

**Study abroad for global engagement: The long-term impact of mobility experiences**

R. Michael Paige\*

Department of Educational Policy and Administration  
University of Minnesota  
330 Wulling, 86 Pleasant St. SE  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 USA  
01-612- 626-7456 office; 01-612-624-3377 fax  
r-paig@umn.edu

Gerald W. Fry

Department of Educational Policy and Administration  
University of Minnesota  
330 Wulling, 86 Pleasant St. SE  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 USA  
01-612- 624-0294 office; 01-612-624-3377 fax  
gwf@umn.edu

Elizabeth M. Stallman

Department of Educational Policy and Administration  
University of Minnesota  
330 Wulling, 86 Pleasant St. SE  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 USA  
01-612- 624-7435 office; 01-612-624-3377 fax  
stall044@umn.edu

Jasmina Josić

Department of Educational Policy and Administration  
University of Minnesota  
330 Wulling, 86 Pleasant St. SE  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 USA  
01-612- 624-7435 office; 01-612-624-3377 fax  
bisa0013@umn.edu

Jae-Eun Jon

Department of Educational Policy and Administration  
University of Minnesota  
330 Wulling, 86 Pleasant St. SE  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 USA  
01-612- 624-7435 office; 01-612-624-3377 fax  
jonxx01@umn.edu

## Study abroad for global engagement: The long-term impact of mobility experiences

R. Michael Paige\*, Gerald W. Fry, Elizabeth M. Stallman, Jasmina Josić and Jae-Eun Jon  
*University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA*

This article reports on the preliminary results of a research project - Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) - that examines the long-term impact of study abroad on various forms of global engagement. The study employs a retrospective tracer study and mixed methods research design. Survey results from 6,391 study abroad participants reveal that study abroad has had an impact on five dimensions of global engagement (civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity) as well as on subsequent educational and career choices. 63 interviews also were conducted to provide more detailed life stories about the role of study abroad on global engagement, education, and career paths. Three of these case studies are presented. Data were also gathered concerning study abroad program characteristics and participant characteristics. In future analyses, the relationships among these variables will be examined.

**Keywords:** study abroad impact; global engagement; Global Engagement Survey; retrospective tracer study; mixed methods

### Bosnian version

Ovaj članak izvještava o rezultatima istraživačkog projekta Poslije Neposrednog Uticaja: Studiranje u Inozemstvu za Globalno Angažovanje (*Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement – SAGE*) koji proučava dugotrajan uticaj studiranja u inozemstvu na različite oblike globalnog angažovanja. Projekat je koristio retrospektivno istraživanje, kao i dizajn mješovitih metoda. Rezultati ankete sa 6391 sudionika studija u inozemstvu su otkrili uticaj tog studija na pet dimenzija globalnog angažovanja (građansko angažovanje, stvaranje znanja, filantropija, socijalno poduzetništvo, i dobrovoljna jednostavnost života), kao i na izbor obrazovanja i karijere nakon studija. Dodatno je obavljeno 63 intervjua koji su pružili detaljnije životne priče o ulozi studija u inozemstvu na globalno angažovanje, obrazovanje, i tok karijere. Članak uključuje analize tri takva slučaja. Podaci su takođe prikupljeni o sudionicima i karakteristikama programa u inozemstvu. Analiza odnosa između ovih varijabli će uskoro biti istražena.

**Ključne riječi:** uticaj studija u inozemstvu; globalno angažovanje; Anketa Globalnog Angažovanja; retrospektivno istraživanje; mješovite metode.

## Introduction

The results presented in this article are derived from the research project entitled, *Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement*, or SAGE. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which participants in U.S. higher education study abroad programs have become globally engaged during their lives since their overseas sojourns and the degree to which they attribute these contributions to their having studied abroad. To accomplish these research objectives, we conducted a retrospective tracer study of alumni of U.S. college and university study abroad programs covering approximately 50 years, from 1960 to 2005. The SAGE project is funded by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Title VI: International Research and Studies Program.

