CHAPTER 8

Study Abroad as Self-Authorship: Globalization and Reconceptualizing College and Career Readiness

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Introduction

Reflecting on current trends impacting higher education today, it is undeniable that pressure exists on institutions of higher education to fulfill the demands and expectations of students to acquire global competencies through curricular and co-curricular global experiences (Hovland 2009). According to the Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement 2012), one of the fundamental duties of US higher education is to prepare students "to live and work in a society that increasingly operates across international borders" (p. 5).

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The literature signals that like nearly all institutions of higher education, community colleges are not isolated from the effects of globalization and they continue to evolve grappling with the idea of becoming global actors (Cohen 2011; Zhang 2011). Responding to globalization trends, community colleges continue to work effortlessly to become catalysts for greater educational access, in particular, promoting economic and occupational mobility for non-traditional students (Valeau and Raby 2007; Raby and Valeau 2009). Study abroad is one of the most commonly implemented practices to move internationalization efforts forward and has been offered at community colleges for nearly four decades (Raby 2008; Institute of International Education 2014a). This chapter threads together aspects of educational policy and research that may seem tenuous at first. To begin, we consider *study abroad* in terms of a theory of *self-authorship*. We then formulate self-authorship as its own kind of *college and career readiness*. Our reconceptualization of readiness calls for broadening what is deemed essential in being prepared for college and career, asserting that global literacy is a necessary competency (i.e., *global readiness*). Moreover, in this chapter we focus on underserved and overlooked students, students of color, among them, who often come from disadvantaged backgrounds that entail generations of marginalization.

Our argument is that study abroad entails self-authorship, which translates into an exceptional kind of readiness for college and career that is important, particularly for racially/ethnically diverse groups. Our aim is fourfold. First, we offer a theoretical framework for future research into the interconnections between study abroad, self-authorship, and readiness for students of color. Second, we deepen educational policy discourse on *readiness* by making a vital connection between study abroad and self-authorship. Readiness policies often envision broad horizons for students made possible in the confines of the classroom. We take a more expansive view of readiness by advancing a global mindset about educational opportunities and "classrooms" for students of color.

Importantly, we delve into the question of access to study abroad. Students of color are often left out of study abroad opportunities due to limited finances and inadequate program recruiting, as well as student fears and negative pressures by family and friends (Hembroff and Rusz 1993; Dawson 2000; Dessof 2006; McMurtrie 2007; Brux and Fry 2010). We do not tackle these problems directly. Instead, our third aim is to give study abroad programs and community college campuses a timely reason to address barriers by understanding study abroad as a vital kind of

readiness education for students of color: readiness to return to campus to complete a degree and readiness to meet the challenges of a global environment. Fourth, our hope is to encourage research into the nexus of study abroad, as self-authorship, for underserved students as a question of global readiness for college and career.

Globalization, Educational Policy, and Study Abroad

In November 1979, the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies issued a report, titled: "Strength through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capabilities" (Fersh and Fitchen 1981). The Commission, comprised of "leaders in education, government, language and area studies, and business and labor" (Ibid.) advanced recommendations and themes that resonate today: students must acquire foreign language skills for a global community; students must prepare for global citizenship; and students must meet the challenges of a global economy. In present-day parlance, education entails global *readiness*, from college to career.

Notably, the Commission singled out community colleges for their particular role in international education in light of the diversity of student populations and their overall numbers in post-secondary education. Fersh and Fitchen report that the Commission "urges that community colleges … enlarge their international commitment and enlarge the staff development necessary to strengthen their commitment to foreign language and international studies" (p. 14).

Recent educational policy continues to affirm and advance a commitment to global education as study abroad. In 2005, the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Commission proposed a "bold vision for the United States," namely, "Send one million students to study abroad in a decade" (Commission of the Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program 2005, p. v). In the report, *Global Competencies and National Needs*, the Commission establishes that "study abroad is a powerful educational tool." The report continues, "Overwhelming numbers of graduates who have studied abroad agree that the experience enhanced their interest in academic work, helped them acquire important career 'skill sets,' and continued for decades to influence their perspective on world events" (p. vi).

Important for community colleges given their diverse student populations, the Commission called for greater participation by minorities, first generation students, and other diverse students. In addition, they recognized that traditional study abroad programs might not be suitable to fit

the needs and expectations a growing population of non-traditional students, older than 25, working full-time, and often providing the majority of economic support in the household that enrolls in community colleges (McMullen and Penn 2011). In short, the Commission identified the benefits of study abroad for traditionally underserved students in higher education—American Indian, African American, Hispanic, low-income, among others—and the challenges that often attend their pursuit of an education, some of which we noted earlier.

