

Exploring undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership through short-term study abroad leadership courses

Evan Witt

University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

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Abstract

Purpose – Many colleges and universities within USA higher education claim that their graduates understand global leadership. The purpose of this study is to explore undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership through their participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses.

Design/methodology/approach – Utilizing a post-intentional phenomenological (PIP) framework, this qualitative study explored how the phenomenon of undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership may take shape through their participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses. A secondary research question explored how the context of short-term study abroad leadership courses provokes students' understanding of global leadership. Interviews were conducted with a diverse sample of twelve participants, either current students or alumni, from three institutions.

Findings – The four key productions of the phenomenon were developing a leadership identity, influences of experiences, perceived impact of short-term study abroad courses on understanding of global leadership and application of global leadership. Select productions and associated provocations are discussed.

Research limitations/implications – Based on these productions and provocations of the phenomenon, implications for leadership educators are provided.

Originality/value – This inquiry focuses on the phenomenon of undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership to build on the knowledge about the experiences of students participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses. It fills a gap in the literature related to what is known about short-term study abroad leadership courses and outcomes from student participants. The methodology of this study as a PIP design further contributes to the need for qualitative research in leadership education. It is through this methodology that the diverse sample of student voices has been captured to inform our field of their experiences.

Keywords Teaching and learning of leadership, Leadership education application and outcomes, Study abroad leadership courses

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Across higher education in the United States of America, colleges and universities are aspiring to graduate globally minded students with strong leadership skills (Helms & Brajkovic, 2017; Sowcik & Komives, 2020). While there are a number of campus-based initiatives that focus on the leadership development of students and on the internationalization of campuses, there are only a few initiatives that accomplish both. One emerging trend is the development of short-term study abroad leadership courses (Beatty & Manning-Ouellette, 2022; Armstrong, 2020; Earnest, 2003; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012; Niehaus, O'Rourke, & Ostick, 2012; Rosch & Haber-Curran, 2013).

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Developing global leaders has been a focus of governmental and educational associations, such as the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of American College and Universities (AAC&U) and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), as they encourage Americans to become more globally and interculturally competent to compete economically and address significant worldwide challenges (Niehaus, 2018). Institutional missions and purpose statements frequently include leadership or language that demonstrates a commitment to graduates being proactive citizens in this global world, yet there are few tangible ways this is accomplished (Komives & Sowcik, 2020). Leadership educators are uniquely positioned to prepare leaders for the complexity of this global interconnectedness and to address the impacts of globalization and interactions between leaders and their followers (Sowcik, 2015).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership through participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses. This inquiry focuses on the phenomenon of undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership to build on the knowledge about the experiences of students participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses (Beatty & Manning-Ouellette, 2022; Armstrong, 2020; Earnest, 2003; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012; Niehaus *et al.*, 2012; Rosch & Haber-Curran, 2013). It utilized a post-intentional phenomenological (PIP) design to explore the phenomenon using participant interviews. Global leadership was defined as "the process and actions through which an individual influences a range of internal and external constituents from multiple national cultures and jurisdictions in a context characterized by significant levels of task and relationship complexity" (Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2017, p. 553). Short-term study abroad leadership courses were defined as academic courses with curriculum centered on the study and practice of leadership within a global environment (Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012).

Research questions

In order to explore undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership through short-term study abroad leadership courses, this study pursued two overarching research questions.

- RQ1.* How might students' understanding of global leadership take shape through their participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses?
- RQ2.* How might the particular context of short-term study abroad leadership courses provoke students' understanding of global leadership?

Literature review

The literature in the fields of study abroad and student leadership is extensive individually, but research on short-term study abroad leadership courses is limited. This study was grounded in the literature on short-term study abroad, academic leadership courses and short-term study abroad leadership courses. Through this careful review, this study is positioned to contribute to the growing body of literature around undergraduate short-term study abroad leadership courses.

Short-term study abroad

Study abroad has existed within USA higher education as early as the late 1800s, with campuses providing their students the opportunity to study away for academic credit

(Rhodes, Loberg, & Hubbard, 2014). Throughout the early to mid-1900s, study abroad education was heavily influenced by USA governmental priorities related to foreign language development and national defense (Rhodes *et al.*, 2014). It was not until the 1980s that individual colleges and universities began to develop their own programs and viewed it as an emerging trend (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988). The growth in the number of students participating in study abroad grew steadily throughout the 1990s, with 70,727 students studying abroad in 1990 and 154,168 students studying abroad in 2000 (Institute for International Education, 2022). In 2004, the U.S. Congress explored the expansion of study abroad with the goal of having one million students studying abroad within a single academic year (Lincoln Commission, 2005). This goal has yet to be met, although over the last decade there has been a 75% increase in study abroad participation in the United States of America, resulting in nearly 350,000 USA students studying abroad in the 2018–2019 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2020). In 2020, the impact of COVID-19 was acutely felt in the study abroad field, with 81% of students being evacuated in the spring of 2020 and 64% of institutions canceling all programs abroad for fall 2020 (Martel, 2020a, b).