Global engagement, as conceptualized by the SAGE project, is expressed by *civic commitments* in domestic and international arenas; *knowledge production* of print, artistic, online, and digital media; *philanthropy* in terms of volunteer time and monetary donations; *social entrepreneurship*, meaning involvement in organizations whose purpose and/or profits are to benefit the community, and the practice of *voluntary simplicity* in one's lifestyle.

The project surveyed 6,391 former study abroad participants from 22 colleges, universities, and education abroad providers throughout the United States. This article presents descriptive data regarding the survey results as well as three case studies representing the highlights and major themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews.

## Background

As study abroad continues to gain popularity throughout much of the world, it is time for a major study to assess the long term impact of this kind of program. Colleges and universities in the United States and elsewhere invest heavily in study abroad as a major element in their efforts to internationalize their campuses. Many institutions have established elaborate and fairly costly infrastructures in support of study abroad. In academic year 2006-07, there was a record number of U.S. students studying abroad, 241,791, up 8.2% from the previous year and up 143% from the levels ten years earlier (Institute for International Education 2008). Similarly, ERASMUS data show a dramatic increase in EU student mobility from 3,244 in 1987-88 to 86,000 a decade later and up to 159,324 in 2006-07 (European Commission - Education and Training 2008). These statistics indicate that study abroad represents significant investments by students, parents, and their institutions.

SAGE was inspired by the research design of the breakthrough study, *The Shape of the River* (Bowen and Bok 1998), a compelling account of the long-term effects of affirmative action policies on the recipients themselves, U.S. higher education, and the society at large. Putnam (2000), in *Bowling Alone*, and earlier Bellah (1985) in *Habits of the Heart*, have expressed deep concern about the decline of social capital and civic engagement. To what extent do those who have studied abroad demonstrate commitment to civic and public engagement? The SAGE project is designed to build on the existing body of knowledge regarding personal and professional impact of study abroad and to expand upon it by assessing global engagement contributions.

The centerpiece of this research is the retrospective tracer study methodology and the use of global engagement indicators. Our research design has yielded a large sample of U.S. study abroad participants from five decades, 1960 to 2005. Impact is assessed by the respondents' attributions regarding the influence of study abroad on their lives, as well as external measures regarding their occupational paths, academic choices, and global engagement contributions. We provide narratives and data over a broad time horizon ranging

from the near-term impact of recent graduates to the long-term effects of persons who studied abroad nearly 50 years ago.

The information provided by over 6,000 study abroad alumni—through the juxtaposition of outcomes with different types of study abroad programs, students, and sponsoring colleges and universities—constitutes valuable data regarding present and future needs for higher education. As we explore the personal and professional life histories as well as the global engagement contributions of the alumni, we are mapping critically important relationships among these key variables.

The overarching question addressed in this study is, *What is the near-term (1-5 years post study abroad) and long-term (6+ years post study abroad) impact of study abroad on alumni's global engagement contributions, professional development, and personal development, as perceived by the alumni themselves and as assessed by external measures?*

### ***Review of the literature***

While research literature on outcomes of study abroad has emerged, the overwhelming focus to date has been on immediate and short-term outcomes. This study addresses near-term (which we define as one to five years post study abroad) and long-term (six or more years post study abroad) impacts of the study abroad experience. For near-term assessment, existing studies serve a very useful purpose for educational institutions seeking to determine goals for student learning and institutional investment. These studies would seem to suggest, however, that the benefits of study abroad are limited in scope or “expire” after a short time. Even the literature pertaining to intermediate or long-term outcomes has focused primarily on one: job history and trajectory (Abrams 1979; Burn 1982; American Institute for Foreign Study 1988; Carlson, Burn, et al. 1990; Starr 1994; Whalen 2001; Alred and Byram 2002; McMillan and Opem 2004; Browne 2005).

