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Disrupting Neoliberal and Neocolonial Ideologies in U.S. Study Abroad: From Discourse to Intervention

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Abstract

This review highlights the neoliberal and neocolonial ideologies embedded within discourses surrounding U.S. study abroad, specifically regarding global citizenship. Drawing on existing literature and recent rhetoric promoting study abroad, it contextualizes contemporary U.S. study abroad from a critical perspective. Synthesizing the voices of critical scholars builds toward the need for intervention that intentionally incorporates critical pedagogies including decolonizing pedagogies and a focus on guided critical reflection and equitable interaction. This article includes a review of research focused on such critical frameworks in study abroad as a potential guide for study abroad educators and administrators to begin to reframe U.S. study abroad.

Keywords:

neoliberal, neocolonial, global, discourse, study abroad

Introduction

U.S. study abroad is ensconced in discourses that promote various assumptions and expectations of study abroad as a means for gaining cultural competency and global citizenship (Ogden & Brewer, 2019; Tiessen & Huish, 2014), internationalization (Kubota, 2016; Rumbley & Altbach, 2016), and overall personal improvement and marketability (Lane & Toomey, 2012; Michelson & Álvarez Valencia, 2016). The neoliberal and neocolonial undertones have not gone unnoticed and critical scholars continue to draw attention to these harmful ideologies (Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Doerr, 2019; Zemach-Bersin, 2007, 2009,

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2012). Nevertheless, the rhetoric of national and institutional marketing continues to paint a neoliberal and neocolonial vision of U.S. study abroad and the benefits that will come with participation, particularly under a "global" agenda that is often used as a catchall term for study abroad (Ogden, 2015; Streitwieser & Light, 2016).

This article examines the "global" discourse and how neocolonial and neoliberal ideologies shape expectations of study abroad that coincide with expectations of "global citizenship," which implies cross/intercultural engagement and learning. The purpose of this review is to both continue the relevant discussions brought forth by critical scholars such as Zemach-Bersin (2007, 2009, 2012) and to provide an updated commentary on both the rhetoric and current literature in contemporary U.S. study abroad as framed by neocolonial and neoliberal perspectives. It further draws upon recent rhetoric related to the promotion of U.S. study abroad as illustration of the global discourses and their relationship with the underlying neoliberal and neocolonial ideologies. The commentary concludes with a review of interventionist research which rejects the assumptions embedded within the "global" discourse. The review will emphasize critical pedagogies in study abroad that promote decolonizing approaches, intentional self-reflection, and critical consciousness as a guiding path for educators and administrators working in the field.

The "Global" Discourse of Study Abroad

Fairclough (1992) maintained that ideology is communicated through the "convention[s] underlying language practice, be it a 'code', 'structure', or 'formation'" (p. 88). At the turn of the millennium, McCabe (2001) rightly predicted a new trend produced in language practice: "It seems as though the field of study abroad has adopted globalization as the programmatic buzzword for the future" (p. 139). Indeed, globalization and specifically "global citizenship" have been the focus of much scholarship in study abroad (see for example, Lewin, 2009; Pike & Sillem, 2018; Stoner et al., 2014; Tarrant, 2010).

Scholars have pointed out that "global citizenship" is a nebulous and highly contested term (Golubeva, Wagner, & Yakimowski, 2017; Streitwieser & Light, 2016). Zemach-Bersin (2007) explained that being "a global citizen requires a critical engagement with diversity in and between different cultures as well as a critical examination of one's own assumptions and perceptions vis-à-vis the world and other cultures" (p. 53). Picard, Bernardino, and Ehigiator (2009) defined it as:

> By global citizenship we refer to students who, variously and in combination, have had exposure to other cultures, possess foreign language skills, have tolerance for those whose cultural backgrounds are different from their own, display a sense of curiosity about the world beyond their immediate experiences, are adept at navigating in unfamiliar circumstances and show empathy for others. (p. 321)

While I do not attempt to define global citizenship here, I do highlight an emphasis on common language referring to: sharing across cultures (which assumes intercultural interaction); ability to see a diversity of perspectives; and critical self-reflection (Lewin, 2009; Doerr, 2019).