There is debate within the study abroad literature about determining the optimal program duration to enhance student learning (Coker, Heiser, & Taylor, 2018; Dwyer, 2004; Gaia, 2015). Historically, semester and year-long study-abroad programs have been the dominant program models, but in recent years, the emergence of short-term study-abroad programs has occurred. Short-term study-abroad programs are defined as any program that is eight weeks or less in duration (Institute for International Education, 2022). In the 2018–2019 academic year, this accounted for 65% of study abroad programs (Institute for International Education, 2022). Guidance for short-term study abroad programs has been provided by the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) through their *Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad* publication (Spencer & Tuma, 2007).

Academic leadership courses

Academic student leadership courses are one of the most popular methods for facilitating student leadership development (Mitchell & Daugherty, 2019; Rosch & Jenkins, 2020). Across higher education institutions in the USA, there are over 2,000 curricular leadership programs (International Leadership Association, 2020). A recent study conducted a descriptive analysis of these programs to find that there are 13 associate degrees, 241 certificates, 324 bachelor's (including majors and minors), 651 master's and 329 doctoral degrees. These programs represent a wide range of institutional types, academic disciplines, curriculum delivery methods and foundational frameworks (Guthrie, Batchelder, & Hu, 2019). A recent issue of *New Directions for Student Leadership* offered an overview of approaches to leadership from a range of academic disciplines, including agriculture, political science, sociology, business, communication, higher education, engineering, medicine and military science (Sowcik & Komives, 2020).

In a study of academic student leadership courses, it was found that discussion, reflection, self-assessment and case studies were the most common instructional strategies. The most common forms of assessment were individual and group projects, writing assignments and presentations (Jenkins, 2018). While considering many of the current trends in academic student leadership courses, Rosch and Jenkins (2020) offer recommendations for enhancing the academic student leadership curriculum. These recommendations include more connections between leadership learning and practice, structured feedback for both individuals and groups, employing more role-playing or simulations and positioning debrief discussions in context.

Short-term study-abroad leadership courses

Although leadership development may not be a stated outcome of all study abroad programs, there are examples of leadership-focused study abroad programs that have facilitated leadership development for students in international contexts (Niehaus, 2018). Specifically, faculty-led study abroad programs have provided new opportunities for students studying leadership development (Armstrong, 2020; Earnest, 2003; Keese & O'Brien, 2011; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). A number of universities within the USA have established international leadership experiences that take place through study abroad (e.g. School of Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University; the McDonough Center for Leadership & Business at Marietta College; the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond; the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego) (Armstrong, 2020). Short-term study abroad leadership development courses are academic courses with curriculum centered on the study and practice of leadership within a global environment (Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012). Throughout the literature, there are several examples of these programs that demonstrate student learning.

The literature provides two empirical studies of outcomes related to short-term study abroad leadership courses. One study assessed students on a nine-day leadership-oriented study abroad course in Italy (Rosch & Haber-Curran, 2013). This study had students complete a quantitative assessment, in addition to qualitative assessments, through content analysis of student reflection papers. All students demonstrated increases in the quantitative assessments, but the low sample size of ten students did not yield statistically significant results. The content analysis of the reflections yielded three main themes, including immersion within another culture, the pairing of classroom and field experiences and personal development. A more recent study used the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale as a pretest-posttest for a cohort of approximately 20 students over a 5-year period from 2013–2017 (Armstrong, 2020). These students participated in an intercultural perspectives on leadership course that took place in Zambia over five weeks. Statistically, significant gains were found in overall intercultural competency across continuous learning, interpersonal engagement and hardiness, as well as each of the six competencies of self-awareness, exploration, global mindset, relationship interest, positive regard and emotional resilience. Implications for leadership educators included the value of reflection, the importance of sustained engagement with local communities, a commitment to pre- and post-learning and the value of engaged teaching.

Research design

In order to understand the ways in which undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership through participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses, this study utilized a PIP research design. PIP is a modern expansion of phenomenological research design. In order to understand this methodology, it is important to understand the foundations of both qualitative research and phenomenology as a methodology more broadly (Vagle, 2018).

As defined in Boudah (2020), qualitative research involves analyzing actions and documents to determine patterns or themes to better understand a situation. Based on the different traditions of qualitative research, phenomenology would be the most appropriate for understanding the phenomenon of students understanding global leadership in short-term study abroad leadership development courses. This is due to the complex nature of understanding global leadership and the unique context of short-term study abroad leadership courses. Phenomenology can be defined as a philosophical tradition that emphasizes discovering the truth of a phenomenon as it manifests for those experiencing it

(Moran, 2020). PIP was used in this study for a number of reasons, and its commitment to knowledge is ever-changing (Vagle, 2018).