Some studies have undertaken a long-term analysis of study abroad participants from various institutions. The Carlson, et al. (1990) study was long-term and included four institutions, but had only 76 respondents. This study makes some intriguing suggestions that studying abroad results in a decreased gender gap, increases educational attainment, and influences career direction and practices; it also notes the lack of information on how study abroad affects personal and civic life. Dukes and others (1994) contacted Semester at Sea alumni of ten years earlier to determine any long-term effects of their experience. The researchers report general attitudinal outcomes related to global perspective and personal growth. Overall, their results imply that graduate level education is a result of study abroad and they call for future studies to investigate participants more than 10 years after studying abroad. Lastly, a tracer study conducted by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) (Akande and Slawson 2000; Dwyer and Peters 2004; McMillan and Opem 2004) looked at over 50 years of alumni who had studied abroad on IES programs. This study researches professional and personal outcomes of participants on semester or academic year programs. Although the age range of the sample is 22-67 and the number of respondents large (n=707), the median age of the respondents is 26, making this a study mainly of those recent alumni, 5-10 years after graduation. Further, Akande and Slawson (2000, 8) note the limitations of their study and call for “a larger scale, more comprehensive survey based on a more representative sample of all study abroad students.”

### ***Theoretical frame***

Though the major focus of this study is practical and policy-related, it can also inform important theoretical thinking and constructs. An example is the work of the late Harvard social psychologist, Allport, who developed social contact theory and authored, *The Nature*

*of Prejudice* (1954). Interestingly, as an undergraduate at Harvard, Allport did what was not common in his day and age: he spent time in Greece having Peace Corps-type experiences, which likely had a major impact on his subsequent career, knowledge production, and life-long research interests. Basically, Allport argues that if certain conditions are met, then contact among different ethnic or racial groups will reduce prejudice and enhance mutual understanding. Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) in a major meta-analysis finds solid support for Allport's theory, even when his strict scope conditions are not met. If Allport's theory is indeed valid, then study abroad should have significant long-term impact on the reduction of prejudice and ethnocentrism and in turn enhance cultural understanding and global citizenship.

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study is that of a *retrospective tracer study* developed by Fry and Paige (2001). This methodology is inspired by Pang's tracer studies of alumni of Singapore education institutions (Pang and Leong 1976; Pang and Seah 1976) and Bowen and Bok's assessment of the long-term effects of affirmative action on university graduates of color in the United States (1998). The aim of this research project is to contact alumni of study abroad programs after a period of time ranging from three to 45 years to inquire about their levels of commitment to global engagement issues and activities.

### **Methods**

The research design for this study is, as Creswell (2009) describes, a *sequential mixed methods design*, comprised of a single, cross-sectional, online survey instrument administered to a large sample followed by a series of individual interviews with randomly selected survey respondents. This combination of methods aims to yield a baseline dataset of study abroad alumni and their impact on society post graduation as well as informative insights from selected participants.

### **Instrumentation**

Informed by previous research on long-term impacts of study abroad alumni (Akande and Slawson 2000; Carlson, Burn, et al. 1990; Dukes, Lockwood, et al. 1994; Dwyer and Peters 2004; McMillan and Opem 2004; Wallace 1999) and civic engagement (Cogan and Derricott 1998; Hoy and Miesel 2008), this study sought to employ mixed methods research to explore long term manifestations of global engagement. A new instrument was developed, the Global Engagement Survey (Paige et al. 2007), to examine individuals' undergraduate education abroad experiences and their subsequent participation in global engagement activities. In developing this survey, the research team incorporated literature and previous instruments that pertain to the independent and dependent variables. The conceptual model of global engagement developed for this study included five principal dimensions: *civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity*. In addition, the survey looked at two secondary outcomes: future education and occupation experiences. To explore the relationship between the global engagement, education, occupation outcomes and study abroad, we also looked at a set of five demographic variables (gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and prior intercultural/international experience) and four study abroad program specific variables (program genre, location, duration and US institutional classification).

Figure 1 goes here.

### *Global Engagement Survey*

The survey includes a total of 56 questions. Twenty-two questions focus on the five global engagement dependent variables: six pertain to civic engagement; six to knowledge production; three to philanthropy; and seven to social entrepreneurship. Seven questions focus on education abroad and 13 relate to demographic information. The survey also includes education and career sections constituting of five and four questions respectively. Five questions are miscellaneous and include a question regarding the impact of activities while in college and an overall impact of study abroad on the respondent's life. Answers to certain branching questions led respondents to differing subsequent questions.

