

Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad

© Federica Goldoni, Stacy Rusnak

The work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Volume 36, Issue 3, pp. 83-114

DOI: 10.36366/frontiers.v36i3.824

[www.frontiersjournal.org](http://www.frontiersjournal.org)



# Minority, Low-Income Students: Study Abroad and Global Studies Experiences

Federica Goldoni<sup>1</sup>, Stacy Rusnak<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

International education has focused on the learning processes of minority, low-income college students and learners of color. This study analyzes the experiences of nine minority, first-generation U.S. undergraduates from a four-year college in the southeastern U.S. who pursued study abroad and Global Studies during 2015-2022. Global Studies is an enrichment opportunity offered to students to build their linguistic and intercultural competence. Closed-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and course materials were collected. Canagarajah's (2013) notion of transcultural practice, in conjunction with Kramsch's (2009) concept of symbolic competence and Norton's (1995) theory of investment were used to explore these students' experiences while interacting with the target language and culture. The findings reveal how the student participants' linguistic and sociocultural identities developed as they negotiated their different positionings. Students demonstrated a newfound meaning and symbolic value in the language and culture that they engaged with. Students' reflections on issues of inclusiveness and social justice are discussed.

## Abstract in Spanish

La educación internacional se ha enfocado en los procesos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes universitarios de color de bajos ingresos. Este estudio analiza las experiencias de nueve estudiantes universitarios estadounidenses de primera

---

<sup>1</sup> GEORGIA GWINNETT COLLEGE, LAWRENCEVILLE, GA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**Corresponding author:** Federica Goldoni, [fgoldoni@ggc.edu](mailto:fgoldoni@ggc.edu)

Date of Acceptance: June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024

generación, pertenecientes a minorías, de una universidad de cuatro años en el sureste de los EE. UU. Estos estudiantes realizaron estudios en el extranjero y “Global Studies” (Estudios Globales) durante el período 2015-2022. Global Studies es una oportunidad de enriquecimiento que se ofrece a los estudiantes para desarrollar su competencia lingüística e intercultural. Se recopiló cuestionarios demográficos, entrevistas semiestructuradas y materiales del curso académico. La noción de práctica transcultural de Canagarajah (2013), junto con el concepto de competencia simbólica de Kramsch (2009) y la teoría de la inversión de Norton (1995) se utilizaron para explorar las experiencias de estos estudiantes mientras interactuaban con la lengua y la cultura extranjera. Los hallazgos revelaron que las identidades lingüísticas y socioculturales de los participantes se desarrollaron a medida que negociaban sus diferentes posiciones. Los estudiantes identificaron un nuevo significado y valor simbólico en el idioma y la cultura con los que interactuaron. Se discuten las reflexiones de los estudiantes sobre cuestiones de inclusión y justicia social.

## Keywords

Global studies; language and identity; minority learners; study abroad; transcultural and translingual practice

---

## 1. Introduction

The Institute of International Education (2022a) reported that short-term study abroad (SA) programs (summer or eight or fewer weeks) count for nearly 60% of all programs in the U.S., and of all U.S. students studying abroad, 68% are White. However, the number of minority, low-income and first-generation students participating in a short-term SA program (more affordable and more convenient than longer programs) is growing across the nation (Institute of International Education, 2022b) thanks to initiatives like federal loans, low-cost faculty-led SA programs, and the Gilman Scholarship Program to Study Abroad, which was launched in 2001 by the Department of Education and is available to U.S. undergraduates who receive Federal Pell grants. In short-term SA programs, it is challenging for participants to significantly improve their second language (L2) proficiency and acquire knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of other people’s cultures, traditions, and practices; and intercultural learning can be limited (Dwyer, 2004; Kortegast & Kupo, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to

incorporate pre-departure and post-return components in a short-term SA program to prepare participants for their international experience and to help them process it afterwards.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the work and experiences of a group of nine minority, low-income and first-generation U.S. undergraduates from diverse backgrounds enrolled in an open access four-year college located in the southeastern U.S. and ranked the most diverse in the region. These diverse learners pursued the Global Studies Certification Program (GSCP) during 2015-2022, an enrichment opportunity offered to all students who aspire to build their linguistic and intercultural competence and to prepare to work in a diverse world. Two requirements of the GSCP are coursework in a language other than English and participation in a (short-term) SA program. This qualitative case study included one closed-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with the nine participants, their capstone course final research projects, and e-portfolios. The data was approached from a poststructuralist perspective, embracing the notion that each individual's identity is dynamic, multifaceted, and continually shifting over time and space (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2010). Although our research on global studies is wide in scope, the analysis of our data leans heavily on three key theories: Canagarajah's (2013) notion of transcultural and translingual practice, Kramsch's (2009) concept of symbolic competence, and Norton's (1995, 2000, 2010, 2013, 2016) framework for language, identity, and investment. Each of these frameworks are employed to examine the nine students' experiences with the target language, culture and society, and their interactions with their own and others' sociocultural products, practices, and perspectives. This study is important because it sheds light on how SA programs and global studies can help students become prepared to interact in our global society. Students without prior exposure to diversity can face significant challenges upon entering today's professional workforce, which grows increasingly pluralistic and diversified. Exposure to highly diverse cultural contexts, concepts, and people can help students think creatively and critically, as well as promote problem-solving. Additionally, these experiences allow students to develop more acceptance and tolerance towards others, making for a more inclusive minded individual and workplace.

## 2. Background and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Multilingual and Multicultural Students Abroad and Global Citizenship

Academic institutions across the globe are allocating resources to design and promote global and cultural experiences that enrich students' college education and also meet the needs, interests, and challenges of minority students participating in global initiatives. For example, African American students may feel psychological stressors regarding racism at home and abroad; first-generation students may encounter familial cultural attitudes that suggest SA is a luxury or a frivolous waste of time; and students at community colleges may be unable to take time off from work or be away from other family obligations (Dessoff, 2006). The existing literature reveals several positive impacts for cultivating young, global citizens. Ndura (2007) contends that higher education has a responsibility to prepare students to advocate for social justice and positive societal change both locally and globally, and to improve their own lives and those of other disadvantaged community members. Similarly, Arnot (2009) suggests that higher education encourages students to acquire a global gaze, through which they can look critically at inequalities impacting disenfranchised groups and begin dismantling unjust systems of power and oppression. For Schattle (2009), global citizenship "entails self-awareness as well as outward awareness of one's surroundings and the world" (p. 10). Schattle (2009) also implies that for some individuals, it invokes a sense of mindfulness "of responsibilities beyond one's immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly" (p. 12). Learning to be a global citizen requires students to utilize all resources available to them and engage with other cultures. Sperandio et al. (2010) support the notion that "students' global engagement must begin with leaving the protective walls of the university," and that "[e]ngaging requires both experiencing viscerally the differences in cultures as well as thinking deliberately about one's stance in relation to the differences" (p. 16). Thus, formal coursework, structured critical reflection, and the SA experience all serve to nurture the student's learning pathway to global citizenship.