Despite the continued correlation between study abroad and global citizenship as a mode for interacting with "other cultures" at the global level to share perspectives and learn from each other, scholars have questioned if we are promoting global citizenship or perhaps more accurately, "globetrotting" (see Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Others have added that the term tends to be used in a neoliberal and neocolonial fashion (Adkins & Messerly,

2019; Doerr, 2013; Zemach-Bersin, 2007). It is not surprising then that many scholars have turned their attention to addressing the extensive and problematic overuse of the 'global' catchphrase in connection with study abroad (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Lewin, 2009; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012). More recently, Doerr (2019) confirmed that "global is a key term in study abroad" and that the "goal of study broad is often cited as nurturing 'global competence' in students, turning them into 'global citizens'" (p. 26). Study abroad is continually presented as a way to achieve "global citizenship" (Pike & Sillem, 2018; Ogden, 2015; Ogden & Brewer, 2019), which will then improve the individual, their institution, and their nation. The neoliberal underpinnings of "globalization" do not go unnoticed.

Marketization of the "Global"

Critical scholars have also voiced concern with the marketization of 'global citizenry,' which encourages the (mis)conception that study abroad automatically equates with increased global awareness and citizenship (Doerr, 2012; Zemach-Bersin, 2007). Chapman, Ruiz-Chapman, and Eglin (2018) spoke directly to this issue in their aptly entitled paper, "Global Citizenship as Neoliberal Propaganda" calling the repeated empty use of 'global citizenship' across university websites a "buzzword or mantric charm" (p. 149) to entice students to study abroad. Soguk (2014) also criticized the emptiness attached to the overused term 'global citizenship' and stated that "both as concept and praxis, [it] is often simply announced rather than exemplified or substantiated" (p. 49).

Zemach-Bersin (2009) analyzed both study abroad advertisements and student interviews to examine the impact of the rhetoric on study abroad participants and found that, "Even under the banners of global citizenship and cross-cultural understanding, advertisements endorse attitudes of consumerism, entitlement, privilege, narcissism, and global and cultural ignorance" (p. 303). In 25 post-program interviews with Wesleyan students, Zemach-Bersin found that the majority of the participants associated global citizenry with study abroad, however, they were unclear about what global citizenship actually meant nor what they needed to do—besides simply go abroad—to become a global citizen. Regardless of how they understood the term, however, students still found value in the term itself. A student stated, "I would identify as a global citizen…if it's ever useful to me, if I'm trying to sell my own experience in terms of trying to get a job" (p. 317). Upon returning back to Wesleyan, not one of the 25 students identified as a global citizen and in fact felt stronger national identifications based on their feelings of being a "foreigner," "cultural outsider," and "American" while studying abroad (p. 316). Zemach-Bersin concluded that there is an obvious disconnect between the empty rhetoric of global citizenship being sold to students versus the reality of their experiences that does not often involve an explicit or critical discussion of becoming a global citizen.

Global-centered terms are not only prolific in the rhetoric surrounding study abroad but also noticeable in the changing names of university study abroad offices. In 2018, The University of Georgia for example, changed the name of its central office from the Office of International Education to the Office of Global Engagement, which is indicative of a larger trend across U.S. study abroad. Northwestern University has the Global Learning Office, Georgetown University has the Office of Global Education, Columbia University has the Office of Global Programs, and the University of Washington's hub is the Office of Global Affairs.

The "global" message in study abroad is not a one-time affair and is repeated over and over by U.S. officials and institutions, as seen in the two excerpts below. In 2020, the United States Department of State Study Abroad website declared:

> As a future global leader, you need to feel at home in a fast-changing world. By studying abroad, you will experience new perspectives, learn how to navigate different cultures, work with diverse peers, and communicate in other languages...these are the skills that will prepare you to solve the world's toughest challenges, make you more competitive in the job market, and transform you into a responsible engaged citizen. (Accessed February 13, 2020, https://studyabroad.state.gov/value-study-abroad/why-study-abroad)

In 2016, Evan Ryan, the then Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, issued the statement below:

> We need to empower more of America's future leaders to experience the world beyond our borders...International education helps people develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in today's global economy and creates networks across borders that improve international understanding and strengthen the national security of the United States. (Ryan, IIE Press Release, 2016)

The two statements above show an abundance of thematically similar terms, i.e., global, navigate different cultures, engaged citizen, beyond our borders, global economy, networks across borders, intended to point the reader towards the 'global connections' ideological focus of the nation state and personal interest.

A Discourse of Immersion

A discourse of immersion is also present within the global narrative above. Scholars caution against the overwhelming discourse connecting study abroad to a wide-scale purpose of global citizenry, which assumes those who study abroad will automatically acquire gains in global perspectives and become "globally proficient" by living and interacting with host communities (Doerr 2012; 2019; Gore, 2005/2017, p. 107). Doerr (2013) confirmed that global citizenship "often implies foreign language skills; 'inter-cultural competence', defined as culture-specific knowledge, tolerance and understanding toward other cultures; 'global imagination' with a plurality of the imagined world; and tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 226). There is an assumption that simply by being immersed in the study abroad host country "you will experience new perspectives, learn how to navigate different cultures, work with diverse peers, and communicate in other languages" as the 2020 USA Study Abroad site stated above.

