Preparing Students as Leaders with a Global Mindset: A Study Abroad Phenomenological Case Study

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Abstract

Research continues to stress the importance for college students to graduate with the skills to be successful as global-minded leaders in today's evolving workforce. Although the typical study abroad programs can address this, critics point to some limitations. First, most study abroad programs are short-term, limiting students' ability to internalize and apply cultural context upon their return to the United States. Second, although universities and colleges state the importance of developing students' cultural competencies, few have intentionally incorporated best practices for study abroad. The purpose of this phenomenological case study, therefore, was to explore how nine students from six different disciplines perceived a unique study abroad experience, designed to address some of the typical study abroad limitations. This interdisciplinary program was designed to immerse students in three European countries while participating in a formal learning cohort program that incorporated cognitive, experiential, and humanistic methodologies. The study also explored what role cross-cultural partnerships with companies, organizations, and community leaders played in enhancing the students' application and integration of developing themselves as global- minded citizen leaders in their field of study. Data were collected through informal interviews with all nine students and supporting data included field observations, rich text, and results from the Global Mindset Inventory®. Utilizing a hybrid-coding scheme, researchers found four themes that emerged, supporting the notion that the cross-cultural pedagogical framework enhanced students' self-efficacy as global-minded citizens, resulting from their interdisciplinary international experiences.

Keywords

Global learning; global leadership; interdisciplinary; study abroad; experiential learning; pedagogical practices; international perspectives; critical reflection

Introduction

There is recognition that the world has become more complex, driven by globalization and hyper-connectivity. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the challenges faced by global leaders as they wrestle with issues both internally and globally. In the face of this complexity and global challenges, many organizations have sought employees with global leadership skills. For example, Goldsmith et al. (2003) found that one of the top traits human resource managers from global organizations

valued was business leaders who use global considerations for decision-making. However, as data and studies have shown, the demand for these global leadership skills currently outweighs the supply (Walker, 2018). Thus, as Blaise, Hollywood, and Grant (2012) point out, this has created an urgent need to academically prepare globally competent organizational leaders. Employers continue to place an emphasis on new graduates' need for written and oral communication, teamwork, ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and the

ability to apply knowledge in real world settings (Hart Research Associates, 2016). Research studies stress vital characteristics individuals need to understand and demonstrate as the workforce becomes more globally complex. These characteristics include (a) a global and local perspective (mind-set), (b) intercultural empathy, (c) adaptability, (e) cross-boundary partnering, (f) self-awareness and assurance, and (g) intercultural decision making (Chandwani et al., 2015; Cseh et al., 2013; Gholba & Dyaram, 2016). Therefore, providing opportunities for students to experience different cultures while engaging in cross-cultural discussions first-hand over an extended period of time can enhance the depth of understanding one can then transfer and apply in future situations when employed (Gitsham, 2008; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012).

Although study abroad opportunities for students continue to expand in higher education, the majority are considered short-term, limiting their effectiveness. DeLoach and colleagues' (2021) research supported the argument that the length of time and immersive experiences influence participants' level of global awareness, specifically related to intercultural competency and interdependence. Findings discussed semester experiences that incorporated "multi-genre" experiences as opposed to short-term experiences. Research suggests that more formalized curricula are necessary to enhance the likelihood of higher order outcomes, like global citizenship, which encompasses social responsibility, global awareness, and civic engagement (Tarrant et al., 2014). Schattle (2009) states that global citizenship "entails being aware of responsibilities beyond one's immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly" (p. 12). The complex issues described above often need to be examined through an interdisciplinary perspective, yet there is minimal research to assist higher education in developing such formal curricular programs to address these concerns. For example, although there is a recognition to develop a new type of global leader to tackle the issues of the 20th century, there is a lack of research that examines both the competencies and formal ways educational programs can better develop these global leaders (Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). This gap in the literature establishes a need for new ways to design meaningful global experiences through interdisciplinary course development and programmatic frameworks to deepen a student's knowledge to work more effectively and meaningfully with people globally is critical in today's society.

The study sought to understand the experiences of students who were part of a unique study abroad global leadership program. Specifically, it explored their experiences in the context of immersing themselves in three European countries while participating in a formal learning cohort program that incorporated cognitive, experiential, and humanistic methodologies. The study also explored what roles cross-cultural partnerships with companies, organizations, and community leaders play in enhancing students' application and integration of developing themselves as a global-minded citizen leaders in their field of study. The two grounding research questions for the study were as follows:

RQ1: How did or did not the structural framework of the program influence participants' growth in global-mindedness?

RQ2: How did the cultural context and course content influence the participants' experience as global minded leaders?