The numbers help to illustrate the challenges and their effect on participation. In 2012–2013, White students made up nearly four-fifths of study abroad participants in the USA. By comparison for 2012–2013, Hispanics/Latino Americans made up 7.6 % of students of color who studied abroad followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders at 7.3 %, 5.3 % African Americans, 3 % mixed race, and American Indian/Alaska Native comprised 0.5 % (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers n.d.; Institute of International Education 2014b).

On a brighter side, research conducted on students of color underscores that study abroad is linked to higher retention rates (Metzger 2006), promotes positive changes in self-image, reassures academic and professional goals, builds positive attitudes about their roles in society, encourages students to be more involved with faculty, and increases community participation (Kuh 2003). These findings draw attention to the potential of study abroad as a promising educational initiative, and provide further reason to increase participation in study abroad by students of color.

A Closer Look at the Literature

Community colleges are not immune from the demands and effects of globalization. Instead, they continue to grapple with the need to become global actors and educators (Cohen 2011; Zhang 2011), in order to provide greater access, and promote economic and occupational mobility for traditionally underserved students (Valeau and Raby 2007; Raby and Valeau 2009).

Researchers have documented higher levels of student engagement; second-language gains, increased cross-cultural adaptability, and intercultural sensitivity are associated with study abroad (Black and Duhon 2006; Baker-Smemoe et al. 2014; Raby et al. 2014).

Unfortunately, very little is known about nexus of educational commitments—student access, readiness, and study abroad—at community colleges, let alone the role of self-authorship within this nexus. A review of

the literature shows that research on study abroad and community colleges is limited to a fewer than a dozen publications—articles, chapters, reports, and dissertations (Emert and Pearson 2007; Raby and Valeau 2007; Raby 2008; Niser 2010; Amani 2011; Drexler and Campbell 2011; Willis 2012; Raby et al. 2014). When research examines this nexus, it more often focuses on quantity instead of quality: demographics (background and numbers) and geographic (the diversity of study destinations) (Raby et al. 2014).

One telling figure is the level of student participation in study abroad at community colleges, when compared with student participation at four-year institutions. While the former enroll nearly half of all undergraduate students in the country (American Association of Community Colleges 2015), community college students represent only 2 % of all college students studying abroad (Institute of International Education 2014a, b). Although a comparatively small number of community college students participate in study abroad, the literature notes that community-college study abroad students report gains in international literacy (Raby 2008; Arden-Ogle 2009; Amani 2011; Willis 2012); knowledge of the global economy (Niser 2010); citizenship skills (Frost and Raby 2009); intercultural awareness skills (Emert and Pearson 2007), strong connections with faculty, academic persistence, and success (Raby et al. 2014). However, as stated by Raby (2012), "it is alarming that study abroad remains a peripheral community college program" (p. 181).

Current Trends in Study Abroad

One strategic means of advancing the college completion agenda for a global knowledge economy has been increasing the number of graduates in career technical education (CTE), particularly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Taylor et al. 2012; Zamani-Gallaher et al. 2015). Recent figures for study abroad participation indicate an increase among STEM majors of 8.8 % between 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 (Institute of International Education 2014a). In fact, 23 % of all study abroad participants are STEM majors, which accounts for the highest number of education abroad participants by field of study. This pattern of the majority of study abroad students pursuing STEM fields holds true for two- and four-year institutions (Institute of International Education 2014a). The growth in American students studying abroad has largely been in the STEM areas. This is the first time STEM majors outnumber study abroad students in other major fields. Oguntoyinbo (2015)

attributes the growth of STEM students pursuing education abroad to the impact of globalization on the curriculum, the flexibility of offerings, as well as concerted efforts of faculty and administrators to raise student awareness of the value of international study opportunities. In short, those who major in STEM are more competitive in the labor market for better jobs and there are now more study abroad programs in STEM at community colleges and their four-year counterparts.

A Theory of Self-Authorship

In this section, we tie together the tenuous strands of study abroad, self-authorship, and global readiness—to mix metaphors and advance an educational policy nexus that we hope will offer a basis for community colleges to conceptualize, design, and promote study abroad with underserved students in mind. Furthermore, we endeavor to encourage new lines of research (given the dearth that is available on community college study abroad programming) that deepens our understanding of the value of study abroad in fostering individual global readiness by way of a truly global education.

