such as "not to buy something with a large amount of plastics," and initiated a recycling program in his community. He added that his local action of polluting air by driving a car can have a ripple effect from his city in the Midwestern part of the United States to down in Mexico, and it is why he supports organizations at the global level. Similarly, Ruth, in the following quotation, stresses that her understanding of global interconnectedness was influenced by study abroad with the sense of responsibility, leading to the behaviors to support a sustainable environment:

I am more aware of the idea that we're all connected. That environmentally, socially, and politically as well but certainly environmentally, that the earth is all connected. So, what happens in California, my little corner of the world, can actually affect people in these countries that I visited, and that what they do can affect me. I need to take responsibility for what I'm doing to the environment and to the world around me. (Ruth)

Furthermore, having observed those struggling with poverty and environmental degradation, participants decided to recycle, have more simple possessions, and make donations for the global common good. For instance, Joy explained that her ship-board study abroad program visiting multiple countries led her family to spend minimally for house or food, despite their high level of income. Instead, they saved money to donate internationally through an organization that they carefully chose. She expressed her satisfaction with being able to do little things for other people. Similarly, those who are lawyers commonly mentioned that they made nonpecuniary career

choices for public interest or local impact, a decision influenced by their study abroad experiences (Jon et al., 2020).

Engagement for the Global Common Good at the Global Community Level: Practicing Civic Engagement and Philanthropy

Participants' global engagement for the common good could also target direct impact at the global level. Participants were motivated to do so from enhanced awareness during study abroad that their behaviors can have global impact. Such behaviors centered around civic engagement and philanthropic activities.

In relation to civic engagement, when participants made a political decision in the United States, its impact on the international community became a priority. For voting in an election, they considered its global repercussions and emphasized the importance of foreign policy in choosing a candidate. Particularly, they became highly cognizant of how people outside the United States view U.S. politics and how much keen interest international communities have about U.S. politics.

Participants also donated to organizations for international community and environment, and joined local groups to volunteer for international impact or volunteered abroad directly. Some made donations to countries they studied abroad in or broader regions for natural disaster or nature conservation. William, for example, stated that his active involvement in a civic group, the Rotary International Program, is "not only to make our local community a better place but other places as well." He also coordinated disaster relief to Asia. Helen who studied abroad in Europe devoted her attention to international issues and was sponsoring people in other countries:

I'm very interested in following closely what's going on Zimbabwe right now. I have supported a Zimbabwean for a long time by donating money and time to that. I also sponsor a woman in the Congo through an organization called Women to Women International. Without traveling abroad, I don't think I would be nearly as interested or feel as invested in the outcomes of international issues as I do now because before I did travel abroad, I was much more focused on the American issues. (Helen)

Or Joy shared that she preferred volunteering abroad for direct impact. It came from global empathy, which she called "compassion that really woke up when I went on global semester," an example of what has been termed as the cosmopolitan ethic (Appiah, 2006). Significantly, participants highlighted their sense of global empathy and interconnectedness as an integral part of their global engagement actions for international impact. Having exposure to a variety of issues and challenges in other countries through study abroad made them interested in and sensitive to issues such as human rights, health, and environment.

Moreover, reflecting social entrepreneurship, participants started a socially responsible group or worked for their organizations to be socially responsible at the global level. Luna recommended that her company, a for-profit company on investment research, and its employees support financially a project of the UN environmental

program. She explained that her learning the importance of being a good citizen from study abroad helped her efforts to make “policies and actions for the company as a whole reflect the responsible approach.” Another participant helped to establish an organization that supports translating modern literature from different countries in English for readers in the United States. She also helped setting up a program for refugee writers in the United States.

In summary, the findings showed that the majority of participants practiced global engagement behaviors for the global common good of local and global communities. Through this process, they developed individual agency (Hewson, 2010) and made their own choices to act in terms of voluntary simplicity, civic engagement, and philanthropic activities, going beyond the U.S. consumeristic culture and narrow domestic politics. Or they practiced global engagement through communal agency (Hewson, 2010) by creating or participating in socially responsible organizations. They all behaved based on their enhanced free will and capabilities (Sen, 1999a, 1999b). Such actions were influenced by their study abroad experiences. Impressively, some participants also hoped to continue their commitment to the global common good in the future through international volunteer work. For example, some had already done that through joining the Peace Corps.