While research on SA often explores L2 gains and immersion (Marijuan & Sanz, 2018; Tullock & Ortega, 2017), applied linguists have also focused on the

role of identity in L2 proficiency (Freed, 1995; Kinginger, 2009, 2013), the social turn (Block, 2003; Ortega, 2011), and the multilingual turn (Diao & Trentman, 2021), including the ways in which one draws from their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning of their interactions with others in contact zones. Some studies discuss multilingual translanguaging practices (Hawkins & Mori, 2018; Turner & Lin, 2017) to illustrate the fluidity of language boundaries and to demonstrate how learners of Arabic use such practices abroad “to establish and maintain intersubjectivity; create opportunities for learning; signal multiple identities and experiences as travelers, multidialectal speakers, bargainers, movie watchers, consumers of popular culture; and to show their interactional competencies” (Al Masaeed, 2020, p. 262). By drawing on translanguaging practices, participants maximize meaning-making. Likewise, Mori and Sanuth (2018) illustrate how American students of Yorùbá give priority to complex translanguaging practices over the monolingual policy promoted by their institution. In sum, a multilingual framework focuses on *how* students utilize their linguistic skills and competencies to communicate and make meaning rather than on *what* tool, strategy or skill students use. Additionally, minority students who already speak multiple languages have unique skills in these areas, which are not acknowledged within a monolingual framework (Anya, 2017; Diao & Trentman, 2021).

Minority and ethnically diverse students bring to the table abilities, backgrounds, and histories that stand out and uncover new ways of thinking, referencing and interpreting experiences. Quan and Menard-Warwick (2021) discuss Terry, a Vietnamese American heritage student who studied abroad in Guatemala. Terry drew upon all her multilingual skills, backgrounds, and life histories to navigate her learning process. Coursework and critical reflection were crucial in her “finding new value in her linguistic repertoire and background” (p. 365) and a sense of pride in her heritage. Anya (2017) focuses on four Black American participants studying Portuguese in Salvador, Brazil, a majority Afro-Brazilian city. Leti, a Dominican American student in this study, utilized her history with racism in the U.S. and the Dominican Republic to view the term “negrita” (black) as pejorative, yet she embraced the Brazilian Portuguese term “pretinha” (black) to develop a sense of belonging through her interactions within Afro-Brazilian contact zones. Anya’s (2017) research demonstrates how SA has the potential to facilitate new communicative selves and appreciation for one’s identity. Lastly, Doerr’s (2018) research on the

experiences of four SA students in Sierra Leone and Spain reveals that bi/multicultural and bi/multilingual minority immigrant students combine prior border-crossing experiences and cultural resources to relate to other diverse groups of people.

The skills students develop through their SA experiences often prompt them to seek new opportunities upon completing their journeys abroad and become active in the communities around them; they “go abroad expecting to learn about others and return home with new understanding about themselves and their place in the world” (Martinez et al., 2009, p. 527). For these reasons, SA is often described as transformative, an opportunity to cultivate the necessary skills to navigate our increasingly interconnected global world. Sherman et al. (2020) suggest that students who participate in SA have an “existing orientation toward global mindedness, a slight proclivity toward global citizenship identity, and endorse values that are prosocial in nature” (p. 17). Being flexible, adaptable, creative, self-aware, and possessing empathy for others, are all desirable skills for post-graduate employment in an unknown marketplace. Students who can efficiently respond to rapidly changing conditions will be in high demand in a future of uncertainties and shifting contexts.

## 2.2. Theoretical Framework

In this study, the term “multilingual” is employed to refer to learners who communicate across language and cultural boundaries and navigate through multiple languages and varieties in a fluid, comprehensible, agentive, and intentional manner as they make meaning and signify practices based on the interlocutors and the social context involved (Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1977). Canagarajah’s (2013) concept of translingual practice is adopted here to reference the processes through which multilingual learners make sense of their experiences while interacting with diverse others in contact zones and blended spaces, using a variety of communication resources. The term “translingual” considers the complexity of interactions between languages and communities. In fact, “trans” indicates how speakers dynamically cross linguistic and cultural boundaries to communicate. Within both social and physical contexts, language and semiotic resources (icons, symbols, images) function together, with elements such as gestures, objects, the body, and the surroundings all being contributing factors of the meaning-making process. At the heart of the matter is the learner’s ability to negotiate interactions within

contact zones using all available resources to respond appropriately and effectively to a given situation. Moreover, there are important ideological transformations made possible through the engagement with environments and places where language and cultural diversity is palpable; and it is through these interactions that students develop metalinguistic awareness and learn significant social, geographical, and identity-related variations. For Canagarajah (2013), translingual practice is the use of “diverse semiotic resources to create meaning and achieve communicative success when [...] homogenous norms are not available in contact zones” (p. 174). “Contact zones” are “spaces where diverse social groups interact” (p. 26). For the author, “performative competence” is the ability of multilinguals to accomplish social goals within contact zones, thanks to their language and critical awareness, social values, and learning strategies. Translingual practice is intrinsically intertwined with transcultural practice and translingual identities: Multilinguals in contact zones negotiate power structures and ideological differences, and they navigate different identities and socio-cultural values to reflect upon the world. Transcultural competence equips students with the “ability to successfully deal with and develop solutions to issues and problems created by cultural differences within any cultural setting” (Glover & Friedman, 2015, p. 8), within both global communities and, increasingly, domestic contexts.

Related to Canagarajah’s (2013) performative competence of translingual practice is Kramsch’s (2009) work on symbolic competence. For Kramsch (2009), symbolic competence is the capacity that learners develop through language learning experiences to: 1) find new meaning in the language(s) they learn and the language(s) they already use; 2) discover and construct new objective and subjective realities as they explore “various possibilities of the self in real or imagined encounters with others” (p. 15); 3) discover new resources like linguistic and cultural practices or life histories that are loaded with symbolic value; and 4) find new appreciation for their identities. Students demonstrate symbolic competence when they reflect on their experiences in diverse settings and highlight aspects of complex and contradictory contexts through the use of cultural cues. Students are engaged in self-reflection that allows them to understand their own and another’s cultural practices, beliefs, and behaviors without privileging one set of values over the other. Symbolic competence is both a theoretical and practical ability. For learners, it can be a place of possibility, where one can envision new ways of

navigating cultural communities by empathizing with others, acknowledging alternative visions of histories, events, and stories, and considering new definitions of successes and failures. Such imaginings are day-to-day practices that can effect attitudinal change and make students more flexible in interacting within diverse workplaces and global societies in general.

Norton's notions of language, identity, and investment are also significant in this study. Norton (2010) defines language "not only as a linguistic system, but as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated" (p. 351). Individuals' identities are multifaceted and continually evolving over space and time (Darvin & Norton, 2015) as they agentively negotiate various identities based on the multiple social environments involved, their feelings, and their goals. For Norton, learners intentionally invest in their language learning, identities, and social worlds, and their investment is commensurate with their desires, efforts, and resources (Norton, 1995, 2000, 2016). Learners use language to negotiate information and a sense of self, and to articulate how they view their social world at a specific point in time and space. Central to Norton's definition of investment is also the concept of symbolic capital: Learners invest in a language to acquire new symbolic and material resources, knowledge, skills, and relations that will increase their existing cultural capital and social power, thereby opening up possibilities for imagined futures while transforming the newly acquired capital into something valuable. Learners' investment in the target language is subject to complex, fluid power dynamics and control patterns existing in various social fields; and learners gain, maintain, resist, or lose power as they lead increasingly mobile lives (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1995, 2013). In these spaces, learners have agency: They can express their voices, affirm their identities, negotiate symbolic capital, reframe power relations, and challenge ideologies and dominant practices.