Ryan's (2016) previous statement also furthers this passive immersion discourse where Ryan personifies "International education" as the agent that grants the "skills needed to succeed in today's global economy" rather than it being a process in which students participate and do the work. Removing the agency on the part of the students—and study abroad educators—has important implications regarding the message. Ryan's words suggest that students will reap the benefits of international education (e.g., developing knowledge and skills, creating networks across borders, improving international understanding) regardless of their individual study abroad experiences. This rhetoric represents the problematic assumptions and expectations surrounding

international education that study abroad, in and of itself, automatically results in cross-cultural interaction which leads to future success (Doerr, 2012, 2013, 2015; Ogden, 2006). On the contrary, research continues to tell us a different story, that "global citizenship" or "intercultural learning" is highly dependent on multiple factors including but not limited to the structure and length of the program (Czerwionka, Artamonova, and Barbosa, 2015; Walters, Charles, and Bingham, 2017); demographics (Goldoni, 2018; Terzuolo, 2018); identity (Hartman et al., 2020; Johnstone, Lachelle Smith, & Malmgren, 2020) and pedagogical approaches (Mikulec, 2019; Perry, Stoner & Tarrant, 2012).

An Underlying Neoliberal Ideology

Marxist scholar, David Harvey (2007), defined neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 71). In relation to internationalization and study abroad, a neoliberal lens sees both as a commodity that increases the worth and status of the institution and the person. Study abroad is often looked at with a market lens that encourages privatization and competition (Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Kubota, 2016). Focus on economic, social, and political success dominates the rhetoric used to promote study abroad where it is positioned as a competitive tool to advance the nation-state, the academic institution, and personhood (Doerr, 2019; Ogden & Brewer, 2019). In 2017, Alyson L. Grunder, the then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Policy in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, stated:

> International student exchange is an essential contributor to America's economic competitiveness and national security...We need to develop the talent and skills necessary for 21st century careers. It is in our national interest to build and grow the international relationships and networks that are key to addressing the global challenges and opportunities we face going forward. (IIE Press Release, 2017, para. 7)

As with Evan Ryan's, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, previous statement from 2016, Grunder explicitly connected study abroad to the success of America highlighting that international education is in our national interest. Grunder also correlated study abroad with 21st century careers suggesting that success in one's future career will be tied to study abroad. In this way, the neoliberal emphasis of personhood is also underlined.

Enacting the Discourse of Personhood

Students are considered proprietors of their own talents, initiatives, and success. They are repeatedly told to compete to get ahead of the curve. Those who study abroad are assumed to gain skills that raise them above their peers; they will have improved chances of getting a job, having a better career, being accepted into academic programs, and generally having the cultural and social capital to cash in for greater opportunities in their future. This neoliberal discourse permeates the rhetoric of study abroad. In 2020, the Generation Study Abroad initiative positioned today's students as "not prepared for the workforce" and facing "high debt." It then proposed as the solution to this issue: "Study abroad is one of the best ways students can acquire global skills and open up personal and professional opportunities" (https://www.iie.org/Programs/ Generation-Study-Abroad/ About/Why-Study-Abroad, para. 3, 2020). Likewise, in 2018, the President and CEO of the

Institute of International Education wrote a statement entitled "Linking Study Abroad to Career Success," in which they wrote:

> While going abroad is not an automatic guarantee of obtaining a job post-graduation, it does signal to employers that graduates possess certain traits that will help them be effective and move the company or organization further along toward achieving its goals. (Goodman, 2018, para. 4)

Trower and Lehmann (2017) argued against such a neoliberal discourse stating that when we think that, "university students can develop personal capital and distinguish themselves in an increasingly congested graduate labor market" (p. 275), we perpetuate inequities since only those with social privilege will end up benefitting. The marketable edge is limited to those who have the means, time, and capital to participate in study abroad (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Yet, the rhetoric continues to promote this widespread neoliberal discourse that study abroad equates with a competitive edge and social mobility.