Discussion

With the growing intensity of internationalization in higher education over the past several decades, we arrived at the point of asking whether and how internationalization has made “a meaningful contribution” to society as one of the core values for internationalization (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 29). Accordingly, in response to the *Journal of Studies in International Education*’s call for this special issue, our study addresses the key question of whether and how higher education can make a meaningful difference through internationalization, as reflected in the agency fostered by student mobility. Thus, we asked how study abroad could contribute to participants’ engagement and agency working for the global common good. The findings showed that study abroad participants demonstrated the behavioral changes or reinforcement for global engagement (civic engagement, voluntary simplicity, social entrepreneurship, and philanthropy) for the common good at the levels of local, glocal, and global communities.

As previously noted, we are currently facing critical issues of global warming, growing inequalities, violent conflicts and turbulence, and rising ultranationalism (Jones, 2014; Kashani, 2019; Pierre-Louis et al., 2020; Piketty, 2019/2020; Pomeroy, 2020). The findings in this study suggest that many former study abroad participants take actions to address these issues based on their study abroad experiences through global engagement for the global common good. For example, participants practiced voluntary simplicity by engaging in recycling and more modest lifestyles. As past studies similarly highlighted the development of proenvironmental attitudes and behaviors as study abroad outcomes (Tarrant et al., 2014; Wynveen et al., 2012), they can help to combat global warming.

In addition, participants' philanthropic activities at local and global levels can be considered as endeavors to decrease inequalities and improve the quality of life in global communities, directly by volunteering and indirectly by donating. The examples of supporting refugees in local or national communities, disadvantaged youth in local communities, and deprived individuals in international communities are included in these actions.

Besides, as U.S. college students studying abroad, participants experienced the heightened awareness of being from the United States and international attention to increasingly polarized politics in the United States. It spurred their domestic civic engagement after their return, with international impact. This substantiates Dolby's (2004) remark that participants' negotiation of national identity from study abroad can contribute to promoting the public good and understanding of the United States in terms of openness and inclusiveness rather than closure and rigidity.

These findings as a whole respond directly to the key question of this special issue that study abroad participants do contribute to society in a meaningful way, by recycling, making donation, volunteering, and engaging in civic activities and socially responsible organizations in support of local, global, and global communities. The findings in this study have crucial implications, given the current wave of ultranationalism, anti-immigration, and protectionism in both the United States and beyond (Löfflmann, 2019). These trends have been exacerbated further with the current global COVID-19 shock. The recent phenomena are aggravating local and global inequalities even more (Akiwumi & Valensisi, 2020). These circumstances call for a need to strive for global solidarity in the post-COVID-19 world (Harari, 2020). Significantly, participants in this study underscored that their awareness of global interconnectedness and increase in global empathy from direct experiences and observation of others' living and their cultures during study abroad prompted their engagement in support of local and global communities. In other words, study abroad participation can help to prepare educators and students with a cosmopolitan ethic for responding to ethical and pedagogical challenges that we are facing in an era of accelerating global interconnectivity (Appiah, 2006; Rizvi, 2019).

Conclusions and Implications

Implications for Future Research

As suggested by Stebleton et al. (2013), more qualitative research, as shared in this article, is needed to identify the study abroad program designs for the most impactful learning on the development of global citizenship and long-term global engagement. The unique contribution of qualitative research is that it has allowed us to develop a deeper understanding of and insight into both the nuances of study abroad program design and related engagement outcomes. Such rigorous qualitative studies can contribute to greater accountability in higher education and also excellence in study abroad.

Implications for Theory

The use of the common goods framework demonstrates the primary rationale for the original SAGE study, examining how benefits from study abroad go beyond the individual participant. The important distinction between common and public goods is also important in understanding our findings. Our study abroad participants were on programs developed by both public and private providers. The concept of the common good emphasized by UNESCO and other scholars (Cheng & Yang, 2015; Locatelli, 2018; Marginson, 2016, 2018; Marginson & Yang, 2020; Szadkowski, 2018; Tian & Liu, 2018) provide a valuable theoretical foundation for this study. A key element of the global common good is promoting “learners to be global citizens who are equipped with global perspectives and responsibility” (Tian & Liu, 2018, p. 627). Our findings confirm that study abroad clearly contributed successfully to that end and illustrate well Sen’s emphasis on making a difference in the world and fostering change and Freire’s call for fighting for social justice.