Finally, structured critical reflection (Jackson, 2011, 2018; Pasterick, 2019) is another productive model in internationalized settings and among multilinguals and diverse learners as they get involved in high-impact practices like community engagement projects and service learning. Structured critical reflection encourages learners to study and discuss theoretical notions during coursework and to connect and apply course content to their identity, background, language, and culture learning. Students reflect on these



connections and perceptions and explore meanings outside of themselves while deepening their understanding and awareness of the world to expand their sociopolitical and sociocultural frames of reference. The DEAL model of reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009) highlights three stages involved in reflecting upon experience: Describe, Examine & Articulate Learning. The process of reflection involves the exploration of content, personal growth, and social responsibility. Students in this study brought up issues of inclusiveness and social justice, in addition to the personal impact that the GSCP had on their sociocultural learning process. The analysis of the students' reflections proves valuable for considering how translingual practice impacts relations within global contact zones.

There is a strong push in higher education to increase diversity, including in world language teaching and SA (Anya, 2017, 2021), and to explore minority students' learning and cognitive processes, communicative strategies, and skill sets while embracing global studies and high-impact practices in contact zones. Hence the need for more research like the present study that is guided by the following research questions: 1) What linguistic and cultural practices, and meaning-making processes, can learners pursuing SA and the GSCP engage in? 2) How can global studies impact learners' sociocultural learning process and development as individuals?

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. The Study**

This qualitative case study investigates the work and experiences of nine multilingual and multicultural U.S. undergraduates from an open-access four-year college located in a diverse county in the southeastern U.S. According to the U.S. News and World Report (2024), the college is ranked among the top five ethnically most diverse public institutions in the region and across the nation. Over 11,000 first-generation college undergraduates (59% female, 41% male) constitute the student body of this Hispanic serving institution, with a high representation of Latinx (29%) and African American students (32%), followed by White students (22%), Asian students (12%), multi-ethnic students (4%), and other races and ethnicities including Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians and Native Americans (less than one percent). Eleven percent are non-traditional

aged students, 70% of the student population receives financial aid, and 112 countries are represented.

The focal students were selected because they had completed the Global Studies Certification Program between 2015-2022 and agreed to participate in this study when the authors contacted them. The GSCP requires students to complete coursework in a language other than English, participate in a (short-term) SA program, and register for at least two upper division internationalized courses and the Global Studies capstone course. In an internationalized course, 30% or more of the content is globally focused, and it addresses learners' cultural awareness, communication and collaboration skills, and applications of problem-solving skills. The Global Studies capstone course brings together the notions and lessons that students learn in their internationalized courses and SA experiences, the languages that they speak, and their life histories, which they discuss in relationship to global events and perspectives. Within this capstone course, students research a global topic of interest and present it at the end-of-the-semester campus conference.

### 3.2. The Participants

The study participants were nine (five female and four male) diverse first-generation college undergraduates (ages 21 to 51 years old; see Table 1). Their majors ranged from psychology, political science, and international relations to film and nursing. They were born and/or raised in Georgia, except for Paulo, Raquel, and Olivia (pseudonyms), who were originally from Brazil, North Carolina, and New York respectively. Chad provided no response. They were all U.S. citizens, but their heritages were different: Paulo, Alexa, Yadira, and Olivia were Latinx, Sannia Asian, Scott African American, and Chad, Mac, and Raquel White. English was the common language among them, but Paulo, Alexa, Yadira and Sannia were bilingual and bicultural in Portuguese (Paulo), Spanish (Alexa and Yadira) and Korean (Sannia). Their SA destinations varied from Quito (Ecuador), Paris (France), Prague (Czech Republic), Lima and Cusco (Peru), and Seoul (South Korea). Ecuador and Peru were faculty-led SA programs sponsored by the home institution, and one of the authors of this article was the faculty leader and professor of the courses being offered in the context of the Ecuador and Peru programs. The Paris, Seoul and Prague SA trips were sponsored by affiliate institutions, which allowed credit transfers. Both authors of this article were faculty members affiliated with the sponsoring institution.

**TABLE (1)**  
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Pseudonym	Age	Birthplace	Ethnicity, Race, or Heritage	Nationality	Native Fluency	Languages Learned at School	Major	SA Location and Year Abroad
<b>Paulo</b>	29	Jacareí, Brazil	White Latino (Brazilian)	Brazilian/American	Portuguese	English, Italian, Spanish, French	Political Science, International Relations	Paris, France, 2014
<b>Raquel</b>	28	Hickory, NC	White	American	English	French	Film	Paris, France, 2019
<b>Olivia</b>	51	Queens, NYC	Dominican /Ukrainian	American	English	Spanish	Psychology	Quito, Ecuador, 2017
<b>Mac</b>	24	Kansas	White	American	English	Spanish	Political Science, International Relations	Prague, Czech Republic, 2016
<b>Sannia</b>	23	Georgia	Asian (Korean)	Korean/American	English/Korean	No response	Nursing	Seoul, South Korea, 2016
<b>Alexa</b>	23	Georgia	White Latina (Mexican)	Mexican/American	Spanish/English	English, Spanish, French	Psychology	Quito, Ecuador, 2018
<b>Chad</b>	23	No response	White	American	English	Spanish	Political Science, International Relations	Quito, Ecuador, 2017
<b>Yadira</b>	22	Lawrenceville, GA	White Latina (Mexican)	American /Mexican	English/Spanish	Spanish	Political Science, International Relations	Lima and Cusco, Peru, 2022
<b>Scott</b>	21	Greensboro, NC	African American	American	English	Spanish	Film	Lima and Cusco, Peru, 2022

### 3.3. Ethics

The authors obtained IRB permission, recruited the participants, and collected data once grades were submitted and/or the participants had graduated to avoid conflict of interests or retaliation concerns in case of students' rejection to participate. The student participants were aware that the data being collected was for research purposes.

### 3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected between November 2020 and December 2022, from both authors who equally engaged in this process. The authors collected one online closed-ended questionnaire about the focal students' demographic data and background information, their capstone course final research project and/or e-portfolio, and one semi-structured interview conducted via Teams or Zoom, lasting approximately 60 minutes that was audio-recorded and transcribed by the authors (4-5 interviews per author). The authors asked students to talk through their individual expectations and goals for the GSCP, experiences and feelings regarding the program, challenges and transformative moments, linguistic and cultural practices, and personal reflections. All students were given pseudonyms. The authors coded the data based on the research questions and analyzed the data for recurring themes for each participant and across the cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The themes related to the participants' linguistic and cultural practices, reflections, identity negotiation processes, as well as meaning-making and sociocultural learning processes.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The most salient findings emerging from the data were the student participants' translingual and transcultural practices and their symbolic competence, the role of coursework and structured critical reflections in their learning process and individual development, and students' investment and agency.

### 4.1. Translingual and Transcultural Practice

Translingual and transcultural practice (Canagarajah, 2013) was displayed by the participants of this study, and three examples are provided below. The first example comes from a specific translingual encounter that

Paulo had in Paris during his SA sojourn. The second example is from Mac, who assessed the nature of the recent far-right conservatism affecting our societies after studying abroad in Prague. The third example comes from Chad, who identified complex hierarchal structures in language education and discourses of prestige and language pureness in English and Spanish during a visit to an English language class in a high school in Quito.