Reilly and Senders (2009) explained how study abroad has become synonymous with social mobility as an "investment" in one's future (p. 243). It will create "resumes [that] are more imposing" and "testimony [that is] more moving…It is one of the few products that students can buy that seems to set them apart from the rest" (p. 243). In this way, study abroad has become—and is promoted as such—a very individual-centered concept of personal investment. To succeed in today's market economy, students are told they must strategically invest in themselves by enhancing their own marketability in unique ways.

It is not surprising then that scholars report instances of study abroad participants viewing their experiences as capital that would set them apart from the norm. Lane-Toomey and Lane (2012) collected surveys from 275 students studying in the MENA region and conducted eight focus groups with 76 students across the MENA region. A major finding included how the participants viewed the MENA region as a symbol of social mobility. Choosing to study in the MENA region was different from their peers who were going to more traditional destinations like Europe, which many believed would improve their career mobility. One student in Jordan explained, "This is such a marketable experience and means so much more than going abroad in Europe" (p. 321). Trentman (2013) likewise found in a qualitative study with 54 participants that students believed studying Arabic in the MENA region would not only help them procure better jobs but would also elevate their status given the challenging nature of Arabic and its uniqueness from other more common languages and study abroad destinations. Some participants felt studying Arabic in Egypt elevated their own personhood since it was more unique and was a "marketable skill" (p. 550). Trentman concluded that students placed value on the language and culture for personal gains rather than for "developing a more multicultural outlook" (p. 558). Instead of focusing on 'intercultural learning' for the sake of building relationships and understandings that support mutual global citizenry as the "Global" discourse of study abroad tells us, these findings suggest that some students instead seek cultural and linguistic learning for neoliberal gains.

Hegemonic Neoliberal Gains

Neoliberal gains, however, may only privilege the White monolingual/cultural mainstream experience as opposed to students who come from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds. Doerr (2019) explained that the expertise and possessed global

competence of minority students is discounted in the current 'global' discourse which implies that one can only gain global competence through study abroad and that all other types of global or intercultural knowledge are not considered legitimate. To contrast this narrative, Doerr (2018) presented findings supporting the value of minority students' global competence. Doerr's ethnographic study on the experiences of four minority immigrant students studying in Sierra Leone and Spain found that each student was able to use their multicultural and multilingual heritage to help navigate and connect with their study abroad experiences in ways that their peers could not. "Mohammed" for example, found that his shared Muslim religion enabled him to experience and understand the culture of Sierra Leone in different ways than other students on the program. "Anjana" used her experiences in Bangladesh to interpret cultural differences in Sierra Leone that were similar to what she knew in Bangladesh and "Maria" and "Ned" used their bilingualism as a resource in Spain and to help their peers as translators. Doerr concluded that the experiences of the four participants show the need for a change in the global citizenship discourse that positions only *new* study abroad experiences, as opposed to lived experiences, as the singular path to global competence. The hegemonic devaluation of other forms of global competence also highlights the neocolonial underpinnings of U.S study abroad that privilege the experiences of specific cultural groups over others.

Neocolonial Perspectives

Postcolonial scholar, Sherene Razack (2002) stressed that "Internationalism is rooted in colonialism and imperialism, especially when the production of knowledge and other academic gains flow from North to South. Hegemony is therefore inherent in our pedagogy, practice, education and attempts at globalization" (p. 255). Study abroad scholars have used the term neocolonial to describe the political and economic approach of cultural superiority, globalization, and historical colonial tendencies which undergird the institution of U.S. study abroad (Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Hoult, 2018) and includes the consumerist and ethnocentric attitudes of study abroad participants (Doerr, 2019; Hartman & Kiely, 2014). Indeed, Ogden (2008) warned of the "View from the Veranda" in his discussion of U.S. colonial students who "yearn to be abroad, to travel to worlds different from their own, to find excitement, to see new wonders and to have experiences of a lifetime" (p. 37). He likened them to the "children of the empire" who not only seek neoliberal gains, but who also see the world as "theirs for discovery, if not for the taking" (p. 39) all while imparting their ways onto their host communities.

This colonial mindset is likewise communicated to us from our nation. In 2018, the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, kicked off International Education Week with: "American Students studying abroad play a key role as citizen ambassadors. They tell the American story and demonstrate American values and ideals to the entire world" (Accessed January 8, 2020, https://eca.state.gov/video/us-secretary-state-mike-pompeo-kicks-international-education-week-2018). Pompeo's statement unabashedly combines the global rhetoric (i.e., "citizen ambassadors") with a push for the neocolonial imposition of implied superior American "values and ideals" onto all others. This approach to study abroad positions U.S. students as bearers of new knowledge, rather than learners of equitable exchange. Falk and Kanach (2000) argued that we must view "globalization with great suspicion" since in addition to its seemingly harmless goals of global connectedness, it also represents a "dangerous embrace of decadent Westernized values and lifestyle, or more

dramatically, as an American project for world domination" (p. 156). Other scholars continue to express concern about the neocolonial implications of the study abroad and global discourses (Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Hoult, 2018; MacDonald, 2014; Ramírez, 2013).