The following sections elaborate on (a) higher education's need to establish study abroad experiences that enhance students' global-minded perspectives and (b) the current study's structuring of the program experience to hopefully enhance the opportunity for student self-efficacy related to global-mindedness.

Theoretical Framework

Although the concept of global leadership theory has existed since before the twentieth century, its definition, best practices, and competencies continue to become more complex as our society adapts to current challenges. Mendenhall et al. (2012) defined global leaders as people who build teams through establishing trust and by involving cross-cultural stakeholders and people who are mindful of the geographical and cultural complexities associated with affecting positive change in organizations.

Over the past few years, corporations, governments, and educational institutions have become more cognizant of the fact that the world is becoming more interconnected. Thus, the idea of solving complex global problems may be limited if students are only educated in their own country with little to no exposure to other cultures. Competencies to assist with developing global-minded leaders continue to be researched; how students are to develop these skills in a way that will be more internalized and become a part of their personal leadership style has also been the subject of research. Furthermore, corporations and educational institutions continue to explore ways to provide people with experiences to better equip them to meet the needs of a global society (Henson, 2016).

As the world shifts to viewing leadership in a broader global context, it is important for leaders to develop and lead others with a global mindset (e.g., Holt & Seki, 2012; Javidan & Teagarden, 2011; Walker, 2018). Javidan and Teagarden (2011) defined global mindset through the Global Mindset Project as:

> ...the stock of (1) knowledge, (2) cognitive, and (3) psychological attributes that enable the global leader to influence individuals, groups and organizations (inside and outside the boundaries of the global organization) representing diverse cultural/political/institutional systems to contribute toward the achievement of the global organization's goals. (p. 20)

Bikson et al. (2003) emphasized the university's need to develop global leadership curricula. Furthermore, a university environment provides students with opportunities to combine theory and practice into a comprehensive leadership curriculum (Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). And yet, in today's society, there continues to be limited curricula to prepare students to be more globally competitive and meet the needs of the workforce. Therefore, the current study's theoretical context focused on the Global Leadership Development Ecosystem developed by Walker (2018), which considers competencies associated with the Global Mindset Inventory—Intellectual, Psychological and Social Capital, as well as learning methodologies to enhance the opportunity for students to experience global leadership self-efficacy. This model's suggested learning methodologies—humanistic, social, experiential, and cognitive—facilitate increasing student global mindset competencies. What connects the different elements of the model is

the facilitated international experience that promotes student self-efficacy.

The Global Leadership & Team Decision-Making Minor Program

Participants in the study were a part of a cohort experience with the interdisciplinary Global Leadership and Team Decision-Making minor at North Carolina State University. The General H. Hugh Shelton Leadership Center and the European Center in Prague at North Carolina State University partnered to be at the forefront of developing a novel approach to the way in which the academy educates students globally. While being co-taught by a faculty member from North Carolina State University and a faculty member from a partnering European university, students were able to immerse themselves for an extended amount of time in three European cultures over the course of a semester. The purpose of this educational model was to maximize the students' opportunity to study abroad. The model sought to (a) immerse the students in three cultural communities to enable their learning from multiple global perspectives on leadership topics presented through an interdisciplinary lens, (b) support students while implementing new skills and communicating how their learning experiences support their growth as global leaders focused on European and American perspectives. The 15-hour minor allowed students to take one interdisciplinary course on decision-making prior to studying abroad. Twelve credits were taken as a cohort, with a capstone course taught at North Carolina State University's European Center in Prague. Two additional countries where students studied were Reutlingen, Germany and London, United Kingdom. The program accepted nine students to participate during the first year. Students were from six of the ten colleges on campus—humanities, management, agriculture and life

sciences, engineering, exploratory studies, and textiles. There was one second-semester freshman, two sophomores, three juniors, and three seniors. While abroad, the cohort resided together, and participated in the same courses throughout the nine-week program. The capstone course sought to set up expectations for the program experience while helping students to identify, examine, and apply personal leadership competencies within a global context that would assist them in developing a global mindset when leading others in their field of study. Prior to arriving abroad, students took a scientifically based instrument, the Global Mindset Inventory®, to pre-assess their knowledge in three areas—psychological capital (quest for adventure, passion for diversity, and self-assurance); social capital (intercultural empathy, interpersonal impact, and diplomacy); and intellectual capital (cognitive complexity, global business savvy, and cosmopolitan outlook). The instrument is a psychometric tool that assesses 35 total capabilities related to global leadership and generates both individual and group reports that provide feedback on the global mindset of participants (Javidan et al., 2010). At the end of the program, students were required to take a post-assessment of the inventory and create a virtual portfolio articulating their learning across their courses and the impact of their learning on their professional aspirations.