In comparison with other forms of phenomenology, the goal of PIP is not to describe the essence of a phenomenon. It is to describe how the phenomenon is provoked and produced within a context (Vagle, 2018). In his forthcoming edition of *Crafting Phenomenological Research* (2024), Vagle committed to five key principles of PIP:

- (1) PIP entangles post-structural concepts and phenomenological concepts to see what might come of such entanglements.
- (2) Phenomena provoke and produce contexts, individual experience, and the social broadly conceived, and are provoked and produced by the same.
- (3) Methodologically speaking, it moves from “data” to “PIP material”.
- (4) PIP doesn’t determine, but it follows.
- (5) PIP can be a useful tool for all people to engage in everyday contemplation.

This study explored how undergraduate students understood global leadership through short-term study abroad leadership courses. It explored the phenomenon through a PIP research design, which is guided by a five-component process (Vagle, 2018). The components of this process include identifying a phenomenon, data collection design, and analyzing the data using theory. The post-intentional phenomenon that was studied is the development of global leadership skills for undergraduate students participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses.

Participants

In total, 12 participants were identified for this study. They were a mix of undergraduate students and alumni participants. Alumni were invited to participate in the study to provide a more diverse perspective on the phenomenon. Participants were required to meet the following criteria:

- (1) *Short-term*: the course duration was at least two weeks but less than eight weeks, which falls under the definition of short-term study abroad programs (Institute for International Education, 2022);
- (2) *Study abroad*: academic credit is gained through an international course location and counts toward a degree in the United States of America;
- (3) *Course content*: the core content area for the course was leadership, although it may be approached from a discipline-specific or multidisciplinary perspective;
- (4) *Course completion*: at the time of participation in the study, all participants have received final course grades;
- (5) *Enrollment and alumni status*: eligible students include currently enrolled undergraduate students, in addition to any alumni who would have participated in a course within five years of the invitation to participate;
- (6) 18 years of age or older and
- (7) Self-selected to participate in the study.

Recruitment for this study took place in July, 2022. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to three institution-specific contacts to share with students who met the criteria for participation. Students received a recruitment email with information about the study,

compensation information and specific demographic goals for participation. Interested participants completed a registration form to learn more about the opportunity. A diverse sample based on institution type, enrollment status, race and/or ethnicity and gender was selected. Participants were invited via email and were compensated with a \$20 gift card for each completed interview to encourage participation. Participation included two interviews, each lasting between 45 and 60 minutes.

PIP design does not require a minimum number of participants to be able to explore the phenomenon in question (Vagle, 2018). One of the strengths of this study is the diversity of participants. Of the twelve participants interviewed, four identified as men and eight identified as women. Eight of the twelve participants identified as Black, Indigenous or People of Color, which is an overrepresentation of the national data on study abroad participation (Institute of International Education, 2021). Participants represented three different institutions in addition to four different study abroad locations across Europe, Asia and Australia.

Data collection

Interviews provided the primary form of data collection for this study. The interviews were semi-structured in order to allow the phenomenon to be provoked and produced from the conversations. Each participant was interviewed twice, with interviews lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. The first interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and focused on overall understanding of leadership, understanding of global leadership and overall experience in their short-term study abroad leadership course. The second interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and focused on follow-up questions from the first interview, definitions of global leadership and an application of global leadership in the future. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis in alignment with PIP practices.

Phenomenological interviewing techniques include some unique guidelines in addition to planned questions. These include agreeing with the experiences shared by participants, researchers adding their own voice to the interview, making statements in addition to asking questions and seeing mistakes as opportunities (Vagle, 2018). Each of these guidelines helps to develop rapport with the participants as the phenomenon is provoked and produced by both the participant and researcher.

Data analysis

There were three sources of data for this study: participant interviews, researcher post-reflections and theories. Each one of these data points was considered throughout the analysis process. I used Vagle's (2018) whole-part-whole analysis for analyzing participant interviews to identify provocations. Once identified, I worked in and across the PIP methodological research triangle (Vagle, 2024). This is illustrated in Figure 1:

The interviews were initially recorded and transcribed. I read the whole transcription once to understand the broad context and noticed central themes. Then, a line-by-line reading took place, during which the researcher made notes, memos and identified potential follow-up questions. During this process, it was important to notice lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), in addition to connections, disconnects, assumptions of normalities and intensities in the data (Vagle, 2018). Examples of lines of flight included questioning binary thinking, challenging certainties, pursuing curiosities and exploring uncertainties (Vagle, 2018).