All but two of the questions use a fixed response format, in which respondents choose among a number of possible answers or insert a number. One question is entirely open-ended where respondents can freely write their responses. Finally, one question is quasi-qualitative in nature, where a system of points is employed in order for respondents to describe their ethnic identity.

### *Global Engagement Interviews*

In addition, the SAGE research team conducted 63 individual interviews with survey participants who were randomly selected from 2,982 survey respondents who agreed to participate in the interview portion of this study. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the global engagement dimensions in greater depth, with a particular focus on the nature of their later global commitments and what meaning it had for them. The interview also sought to understand in greater detail the link between education abroad and global engagement. It was fundamentally an opportunity for the interviewees to provide us with an illustrative narrative of their life experiences.

## **Participants**

### *Partner Institutions*

From March to May 2007 announcements requesting applications from interested institutions were submitted to two email listservs known to have wide membership across the education abroad field: the Forum on Education Abroad listserv and the SECUSS-L listserv; we received applications from 27 institutions. We ultimately partnered with 22 institutions in the following categories<sup>1</sup>: Doctoral-granting (9), Masters-granting (4), Bachelors-granting (7), and Education Abroad Provider (2). All partners were selected based on two criteria: the number of alumni they could contact by email and the ability to survey alumni at least as far back as 1985 and preferably to 1960. We anticipated the search for this information and the ultimate launch of the survey would involve time and coordination with several units on each campus. Therefore we offered a financial incentive to each partner institution. The partners were the primary contact with the study abroad alumni. Table 1 shows the SAGE partner institutions and their institutional categories.

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<sup>1</sup>Except Education Abroad Providers, all institutions are categorized based on their Carnegie classification.

Table 1. SAGE Partner Institutions and Type

<b>Type</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Doctoral-granting (9)	Carnegie Mellon University Dartmouth College Indiana University Tulane University University of California, Davis University of California, San Diego University of Colorado, Boulder University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Masters-granting (4)	Arcadia University James Madison University Santa Clara University University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
Bachelors-granting (7)	Austin College Beloit College Carleton College Kalamazoo College Middlebury College Saint Norbert College Saint Olaf College
Education Abroad Provider (2)	Institute for Shipboard Education (Semester-at-Sea) School for International Training/World Learning

**Sample**

The study population consisted of 24,019 alumni who had studied abroad as undergraduates from the twenty-two partner institutions between 1960 and 2005. All contact was made by email with the alumni from their alma mater; 2,450 emails were returned for a final population total of 21,569. We received 6,391 responses for a 29.6 percent response rate.

The representation according to institutional type shows that 31.9 percent of survey respondents studied abroad from a Doctoral-granting institution, 5.6 percent from a Masters-granting institution, 41.1 percent from a Bachelors-granting institution, and 21.4 percent from an Education Abroad Provider. Males represented 32.9 percent of respondents and females 67.1 percent. Since 1995, gender representation in U.S. education abroad has hovered around 65 percent female, as reported in *Open Doors* by the Institute of International Education (2008).

**Procedures**

In this section we describe the procedures followed in developing and launching the online survey. At the outset, we wish to acknowledge the fundamental importance of the

contributions to this survey made by the Forum on Education Abroad, which set up the two focus groups with senior education abroad officers, and Dickinson College, which served as the site for the pilot test of our survey with their education abroad alumni.

The research team took over one year to research, receive feedback, pilot, and ultimately launch the Global Engagement Survey. We began by meeting with our external research consultant, Bruce LaBrack of University of the Pacific. His recommendations had an important influence on the project such as conducting a non-experimental design, placing the emphasis on behavioral manifestations of global engagement, and partnering with The Forum on Education Abroad. Member institutions of this organization are higher education institutions with a primary interest in conducting and using research in education abroad.

After the SAGE team reviewed approximately ten versions of the survey, we conducted two focus groups in February 2007. These were with Forum Board of Directors members, selected for their experience in and knowledge about education abroad. The focus groups first took the survey and made written comments on each page and at the end of the survey. We then conducted the focus group discussions via conference call.