Two of the three courses were co-taught by faculty, specifically one U.S. faculty member and one faculty member from the country where the course was taught were represented in each of the two courses. At each location, students also engaged with students from that country. During the courses, students immersed themselves in excursions related to local culture and joined professional organizations to practice applying course content to real-world experiences. Assignments required students to analyze and

reflect on content using personal experience and apply their learning to future experiences.

Data Sources and Methodology

Data Collection

Utilizing a combined strategy approach in this study assisted researchers in understanding how the process of the nine-week program was initiated and carried out during Spring 2020. This study sought to explore the structural framework of the program and describe how cultural context and course content used within the setting influenced the participants' experience as global-minded leaders. The structural framework includes the following components: (a) interdisciplinary courses delivered with a strong emphasis on experiential learning and formal guided reflections, (b) a student cohort that resided, traveled, and learned together, (c) international co-instruction, and (d) course excursions to apply content. Through this study, the researchers sought—through interactions with program participants— to understand how and what meaning was constructed as a result of the students participation in the collaborative experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The primary data collection was the use of a semi-structured interview format with all nine students. Yin (2017) suggests that interviews are the most important source of data collection for a case study. Participants were interviewed through Zoom using semi-structured questions. An interview guide was used to formulate a final analysis for the event viewing it holistically that incorporated the participants' perceptions. It also examined the role of their in defining the overall experience (Creswell, 2018). Several examples of questions and prompts asked during the interview were as follows:

- Can you describe the GLM experience in your own words?
- What about the GLM experience surprised you the most? Explain.
- How would you describe the cohort experience in regard to the intended framework of the program?
- Can you describe an experience (or more than one) that has broadened your perspective on global leadership, if any (that may not have occurred had they taken the regular leadership minor at NCSU)?

The study required all participants to sign a consent form that articulated the purpose of the study, participants' roles in the study, and how the descriptions of their experiences would be used in the study. At the beginning of the interview, students were informed that the interviews would be recorded. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were transcribed either through Zoom translation with the interviewer going back through the audio to confirm accurate translation of the participants' responses. There were three interviews transcribed verbatim by a professional agency with the interviewer going back through the recorded video to confirm accurate translation. This additional method aligns with natural transcription, allowing the interviewer to license the participants' words rather than making assumptions from the transcription themselves. It also allows the interviewer to consider participants' non-verbal gestures, which can be beneficial to this type of study (Oliver et al., 2005). In addition to the interviews, documents were also collected to support the study. Documentation consisted of the pre- and post- Global Mindset Inventory data and assignments associated with the capstone, specifically the virtual portfolio.

Javidan et al.'s (2010) Global Mindset Inventory® 76-item (50-GMI related) self-assessment standardized quantitative instrument assesses 35 attributes related to global leadership. Table 1 discusses the reliability of the instrument.

Table 1. Global Mindset Inventory Scale Reliabilities Based on Development of the GMI (2007)

N= 6,071				
	Cronbach's Alpha	# of Items	Example	N
Total GMI Average	0.962	50		4302
Psychological Capital	0.897	16		5972
Passion for Diversity	0.910	6	Enjoy getting to know people from other parts of the world	6071
Quest for Adventure	0.816	5	Willingness to take risk	6044
Self-Assuredness	0.788	5	Comfortable in uncomfortable situations	5972
Social Capital	0.894	14		6024
Intrcultural Empathy	0.899	6	Ability to engage people from other parts of the world to work together	6044
Interpersonal Impact	0.680	3	Strong networks with people from other cultures and with influential people	6051
Diplomacy	0.800	5	Ability to integrate diverse perspectives	6024
Intellectual Capital	0.939	20		4421
Global Business Savvy	0.941	8	Knowledge of how to transact business and assess risks of doing business internationally	6071
Cosmopolitan Outlook	0.932	7	Knowledge of economic and political issues, concerns, hot topics, etc. of major regions of the world	4421
Cognitive Complexity	0.850	5	Ability to take complex issues and explain the main points simply and understandably	6071

A report generated for the participants and the group provided feedback on personal and group profiles of global mindset.

Shaped by the research questions, the global mindset pre- and post-instrument results, and other supporting reflections provided by students, the study looked at how the program structure supported a more immersive and meaningful learning experience for all stakeholders involved in the experience.