During the analytical process, I chose several key concepts or theories to consider. This is known as "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Theories were identified during the design phase of the research based on their potential fit for understanding the phenomenon in question. The theories initially identified at the design phase of my research are leadership for social change (Harper & Kezar, 2021; Higher Education Research Institute,

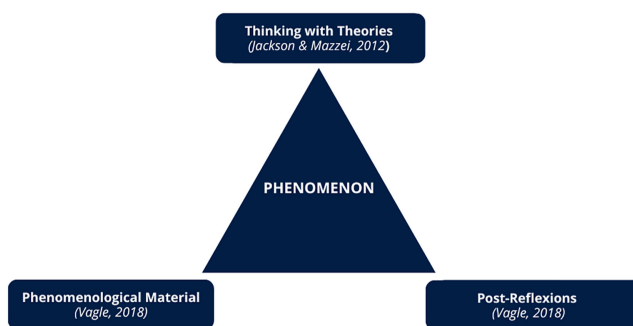
1996), experiential learning through study abroad (Kolb, 1984; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012) and global student leadership development (Widner-Edberg, 2018). During the analysis process, they were revisited to explore the ways in which the phenomenon is provoked, produced and shaped within the context of short-term study abroad leadership courses. In the event that a theory no longer holds relevance at this phase, additional theories may be explored to more deeply understand the phenomenon. This process requires the researcher to be in constant consideration of the theories, the phenomenological data and their interactions throughout the research process (Vagle, 2018). During the analysis process, additional theories considered included the Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006), Intercultural Development (Hammer & Bennett, 2001) and the Pyramid Model of Global Leadership (Osland, 2018).

Post-reflection entries served as an additional form of data that was used in dialog with the phenomenological data and chosen theories (Vagle, 2018). The post-reflections provided access to researcher understandings, assumptions, connections, and disconnections related to the phenomenon. Post-reflection material was used to underscore the importance of specific phenomenological data and how it interacts with the chosen theories. I moved between and among the three components throughout the analysis process as an understanding of the phenomenon emerged (Vagle, 2018).

The final component of the PIP methodology is crafting a text that engages the productions and provocations of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018). Researchers are encouraged to consider multiple forms of how the phenomenon will be shared. It will center on themes related to both productions and provocations. Productions are the ongoing ways a phenomenon is shaped and can be understood (Vagle, 2018). Provocations are the intense ways that a concept may emerge and require analysis, even if it is limited to one line from one interview transcript (Vagle, 2018). As data are reviewed with the research triangle, the researcher identifies which productions and provocations require analysis as they contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon that is being analyzed.

Findings and discussion

In order to discuss the findings of this study, I start with the primary research question: how might students' understanding of global leadership take shape through their participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses? This question will be answered by highlighting and expanding upon a number of productions and provocations that were explored. After discussing the primary research question, I will discuss the secondary research question: how



Source(s): Figure by author

Figure 1.
Post-intentional
phenomenology
methodological
research triangle

might the particular context of short-term study abroad leadership courses provoke students' understanding of global leadership?

The first production of the phenomenon is through developing a leadership identity. Provocations of this production include identifying self as a leader and context matters in understanding leadership. The second production of the phenomenon is the influence of experiences. These experiences are provoked by global and nonglobal experiences through provoking definitions of global leadership. The third production of the phenomenon is the role of short-term study abroad leadership courses in understanding global leadership. Provocations include course structures, reflections leading to understanding, intracultural and intercultural understanding, life-changing experiences, holistic student experiences and defining global leadership in the context of global experiences. The final production is the application of global leadership, which is provoked by global leadership as a lifelong lens, self as a global leader and thinking globally while acting locally. These complex productions of the phenomenon and their provocations can best be understood through a visual representation of how the provocations impact the production of the phenomenon. Figure 2 provides a summary of productions and provocations:



Figure 2. Productions and provocations of undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership

Source(s): Figure by author

RQ1. How might students' understanding of global leadership take shape through their participation in short-term study abroad leadership courses?

In order to answer research question one, we need to take a full perspective on how students understand leadership, global leadership and their application of global leadership. Participants in this study represented currently enrolled college students through alumni within five years of participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses. This diverse set of participants provided varied perspectives related to the phenomenon of understanding global leadership. In discussing this question, there were four primary provocations. They are developing a leadership identity, the role of global experience in understanding global leadership, defining global leadership and the power of reflection. Each of these provocations will be discussed in the context of research question one.

Developing a leadership identity

Each participant in this study was able to identify experiences and an understanding of leadership at an early age. For many, this started as young as elementary school, while for others, this idea became more clear as they entered high school. This leadership awareness was often associated with a role in extracurricular activities such as music, sports or the arts. In attempting to understand global leadership, it is important to first start with leadership. Most of the participants shared that as they entered college or university, their understanding of leadership quickly evolved. For most, this also included recognition that they have the potential for leadership, whether through positional or nonpositional forms of leadership. Several participants highlighted the ways they came to an understanding of leadership.