Implications for Policy

It is important to stress that it would be naïve to think that study abroad per se could contribute significantly to the resolution of global issues such as global warming and inequality. These global issues identified, however, are important context for reflecting on how individuals can make a difference as global citizens developing agency to work for the common good. Our study has a primary policy implication in this regard. Because of the many positive benefits for the common good identified, study abroad deserves strong support both at the local and national levels (Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation). A second rationale for such support relates to the persisting social class bias in study abroad (Comp, 2008; Gozik & Hamir, 2018). Greater scholarship support is essential to ensure that more students of diverse backgrounds can enjoy the benefits of study abroad identified in this and related research.

Implications for Practice

The current pause in study abroad, because of the COVID-19 crisis, provides a special opportunity to develop a new architecture for study abroad and develop a new paradigm to ensure that study abroad is more intelligent, inclusive, and impactful. In the SAGE project, the depth of study abroad programs had significant influence on engagement outcomes (Paige et al., 2010). The essence of defining program depth is the creative organization of challenging activities that involve active mentoring, intensive engagement with local communities, and program design to generate *high-impact learning* (Kuh et al., 2013), which can then lead to the kinds of global engagement identified in this study. As many students, certainly the majority, will not have the opportunity to study abroad, it is imperative to think creatively about how to provide nonmobile students with similar kinds of challenging and broadening experiences through Internationalization at Home (IaH). With many nations now having

increasingly prominent diverse cultural diasporas, engaging students with these important communities can well be part of the new architecture to enhance both inclusion and impact.

Although this article focuses on the outcomes of study abroad, the extensive interviews did provide some insight into what made such programs different. They, in particular, avoided the common “cultural tourism syndrome” associated with much superficial study abroad lacking rigor, quality, and challenge (Woolf, 2007). Students encountered, observed, and experienced new ways of thinking and living while abroad, and were inspired to find ways to make a difference in the world. As program design was not a major aspect our study, future research is needed to discover what kind of programs are most likely to result in the positive engagement outcomes we have identified.

Final Reflections

This study has documented empirically how study abroad has influenced global engagement to work for the global common good in multifaceted ways. Therefore, our findings address the theme of this special issue, “reimagining internationalization for society,” by providing strong empirical support for how internationalization can serve and improve society in multiple ways. For many former participants, it has enhanced their agency and transformed their ways of living and looking at life. Through study abroad, they have experienced the opportunity to rethink their life paths and goals. Even more importantly, with respect to the theme of this special issue, they have become more actively engaged with the larger society by reframing human agency to “pursue a better future” (Miller, 2017). To conclude, study abroad has inspired individuals to make a difference in the world fighting for greater social justice and sustainable development, and to become active global citizens working for greater harmony and peace in our turbulent world.

Acknowledgments

We would like to dedicate this article to the memory and legacy of the late Dr. R. Michael Paige, Distinguished International Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota. Dr. Paige was a leading figure in international/intercultural education and did some of the most important and influential studies related to the impact of study abroad such as SAGE, Georgetown, and CIEE. We also extend thanks to cooperating partner institutions and our SAGE research team.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This project was supported by the U.S. Department of

Education under Title VI: International Research and Studies Program (2006–2010; No. P017A060057). Data in this study are from the “Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) project.” In addition, this work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund.

ORCID iD

Jae-Eun Jon  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9148-6410>

References

- Adams, A. (n.d.). *Liberation: My world abroad*. Odyssey. <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/liberation-my-world-abroad>
- Akiwumi, P., & Valensisi, G. (2020, May 4). *When it rains it pours: COVID-19 exacerbates poverty risks in the poorest countries*. <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2356>
- Appiah, K. A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers*. W.W. Norton.
- Bennett, M. (2017). Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In Y. Y. Kim (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication* (pp. 1–10). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0182>
- Byker, E. J., & Putman, S. M. (2018). Catalyzing cultural and global competencies: Engaging preservice teachers in study abroad to expand the agency of citizenship. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(1), 84–105.
- Cheng, K., & Yang, R. (2015). A cultural value in crisis: Education as public good in China. In O. Fillipakou & G. L. Williams (Eds.), *Higher education as a public good: Critical perspectives on theory, policy and practice* (pp. 127–139). Peter Lang.
- Comp, D. J. (2008). *Research and literature on underrepresentation in education abroad: A n annotated bibliography*. https://www.academia.edu/166924/Research_and_Literature_on_Underrepresentation_in_Education_Abroad_An_Annotated_Bibliography
- Creswell, J. W. (2019). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed). SAGE.
- Crocker, D., & Robeyns, I. (2009). Capability and agency. In C. W. Morris (Ed.), *Contemporary Philosophy in Focus. Amartya Sen* (pp. 60–90). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511800511.005>
- de Wit, H., Hunter, F., Howard, L., & Egron-Polak, E. (Eds.). (2015). *Internationalisation of higher education*. European Parliament. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU\(2015\)540370_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU(2015)540370_EN.pdf)
- Dolby, N. (2004). Encountering an American self: Study abroad and national identity. *Comparative Education Review*, 48(2), 150–173. <https://doi.org/10.1086/382620>
- Dolby, N. (2008). Global citizenship and study abroad: A comparative study of American and Australian undergraduates. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 17, 51–67.
- Dwyer, M. M. (2004). *Charting the impact of studying abroad*. International Education of Students. https://www.iesabroad.org/system/files/Charting%20Impact%20of%20Study%20Abroad%20%28Dwyer%29%28Intl%20Ed_Winter%202004%29.pdf
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Fry, G., Paige, R., Jon, J., Dillow, J., & Nam, K. (2009). *Study abroad and its transformative power* (Occasional Paper 32). Council on International Educational Exchange.