Creswell (2018) proposes using multiple qualitative research methods to strengthen the data collected in a study. Thus, several observational approaches were gathered during the nine-week process to support the primary semi-structured data collected. These included the use of field observations, a researcher journal; a journal for participants; and student photographs. Field observations, also referred to as direct observations, consisted of visits to sites and attendance at activities. This technique facilitated the collection of additional information about the meaning of global leadership. Because the study was conducted over a period of time, reliability was enhanced as there were multiple opportunities to conduct direct observations at each site. Photographic methods also allowed us to record and analyze behavior in its situational context. The use of photography also provided the researchers with time to reflect and analyze student behavior. Field observations were done while in the Czech Republic with the students and through Zoom and other social media outlets like GroupMe (Basil, 2011).

The uniqueness of the study rests in the university leaders' desire to engage undergraduates in an extended, interdisciplinary study abroad experience, exposing them to faculty and students from different disciplines and cultures and providing experiential opportunities that ultimately grant students a minor in global leadership and team decision-making. Findings from this research provide insights for educational institutions that seek to develop more relevant and innovative experiences to address complex and global challenges.

Data Analysis Procedures

To ensure quality within qualitative research, there are eight components to consider— worthiness of the topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significance of the contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010). This study incorporated all eight key markers that Tracy identifies as important for ensuring quality research.

The study explored a current topic that both educational leaders and employers are eager to understand in greater depth. This understanding can help educators design and implement curricula to better develop global minded leaders in an ever-increasing complex society. Utilizing natural transcription methods with Zoom video interviews and participant reflections and member checking of the data support Tracy's (2010) eight components of credibility markers. Furthermore, the framework and stakeholders involved in the study support the sincerity, rich rigor, meaningful coherence, and ethical markers, all of which contribute to quality within qualitative research.

The researchers used a hybrid-coding scheme, established by Lofland and Lofland (2006) and Bogdan and Biklen (2003), to identify codes and emerging themes in the data collected for this study (i.e., interviews, pictures, documents, and field observation experiences). Analysis was conducted through a constant comparative method (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), consisting of both open coding and axial coding. Following transcription of the interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses, open coding served as the first phase in which transcripts from interviews were uploaded into QSR NVivo 12 to find keywords. Once keywords were found, we then conducted a thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006)

direction to increase the confirmability of our findings. First, the lead author went through the data seeking "repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). From this process, the first author derived initial themes. This process was repeated to refine the themes before interview transcripts were provided to the second author. This exercise was completed with the purpose of creating an inter-coder agreement to ensure that our themes were reliable (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Monustakas's modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (Creswell, 2018) mutually contributes to the interviewer self-reflection of personal bias, horizontalization, textual description, structural description, essence, and participant account of the phenomenon. Finally, to check and maximize the credibility of the findings, we offered the nine students the opportunity to review our initial findings and provide any feedback. Two students responded and suggested that the findings aligned with their perspective of the experience.

The results from the Global Mindset Inventory® were used as supporting evidence for the themes accrued from the participant interviews, along with the researchers' original questions related to exploring the structural framework of the program. It also described how cultural context and course content used within the setting influenced the participants' experience as global-minded leaders. In presenting the results below, we use pseudonyms to represent the students.

Findings

The findings are broken into two main sections. First, we provide themes to establish a response to the overarching research questions.

RQ: How did or did not the structural framework of the program influence participants' growth in global-mindedness?

RQ2: How did the cultural context and course content influence the participants' experience as global-minded leaders?

Students described the formal structure of the program and then provided insights related to how the experiential components of the program influenced the development of their global mindedness. Analysis of the data revealed several themes associated with the unique structure of the program. These included, *Learn by Doing with Formal Reflection*, *Valuing Diverse Perspectives, Co-curricular Cultural Learning Opportunities*, and *Challenging their Comfort Zone*.

Learning by Doing with Formal Reflection

The framework of the program design was to provide students an opportunity to learn about global leadership through the lens of educators and community leaders from three countries (as well as their own experiences in the United States) within this cohort experience. The framework design incorporated high-impact experiential learning opportunities for students that included visits to businesses and organizations; current and historical experiences also provided greater context to content taught in the classroom. In addition to the experiential learning opportunities, there were structured opportunities for formal reflections that included discussions and written reflective assignments. For example, Alan described one of his assignments where he and his group spent the entire day with the leadership staff of an international non-profit organization.