Ramírez (2013) argued against the problematic neocolonial tendencies of global citizenship both in terms of 'Othering' the host culture while also devaluing the knowledge and experiences of the 'Other.' As a Mexican national, Ramírez presented four vignettes of his observations working in a program for U.S. students in Mexico City. One vignette, in particular highlights how the program's long-anticipated "Mexican Night" positioned Mexican culture as a stereotype for the benefit of the U.S. student (p. 6). Ramírez was asked to dress in "Mexican attire," which the program considered different from his regular daily clothing. Students themselves dressed up as Mexican wrestlers, Mariachis, and Frida Kahlos. Ramírez asserted that the study abroad discourse of globalization must be challenged since it is "up to interpretation" (p. 7) by providers and participants as informed by stereotypes and representation.

Caton and Santos (2009) likewise discussed the representation presented through expected imagery of global travel, which they recategorized as "Western-but-globalizing" (p. 191). The authors analyzed 112 images from the Semester at Sea website and brochure, which purports educational tourism as a mode for attaining global understanding and citizenship. Nevertheless, Caton and Santos found that host individuals were represented in "traditional" ethnic garb, such as the Vietnamese non la hats or the Egyptian galibiyehs rather than modern jeans or other clothing, as if they had stepped out of Disneyland's "It's a Small World" (p. 199). Only 9% of the images showed students interacting with hosts and in those cases most of the hosts were children, which the authors interpreted as non-threatening to the American viewer. The lack of people across the imagery also further promotes the neocolonial discourse of undisturbed land awaiting to be explored and discovered. The researchers also found that the images of landscapes or structures never showed aspects of modernity (e.g., vehicles, modern buildings) whereas all the images of the program cruise ship highlighted modern design, technology, and affordances. When juxtaposed against each other there is a clear theme of primitive versus modern.

Consumption, Exploration, and Personal Growth

The language and imagery associated with becoming globally-minded as so-called global citizens, is steeped in colonial notions of "exploration" and "discovery" as if these study abroad destinations were newly discoverable or waiting to be found. Such troublesome rhetoric implies that these destinations are free to consume and confirms a sense of entitlement that they are waiting for us (Doerr, 2012; Zemach-Bersin, 2007; 2009; 2012). Adkins and Messerly (2019) framed the study abroad "neocolonial mind-set" as the tendency to sell study abroad by "highlighting programs' touristic elements and the sights that participants will be able to Instagram back [home]" (p. 79) while essentializing and appropriating the host culture. Adkins and Messerly continued,

> Neocolonial attitudes and approaches are also not limited to interactions between relatively wealthy U.S. students and individuals from postcolonial countries. Much education abroad programming that occurs in Western Europe offers students superficial engagement with the host countries, essentializes local cultures, and packages an experience for students to consume. (p. 74)

Miller-Idriss, Friedman, and Auerbach (2019), however, found that despite the global citizenship discourse, U.S. institutions are marketing their programs to students based on themes of adventure, fun, self-discovery, and personal achievement. The researchers analyzed 2000 images from the study abroad websites of 39 major universities across the U.S. Using an iterative coding system with multiple coders, the authors found three overarching visual themes in the imagery: jumping, horizon-gazing, and students with their arms-wide. Rather than marketing study abroad with imagery that would suggest cross-cultural exchange, Miller et al. concluded that study abroad is instead presented as a fun experience where students will grow and transform themselves.

Students are repeatedly told to broaden their horizons, but as Miller-Idriss et al. (2019) further explained, this idea is couched under a "a sense of adventure and liberation" and the idea that "the foreign locale will merely be the backdrop to their own inner transformation" (p. 1100). Implicit rhetoric which constructs a non-U.S. context as "adventure" was also noted by Doerr (2012) in a text analysis of the globalist ideology of study abroad. Doerr analyzed the rhetoric in two study abroad guidebooks and found a prominent theme of the study abroad student as 'adventurer' with the positioning of out-of-class learning as superior to in-class learning. Doerr noted that unstructured immersion appeared more valued for learning under the guise of exploration and further concluded that the adventurist discourse perpetuates neocolonialist approaches to study abroad where students are told to view the host country as their amusement park or playground.