#### 4.2. Paulo in Paris, France

Paulo was a non-traditional American student originally from Brazil, who spoke five languages (Portuguese as his native language, English, Spanish, French and Italian), and who had travelled extensively for leisure and vacation during his adult life and had visited all continents. In college, Paulo majored in political science with a concentration in international relations. He took French courses and chose Paris as his SA destination when he decided to pursue the GSCP toward the end of his college years. In 2014, Paulo flew to Paris for a short summer semester. He engaged in translingual and transcultural practices and showed disposition to navigate complex contact zones during one interaction that he had when he attended a summer fair by the Eiffel Tower:

There were little shops on the street and there was this Chinese man selling watches. There were two Hungarian girls looking at a watch. So, I'm sitting there looking at what's happening and I hear them speaking Hungarian [...] They were trying to talk to the Chinese man in English and he kept replying in French. So, one of them looked at me and asked if I spoke English. I said yes. And she asked if I spoke French. I said a little bit. So, she asked me if I could ask him questions in French. So here I am, a Brazilian in Paris, translating English into French from a Hungarian girl into a Chinese man. (Interview, 1 December 2020)

In this situation, Paulo displayed translingual and transcultural practices as he drew from a wide range of linguistic resources: He identified the Hungarian language being spoken by the two girls, effectively deployed English and French (his second and third languages) to make sense of what he was witnessing, and then navigated a complex social space to assist with communication across individuals from diverse backgrounds. He negotiated meaning amongst multiple cultures and identities (Brazilian, Chinese, Hungarian) in a foreign city like Paris, where homogenous norms and familiar references were not readily available to him. Through this exchange, Paulo demonstrated creativity, critical

thinking, and problem-solving skills, and he mobilized diverse semiotic resources to facilitate meaning.

#### 4.2.1. Mac in Prague, Czech Republic

Mac was a White student born in Kansas but raised in Georgia. Mac had not travelled much in his young age, but he remained fascinated by the posters and stories that his oldest sibling brought back from Prague, Czech Republic after his brother toured Eastern Europe with a jazz band. In his capstone work, Mac indicated that his interest in Eastern Europe was genuine: “I’ve been greatly influenced and fascinated by the politics of Eastern Europe since the fall of the USSR” (Capstone research project, Spring 2018). Mac continued by stating how a different generation of democracies were born in the early 1990s, introducing new stressors, instability, and power struggles in the region, particularly the Ukraine crisis. As a political science major with a concentration in international relations, Mac embraced the idea of the GSCP as a way to research this topic and add a greater international focus to his college education. He intentionally searched for an SA program in Prague that fit his course requirements; and in the summer of 2016, he travelled there as part of his program. Within this new cultural context, Mac encountered a very diverse group of fellow students and professors from that region, took courses in English, learned about Czech history and culture in the context of Eastern Europe, and acquired a basic understanding of the Czech language. Mac engaged in transcultural practice and exhibited a disposition to establish significant connections across cultures and communities by reflecting on the similarities between his own understanding of his country and the cultural context of Prague:

We call America a melting pot. I felt like the Czech Republic was a melting pot [...] It's a destination for a lot of people in the Southeast Asia [...] You would see an Asian bride walking down the street, getting her pictures taken in the Czech Republic every day. It was a societal thing 'cause during the Cold War there was a transfer program, I think, from Vietnam to the Czech Republic and there was a lot of Asian business that was in Prague. (Interview, 21 January 2021)

Mac’s reflection demonstrates an example of his developing symbolic resources: He employed his knowledge of local practices and places; established a connection between the Czech Republic and the U.S. while also displaying an understanding of the presence of the Asian culture in the Czech Republic; and

compared one aspect of the history and socio-cultural diversity between the two countries.

Mac's ability to think critically and to identify analogies and parallelisms is also apparent in his capstone work. This is particularly true in his exploration of the far-right conservative movement in Eastern Europe compared to recent developments in the West, with respect to critical phenomena like Brexit in the U.K., far-right political parties gaining power in countries like France, Italy, Germany and Austria, and Trump's extremism in the U.S.:

When I look at how strong the far-right movement is in Eastern Europe, it reminds me of important times in US history. The US has been fundamentally shaped by core cultural and political movements. Through our history we have seen George Washington ceding power voluntarily, the Civil War, Manifest Destiny, WWII and the New Deal, and the Civil Rights movement. These have all developed the macro-American identity in inescapable ways. The amount of power that the far-right has now in Eastern Europe will mold those countries for decades to come, like joining the EU and NATO did nearly two decades ago. The far-right movement in the West has already peaked, and our institutional protections will relegate this time as a unicorn period in politics. We elected a black man to be President, then we put a xenophobic party in power. The pendulum will swing politically in the West. But in Eastern Europe, the effects of this far-right conservative movement will define a generation. (Capstone research project, Spring 2018)

Mac engaged in transcultural practice and operationalized his knowledge and understanding of political, historical, and sociocultural issues at the domestic and international level to evaluate the nature of the recent far-right conservatism affecting our societies. This demonstrates a high functioning level of critical engagement with the social and political histories of his home country and Eastern Europe. His reflections on the impacts of the changing political structures, and the implications of the conservative movements across these countries, highlight his negotiation and understanding of power structures and ideological differences that define both the U.S. and Europe. Mac pulled from his GSCP coursework, capstone research, and his SA experience, and made novel connections between the countries' political contexts.

#### 4.2.2. Chad in Quito, Ecuador

Chad was a White political science student who had learned Spanish at college and spoke it occasionally with his girlfriend from Colombia. In fact, he had previously travelled to Colombia with his girlfriend to visit her family. When asked about his decision to pursue the GSCP and to study abroad in Quito, Ecuador, Chad emphasized language learning and cultural exchange as key motivating factors. He ultimately wished to gain more experience in diversity, which he hoped would positively impact his future graduate school plans and career goals. As part of a community engagement project, Chad visited a high school in Quito during his SA trip. While there, he participated in an English language class, where he interacted with the students and their teacher. In discussing his observations of educational practices in Quito, Chad noted the inherent power structures that exist in language learning:

They [high school students from Quito, Ecuador] study a lot of English vocabulary, surprisingly, like Old English kind of sounding, like the word "thrice." So, it is interesting to see how other people learn our language because when we learn like Spanish, we learn like the Europe Spanish, sometimes... and we really shouldn't be doing that, and it's kind of weird to see them doing the same thing. (Interview, 18 February 2021)

Chad's comment is an instance of transcultural practice: He recognized that there are hierarchal structures in language education, raciolinguistic ideologies, and discourses of appropriateness and language pureness at work in both English and Spanish (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2016). Chad discussed that in formal language teaching and learning of English, students are taught a British variety of English as the prestigious, standard, pure, and "correct" language. The same is true of Chad's experience with Spanish, where students were encouraged to privilege peninsular Spanish, therefore delegitimizing the diversity and variety of linguistic practices in the rest of the Spanish-speaking world.

As these examples illustrate, Paulo, Mac and Chad participated in creative and critical thinking and made meaning of their various cultural settings. Paulo pulled from his full range of linguistic repertoire in Paris to navigate a highly complex social setting across individuals from two different backgrounds (Hungary and China) to facilitate communication. Mac recognized cultural differences, values, beliefs, and customs to account for the presence of



a robust Asian culture in the Czech Republic; and he articulated an understanding of diverse ideologies, histories, and socio-political systems to compare the U.S. and Eastern Europe contexts. Finally, Chad took his observations on language learning in Quito to identify cultural hierarchies and power structures that privilege prestigious language varieties, and therefore favor certain dominant groups of people at the disadvantage of others. These kinds of translingual and transcultural practices allow students to broaden their perspectives and to competently maneuver social and professional settings that include individuals from diverse backgrounds, leading to enhanced interactions with others and a stronger sense of self-confidence in such situations.