The months following the focus groups involved recruiting and communicating with our 22 partner institutions as well as refining and polishing the survey and determining the procedure for launching it. We used a variation of the Tailored Design Method espoused by Dillman (2000). Our sole method of contact was by email sent by the recipient's alma mater and included four total messages: a pre-notice message, a survey recruitment message, a thank you and first reminder, and a final and second reminder. All members of the population received all messages unless they specifically requested to be removed from the mailing list.

We piloted the survey instrument and our procedures with Dickinson College in October, 2007. We launched the full survey in November, 2007; the survey was closed in April, 2008.

## **Findings**

This section reports the findings from our quantitative Global Engagement Survey instrument, as well as the preliminary findings from the qualitative interviews. Descriptive statistics are utilized to provide an understanding of the respondents' study abroad choices and experiences, as well as the perceived impact of study abroad on their subsequent life experiences and global engagement.

### ***Quantitative findings***

To frame the impact of study abroad in the broader context of college life, the participants were first asked to indicate the impact on their lives of various activities they were involved in during their undergraduate study. Table 2 reports all available activities by level of impact (ranging from "no impact" to "strong impact"). Three activities stood out among all of the 12 as having a strong impact on the largest percentage of participants: study abroad (83.5%), friendships/student-peer interactions (73.8%), and coursework (66.2%). We then explored the nature of the study abroad experiences of our sample.

Table 2. Impact of College Experiences on SAGE Participants' Lives (%)

Categories	Strong Impact	Some Impact	Little Impact	No Impact	Not Applicable
Study abroad	83.5	14.9	1.4	0.1	0.1
Friendships/student-peer interactions	73.8	21.8	3.8	0.5	0.1
Coursework	66.2	30.1	3.1	0.2	0.4
Interaction with faculty	37.9	43.6	16.2	2.1	0.2
Work/employment during college	27.5	37.3	19.7	5.3	10.2
Community service/volunteer work	22.6	37.5	23.5	6.7	9.7
Internship (in the U.S.)	21.1	20.6	9.1	5.6	43.6
Athletics/intramural sports	16.9	22.1	22.3	16.4	22.3
Student clubs	13.3	28.7	29.5	12.3	16.2
Fraternity/Sorority	8.9	7.9	6	11.2	66.0
Religious organization	7.6	12.9	15	22.5	42.0
Student government	2.2	6.8	16.8	29.1	45.1

N=6391

*Destination*

The top ten destinations among the sample include (in the order of participation): the UK, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, China, Australia, Japan, Mexico, and Greece. It can be seen that the most common destinations include mainly European countries; however, China and Japan have also emerged among the top ten destinations of the study's sample.

*Duration*

Among the entire sample the most common length of their most significant study abroad experience was four months (25.4%) followed by three months (22%). These findings show that just under a half of the participants participated in the classic semester-long study abroad programs. Additionally, 23.7 percent of the participants participated in five or six months long programs, while around 10 percent of the sample participated in one or two months long study abroad programs.

*Program structure*

In terms of the program structure, the largest portion of the participants (37.1%) attended programs with the classes designed for the study abroad students. In addition, approximately equal numbers of students attended regular classes alongside host country students, travel seminars or shipboard programs, or the mixture of different types of the programs. The fewest number of students attended field studies (6.7%) or the campus of the U.S. institution in another country (2.9%). The participants were also able to describe the structure of their program.

*Program type*

The most common program types were area studies, theme-based programs, and language instruction programs.

### ***Global Engagement Domains***

In this section, we present the findings of the five global engagement variables as well as the education and occupation outcome variables. The percentages being reported are based on the total sample.

#### *Civic engagement*

With respect to this concept, respondents reported on their involvement in a set of civic activities in the domestic (local, state, or national) or international sphere. On issues of domestic importance, the most common civic activity was voting in elections (94.2%). Additionally, 73.2 percent of the participants made a purchasing decision because of the social or political values of a company, 55.4 percent of the participants have played a leadership role in improving quality of life, and 44.8 percent have organized or signed petitions. The participants indicated somewhat less civic activity on the issues of international importance. Here, the most common civic activity was making a purchasing decision because of the social or political values of a company (59.8% of the participants), with an additional 27.3 percent playing a leadership role in improving quality of life. Across issues of both domestic and international importance approximately a third of the participants used the internet to raise awareness about social and political issues.