"[If we would have been in America, we would] have still had the opportunity to meet

people, but we would not have been able to sit down with these international people and get to ask them questions, visit the businesses that we were able to, especially my visit with the not-for-profit. The value of being in Europe was [that] you actually got real world experience on how people act, what's acceptable to say, what [is] not acceptable to say, so if you're in a global setting trying to lead a team with different people from different countries, then you have to be conscious of what you're saying and how they're [going] to interpret what you're saying,"

The time that was scheduled for formal reflection was identified as a critical component of the experience. One of the aspects the students identified as successful was the manner in which structured reflection in the capstone course was critical. This course was split into two weeks. The capstone course occurred the first and last week of the program. Students found that this structure allowed them to engage in significant pre- and post-reflection and goal setting; it also allowed them opportunities to identify their growth as global leaders. Massey noted that Week 1 allowed them to think about what they wanted to get out of their experiences, as a group and individually. As she noted,

"...shaping up our capstone and getting our heads right on how to appropriately approach the rest of the experience to make the most meaning out of what was to come to have the greatest impact on us [was important]."

The opportunity to constantly reflect on the daily experiences was difficult to build into a hectic schedule. As educators, travel and logistical issues can make time scarce as there is a danger of overscheduling without building in time for formal reflection. Yet the students valued that time to reflect upon what they identified as profound experiences. For example, as Sian noted,

"Classes became more about what we learned rather than getting all the material out there and making sure the professor said everything, it was more about what the students internalized and processed."

Valuing Diverse Perspectives

Most study abroad courses have a limited amount of faculty attached to the course. In this instance, the structure of courses involving international co-faculty from multiple disciplines and the pedagogical practices they implemented also contributed to the students' learning and growth as global leaders. Raj, a senior student described the diversity of pedagogical approaches that allowed them to compare different approaches.

"...all professors that were either native to, or weren't an NC State University faculty and from other countries were great because then we could almost always tell that things were different with them than what we were used to."

Mia described how being exposed to the multiple perspectives of different instructors from many different countries in a short space of time added to the learning and continued to challenge their perspectives.

"Three different places with all different professors made it a valuable experience because we obviously got to see the different perspective of all the different teachers."

The value of being exposed to different perspectives extended beyond the instructors, as students spent a significant amount of time with local students, professionals, and organizations that profoundly impacted them. As Sian noted,

"I definitely need to value perspectives more. I learned a lot from what [other cultures]

learned and said. Oftentimes it was their own understandings of social interactions, or how [Americans] operated. I would absolutely agree, actually, that this is something [Americans] can improve on."

The students felt that the structure of the program (spending time in multiple countries and having time for deliberate and formal reflection) enhanced those benefits. As Mia pointed out,

"...different perspectives we were exposed to culturally that I think are more valuable than if someone was just in one country the entire time traveling as tourists."

The nature of the formal reflection was critical and the benefits (as well as the challenges) were sometimes felt by students from the host country who engaged in some of these learning experiences. As Alan pointed out,

"You learned everyone's perspectives, you saw cultural differences in discussion, [certain cultures] had to structure everything, they had to write what was going on, they had to write what they were going to talk about in order, [yet] we didn't care at all. [One activity required] connecting dots and this [this student from another culture] was trying to connect the dots and was getting so uncomfortable."

As a result of the cohort experience and interactions with locals in the three countries, students gained a greater appreciation of the importance of learning about one's culture and the impact it can have on developing mutually respected relationships. The value of learning about cultures will assist them in leading others from cultural and geographic backgrounds. Valuing different perspectives and engaging in lots of different conversations to learn about a societal culture was important to the students' experience. The students acknowledged that

putting time into understanding people's perspectives is hard, yet valuable in the long-run if they desire to be global leaders in the future. For example, Harper described how the structure of the program made it both challenging and rewarding because one is constantly placed in situations where there is a need to consider different perspectives.

> *"People have different views so in our program we had to deal with nine different people who had all different experiences, perspectives, different opinions on things, and the going day to day, the random strangers, the different students we would meet, all the different conversations we had from the students from other cultures to the employees we met with, it basically just re-instilled the fact that people think differently."*

Through the reflection exercises, they were able to recognize that this is a critical facet of global leadership. As Sian noted,

> *"Global leadership requires a lot more work and dedication than leadership, itself. You actually have to put time into being a better internationally accredited person who can actually understand how [others] feel"*

The cohort experience encompasses the students' learning and their formal and informal interactions with students from other countries. Students shared how *"family meetings"* provided them an opportunity to gain perspective from their peers to help them solve problems and make decisions as a group. The cohort experience taught them strategies for communicating and working with others more effectively because they took courses and resided together throughout the experience.