Michelson and Álvarez Valencia (2016) meanwhile examined a college study abroad website, and five student portals showcased on the same website, to examine the relationship between the imagery of study abroad and how students interpret their experiences. These portals included written entries and/or photos and videos from these students' study abroad experiences. Using discourse analysis, the authors reported a distinct positioning of students "as citizens of a globalized world characterized by mobility, and the opportunity for an educational experience in the Mediterranean" (p. 242). Nevertheless, students' personal documentation instead capitalized on their experiences to show off all they had gained from studying abroad with no reference to global citizenship. Instead, students continually positioned themselves in photos to 'document' themselves in front of places making the sights and monuments "objects of consumption" (p. 253). In addition to their consumerist findings, Michelson and Álvarez Valencia (2016) also noted an overwhelming discourse of leisure and commodity across the university website where the "discourses of tourism prevail over discourses of education" (p. 236). Study abroad, therefore, takes on a fun and leisurely connotation where students can enjoy a break from the "real" world.

Trower and Lehman (2017), on the other hand, found that their study abroad participants were more impacted by motives of personal growth and vacation rather than as a self-promotional tool. In a study with 17 Canadian undergraduate students, the majority of whom were from modest socio-economic backgrounds, only a few students recognized they could put study abroad on their resume or that it might help them get into grad school. Instead, study abroad was seen as an escape where combining travel with academics was a purposeful way to "justify the costs of the experience" (p. 284). The researchers found that students enrolled in study abroad as a means for escape where they could take time off from their regular lives and home school experiences. Trower and Lehman's findings confirm that some students see study abroad as a means for 'globetrotting' and personal growth reminiscent of The Grand Tour where privileged

sojourners sought inspiration and growth through a travel experience, rather than for cross-cultural or global exchange as the global discourse tells us.

Despite positive intentions for studying abroad, the "global" picture of U.S. study abroad is not as simple as the discourse wants us to believe: That just by going abroad, we will become global citizens or engage in reciprocal cultural exchanges. Instead, the literature points to a more complicated experience of study abroad than that of what is portrayed in the rhetoric. It is therefore necessary for study abroad educators and administrators to begin to disrupt the neoliberal and neocolonial ideologies inherent in the "global" discourse and expectations of study abroad.

A Call for Intervention

Vande Berg (2007) argued that study abroad practitioners must become "interventionists" (p. 394) who create ways for students to integrate, interact with, and reflectively learn from their experience abroad with consideration to the various program-specific and individual student nuances that make up each program. In recent years, there has ultimately been a push for an interventionist approach to study abroad (Bain & Yaklin, 2019; Goldoni, 2015; Engle & Engle, 2012) where the social actors (in this case, study abroad students) are active participants in the meaning-making process (p. 18). Highlighted experiential strategies include critical reflection, guidance, and intentional experience rather than passive "immersion" (Weber Bosley, 2018). The following literature discussion presents a review of interventionist pedagogies that stress critical thinking and self-reflection in addition to active and equitable engagement with the local community.

Critical Pedagogies

Creating a space for students to critically engage with their experiences has become a rallying cry among study abroad scholars (Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Doerr, 2019; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; MacDonald, 2014). Reilly and Senders (2009) proposed using the term "critical study abroad" to confront the dominating discourses of study abroad so that students become aware of their impact and influence. They presented nine categories to frame critical study abroad: 1) *Shift the Rhetoric: Spaceship Earth*—Have students consider the earth as a collectively inhabited planet; 2) *Study the "Borders"*—Rather than focusing on 'culture,' have students consider overlapping of peoples to move away from a singular national culture; 3) *Value the Local*—Look at the impact of the global on the local and the role that everyone including students play in disrupting the local; 4) *Examine Contemporary Culture*—Introduce students to expanded views of what constitutes 'culture' beyond the glossy brochure images and rhetoric; 5) *Empower and Inspire Students to Action*—Give students the tools to take an active role in their own learning and become collaborative learners; 6) *Emphasize Responsibility*—Recognize the privilege of study abroad participation and how to give back; 7) *Pose Study Abroad as a Search for Solutions*—Examine how local communities consider or solve global issues; 8) *Focus on the Relationship of Humans to their Environment*—Have students consider the role of the environment on developing local practices and policies; 9) *Encourage Student-Led Learning and Teaching*—Have students become active learners who then teach what they have learned. Reilly and Senders' framework sets the stage for a critical approach to study abroad that helps reframe the "consumer of culture" ideology that often pervades study abroad.