### 4.3. Symbolic Competence and Structured Critical Reflection

The participants of this study displayed symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2009) and structured critical reflection (Pasterick, 2019). For example, Sannia, Alexa, and Yadira found renewed appreciation for their multilingual and multicultural identities as daughters of immigrant parents. Their families' life histories and tribulations, dynamics and determination, work ethic and vision, shaped these three female participants' decisions to work and study abroad, to advocate for social justice, equity, and equal opportunities, and to give back to their communities. Elsewhere, Olivia implemented concepts learned in class like "cultural humility" to interpret her life experiences and feelings. Paulo and Sannia identified deficit perceptions attributed to racialized others, and demonstrated how an open, inclusive, and empathetic mindset is key to treating all people with equity.

#### 4.3.1. Sannia, Alexa and Yadira: The Influence of Family

Sannia was Korean American, born and raised in Georgia from a multicultural family, where her mom was Korean and African American, and her dad was South Korean. The Korean language was spoken and enforced at home. Sannia was fluent in both English and Korean, and she had dual citizenship. In college, she majored in nursing and pursued the GSCP because of her heritage, program of study, and future career in healthcare. In 2016, she studied in South Korea for a semester and embraced this opportunity to immerse herself in the culture and community where her dad was born. She found a job at a local restaurant, took college courses taught in Korean with local students, studied Korean art, history, and culture, and she acted as a local community member.

Similar to Sannia, Alexa grew up in Georgia with undocumented Mexican parents and considered herself Mexican: “I have Mexican roots and I have Mexican culture” (Interview, 10 December 2020). Alexa’s first language was Spanish, having learned English in kindergarten. Alexa viewed her bilingual abilities and Spanish-speaking proficiency as assets. She felt confident in her language skills, but she also understood that “studying Spanish would have given me a stronger advantage to help out my community” (Interview, 10 December 2020). Thus, she identified education as a powerful opportunity for social change and for addressing inequities. In college, she majored in psychology and pursued both the GSCP and a Latin American studies certificate. Alexa engaged on and off campus in Latin American student organizations and in non-profit organizations for Latino advocacy and advancement. In 2018, she participated in a short-term SA program in Quito, Ecuador, where she enrolled in two SA courses that functioned as an independent study designed to explore issues of access and equity in Latin America’s education system. In Quito, Alexa was granted access to a high school and a daycare, and she acted as a student researcher and anthropologist. She observed and interacted with children, students, teachers, and school staff; she shadowed a high school teacher, and she was invited to one of the teachers’ meetings.

Like Alexa, Yadira was born and grew up in Georgia to Mexican immigrant parents and described herself as Mexican: “My parents are Mexican. I am Mexican” (Interview, 27 December 2022). Yadira visited her family three times in rural Nuevo Galeana, Mexico, and she described it as a “humbling experience” because of the poverty, lack of resources, infrastructure, and opportunities, but also for the simplicity of everyday life. Yadira was fluent in both English and Spanish, and she used her bilingual language skills in her job. Her major was political science with a concentration in legal studies, and she planned to go to law school to focus on immigration law. This decision came about during summer 2022, when Yadira participated in a short-term program in Lima and Cusco, Peru. In Peru, Yadira lived with two host families and registered for two culture courses designed for Spanish heritage learners. For her courses, Yadira conducted two studies on: 1) Discrimination issues affecting immigrants and locals in Lima and Cusco; and 2) The two major political figures and parties in Peru: Pedro Castillo (liberal) and Keiko Fujimori (conservative). For her capstone project, Yadira chose to research how U.S. policy has resulted in a steady increase in illegal immigration from Latin America, leading to much

suffering and the deaths of vulnerable individuals and children. For these three projects, Yadira interviewed Peruvians and (host) family members, and she analyzed various texts.

Course content, structured critical reflection (Jackson, 2011, 2018; Pasterick, 2019) and experiential learning prompted Sannia, Alexa and Yadira to reflect on, and connect with, their respective backgrounds in novel ways. All three participants displayed symbolic competence in their discussions of the role of language and heritage in shaping their identity and reflecting on their upbringing in a multilingual and multicultural household. Sannia described how her parents impacted her language acquisition and decision to study abroad in South Korea:

My mom is Korean and African American, and my dad is South Korean [...] We were taught not to speak English in the house growing up, only Korean, so I could learn fluent Korean. Now I can speak and read and process in two languages [...] I chose South Korea for my study abroad because I wanted to go study and work at the hometown of my dad [...] I took two courses in Korean history and culture and Korean dance. (Interview, 21 January 2021)

Alexa voiced her growing sense of pride in her language, upbringing, and cultural background, and showed appreciation for her parents' resistance to cultural and linguistic assimilation and to pressures to Americanize:

Over the years, I've just considered myself more Mexican than American because of the struggles that my parents faced [as undocumented immigrants in the U.S.]. That is my background, those are my roots. And I am not ashamed. I'm more actually happy and more prideful of them. (Interview, 10 December 2020)

Finally, Yadira understood that her parents' life histories were loaded with symbolic value. She found renewed appreciation for their legacy and identities and for how much she was a product of her family culture. She strongly empathized with the suffering and challenges that her Mexican parents faced, and the life of opportunities in the U.S. that was offered to her:

Growing up in an immigrant household has had a lot of influence on how I act. I think I'm a little bit more reserved just because my parents are more conservative. So everything is a little bit more traditional in my household. Umm and yeah, one of the biggest thing about me is that I

come from a family of hard workers, so it's a big part of who I am [...] There's a very big emphasis on work and, you know, in succeeding in life. So obviously my parents wanted to succeed. So they immigrated to the United States, and that ambition is something that was given to me and that I get from my parents. Which is why I set high expectations and standards for my own work and my life, and why I want to pursue a career in immigration law. (Interview, 27 December 2022)

In her interview, Yadira added that her decision to pursue immigration law came as a result of her global studies and SA program, her individual background, and her renewed identity and desire to give back to her community: "Immigration lawyers helped my family a lot, and I see [...] the joy of helping people get their residency, or just to take away the fear of being deported" (Interview, 27 December 2022).

In sum, Sannia, Alexa, and Yadira found new meaning in their identities and family dynamics. For Sannia, it was her parents' strict adherence to Korean being spoken in the home that pushed her to study in South Korea. Alexa identified with her parents' struggles as undocumented immigrants and found a renewed strength and a sense of pride where there had previously been feelings of inadequacy. Finally, Yadira articulated how her work ethic and determination to pursue law derived from her parents and their tortuous journey with the judicial system in the U.S.