Co-curricular Cultural Learning Opportunities

Aside from the global challenges and opportunities this experience provided, the students also recognized the benefits of the interdisciplinary structure of the program. These differences manifested themselves daily but despite these challenges, students recognized the benefits. As Mia explained,

> *"it wasn't just learning from being in a different environment, it was also serving all my [fellow] students because they're all different people, and learning from how they behaved in an environment like, study abroad was just as valuable."*

For example, some of the courses and material were more comfortable for some of the students whose discipline may have aligned with certain aspects of the course whereas for other students, certain experiences or courses felt more challenging. This provided experiences of both tension and growth. As one of the older students, Alan, pointed out, the challenge of feeling uncomfortable or having to adapt to uncomfortable situations on a near daily basis often provided some of the most profound growth. As he pointed out,

> *"there's a lot you have to learn by doing and I think this cohort was the best representation I've had in my college career of what real life is like. It's…messy and…you're managing personal and professional stuff and you have things going on in your personal life and you've got things at work and there's different kinds of people to deal with, and you're not always going to be comfortable."*

The interdisciplinary nature of the program abroad also provided students a greater depth of understanding for the importance of considering others' perspectives when working in groups and leading others. This new knowledge emerged through the experiences as a

cohort and through the immersion of local people and places in the three countries abroad. These experiences provided them with insight on how to apply this new knowledge in their desires to communicate and lead themselves and others in the future.

The experiences from multiple site visits in different countries also helped the students gain greater knowledge about how other cultures work professionally which in turn transferred to their own consideration for managing and leading others. The opportunity within a relatively short time-period to experience leadership within different countries had a profound impact. As Vanessa described,

"the different management styles from the different site visits were probably the best part about being able to [travel] country to country and city to city."

The structure of the cohort experience forced the students to focus on building an environment that valued mutual respect, transparency, and working through problems together, even when it may have been uncomfortable. Through the experiences, students learned to value humility, listening, and observing others to develop a positive group experience that fosters a growth mindset in order to achieve greater outcomes. They were very introspective in evaluating their own growth in these areas. Alan was able to think back to some of the initial capstone discussions of different leadership frameworks and describe how these challenges allowed the cohort to develop as a group and individually.

"I think back to the framework of strategic thinking…and just that whole framework of teamwork and leadership and being able to build off each other. I watched

each and every one of us grow across the course [of the program]."

Abby discussed how it is critical for instructors and students to cultivate relationships between students and instructors as *"strengthening those relationships, allows you to have deeper class discussions."*

Another contributing factor that influenced the students' perspectives were the experiences they had with local leaders, students, and the community, at large. The ability to have extended time in each country also enhanced their ability to identify differences, and, much more, similarities people have across these countries, which was surprising for the students. However, the students realized that any relationship takes time, possibly further emphasizing the scholarship on the importance of study abroad duration.

Challenging their Comfort Zone

The program was structured to provide students with opportunities to connect their experiences with their own self-awareness. One consistent theme that students discussed was that the program structure constantly pushed them out of their comfort zone. Through travels, relationships built, and the learning experiences with local businesses and people, students described the experiences as giving them greater confidence to take greater initiative. For example, a number of students mentioned how they were in the final week of the program when President Trump initiated a travel ban and students had to return home as soon as possible. This created a chaotic environment around the world as people scrambled to get on flights. Raj described the experience as their "final test" and described how the experiences throughout the

course gave them the confidence to navigate the challenges during the pandemic.

"The night of the travel ban probably, and it sounds negative at first, but honestly it was such an eye opening moment, a heartfelt moment, I just remember waking everyone up, and everyone being a lot more calm, but very receptive, and there were times when we were laughing and joking.....yeah it was stressful, but it was something that we all enjoyed, and I think we all walked away from that experience learning so much and I wouldn't want to change that. I just remember being in the hall of the hotel on the first floor, and seeing everyone on their phone, figuring stuff out, working on it together, and everyone did their part, everyone stepped up to be a leader, and it was in a global environment. But if I had to think of one experience that captures the whole thing for me, it was the unity, and sense of growth when we had, when we were figuring stuff out, we could, it felt, I felt very content, and like proud and happy. It was our final test."

Many students described the different experiences of being taken out of your comfort zone as uncomfortable but ultimately rewarding. Kylie, who described herself as having an organized personality, initially struggled with the change that was a significant component of the program structure. As she described:

"I think one thing that was really hard for me on the trip was a lot of the moving parts because I am someone that, like, likes the schedule and likes consistency, who [ph] has a routine. So this really challenged that because we were in a different country, and then would have a different professor, and a different roommate, and would have to pack and get on a plane. So it was like right when I would get used to something or get my way around, it was like, "Oh, okay, we're leaving. We're

changing." And that was difficult for me because I just don't think that way. Like, some people are really good with change and they need constant change in their life, but that's not me. [LAUGHS]. So I had to figure out how to be more flexible and adaptable in those situations where you can't just have, like, a set routine."