Decolonizing Pedagogies

Scholars are also supporting decolonizing pedagogies as a mode to disrupt colonial discourses and *Grand Tour* mentalities to encourage critical study abroad practices (Hartman et al.*,* 2020; MacDonald, 2014; Ramírez, 2013). Adkins and Messerly (2019) presented a framework for a decolonizing pedagogy, which similarly to Reilly and Senders (2009) confronts the lack of local participation and voice within study abroad. They argued against the neocolonial tendencies that privilege the program's voice over that of the community and stated, "To decolonize education abroad programming, then, is to eliminate approaches that are one sided, ethnocentric, touristic, uncritical, oversimplifying of cultural complexity, and operating within the savior complex (particularly in community-based learning programs)" (p. 75). Adkins and Messerly added that decolonizing study abroad is a comprehensive and ongoing approach that starts in planning and recruiting, in collaboration with the host community, and in the application of decolonizing pedagogies (p. 84). The authors presented numerous strategies within these overall frames that emphasize equitable collaborations and working with students to recognize and challenge their own power and privilege and the roles that they play as participants in study abroad.

Hoult (2018) proposed a decolonizing "intercultural pedagogy" informed by postcolonial theory to "expose and challenge epistemological assumptions about the 'Other' as well as the 'Self'" in a qualitative study with 14 pre-service U.K. students studying in South India. Participants learned about postcolonial theory prior to departure and then engaged in daily group reflections, sharing of journals, and meeting with Indian locals in unstructured equitable contexts to share experiences and viewpoints. Hoult found that students not only began to question their own privilege and position, but they were also able to discuss issues of power with the aid of postcolonial theoretical language. Hoult concluded that a study abroad pedagogy is needed that "does not pretend to be neutral" (p. 85) and instead is purposeful in guiding students towards the development of a critical lens.

MacDonald (2014) attempted to enact a decolonizing pedagogical approach in a semester long study abroad program promoting global citizenship development in Nicaragua with five Canadian students. MacDonald used place-based narratives to "*situate* for students where their learning is taking place and under what conditions" (p. 211). Students wrote about their senses as related to being in Nicaragua while also reading about important Nicaraguan figures. Despite this interventionist pedagogical structure, MacDonald found it to be primarily unsuccessful since students' narratives showed superficial understandings and assumptions of place and people which they interpreted as truth. Although MacDonald did not find the initial attempt at applying a decolonizing pedagogy ultimately successful, the implications for continuing ways of thinking about how to approach study abroad are noteworthy. Students not only need a decolonizing pedagogical intervention, the structure must also include components that will push students to question and challenge their own assumptions.

Indeed, in their commentary "More than a Vacation: Short-Term Study Abroad as a Critically Reflective, Transformative Learning Experience," Perry et al. (2012) argued that without a framework that intentionally guides students to critically reflect on their experiences, they will be no different from the traditional tourist visiting a place and checking off their vacation destinations. The scholars proposed that by linking Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory,

study abroad participants will move past the current "just do it" ideology (p. 679) to engage in deeper and more critical learning. Such an approach requires reflection and guided experience. Study abroad scholar, Jane Jackson (2018) also highlighted the necessity of reflection and guidance: "A reflective mindset is crucial in the mentoring process, the facilitator continuously prompts the participants to think more deeply and critically about their intercultural attitudes and actions..." (p. 121). As the research confirms, the study abroad educator is essential to this process and must play an active role in working with students on critical reflection.

Scaffolded Critical Thinking and Experience

As with MacDonald (2014), Regalla (2016) found that reflection is not always enough to challenge students' assumptions and biases. Regalla (2016) examined the impact of a short-term two-week service-learning program in Costa Rica on students' "intercultural development" using service learning and reflective writing prompts. The 28 U.S. pre-service teacher participants were majority English monolingual White females working on their masters' degrees in TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages). They stayed with host families and taught English for the duration of the program in a private K-12 bilingual school in a small town. Although participants completed journal reflections and interacted with the host community, Regalla found that participants needed further guidance and intervention to challenge their perceptions of cultural differences and assumptions of American superiority. Participants repeatedly discussed how "uncomfortable" they were with the Costa Rican school routine and student behavior, which they constantly compared—and deemed inferior—to the more structured American system. The participants had trouble with classroom behaviors that were outside of their perceptions of acceptable classroom 'norms' and as Regalla noted, without intervention and cultural mentoring, the students were unable to "overcome their bias toward typical U.S. standards" (p. 70). Regalla determined that study abroad programs, therefore, must be intentional not only with creating space for experience and reflection, but also with guidance and mentorship to help students challenge their own biases.