#### *Voluntary simplicity*

This concept was defined as the effort to lead a more modest, simpler lifestyle. The findings show that a large percentage of the respondents (86.1%) practice voluntary simplicity to a large or some degree.

#### *Knowledge production*

The next concept the study examines is knowledge production in two domains: traditional print outlets and new technology formats. The findings show that 39 percent of the participants have had something formally published during the course of their life and career after the study abroad experience (examples include fiction or non-fiction book; journal, magazine, or newspaper article; governmental or non-governmental organization report; or patent). Moreover, 38.6 percent of the participants have indicated engagement in newer types of knowledge production, such as artistic work, online publishing, multimedia, or films. Both of these inquiries represented initial questions on this concept, and the responses presented above represent the level of engagement in the knowledge production by the entire sample.

#### *Philanthropy*

The inquiry about philanthropic activities has focused on two types of activities – voluntary work and monetary donations. The most common volunteer work activity is with educational organizations, in which 54.7 percent of the participants have frequently or sometimes engaged. Additionally, 48.8 percent of the participants have frequently or sometimes engaged in the volunteer work with community organizations, and 35.4 percent of the participants have worked with organizations addressing poverty issues (such as work in the food bank, construction and repair, etc.). The participants have donated their money largely to the same types of organizations mentioned above. The findings indicate that 49.9 percent of the participants frequently or sometimes provide donations to educational organizations, 47 percent donate to organizations concerned with poverty, and 38.7 make their donations to environmental organizations.

*Social entrepreneurship*

An important finding has also emerged within the concept of social entrepreneurship. One definition of such activity could involve influencing a for-profit organization, from within, to channel an increasing portion of its surpluses and/or profits for the good of the community. Within our large sample, 25 percent of the participants report having a substantive influence on their for-profit organization to be socially responsible.

***Education and Occupation***

Lastly, two more concepts were examined by the study – namely, the educational decisions after completing undergraduate degree, and individuals' career choices.

*Education*

The results show that 60.5 percent of the participants have enrolled in one or more advanced degree programs since completing their bachelor's degree. Moreover, out of those pursuing graduate education, 35 percent of the participants indicated an internationally oriented graduate degree.

*Occupation/Career*

The inquiry into the career decisions shows that 35.2 percent of the participants indicated that study abroad has helped their career to a large degree, while 39.9 percent indicated that study abroad has helped their career to some degree. Additionally, the careers of 37.7 percent of the entire sample currently are, or have been, internationally oriented.

***Impact of Study Abroad***

In addition to examining the outcome variables themselves, we are interested in the degree of influence study abroad has had on the participants in these seven areas. Table 3 presents a summary of the data regarding the reported influence of study abroad on global engagement, education, and careers. The findings from this large sample show that for the majority of the global engagement activities, study abroad is perceived by over 50% of the participants to have influenced their involvement to a large or some degree.

Table 3. "My level of involvement in the following categories was influenced by my study abroad experience"

	To a large or some degree (%)	Very little or not at all (%)	N*
Civic Engagement - Domestic	55.1	44.9	6391
Civic Engagement - International	60.7	39.3	6391
Voluntary Simplicity	70.3	29.7	6217
Knowledge Production - Traditional	51.7	48.3	2491
Knowledge Production - Other	56.3	43.7	2454
Philanthropy - Volunteer Work	45.4	54.6	6391
Philanthropy - Monetary Donations	37.6	62.4	6391
Social Entrepreneurship	61.9	38.1	1592
Educational Decision (advanced degree)	59.7	40.3	3854
Occupation/Career Choice	56.2	43.8	6391

\*Ns smaller than 6391 refer to the branching questions, where only the portion of the participants indicating participation in certain activity was able to express the degree of influence.

### **Qualitative findings**

Following completion of the quantitative portion of this study, qualitative interviews were conducted, guided by a sequential mixed methods design (Creswell 2009). This kind of design makes for an enriched understanding of the impact of study abroad and identifies elements of the impact not captured in the previous quantitative results.