Role of global experience in understanding global leadership

Before participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses, seven of the twelve participants had little to no global experiences they were able to discuss. This led them to have a limited understanding of global leadership. As Denise puts it, "I don't think I thought too much about global leadership before going abroad."

This finding was significant in a number of ways. First, today's world is more globally connected than ever, and news from around the world is easily accessible. Yet, participants without tangible global experiences had a limited understanding of global leadership. This was surprising as a researcher, as I entered this study assuming that all participants would have had some understanding of global leadership, which would have been enhanced through their global experiences.

Second, the role of global experiences became a differentiator for having an understanding of global leadership for participants in their short-term study abroad leadership courses. Those students without global experiences entered with very little understanding of global leadership and few expectations related to it. Participants with global experiences entered these courses with preconceived notions of understanding global leadership that would be foundational to their course experience. It is important for educators who are facilitating these courses to be aware of these different groupings to be able to craft a curriculum early in the course that addresses both starting points.

Third, global experiences that led to an understanding of global leadership before entering the short-term study abroad course experience existed within global and domestic contexts. While some participants had global experiences that took place abroad, others had significant work experiences with a global focus that led to an understanding of global leadership.

Finally, participants who had little to no global experience were more likely to share that their short-term study abroad leadership program was a life-changing experience or one of

their top experiences in college. Participants who had global experiences before that course were more likely to experience the short-term study abroad course as a meaningful experience but not heightened to the level of being life-changing. This could mean that short-term study abroad leadership course impacts on understanding of global leadership are more significant for participants without previous global experiences when compared to participants who entered the course with global experiences.

Defining global leadership

Definitions of global leadership provide some insights into undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership more broadly. During both interviews, all participants were asked to share their definitions of global leadership before and after their short-term study abroad leadership course experience. The definitions shared were profound in a number of ways, thus reflecting another major outcome of this study.

Participants who had little to no global experience before participating in their short-term study abroad leadership course had little understanding of global leadership, in addition to having limited definitions of global leadership to share. When asked to define global leadership, Kristal said, "I think I really did not even tap into global leadership until I saw this being offered." For participants who had no global experience before participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses, their understanding of global leadership was provoked in very meaningful ways.

For these participants, their understanding of global leadership expanded in a variety of ways. Nasia explained, "I guess I had always thought that global leadership was just for select people [. . .] so it definitely changed my view on who can be a global leader." Ruby came to the understanding that, "I think that really means being mindful of the multiple, multiple, multiple different kinds of intersectionalities of history and culture coming together. Leadership is not necessarily about knowing everything." The definitions of global leadership demonstrated a deep understanding of the complexities that contribute to understanding global leadership. This deeper understanding of global leadership serves as a foundation for being able to engage in global leadership action in the future.

For participants who had previous global experiences before participating in their short-term study abroad leadership courses, their definitions of global leadership were enhanced but showed less change than participants with no global experiences. Participants with previous global experiences entered the experience with some understanding of global leadership already. Denise shared, "Compared to someone who's never traveled at all, it probably made it a little less scary. And I had an understanding that there are different practices I need to follow. I can't just kind of expect everything to be the same as for us." In considering the research question, these participants' understanding of global leadership was still provoked by participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses – but in a different way because of their familiarity with global experiences. This provocation was more likely to challenge previously held ideas, in addition to being supported by a curricular experience that focused on global leadership. Doug shared that "having a structured course curriculum, specifically set on learning global leadership, helped."

Power of reflection

Throughout my conversations with participants, it was very clear that proximity to global experiences did not necessarily lead to an understanding of global leadership. Global experiences, when in the presence of intentional reflection, led to an understanding of global leadership for undergraduate students. This finding is significant for study abroad courses broadly and provides an opportunity for using reflection as a tool for increasing understanding of global leadership.

It was interesting to have multiple participants in the study who had completed multiple study abroad programs before their short-term study abroad leadership course. Rhys had completed two study abroad programs, while Brandon and Denise had each completed one. When asked about how their previous study abroad experiences had impacted their understanding of global leadership, each of the participants shared that they had not considered global leadership in the context of those other programs.

RQ2. How might the particular context of short-term study abroad leadership courses provoke students' understanding of global leadership?

In this study, short-term study abroad leadership courses served as a provocation of the phenomenon of understanding global leadership. The context of this provocation is important to understand how it provokes the phenomenon being studied. In order to discuss this, three provocations related to short-term study abroad leadership courses will be discussed. They are the impact of short-term study abroad, the impact of short-term study abroad leadership courses and life-changing experiences. Each of these provocations impacted the way participants evoked the phenomenon of understanding global leadership.