#### 4.3.2. Olivia, Paulo, Sannia, and Alexa: The Role of Coursework

The role of coursework during the GSCP was found to be equally impactful on the students' development of symbolic competence. Olivia was born in Queens, New York but lived in Connecticut until the age of nine when she moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. Olivia was of Hispanic origin; her mother was Dominican, and her father was from the Ukraine. Olivia had travelled for leisure and on work assignments with her family and/or her husband to places like the Dominican Republic, the Soviet Union, Canada, Mexico, Italy, Chile, Australia, and the Philippines (e-portfolio, 2019). In college, she was a non-traditional student majoring in psychology and planning to pursue graduate studies for a career as a professional psychologist in marriage and family therapy. Like Alexa, Olivia pursued the GSCP and a Latin American studies certificate. In 2017, she enrolled in the Ecuador SA program and took two Spanish courses that included an independent study project for which Olivia prepared an interview with a

professional psychologist in Quito specializing in marriage and family therapy. The interview focused on the culture of psychology in Ecuador, how culture influences the psychologist's approach to patients, and the most prevalent issues that the psychologist has helped her patients to navigate. Olivia exhibited symbolic competence in her ability to understand the role of her multicultural and multiethnic heritage, the Spanish language, and her coursework on Latin American and global studies in shaping her life and relationships with others and in serving the international community in her area. In her capstone project Olivia stated:

Although both of my parents came to the United States from dire circumstances in their countries of origin, they both worked very hard [...] Therefore, hard work, responsibility, excellence, and courage were instilled in me and have been the bedrock of my life. Coming from a multicultural background has been a benefit in many ways. Most notably, I find it has caused me to be drawn to others who may have a unique background or American experience. These are usually the individuals that I seek to connect with. I am eager to learn and understand their story [...] my background has also fueled my desire to travel [...] and travel has laid the foundation to pursue and attain Global Studies Certification and a Certificate of Latin American Studies. As a part of these programs, I have taken numerous Spanish, Film, History, and Political Science courses. These studies have helped to develop understanding, empathy, adaptability, and the broad perspective required to facilitate connection in a multicultural society. (e-portfolio, 2019)

Olivia also indicated that her coursework at home and abroad provided her with key conceptual vocabulary that helped her articulate, reflect on, and interpret lived experiences and perceptions. When asked what take-away lesson she learned from the GSCP, Olivia talked about cultural humility:

We learned the term "cultural humility" which is... don't assume that you know about this other culture. You need to find out. You need to ask questions. You need to understand that people have different perspectives. You want to approach your clients with a sense of humility and curiosity [...] I think it [GSCP] has increased my cultural humility. [...] It's made me more aware of what I don't know [...] it's given me the desire to ask more questions [...] not taking for granted that my experience is going to be the same as their experience. (Interview, 22 January 2021)

Cultural humility helped Olivia understand why she desired to know more about another culture, to ask more questions, and to connect with people on a deeper level, an example of her growing symbolic competence and her capacity to operationalize theory to interpret life and sentiments.

Similarly, Paulo and Sannia demonstrated acceptance and tolerance through their experiences with otherness, while avoiding deficit perspectives and perceptions of weaknesses based on culturally different practices by others. In the examples below, Paulo and Sannia legitimized the value of connecting coursework and critical reflection. Their comments highlight the importance of maintaining an open and inclusive mind when in contact with diverse individuals in order to treat all people with respect, dignity, equity, and fairness. When asked about his take-away lesson from the GSCP, Paulo answered with empathic words:

It did make me a little bit more empathic towards people, more understanding, especially when it comes to other cultures [...] It started when I went to Paris [...] fearing that stereotypes of... I'm gonna get yelled at, I'm gonna be fussed at because the French are rude, they don't like people. But [...] It's not really about the people, it's about the experience that you have. (Interview, 1 December 2020)

Sannia also expressed compassion while discussing her GSCP capstone research project on foreign-born nurses working in the U.S., who help to address the nursing shortage across the nation and as a part of the global care chain: "I learned to accept people for who they are and what they do without judging" (Capstone research project, Spring 2018). In her capstone work, Sannia indicated that she understood and validated the unique personal lives and histories that foreign-born nurses share as they leave their countries of origin (and sometimes their families) and migrate to the U.S. Sannia also recognized the "wealth of knowledge, skills, and cultural competence that foreign-born nurses contribute to the healthcare system in the U.S." (Capstone research project, Spring 2018) as they work hand-in-hand with domestic nurses like herself (Sannia was employed as a nurse at the time of the interview).

Lastly, in Alexa's discussion of her coursework, her structured critical reflection regarding her experiential learning and her community engagement, she addressed civic minded topics such as social justice and equal opportunities, which contributed to Alexa's academic and personal learning:

For my [independent study] project I wanted to understand the education system in Latin America [...] how the funding works for those schools [...] and equality and equity in the education system [...] In my e-portfolio I stated how the country [Ecuador] was dealing with immigration and education issues. Experiencing that first-hand really helped me make the connections of the material in the coursework. (Interview, 10 December 2020)

Alexa witnessed poverty and unequal access to education in Quito. It was hard for her to see small children working or begging in the street:

Seeing a six-seven-year-old at the stoplight cleaning your windshield or offering to sell you a juice or a candy or just do tricks for you for a quarter or any kind of money that you had... I thought that was very challenging because when I saw those kids, I automatically pictured my nieces [in Mexico]. (Interview, 10 December 2020)

Alexa connected the challenges that Ecuadorians faced with the struggles her family in the U.S. and Mexico endured, and she leveraged her (in)direct experiences with suffering to align herself with the issues and pain affecting Spanish-speaking communities around the world. Alexa's words above express a sense of agency and a commitment to learning and praxis for social change.

Through their interactions with others, Olivia, Paulo, Sannia and Alexa developed a sense of empathy with the people they encountered in their SA programs. Each student expressed a desire to know more about the Other, demonstrating a cultural curiosity to delve deeper into the sociocultural circumstances that shape their lives. When students reflect on the emotional states of others, authentic and productive communication is more apt to occur.

#### 4.4. Student's Investment and Agency

Norton's (1995, 2000, 2016) concepts of investment and agency are exemplified in how the participants in this study embraced the GSCP and SA as something more than mere college requirements to fulfill. Rather, Scott and Raquel agentively invested: 1) in their passion for Spanish and French respectively, to increase their cultural, social, linguistic, and economic capital, while gaining increased knowledge of diverse cultures and societies; and 2) in their own social identity as multilingual and multicultural individuals and global citizens.

#### 4.4.1. Scott: Language and Communication

Scott was an undergraduate African American senior majoring in film. He was born in North Carolina but moved to Georgia when he was nine years old. Scott was invested in learning Spanish, and he was proud to be the only one in his family to speak a language other than English. Scott joined a Latin American student association on his home campus to stay connected to the Hispanic language and culture. He also pursued the GSCP to improve his marketability and to become part of the small cohort of U.S. students who study abroad. In his interview, he indicated that he wanted to become a polyglot, speak various world languages, and better understand diverse cultures and their interconnectedness with each other. In the U.S., Scott had several Spanish-speaking friends, acquaintances, and co-workers; and for him, learning and using the Spanish language was a top priority:

It [Spanish] means a lot to me [...] Spanish is all around me, in the United States even. I see a lot of Spanish-speaking families and Mexico is right below us, it is very close, so I feel like Spanish is very powerful in my life. (Interview, 20 December 2022)

Scott's desire to speak Spanish comes from his understanding of language as a resource and competitive asset that can improve his marketability and ability to engage with people around him. Additionally, he mentioned Mexico's proximity, which hints at the continued importance of immigration through Mexico into the U.S. He recognized that as the Hispanic population grows, there is value, power, and increased opportunities in being able to communicate with Spanish speakers in his community and beyond.

Like Yadira, in summer 2022, Scott participated in a short-term SA program in Lima and Cusco, Peru, where he lived with two host families and immersed himself in the Spanish language and culture. His priority was to improve his proficiency and fluency in Spanish by communicating with locals, and he was very agentive in this pursuit:

In Peru I spoke with everybody, everybody [emphatic]. I just informed them that I was learning Spanish. I just had a simple conversation with them. It was a great experience for me to just to communicate with other people. And [...] they all wanted to talk to me. They were happy that I was learning Spanish. They appreciated it. They wanted to help me succeed. (Interview, 20 December 2022)



Within this context, Scott took on the identity of the language learner and engaged the locals, who became willing participants in his personal journey to improve his Spanish. His openness to the locals attested to his understanding of the value that higher language proficiency and deep cultural engagement have, because such skills yield powerful cultural capital from a professional, social, personal, and human standpoint.