Three interviews presented in this section were deliberately chosen for being particularly exemplary in representing the focus of study, the impact of study abroad on global engagement. The interview questions focused on participants' study abroad experiences and impact on their life, particularly on their global engagement (civic engagement, voluntary simplicity, knowledge production, philanthropy, and social entrepreneurship) and educational and career choices.

### ***Case studies***

#### *Case 1*

Gayle Woodruff, a White female, is the Director of Curriculum Integration at the Learning Abroad Center, University of Minnesota. She studied abroad multiple times as an undergraduate, in Mexico, Germany, and Spain, which influenced her to change her major from pre-medicine to international relations. Further, at graduate school studying international education at the University of Minnesota, she conducted field work in Ecuador.

It is noteworthy that her study abroad experiences have influenced her active involvement in the community on both domestic and international issues during the last two decades. For example, she created a national food buying club with her friends in the community. She also created a non-profit organization, Global Learning Connections, which brings Ecuadorian musicians to the Twin Cities in Minnesota and connects them to local educational organizations. She explained the significance of her study abroad experiences on her life as follows:

I can't imagine my life without having had international experiences. They've completely influenced my way of not just looking at my own life, but my own society and the world. ...It makes the world feel a lot smaller."

#### *Case 2*

Julius Coles, an African American male, is currently the head of Africare, a not-for-profit organization promoting African development. While an undergraduate at Morehouse College in the 1960s, he did volunteer work in Senegal as a participant in Operations Crossroads and later was selected as a Merrill scholar for study abroad. He *intensively* studied, travelled, and worked throughout Europe and North Africa for 15 months, made possible by the Merrill scholarship. He described his study abroad experiences as follows:

By this experience of traveling, living abroad and studying abroad, I came to realize that I was a human being; that I was not an inferior being that I had been told all my life [that I was Black and inferior].

In addition, he explained that his international experiences at college prepared him for a later career in international affairs. He was a senior official with the United States Agency of International Development, working in various countries for 28 years. He was a Mission Director in Swaziland and Senegal and the countries where he served include Congo, Vietnam, Morocco, Liberia, and Nepal. In his career, he also worked for Howard University and Morehouse College for eight years, developing and directing their International Centers, reflecting his academic entrepreneurship. During the past five years as Director of Africare, he has raised \$350 million on behalf of African development, reflective of his deep commitment to global engagement. In 2007, he was granted the James Madison Award, the highest award given by Princeton University to its alumni, for his contributions to public service and the public good.

In his interview, he said, “Without study abroad, I never would have gotten there [in] my life and career.”

### *Case 3*

Robin Sakamoto is a White female and currently a professor at a university in Japan where she has lived for almost 24 years. She studied abroad in Germany on a Kalamazoo College program. She said in her interview that her international experiences helped her “professionally as well as personally.” She said, “I said to myself, ‘what have I learned in my life?’ and used that as the starting point.” For example, her experiences in Germany increased her political awareness of things that are happening around the world, and influenced her to design a course on global citizenship at the university. She also encourages strongly her Japanese students to study abroad.

Her impressive role as the President of the Parent-Teacher Association in Japan is also related to her study abroad experiences. She explained that her experiences in Germany, knowing that she had other experiences that she had worked at, influenced her to take a leadership role in a culture that is not her own.

### ***Emerging themes***

The life stories of these three individuals demonstrate a significant impact of their study abroad experiences on their life. From these cases there are four emerging themes:

First, three case studies reveal that study abroad experiences influenced the interviewees’ global engagement in multiple ways, which correspond to key global engagement variables identified in the previous quantitative results. For example, Gayle Woodruff’s involvement with two organizations represents global engagement in terms of civic engagement, voluntary simplicity, philanthropy and social entrepreneurship. The careers of Julius Coles and Robin Sakamoto also represent their commitment to civic engagement.

Second, the careers of each of these individuals were internationally oriented with a large influence from their study abroad experiences. Woodruff works in international education at a university, Coles works in international development in developing countries, and Sakamoto teaches at a university in Japan.