Impact of short-term study abroad

The role of short-term study abroad provokes an understanding of global leadership in important ways. Short-term study abroad programs place participants in a global context, which creates a new frame of global reference for their experiences. They are removed from the ethnocentrism that characterizes much of American culture and places them in new spaces with distinct cultures, histories and traditions. This becomes the backdrop for understanding global leadership, a backdrop that many participants were surprised to encounter. When discussing her global context, Rhonda shared, "I kind of forgot other countries and histories."

For the participants engaging in the short-term study abroad experience, it creates an environment where they are forced to dive into an experience in a way that semester or year-long study abroad programs don't require. When comparing the short-term experience to longer programs, Don shared, "You're almost stepping into a pool. Then you're settling into it, and you're letting the waters settle and seeing how things are while you're there. But for us [...] we're jumping in; we're diving straight into it." I think this is an important distinction for understanding global leadership because that understanding is happening in a context of both intensity and a short duration. This creates an environment where understanding could be provoked in intense ways, but the impact of that will likely not be fully realized during the program itself. The opportunity to talk to participants with various lengths of time away from the experience was beneficial in this study, as it really let me experience their understanding of global leadership as it continues to take shape.

Impact of short-term study-abroad leadership courses

In addition to the context of short-term study abroad courses overall, the context of short-term study abroad leadership courses is important to distinguish. Leadership outcomes are not commonly associated with study abroad programs, which is why the leadership course content is important. Several participants had completed multiple study abroad experiences, but they felt that only their leadership course provoked their understanding of global leadership. When discussing ways in which a leadership curriculum was different from other courses, Doug shared, "We wouldn't pick up on the subtle differences, and we especially wouldn't learn about global leadership as a whole just from traveling to one place. Having a structured course curriculum, specifically set on learning global leadership, helped."

This focus on the leadership curriculum provoked students' understanding of global leadership in several ways. Kristal acknowledged this understanding of global leadership in honest ways by saying, "I knew cultures were different, but honestly, it is a complete 180. I went from really not thinking about it at all to [...] it's here right in front of me." This experience was particularly true for participants who had not had global experiences before their short-term study abroad leadership course. Without global experiences, the phenomenon of understanding global leadership remained unprovoked.

One of the most significant examples of short-term study abroad leadership courses provoking the phenomenon was through participants' understanding of themselves as having the capacity to be global leaders. Expanding on Nasia's earlier quote, she shared, "I had always thought that global leadership was kind of more just for select people. I don't know why I ever thought that but it was just not for people like me. So I think [I am] realizing that [...] it's not so selective." I believe that the context of short-term study abroad leadership courses contributes to the understanding of global leadership being shaped from a personal identification due to the experiential nature of these course experiences. Participants were learning in a global context as they were practicing many of the elements of global leadership as well.

Life-changing experiences

An additional important context for understanding global leadership through short-term study abroad leadership courses is the perception that, for most participants, it was seen as a life-changing experience. The overwhelmingly positive association with the experience could lead to a tendency for participants to also associate their understanding of global leadership positively. As Brandon shared, "It was one of the highlights of my life – maybe the highlight of my life. It was absolutely incredible."

As I consider how this perception of a life-changing experience can provoke an understanding of global leadership, there is caution in overestimating one's understanding. This overestimation could be a result of the positive experience of the course being conflated with an understanding of global leadership. Participant interviews indicated that most participants had both a positive experience and developed an understanding of global leadership. It is important to acknowledge that participants could have a positive experience in their short-term study abroad leadership course and have a limited understanding of global leadership.

Implications for leadership educators

This study was conducted through a PIP research design. The purpose of the research was to understand the ways in which the phenomenon of undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership was shaped and provoked for participants through short-term study abroad leadership courses. While the findings of this study are not generalizable based on the sample size, the experiences of the participants do have implications for practice, policy and future research.

Incorporate global experiences into academic leadership programs

The continued rise of undergraduate major and minor programs in leadership provides an opportunity for practitioners and educators to continue to evolve the curricula of these programs. The recommendation to incorporate global experiences into academic leadership programs is critical if programs hope to develop an understanding of global leadership. As demonstrated in this study, participants who did not have global experiences had a limited understanding of global leadership as the phenomenon had not been provoked. This was

explored through the production of influences from experiences including the corresponding provocations.

These global experiences do not solely need to take place in global contexts. Global experiences can be built into the leadership curriculum in several ways. I recommend that all academic leadership programs include a global leadership course, or minimally a global leadership component, in their curriculum. Programs can incorporate leadership theories, frameworks, and examples that take place outside of a USA context with an opportunity to compare the ways in which leadership can operate differently in a global context. Additionally, leadership programs should acknowledge the inherent global power dynamics that can exist while teaching about leadership from a USA higher education and Western perspective, which may not be able to be applied in global contexts as effectively. For leadership programs that use a leadership for social change framework, this can be expanded into global contexts as students progress (Harper & Kezar, 2021; Higher Education Research Institute, 1996).