When considering the expectations of what college degrees should provide, there is public consensus that a college education should produce high quality professionals, engaged citizens, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and above all, individuals who are able to succeed in a global, diverse, and interconnected world (Taylor 2004; Hadis 2005; Tillmann 2010). Unfortunately, and generating great distress, it is argued that many students lack these valuable skills, and graduates come out of college with limited exposure to diverse perspectives and lack the skills needed to cope with current challenges in our society (Baxter Magolda 2008).

Baxter Magolda (2008) notes that many graduates today have accumulated a bulk of knowledge, but lack the ability to make effective decisions, and have been trained only to follow directions. In Baxter Magolda's words, graduates have not developed self-authorship, defined as the "internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda 2008, p. 69). Baxter Magolda affirms that in their twenties, students struggle to answer three major questions associated with the development of self-authorship: Who am I? How do I know? How do I want to construct relationships with others? (Baxter Magolda 2009). Using the analogy of a roadmap, Baxter Magolda (2008) describes self-authorship as a developmental capacity process that embodies three phases (a) external formulas, (b) crossroads, and, (c) self-authorship.

The first phase, external formulas, describes a time in which individuals rely on external forces, voices, and authorities to define their identity, explore their beliefs, and establish their relationships with others. In this phase, individuals heavily rely on others (e.g., parents, teachers, bosses) to make decisions and to resolve issues.

The second phase, the crossroads, defines a point where individuals begin to make decisions on their own relying on their internal voice. In this phase, individuals are torn between following their internal voice and listening to external formulas, and begin to recognize the importance of listening and cultivating their internal voice.

The last phase is self-authorship. This is the culmination of the journey toward development, with individuals listening, cultivating, and trusting their internal voice. Following your intuition is a key determinant, with individuals gaining confidence on what to believe, how to view themselves, and how to act on relationships. At its core, the transition from authority dependence to self-authorship entails questioning trusted sources of authority, it requires that individuals acquire new perspectives, and it pushes individuals to construct new beliefs that serve as the foundation or philosophy of life.

Self-Authorship and Study Abroad

In her text, *Black Passports: Travel Memoirs as a Tool for Youth Empowerment*, Evans (2014) describes study abroad as a mechanism for holistic youth development, self-empowerment, and a sense of agency. Evans argues that education abroad for students of color in particular provides a foundation of knowledge and skills needed for college and career competence and opportunity to find voice. In some respects, study abroad is ready-made to foster and even provoke a student's endeavor of self-authorship. From the very beginning, a student draws on a combination of outside encouragement and an inner drive or predisposition to venture out into the world. For marginalized groups, personal characteristics such as race, gender, and ethnicity can affect the predisposition of participants to "seek particular experiences (e.g., jobs, relationships, travel)" (Baxter Magolda 2008, p. 282; Leon 2013).

Then, once overseas, a student is the proverbial stranger in a strange new land. A student may wrestle with the question of how to view himself or herself. Research on self-authorship claims that, introducing college students to complex situations, promote the developing of their identity.

Pizzolato (2005) calls these complex situations provocative experiences, which offer an ideal scenario for students to deal with the complexities of adult life. Research has demonstrated that students are not likely to develop self-authorship in college because "institutions of higher education did not provide sufficiently provocative experiences that disrupted students student's equilibrium such that they felt compelled to consider and begin to construct new conceptions of self" (Pizzolato 2003, p. 798).

Building New Relationships

Forming relationships is one of the main concerns that individuals must face in order to develop self-authorship. Baxter Magolda (2008) points out that "self-authorship enhances, rather than constraints, relationships" (p. 282). Baxter Magolda argues that self-authorship fosters relationships that are more authentic because these relationships often help individuals pursue their internal commitment by listening to their internal voice.

A student is confronted with different contexts and ways of thinking, challenging him or her to evaluate and construct knowledge and judgments about culture, identity, politics, morality, and everyday ways of doing things. In all study abroad as self-authorship can mean self-confidence and autonomy as the student fashions an internal identity separate from, but sensitive to external factors. One important element is to trust your internal voice, recognizing that reality is beyond your control, but individuals can use their internal voice to shape that reality (Baxter Magolda 2009). Baxter Magolda (2008) states that as individuals develop toward self-authorship, they begin to recognize and identify their own voice. This helps individuals establish beliefs, priorities, goals, and discover themselves, while nurturing relationhsips that are aligned with their own voice.