- Gozik, N. J., & Hamir, H. B. (Eds.). (2018). *Promoting inclusion in education abroad: A handbook of research and practice*. Stylus Publishing.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. SAGE.
- Harari, Y. N. (2020, March 30). The world after Coronavirus. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/19d90308-6858-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75>
- Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, *162*, 1243–1248.
- Hewson, M. (2010). Agency. In A. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (pp. 13–17). SAGE.
- Horn, A. S., & Fry, G. W. (2013). Promoting global citizenship through study abroad: The influence of program destination, type, and duration on the propensity for development volunteerism. *Voluntas*, *24*(4), 1159–1179. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-012-9304-y>
- International Education of Students. (2016). *Career outcomes of study abroad students: Survey of IES abroad alumni 2012-2015*.
- Ingraham, E., & Peterson, D. (2004). Assessing the impact of study abroad on student learning at MSU. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *10*, 83–100.
- Institute of International Education. (2017, October 2). *Gaining an employment edge: The impact of study abroad on 21st century skills & career success*. Institute of International Education. www.iie.org/employability
- Jon, J.-E., Shin, Y. J., & Fry, G. W. (2020). Understanding study abroad participants' career decisions and perspectives in U.S. Higher Education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *50*(1), 53–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1502608>
- Jones, C. W. (2014). Exploring the microfoundations of international community: Toward a theory of enlightened nationalism. *International Studies Quarterly*, *58*, 682–705.
- Kashani, A. (2019). *Radical generosity: Resisting xenophobia, considering cosmopolitanism*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Book.
- Kuh, G. D., O'Donnell, K., & Reed, S. D., Association of American Colleges and Universities., & Liberal Education and America's Promise (Program). (2013). *Ensuring quality & taking high-impact practices to scale*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Locatelli, R. (2018). *Education as a public and common good: Reframing the governance of education in a changing context*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002616/261614E.pdf>
- Löfflmann, G. (2019). America First and the populist impact on US foreign policy. *Survival*, *61*(6), 115–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2019.1688573>
- Marginson, S. (2016). *Higher education and the common good*. Melbourne University Press.
- Marginson, S. (2018). Public/private in higher education: A synthesis of economic and political approaches. *Studies in Higher Education*, *43*(2), 322–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1168797>
- Marginson, S., & Yang, L. (2020). *The role of higher education in generating "public" and "common" goods: A comparison of Sinic and Anglo-American political cultures* (Working Paper 52). Center for Global Education, University of Oxford.
- Mason, D. P., & Thier, M. (2018). Study abroad, global citizenship, and the study of nongovernmental organizations. *Voluntas*, *29*(2), 404–418. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-017-9899-0>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Miller, R. (2017). *Transforming the future: Anticipation in the 21st century*. Network for Future Studies.