Other scholars have done just that to challenge and deconstruct the common positioning of the U.S. student as superior or as an inequitable consumer. Sharma, Phillion, and Malewski (2011) for example, looked to Dewey's theory of experience to guide their study on building "multicultural competencies" during a 3-week study abroad program in Honduras. In a qualitative longitudinal study conducted over seven iterations of the program, Sharma et al. followed 49 U.S. pre-service teachers who engaged in interactive service learning, field observations in various educational settings, and classes specifically designed to promote multicultural competence. Within the courses, as well as after the program, students engaged in reflective discussions through guided prompts and a journaling component that led students to continually reflect on and compare their current experiences to their previous ones. They were also guided in questioning their assumptions that they had associated with their experiences. The researchers found that while students initially described the country from a deficit perspective framed by poverty and lack of education, after completing prompted reflections and guided discussions, students were able to make more critical connections to their experiential interactions. This led them to question their own biases. "Andrew," for example, journaled:

> Wow! Talk about being wrong... I was in the computer science class for my observations and the eleventh graders were the smartest I have come across.

> I thought I would be teaching and explaining to them…But the students were teaching me. Forget computer science, they knew more about the U.S. than I knew about Honduras. I thought the schools would not be well-equipped, being a poor country, and students would not be academic because they lacked resources. I was so wrong. The school had a lot of technology and other resources and the students asked so many questions, I was impressed. Makes me wonder why we think America is number one in everything. Really? All false! The kids were all so disciplined and their teacher had a double M.A. and was doing his Ph.D.

Sharma et al. explained that Andrew's experience, when coupled with guided reflection, helped him recognize and challenge his preconceived notions.

A study from Cai and Sankaran (2015) confirmed that guided reflection promoted critical thinking when combined with experiential learning. They focused their journal prompts on unit themes of global *and* glocal awareness, field experiences, reflections, applications, and assessment. Cai and Sankaran qualitatively studied the journal responses to the unit prompts from 12 U.S. undergraduate participants using a series of formative and summative assessments. They found that prompted questions related to students' experiential learning strongly supported students' critical thinking. For example, when the question "What does the Great Wall mean to ordinary Chinese people in their daily life" was asked, it not only helped students consider the implications of the Great Wall beyond the U.S. tourist lens, it also allowed for students to make critical connections as exemplified in a student's response:

> …Suddenly, I realized there are other walls that are significant as well such as the Berlin Wall, the newly built wall at the border between the US and Mexico, and the wall surrounding Vatican. What does the wall at the US border mean to Americans and Mexicans? … I could not get the question out of my mind, what the wall means to an ordinary person in China. I know this is how I am going to think when learning about other things…

What is noteworthy in this study is that it suggests that students can successfully engage in critical reflection on an individual level (rather than through teacher-facilitated group discussion) when the curriculum is carefully designed to combine guided critical thinking in conjunction with experiential learning.

The above-mentioned studies provide an overview of how some study abroad educators are adapting program structure and curricula to better support a more equitable global exchange and to challenge dominant neoliberal and neocolonial discourses that U.S. students may bring with them as they travel abroad. By contextualizing learning during study abroad with a critical perspective that acknowledges and honors the voices and experiences of those live there, educators can focus on deconstructing and decentering epistemologies rife with cultural superiority.

Conclusion

In this overall review of the literature, I first contextualized contemporary study abroad within the neoliberal and neocolonial ideologies and global discourse that is present in the field. A review of the relevant scholarship highlighted that scholars and educators agree that students need guided assistance, reflection, and purposeful experience, to maximize intended globally-centered learning objectives in study abroad, to

disrupt individual biases, and to empower and include the voices of the host community within the learning process. The studies also suggest that study abroad educators need to not only move beyond a passive immersion structure, they need to be even more intentional with structured student activities that include equitable interaction and critical reflection. Reflective journals for example will not necessarily challenge students' assumptions and biases and instead may only present them with a platform in which to write them down. Instead, educators must become facilitators who actively guide students in their self-reflection and critical thinking.

It is necessary to challenge students to question their biases, expectations, and what they encounter in their study abroad experiences, while also addressing hegemonic narratives. As did Hoult (2018) with the introduction of postcolonial theory to the program in India, students would also benefit from similar contextualization and intentional disruption of existing ideologies. Explicitly drawing attention to the neoliberal and neocolonial underpinnings of study abroad may also help students to recognize national, institutional, and even their own individual roles in these discourses.

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