Scott showed real tenacity to build up his cultural capital in his language skills, which allowed him to reach out to more people and to show that he cared about others and their communities. To him, being able to communicate with others in Spanish meant that he could engage with and support people in need in his immediate community in the U.S.:

I can help people that speak another language, in this case Spanish, and do not know English well. I have that sometimes at my job. Currently I work in food, so sometimes customers come in and they struggle with English. They don't know English well. I can tell they have a thick Spanish accent. So, I try to help them and whenever I do it, it makes them smile [...] it makes them feel better. So, I want to help those kinds of people that are struggling with English [...] for my job, for my future in general. (Interview, 20 December 2022)

Scott acknowledged a civic responsibility to help others in his environment who struggle with English. He displayed empathy for vulnerable individuals and an increased sense of cultural competency. This suggests that interactions with diverse peoples have the potential to lead to increased civic engagement and solidarity with the community.

#### 4.4.2. Raquel: Language and Cultural Awareness

Raquel shared the same birthplace (North Carolina) and major (film) as Scott. She was a White undergraduate raised between Georgia and New York City, which exposed her to diverse communities and interactions during her young age. In college, Raquel cultivated a passion for French. In 2019, she studied abroad in Paris for a summer semester, and she was genuinely invested in improving her French:

I really enjoyed the French language [...] I've literally taken every possible French course that XXX [name of host institution] has [...] I really enjoyed that [...] the Global Studies Certification required study abroad [...] It was like I had an excuse to do something I wanted to do

anyway [...] Plus, I also just objectively thought, “Anything that says certification is gonna look good on the resume.” (Interview, 2 February 2021)

Like Scott, Raquel displayed a true dedication to learning French, taking every opportunity to improve her proficiency in the language. Additionally, she understood the importance of the certification and how being a “French speaker” was loaded with symbolic social, cultural, and economic power for herself and her future professional plans and competitiveness.

Additionally, Raquel illustrated how active learners can reframe power relations and challenge dominant ideologies and practices through a sense of cultural humility and self-evaluation. In her interview, Raquel revealed that she was ready to take an agentive stance in challenging deficit perceptions about others. She mentioned how the Santa Fe mall, located in an area where Raquel grew up, is stereotyped as dangerous because of the Hispanic population that congregate there. The mall itself is a mix of fashion, specialty stores, and Mexican eateries:

At home I’m going to be a lot more active in trying to find international communities to [...] I don’t want to say participate in [...] but to learn from [...] here’s an example. The Santa Fe mall is oftentimes considered a really dangerous place... It’s a mall that happens to recognize that a majority of the demographic is going to be Latinx [...] And now that assumption I grew up with, I am going to actively break down. (Interview, 2 February 2021)

Through a process of self-reflection and self-evaluation, Raquel recognized historic realities of discrimination, denigration, and unfair treatment affecting Hispanic people in the U.S. Raquel identified a power imbalance in her immediate community; she acknowledged her own biases; and she voiced her intentions to redress them and to change how she viewed diverse others. She demonstrated cultural humility and a willingness to maintain an open mind to the Latinx community, to raise awareness, and to promote social justice to help dispel deficit stereotypes. Raquel recognized the disparaging discourses, traditional expectations, and the whiteness of words around U.S. Latinx, all of which prompted her desire to be an agent of change.

Scott and Raquel’s comments are indications of Norton’s (1995, 2000, 2016) concept of investment, as neither of the participants were motivated to

participate in the GSCP to simply fulfill a requirement for their degree. Instead, they actively engaged in learning Spanish and French for the cultural, social, linguistic, and economic capital that they would earn. They invested in their own desire to improve their language skills and to gain increased knowledge of the Spanish and French cultures and societies. Their investment is evidenced in their own social identity: Both Scott and Raquel wanted to be recognized as a competent Spanish/French speaker and as someone who mastered the Spanish/French culture. The Spanish and French language and culture were key elements in their global citizen identity building process.

## 5. Conclusion

In addressing the two research questions guiding this study (What linguistic and cultural practices, and meaning-making processes, can learners pursuing global studies engage in?; and How can global studies impact learners' sociocultural learning process and development as individuals?), the examples of student participants engaging in translingual and transcultural practices demonstrated their acquired symbolic competence and their abilities and dispositions to use their entire linguistic and cultural repertoires to make sense of what they were learning and to navigate complex social worlds. They found new meaning and symbolic value in the language, culture, and communities that they interacted with, and in their own backgrounds and upbringings. They invested in their SA journey, education, and coursework to gain status and access cultural, linguistic, social, and economic capital. Their translingual and transcultural identities evolved over time and space: They agentively negotiated a new sense of self while relating to others in contact zones. Structured critical reflection helped students connect theoretical notions to course material and their experiences, life histories, and identities. This allowed them to explore meanings inside and outside of themselves, expand sociocultural frames of reference, and apply knowledge to local and global issues.

The findings above illustrate examples of self-awareness, empathy, cultural humility, intercultural knowledge, global connectedness, sophisticated communication skills and creative and analytical thinking that set these participants apart from others with less experience in diverse cultural contexts. These results are in line with the research on multilingual individuals' international experiences discussed above. Significant transformations can take

place when multilingual learners from diverse backgrounds come in contact and interact with environments where language and cultural diversity is promoted, and when it is vivid and tangible. One could claim that the participants' positive encounters may be a result of the richness of their prior cross-cultural experiences. Their diverse upbringings and identities facilitated their individual development and their pathway toward becoming global citizens, i.e., individuals who are informed, open-minded, responsible, and attentive to the entire spectrum of differences and who understand how their actions impact local and global societies.

Diverse students should be increasingly supported in their global learning process and in engaging in structured, critical, intercultural reflections with diverse individuals over an extended period of time, including before, during, and after studying abroad (Hartman et al., 2018; Jackson, 2010, 2013). Multidisciplinary programs help these students connect the notions that they learn in their courses, the experiences that they have abroad, the languages that they speak, and their life histories, because they discuss them across disciplines in relationship to global events and perspectives. Students can explore transnational issues from U.S. and non-U.S. vantage points and approach these issues using perspectives and methodologies acquired in their major programs and other areas. Students can also examine the interconnectedness of the world's languages, governments, industries, institutions, and policies, and how they shape our and their identities and lives.

Although not part of this study, the concept of the learning community can support students' learning, development, and meaning making skills by linking courses under an academic focus area. Within the learning community, students explore a particular topic related to their global coursework and SA experience from various perspectives and across disciplines. The learning community can also help students to process their experiences within a supportive and inclusive environment alongside other students who have engaged in global learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. When students feel engaged with the work that they do to acquire new linguistic and cultural skills, they are more likely to share their knowledge through local and international collaborations with various partners, and even embrace ethnographic projects at home and abroad (Jackson, 2010; Roberts et al., 2001; Trentman, 2018). Students can be trained on how to observe places, people,

situations, and practices with a critical eye and an open mind and heart, so that they can approach diverse individuals, identify culturally significant data and materials, and connect it to coursework through directed studies. This kind of academic training may greatly impact our communities and demonstrate support of, and advocacy for, others.