By incorporating global experience into academic leadership programs, the likelihood of graduates having an understanding of global leadership would increase by provoking the phenomenon. Academic leadership programs can be a major component of a campus working toward developing leaders. By incorporating global experiences, academic leadership programs can serve as a model for other academic programs to complicate the ways in which their discipline is covered from a global perspective.

Curriculum provokes understanding of global leadership

As leadership educators and practitioners develop short-term study abroad leadership course curriculum, it is important to recognize that the curriculum will be one of the key provocations of understanding global leadership. This was demonstrated through provocations related to the power of reflection and defining global leadership, as proximity to global experiences did not necessarily lead to an understanding of global leadership. As one participant shared, having a structured course curriculum set on learning global leadership helped advance their understanding. These findings continue to build on the role experiential learning and reflection can play in leadership education (Guthrie & Jones, 2012).

Curriculum considerations could include the balance of academic sessions compared to experiential activities, the role of engaging with local community partners and the incorporation of reflective practices. Simply being abroad in a global context will not necessarily result in students developing an understanding of global leadership, as evidenced by participants who not only completed multiple study abroad experiences but only understood global leadership within their short-term study abroad leadership course. This creates an opportunity for leadership educators and practitioners to consider the ways in which their curriculum can provide more provocations for understanding global leadership.

One way this could be done is through the intentional design of reflective activities that focus on global leadership. For example, students could complete a pre-departure reflection that asks them to consider their definitions and understanding of global leadership. This understanding could be revisited through reflection assignments during and at the end of the course experience. Personal global leadership development plans could also be facilitated to incorporate goal setting and reflections about how students hope to grow as global leaders through participation in their course experiences. These kinds of practices can also be personalized for the different levels of global experience that participants have when entering short-term study abroad leadership courses, as discussed in the production of influences from experiences.

An additional way that the curriculum can provoke an understanding of global leadership is by ensuring that leadership is deeply connected to the location that has been chosen for study. Nasia's course experience, for example, focused on women's leadership in Sweden and incorporated multiple female leader guest speakers who spoke with students about their experiences in leadership in Sweden. This provided a learning opportunity for students to compare this to the leadership experiences of women within a USA context. The ability to incorporate specific guest lectures, site visits and readings that deeply connect to the local leadership context will push students toward more complex understandings of global leadership.

Funding for short-term study-abroad leadership courses

Across higher education in the United States of America, colleges and universities are aspiring to graduate globally-minded students with strong leadership skills (Helms & Brajkovic, 2017; Sowcik & Komives, 2020). This is occurring within a context where both internationalization efforts and leadership skills are listed as institutional priorities in strategic plans and mission statements (Helms & Brajkovic, 2017; Meacham & Gaff, 2006). Short-term study abroad leadership courses exist at the intersection of these institutional priorities and provide a way for students to deeply develop in each of those areas.

To fully realize the potential for short-term study abroad leadership courses, institutions must invest resources in these courses. This builds on the evidence from the provocations of impact of short-term study abroad, impact of short-term study abroad leadership courses and life-changing experiences. It is the context of short-term study abroad leadership courses that can provoke students' understanding of global leadership in meaningful ways.

This investment could be in the form of institutions providing grants for faculty members to create short-term study abroad leadership courses. Another opportunity would be for global organizations to partner with institutions to create courses in which they could host groups of students for short-term study abroad leadership courses, which would achieve their own possible goals related to youth leadership development or, even potentially, the recruitment of a more globally diverse workforce. By providing funding incentives for faculty and instructors to create and deliver these courses, the number of students participating in short-term study abroad leadership courses could be significantly impacted. A number of universities within the USA already have established international leadership experiences that take place through study abroad (e.g. the School of Leadership Studies, Gonzaga University; the McDonough Center for Leadership & Business, Marietta College; the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, the University of Richmond; the School of Leadership and Education Sciences, the University of San Diego) (Armstrong, 2020). Yet, there are many more opportunities for institutions to create these opportunities.

With the goal of increasing the number of students who graduate with globally-minded and strong leadership skills, providing financial support for students can increase the number of students who are able to benefit from these courses. Some campuses, like the University of California, Santa Cruz, have created online articles specifically for first-generation and low-income students to offer advice on how to study abroad (Garcia, 2020). Compared to full-semester or year-long study abroad programs, short-term study abroad leadership courses inherently provide a more cost-effective alternative for students looking to participate in study abroad. This also means that scholarships to support participation can have even more of an impact on the already lowered total cost of attendance when considering both time and money. By subsidizing the costs for students to participate in these courses, it will help increase the number and diversity of students graduating as globally-minded leaders.