Despite those challenges, she was able to identify how much pushing her out of her comfort zone on a consistent basis helped her both in the short term and potentially longer term, a critical facet of a global leader in an evolving complex world.

"It (the Minor) pushed me out of my comfort zone and I had to think in a different way, kind of like a global mindset, right? It was like a different mindset I had to put on my head. And you can't just do the same thing all the time. You have to be willing to be flexible. It was hard. It was probably more draining for me when I had to be in a different role. I think it will definitely help me with just being flexible and willing to work with different people that I might not be totally comfortable with. Because that was something the minor really helped me with was you don't always have to pick the easy, comfortable route. Like, it's okay to pick the one that might be, you know, out of your comfort zone or a little bit more risky. And it can end up being way better than choosing the safe comfortable route."

The recognition of being willing to take risks had a profound impact on her, particularly when she had to navigate the challenges of returning to the United States.

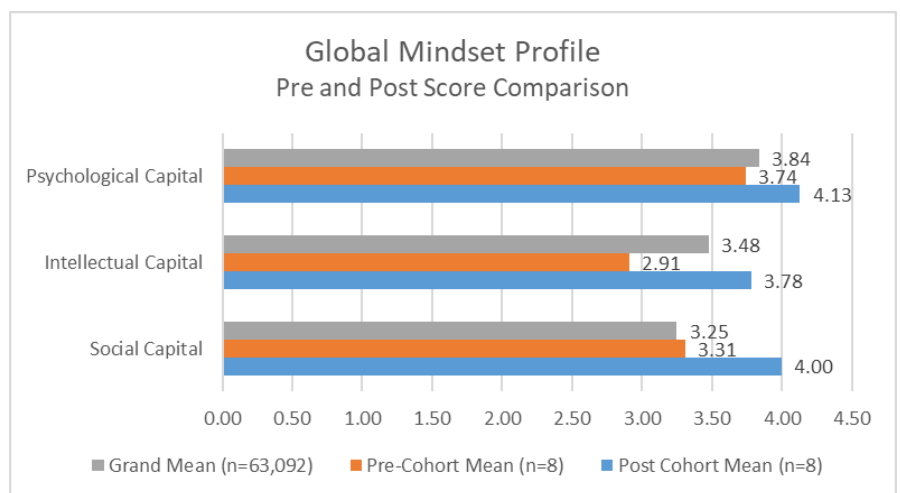**Figure 1.** Rich Text Collected from Student Experiences in the Program

Data Supporting Themes

During the program, students completed a pre- and post-inventory, Global Mindset Inventory (Javidan, 2010) to help them assess their growth in three areas: Intellectual Capital, Psychological Capital, and Social Capital. The intent of the report is to help one understand their approach to working with people from cultural and geographic backgrounds (different from one's own) and suggests areas of improvement toward a more holistic global mindset.

Each category focuses on three areas. Within intellectual capital, areas assessed focus on cognitive complexity, cosmopolitan outlook, and global business savvy. Psychological capital assesses self-awareness, quest for adventure, and passion for diversity. The last category, social capital, evaluates intercultural empathy, diplomacy, and interpersonal impact. A score of one means that the group does not believe they are good at that dimension. A score of four or higher means that the group believes they are good at the dimension largely. Although nine students participated in the program, one student selected not to take the pre- or post-inventory. The results from the instrument are used to compare the qualitative results with quantitative measurements; however, since the study had a small sample size (N=8), statistical significance was not calculated but tendencies in the mean values are reported. Referring to the report, the comparison of pre- and post-data from the inventory supports the themes that emerged from the students' interviews. In the area of psychological capital, the group's score went from 3.74 to 4.13. The groups' score within social capital went from 3.31 to 4.00. The greatest amount of growth assessed was within intellectual capital with a pre-score of 2.91 and post-score of 3.78. Based on the information provided in Figure 1, the group's perspective increased in all three categories over the nine weeks of the program with cognitive complexity (intellectual capital) being the highest score (4.33) and global business savvy being the lowest score (3.22).

Global Mindset Profile
Pre and Post Score Comparison

Category	Grand Mean (n=63,092)	Pre-Cohort Mean (n=8)	Post Cohort Mean (n=8)
Psychological Capital	3.84	3.74	4.13
Intellectual Capital	3.48	2.91	3.78
Social Capital	3.25	3.31	4.00

Figure 2. Mean Values for the Global Mindset Pre-inventory in January 2020 and Post-

inventory in March 2020 of Students in the Program.