- Millora, M. L. (2011). This is how life can be different: How U.S. student experiences in international education programs facilitate civic and global engagement. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 48(2), 229–245.
- Murphy, D., Sahakyan, N., Yong-Yi, D., & Magnan, S. S. (2014). The impact of study abroad on the global engagement of university graduates. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 24, 1–24.
- Noble, M., & Ross, C. (Eds.). (2019). *Reclaiming the university for the public good: Experiments and futures in co-operative higher education*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). *Education at a glance 2019: OECD indicators*. OECD.
- Paige, R. M., Fry, G. W., Stallman, B., Jon, J.-E., & Josić, J. (2009). Study abroad for global engagement: The long-term impact of mobility experiences. *Intercultural Education*, 20(4), S29–S44.
- Paige, R. M., Fry, G. W., Stallman, B., Jon, J.-E., & Josić, J. (2010). *Beyond immediate impact: Study abroad for global engagement* [Report submitted to the Title VI: International Research and Studies Program]. U.S. Department of Education.
- Pierre-Louis, K., Fountain, H., & Lu, D. (2020, May 5). A melting Antarctica as never seen before. *The New York Times*, D2.
- Piketty, T. (2020). *Capital and ideology* (A. Goldhammer, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published 2019)
- Pomeroy, A. F. (2020). Rethinking political ethics. *Radical Philosophy Review*, 23(1), 137–141. <https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev20202313>
- Quilligan, J. B. (2012). Why distinguish common goods from public goods? In D. Bolier & S. Helfrich (Eds.), *The wealth of the commons: A world beyond market and state* (pp. 73–81). The Commons Strategies Group [in cooperation with] Levellers Press.
- Rizvi, F. (2019). Global interconnectivity and its ethical challenges in education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20(2), 315–326. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09596-y>
- Roy, A., Newman, A., Ellenberger, T., & Pyman, A. (2019). Outcomes of international student mobility programs: A systematic review and agenda for future research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(9), 1630–1644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1458222>
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Salisbury, M. H., An, B. P., & Pascarella, E. T. (2013). The effect of study abroad on intercultural competence among undergraduate college students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 50(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jsarp-2013-0001>
- Scharmer, C. O. (2018). *The essentials of theory U: Core principles and applications*. Berrett-Koehler.
- Sen, A. (1999a). *Commodities and capabilities*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (1999b). *Development as freedom*. Knopf.
- Sherman, D. P., Cofield, B., & Connolly, N. (2020). The impact of short-term study abroad on global citizenship and engagement. *Journal of Global Citizenship and Educational Equity*, 7(1), 1–23.
- Sklad, M., Friedman, J., Park, E., & Oomen, B. (2016). “Going glocal”: A qualitative and quantitative analysis of global citizenship education at a Dutch liberal arts and sciences college. *Higher Education*, 72, 323–340. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9959-6>
- Stebleton, M., Soria, K., & Cherney, B. (2013). The high impact of education abroad: College students’ engagement in international experiences and the development of intercultural competencies. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 22, 1–24.

- Szadkowski, K. (2018). The common in higher education: A conceptual approach. *High Education, 78*, 241–255. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0340-4>
- Tarrant, M. A., Rubin, D. L., & Stoner, L. (2014). The added value of study abroad: Fostering a global citizenry. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 18*(2), 141–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315313497589>
- Tian, L., & Liu, N. C. (2018). Rethinking higher education in China as a common good. *Higher Education, 77*(4), 623–640.
- UNESCO, Director General. (2015). *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good*. UNESCO.
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (2020). *Global flow of tertiary level students*. UNESCO Institute of Statistics.
- Vande Berg, M., Connor-Linton, J., & Paige, M. R. (2009). The Georgetown Consortium Project: Interventions for student learning abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 18*, 1–75.
- Vande Berg, M., Paige, R. M., & Lou, K. H. (Eds.). (2012). *Student learning abroad: What our students are learning, what they're not, and what we should do about it*. Stylus.
- Varela, O. E. (2017). Learning outcomes of study abroad programs: A meta-analysis. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 16*(4), 531–561. <https://doi.org/10.5465/aml.2015.0250>
- Woolf, M. (2007). Impossible things before breakfast: Myths in education abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*(3–4), 496–509.
- Wynveen, C. J., Kyle, G. T., & Tarrant, M. A. (2012). Study Abroad experiences and global citizenship: Fostering proenvironmental behavior. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 16*(4), 334–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315311426782>

Author Biographies

Jae-Eun Jon is an assistant professor in international education and cooperation in the College of Education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. She received her PhD in comparative and international development education from the University of Minnesota. Her research interests include international student mobility and higher education, focusing on migration experiences, power relations, and intercultural interactions in higher education.

Gerald W. Fry is a distinguished international professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA. He holds a BA in economics from Stanford, an MPA from Princeton, and a doctorate from Stanford in international development education. For about 20 years, he yearly led study groups to Southeast Asia, for diverse institutions such as the East-West Center, Stanford, Oregon, and Minnesota. Among his major publications are *Study Abroad and Its Transformative Power* and *Education in Thailand*.