Short-term study-abroad leadership course research

This study aimed to fill a gap in the literature related to what is known about short-term study abroad leadership courses by focusing on students' understanding of global leadership (Beatty & Manning-Ouellette, 2022; Armstrong, 2020; Earnest, 2003; Montgomery & Arensdorf, 2012; Niehaus, 2018; Rosch & Haber-Curran, 2013). While this study highlighted some of the ways that students' understanding of global leadership was provoked by short-term study abroad leadership courses, there still remains a need for more research related to these experiences. Within the interview data in this study, a range of experiences, both positive and negative, opened many possibilities for future research. Additionally, the diversity of the participants in this study highlighted several additional research needs.

The participants of this study represented three different institutions, current students through alumni and a range of demographic identities. While the diversity of these participants was strength of this study, it would be important for future research to focus on the experiences of students from specific identities within short-term study abroad leadership courses. For example, studying the experiences of Students of Color in short-term study abroad leadership courses could inform the way that courses center curriculum on issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism within global contexts. Another example would be how first-generation college students experience short-term study abroad leadership courses, as first-generation students may be less likely to participate in study-abroad courses or less likely to view themselves as leaders. This is supported by research that has demonstrated that first-generation students are less likely to engage in high-impact practices than their peers (Finley & McNair, 2013). Further research to understand the diverse experiences of students in these courses can help improve and enhance the impacts of these courses on college students.

Considering the impact of global experiences on the production of undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership, further research could explore differences between students who have completed academic leadership courses before a short-term study abroad leadership courses and those who have not. This research could explore whether students who have not completed an academic leadership course have a more profound learning experience than those who have completed academic leadership coursework. This inquiry could have implications for curriculum design for multidisciplinary leadership courses with students who are and are not enrolled in academic leadership majors or minors.

Limitations

Validity in qualitative research has been associated with trustworthiness, credibility, relevance and confirmability (Freeman *et al.*, 2007). In PIP, validity is treated differently and addressed as part of the post-reflection process in an effort to gain understanding rather than make generalizable claims (Vagle, 2018). Phenomenological methodology addresses validity and trustworthiness with a focus on sustained engagement of the researcher in addition to an openness in approaching the phenomenon demonstrated through time spent studying the phenomenon, collecting data and analyzing data (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008; Vagle, 2018; van Manen, 1997). In PIP, post-reflections are a way to increase the researcher's sustained engagement, thus strengthening the validity of the findings (Vagle, 2018). In terms of generalizability, the goal of PIP is to understand a phenomenon that is unstable and ever-changing. Therefore, results are not meant to be generalizable but a contribution of an understanding of the phenomenon that is ever-changing (Vagle, 2018).

Conclusion

This study examined undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership by short-term study abroad leadership courses using a PIP research framework. During this exploration of the phenomenon, participant interviews, thinking with theory and researchers' post-reflections all contributed to the phenomenological data as they produced and provoked the phenomenon.

The findings showed the complex and profound ways in which undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership was produced and provoked through short-term study abroad leadership courses. Productions included developing a leadership identity, influences of experiences, role of short-term study abroad leadership courses on understanding of global leadership and application of global leadership. Participants represented three institutions, a diverse range of identities and a diverse range of global experiences through their short-term study abroad leadership courses. This resulted in understandings of global leadership that, while varied, were profoundly provoked through the short-term study abroad leadership courses experience.

This study contributed to the literature related to the fields of study abroad and student leadership education through focusing on undergraduate students' understanding of global leadership through short-term study-abroad leadership courses. It contributes to the literature by providing qualitative narratives that contribute to the deeper recognition of students' understanding of global leadership. The diversity of the participants is a contribution to the literature, as it centers diverse voices within the literature related to the fields of study abroad and student leadership education. Finally, the study contributed to the literature with a focus on both current undergraduate students but also included the perspectives of alumni to provide a wider range of perspectives on the phenomenon of study.

When conducting work in leadership, leadership educators must maintain hope that even in the midst of unjust systems, there remains an opportunity for leadership education to educate the next generation of leaders that will address those systems (Bishundat, Phillip, & Gore, 2018). It was a privilege to have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of the participants in this study. It was clear that the short-term study abroad leadership courses provoked their understanding of global leadership in profound ways. While many participants expressed positive experiences with their short-term study abroad leadership courses, one participant went so far as to say, "So people need this [. . .] We're focused on people that learn something and come back [. . .]" Recommendations generated from this study can be applied across institutions of USA higher education to increase the number of graduates who are globally minded in their leadership. It is my hope that this study contributes to a world in which our most pressing local and global issues are being addressed by those with globally-minded leadership.

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Corresponding author

Evan Witt can be contacted at: evanwitt@umn.edu

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