Discussion

This study focused on the students' experiences within a formal curricular international experience and asked whether immersive components of the program related to cultural partnerships with organizations and community leaders influenced the likelihood of students' increasing global-mindedness. The researchers explored two questions: (1) How did the structural framework of the program influence (or not) participants' growth in global-mindedness, and (2) how did the cultural context and course content used within the setting influence the participants' experience as global-minded leaders? From the study, four themes emerged as a result of observations, interviews, examination of the Global Minded Inventory, and rich pictures. They were as follows: *Learn by Doing with Formal Reflection*, *Valuing Diverse Perspectives, Co-curricular Cultural Learning Opportunities*, and *Challenging their Comfort Zone*. From these themes, the researchers learned that formally structured international program designs that incorporate experiences with cross-cultural organizations, businesses, and local leaders will enhance their ability to reflect and apply how they are developing themselves as global-minded citizen leaders. Second, students traveling internationally while engaged in a structured, educational framework increases the likelihood that they will experience global leadership self-efficacy because of the humanistic, experiential, and social interactions they experience as a cohort and with locals. Furthermore, the incorporation of four learning methodologies suggested in Walker's (2018) model, when used in an international formal program framework, has the ability to increase

students' global leadership competencies (social, psychological, and intellectual) as suggested by the Global Leadership Mindset Inventory. Some of these outcomes were realized due to the unique aspect of co-teaching with international faculty and the formal learning methodologies across the curriculum, strategies proposed by Lehtomaki, Moate and Posti-Ahokas' (2016) study on enhancing global connectedness in higher learning. The extended time in countries allowed students to take time to process, reflect, and apply learning about cultural context. The structure of the courses, especially the framework of the capstone course, provided students the opportunity to analyze similarities and differences between culture and locations. From our findings, this concurs with Walker's model (2018) that the intentionality and structure of an experience is critical to the development of global leadership self-efficacy and that higher education should create more opportunities to better prepare students for a more complex and global workforce. It also supports recent research findings that suggest that the amount of time students study abroad influences the depth, duration, and intercultural development related to global awareness (DeLoach et al., 2021).

One of the potential limitations of this research is that the students selected to be part of the global leadership minor were a homogeneous group of students (n=9) in terms of age and racial identity. As the recent global Black Lives Matters movement highlighted, global organizations have been critiqued to address issues of racial inequity. Data highlights that Black students are significantly less likely to participate in study abroad programs compared to their White peers (e.g., Lu et al., 2015). Thus, thinking about how to diversify the pool of participants' opportunities in the future will be critical. Second, the interviews were conducted

in a short time after the culmination of the experience. It would be interesting to do a longer-term follow up interview to ascertain whether some of the benefits described by the participants were still realized in the longer term. Third, students' international experiences lasted nine-weeks, rather than twenty-five weeks suggested in Walker's (2018) Global Leadership Development Ecosystem. Although the time abroad was not as long as that suggested in Walker's research, the structure of the program did suggest that it is feasible to experience self-efficacy with at least nine weeks abroad. A benefit of the structured program also provided the opportunity to collect a large amount of data in real time related to the experiences of a unique global leadership program during a global pandemic, which also provided us with relevant insights related to the value of an interdisciplinary, multi-country program. Ultimately, the data from the students provided insight related to how to structure future programs.

Conclusion

In closing, the study achieved its overall aim to explore how the program's structural framework influences students' learning and fosters an experience that likely enhances their development as globally minded leader citizens. Research needs to continue exploring the relationship between learning methodologies and how time abroad influences student outcomes in international programs that seek to enhance a student's global-mindedness. The researcher intends to replicate the case study with a future cohort associated with the program. Another study could seek to determine if differences are revealed depending upon the demographics, length of travel time of the cohort, and visits to countries different from those discussed in this case study. Quotes from

the participants in this study verified the implications previously discussed. With respect to generalizability, the study was limited in its scope since it was a qualitative study, an instrument could be developed to evolve into a longitudinal study on the topic to expand upon similar findings for generalizability.

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Dr. Acker's general interests include values-based leadership, group/team decision-making, and cross-disciplinary working groups. Over the span of her professional career, her expertise continues to focus on the development and training of leadership competencies including meaningful group work, effective teams, decision-making, incorporation of intentional values-based attributes when leading others (honesty, integrity, diversity, social responsibility and compassion), and developing a global mindset. These efforts have resulted in more than 25 years of working in higher education leading sustainable programs, courses and minors to advance generational leaders. As a senior leader, she has successfully collaborated with university faculty, staff and administrators across disciplines to enhance student success as leaders within their field of studies, resulting in current programs, research, courses and minors.

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