Similarly, study abroad experiences influenced their subsequent educational choices. Woodruff and Sakamoto studied international education at graduate school, and Woodruff had changed her undergraduate major after her study abroad. Coles’ undergraduate study abroad experience was instrumental in his being able to do graduate work at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton. These three individuals also participated in study abroad programs multiple times throughout their undergraduate and graduate education.

Finally and most importantly, these three individuals all pointed out the significance of study abroad experiences for having profoundly shaped their subsequent lives and careers.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### ***Quantitative findings***

The SAGE research program shows first that study abroad is one of the most important experiences students can have during their undergraduate years. Second, SAGE goes on to show in detail the ways in which returnees become globally engaged. Third, this study shows just how influential study abroad is perceived to be by the participants in terms of their subsequent global engagement activities. Moreover, this study conceptualizes global engagement as a multifaceted phenomenon consisting of five core dimensions. These dimensions are explored in considerable detail and provide us with a new and clearer understanding of the ways in which global engagement is manifested. When we look at the percentage of participants who become civically involved, produce new knowledge, practice new and environmentally aware lifestyles, make philanthropic commitments, and create or participate in social entrepreneurship, it is unlikely that these findings would pertain in the larger population. Definitively, more of our respondents went on to graduate education than the general U.S. college undergraduate population, and the international nature of the career choices for so many of them is unlikely to be replicated in the population as a whole.

### ***Qualitative findings***

While the quantitative data of this study demonstrate the significant overall impact of study abroad on long-term global engagement in its various key dimensions, the qualitative case studies enrich those findings by indicating more concretely the nature of such global engagement. The qualitative case studies also provide more in-depth data on the exact nature of the study abroad experience.

In terms of the study abroad experience, a key defining characteristic is the intensity of the study abroad experience. Gayle Woodruff had many diverse study abroad experiences. Julius Coles spent 15 months abroad, including studying in a local university in French, traveling throughout Europe and North Africa, and having many experiential learning opportunities in diverse countries.

In terms of global engagement, the qualitative cases show clearly the dramatic impact of study abroad on career paths and development. Robin Sakamoto, for example, is committed to spending her life teaching and working in Japan. Coles' highly successful career in USAID was clearly inspired by and made possible by his study abroad experiences. Woodruff's global engagement has been primarily in promoting cultural relations while Coles has played a significant role in raising substantial funds for African development.

### **Final reflections**

Previous to this major study of the impact of study abroad on global engagement there has been much anecdotal information on this topic. Through the administration of the Global Engagement Survey to a large national sample of over 6,000 individuals who had studied abroad over a period of 50 years, we have now documented empirically and systematically how study abroad has positively influenced global engagement in each of the five key domains used in this study: civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, voluntary simplicity. Given the current imperative for a more sustainable global environment, the finding that study abroad has contributed significantly to the practice of voluntary simplicity is particularly salient. Also the finding that study abroad was viewed

as the most impactful of their undergraduate experiences should be welcomed by international educators. It is clear from these data, quantitative and qualitative, that study abroad experiences can profoundly influence individuals' pursuit of further graduate studies, career paths, and global engagement.

### Notes on contributors

R. Michael Paige is a professor of international and intercultural education in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He is an internationally recognized scholar and educator with more than 40 years of experience in the field of intercultural education and training

Gerald W. Fry has over 40 years of experience as a scholar, teacher, administrator and consultant. He is a professor of international and intercultural education in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He is a leading area specialist on Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular. He has been leading study groups to Southeast Asia annually since 1993.

Elizabeth M. Stallman is a PhD candidate in the University of Minnesota's comparative and international development education program. Her research interests are racial and ethnic identity, intercultural competence, college student development, and internationalization of the campus.

Jasmina Josić is a PhD candidate in comparative and international development education at the University of Minnesota. Her research interests are in the areas of citizenship education in multicultural societies, gender equity in education, organizational aspects of internationalization of higher education, and development of intercultural competence.

Jae-Eun Jon is a PhD candidate in the comparative and international development education program at the University of Minnesota. Her research interests include the internationalization of higher education, intercultural competence, intercultural friendship, and international development education.

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