This study provides additional evidence to academic officials, administrators, and educators that more attention is needed on the cognitive processes of diverse and minority students pursuing global studies. It also highlights that the languages, backgrounds, experiences, and skills of diverse students are enormous assets that need to be acknowledged as early as possible in the student's academic journey. Additionally, L2, SA and global studies need to be heavily promoted amongst minority students, students from diverse backgrounds, and heritage learners from across disciplines. Their talents, existing knowledge and experiences must be maximized and carefully matched with customized programs, structured projects, and high-impact initiatives that could benefit the learners as well as other groups of people, including local communities. The lessons learned in this context can greatly increase the knowledge and resources to understand and interact effectively with diverse others, to address the world's pressing issues, and to act as empathic social justice advocates and leaders who share a strong sense of belonging to a common humanity.

## References

- Al Masaeed, K. (2020). Translanguaging in L2 Arabic study abroad: Beyond monolingual practices in institutional talk. *The Modern Language Journal*, 104(1), 250-266. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12623>
- Anyá, U. (2017). *Racialized identities in second language learning: Speaking blackness in Brazil*. Routledge.
- Anyá, U. (2021). Critical race pedagogy for more effective and inclusive world language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 42(6), 1055–1069. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amab068>
- Arnot, M. (2009). A global conscience collective? Incorporating gender injustices into global citizenship education. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 4(2), 117-132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197909103932>
- Ash, S., & Clayton, P. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education*, 1(1), 25–48. <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/handle/1805/4579>
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Texas University Press.
- Block, D. (2003). *The social turn in second language acquisition*. Georgetown University Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global English and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36–56.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000191>
- Dessoff, A. (2006). Who's NOT Going Abroad? *International Educator*, 15(2), 20–27.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/200756328?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>
- Diao, W., & Trentman, E. (2021). *Language learning in study abroad: The multilingual turn*. Multilingual Matters.
- Doerr, N. (2018). “Global competence” of minority immigrant students: Hierarchy of experience and ideology of global competence in study abroad. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 41(1), 83–97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2018.1462147>
- Dwyer, M. (2004). More is better: The impact of study abroad program duration. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10(1), 151–163.  
<https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v10i1.139>
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171.  
<https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149>
- Freed, B. (1995). *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context*. John Benjamins.
- Glover, J., & Friedman, H. (2015). *Transcultural competence: Navigating cultural differences in the global community*. American Psychological Association.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/14596-0000>
- Hartman, E., Kiely, R., Boettcher, C., & Friedrichs, J. (2018). *Community-based global learning: The theory and practice of ethical engagement at home and abroad*. Stylus Publishing.
- Hawkins, M., & Mori, J. (2018). Considering “trans-” perspectives in language theories and practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 39, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx056>
- Institute of International Education. (2022a). *Open Doors Report / Duration of Study Abroad*.  
<https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/duration-of-study-abroad/>
- Institute of International Education. (2022b). *Open Doors Report / Student Profile*.  
<https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/student-profile/>
- Jackson, J. (2010). *Intercultural journeys: From study to residence abroad*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, J. (2011). Cultivating cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship through critical reflection and international, experiential learning. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 11(2), 80–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2011.556737>
- Jackson, J. (2013). The transformation of “a frog in the well”: A path to a more intercultural, global mindset. In C. Kinginger (Ed.), *Social and cultural aspects of language learning in study abroad* (pp. 179–206). John Benjamins.
- Jackson, J. (2018). Intervening in the intercultural learning of L2 study abroad students: From research to practice. *Language Teaching*, 51(3), 365–382.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444816000392>
- Kinginger, C. (2009). *Language learning and study abroad: A critical reading of research*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kinginger, C. (2013). Identity and language learning in study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 339–358. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12037@10.1111>

- Kortegast, C., & Kupo, V. (2017). Deconstructing underlying practices of short-term study abroad: Exploring issues of consumerism, postcolonialism, cultural tourism, and commodification of experience. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 8(1), 149-172. <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/842>
- Kramersch, C. (2009). *The multilingual subject*. Oxford University Press.
- Marijuan, S., & Sanz, C. (2018). Expanding boundaries: Current and new directions in study abroad research and practice. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12323>
- Martinez, M., Ranjeet, B., & Marx, H. (2009). Creating study abroad opportunities for first-generation college students. In R. Lewin (Ed.), *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad* (pp. 527-542). Routledge.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mori, J., & Sanuth, K. (2018). Navigating between a monolingual utopia and translingual realities: Experiences of American learners of Yorùbá as an additional language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 78-98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx042>
- Ndura, E. (2007). Calling institutions of higher education to join the quest for social justice and peace. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77(3), 345-350. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.77.3.7265783p27800280>
- Norton, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587803>
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Pearson Education.
- Norton, B. (2010). Language and identity. In N. Hornberger & S. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 349-369). Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation*. Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B. (2016). Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. In M. Breen (Eds.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research* (pp. 159-171). Pearson Education.
- Ortega, L. (2011). SLA after the social turn: Where cognitivism and its alternatives stand. In D. Atkinson (Ed.), *Alternative approaches in second language acquisition* (pp. 167-180). Routledge.
- Pasterick, M. (2019). Language and (inter)cultural learning: Supporting language teacher candidates' development of interculturality during study abroad. In D. Martin & E. Smolcic (Eds.), *Redefining teaching competence through immersive programs: Practices for culturally sustaining classrooms* (pp. 127-153). Palgrave MacMillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24788-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24788-1_5)
- Quan, T., & Menard-Warwich, J. (2021). Translingual and transcultural reflection in study abroad: The case of a Vietnamese-American student in Guatemala. *The Modern Language Journal*, 105(1), 355-370. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12701>
- Roberts, C., Byram, M., Barro, A., Jordan, S., & Street, B. (2001). *Language learners as ethnographers: Introducing cultural processes into advanced language learning*. Multilingual Matters.
- Rosa, J. (2016). Standardization, racialization, languagelessness: Raciolinguistic ideologies across communicative contexts. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 26(2), 162-183. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12116>

- Schattle, H. (2009). Global citizenship in theory and practice. In R. Lewin (Ed.), *The Handbook of practice and research in study abroad: higher education and the quest for global citizenship* (pp. 3-20). Routledge.
- Sperandio, J., Grudzinski-Hall, M., & Gambino, H. (2010). Developing an undergraduate global citizenship program: Challenges of definition and assessment. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 22(1), 12-22.
- Trentman, E. (2018). Research-based interventions for language and intercultural learning. In M. Alhawary (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Arabic Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 303-328). Routledge.
- Tulloch, B., & Ortega, L. (2017). Fluency and multilingualism in study abroad: Lessons from a scoping review. *System*, 71, 7-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2017.09.019>
- Turner, M., & Lin, A. (2017). Translanguaging and named languages: Productive tension and desire. *Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 23(4), 423-433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1360243>
- U.S. News and World Report. (2024). *The Most Ethnically Diverse Regional Colleges in the South*. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/regional-colleges-south/campus-ethnic-diversity?ranking=campus-ethnic-diversity&schoolType=regional-colleges-south>

## Author Biography

**Federica Goldoni** is a Professor of Spanish in the Department of Political Science, Criminal Justice and International Studies at Georgia Gwinnett College. Her Ph.D. is from the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia, and her languages of focus are Spanish, French, and Italian. Her interests are identity issues in second language, foreign language pedagogy, and study abroad.

**Stacy Rusnak** is a Professor of Film and Chair of the Visual and Performing Arts Department at Georgia Gwinnett College. She holds a Ph.D. in Moving Image Studies and an M.A. in Spanish language and literature from Georgia State University. Her interests include Spanish language cinema, popular culture, gender studies and horror cinema.