Study Abroad as Readiness

How then does self-authorship relate to readiness? Self-authorship and readiness may seem to be worlds apart. One has an existential, phenomenological, and psychological feel to it. The other concerns the real world of academic degrees and jobs, and income and well-being. A closer look shows just how similar and even aligned they are. To navigate a global environment, math (and reading and science) skills are necessary, but they are not nearly enough. In 2010, the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) helped to formulate the Illinois College and

Career Readiness (CCR) Pilot Program in more basic and vital terms. Drawing on David Conley (2005, 2007, 2009, 2010), OCCRL advanced the "Conley model," which entails four key concepts toward college and career readiness: academic behaviors; content knowledge; cognitive strategies; and contextual skills and awareness (Baber et al. 2010). The Conley model is the foundation for acquiring math skills, among others, *and* for using these skills meaningfully and effectively in the real world.

1. *Academic behavior* includes "the ability of a student to be organized, possess study skills, and work within a group dynamic."
2. *Content knowledge* includes "skills, concepts and principles" that are foundational to the subject at hand.
3. *Cognitive strategies* include "problem solving, interpretation, precision, and accuracy" (Ibid.).
4. *Contextual skills and awareness means* "college knowledge" (Conley 2010, p. 72), and includes understanding the "campus system" and learning to navigate college culture (Baber et al. 2010).

The blending of CCR and the Conley model means helping to foster capable and confident students who can apply subject matter to the world beyond the classroom. CCR as an exercise in global navigation suffers from a basic problem, however, since the classroom environment must stand in for the world. OCCRL (Bragg et al. 2011) spoke to this challenge by emphasizing a Conley model in which students are "co-facilitators in their learning and development," which must ultimately take them beyond the confines of the school. What kind of global horizon does the world around them inscribe and/or reinforce on a daily basis?

One consideration is the effect study abroad as a new kind of classroom conceived as an endeavor of self-authorship has for students of color. To illustrate the promise and the impact, we draw on a recent study by Leon (2013), *Examining the Concept of Self-Authorship: Black Males Who Study Abroad*. While Leon's focus was undergraduate students at a four-year university, his conversations with African Americans—Mark, Reggie, David, and Logan—who had just completed study abroad programs, introduce voices and lived experiences into our more abstract discussion. While the present chapter is merely a prelude and commentary for future research, we hope to show that the story of study abroad (i.e., its promise and effects) is best told by the students themselves as self-authors; and self-authorship as a kind of self-education, which is often the very best kind

of education. The following highlights study abroad experiences drawn from a larger study of 20 African American males who were first time in any college attendees and community college transfer students at four-year institutions participating in study abroad (Leon 2013).

On Academic Behavior. One of the challenges at first was the whole independence aspect because like I said I'm a passive person generally and I'm a person that waits for instructions from somebody to tell me what to do, but that person wasn't there. It was a lot of me becoming more self-reliant. I got to cook for myself, went to the grocery store by myself, took myself to the hospital, it was just like one of those sort of things (Mark).

On Content Knowledge. When it comes to going to other countries, you hear a lot about it. But when you actually study abroad, you get to come to your own conclusions because you're actually seeing it first-hand and you can make your conclusions about what you see versus what someone told you (Mark). We went to Greece during the protest; it was immediately after the crisis. We went to the national bank, and you know, we had a better understanding of what was going on in Greece because we saw in the news the protests and riots, and everyone looks angry and you didn't have any idea of what was going, but things weren't like that, they were so different. The media portrayed the things very different from how they were and we were able to discover that in our own and form our own opinions (Reggie).

On Cognitive Strategies. When you go into study abroad, you have more interaction, especially with people that study abroad. The one aspect that changed it was that now I am less likely to judge people on their appearance, especially international students. Study abroad opened my eyes to other cultures, to what they go through, and what it is like to live there, it also changed my perspective in judging someone from their perception or you might think about them at first glance, you never know what people are like until you meet them (Reggie). I was more willing to make a decision on my own and not have a bunch of people backing you up, a group of people. Study abroad helped my individual thought process, helping me make decisions by myself without anyone telling me what to do (David).

On Contextual Skills and Awareness. Study abroad helped me to realize that I should be more adventurous, that you can take a risk, and the majority of time you will be okay. Through simple things like doing something on your own, meeting other people, you might not know

how people will respond to you, but it will be fine (Reggie). I feel like the experience as a whole does that because you're there by yourself, you have to like recreate your group of friends and recreate everything and so much has to do with yourself image because you're meeting all these people for the first time and you can really kind of portray whatever you want. Study abroad is a really nice tool to help you deal with self-image (Mark).

On Career Readiness. I learned how to network. [Study abroad] opens up a door of possibilities for you. Just two weeks ago I got a job offer from over there and I'm over here, don't limit yourself (Logan).

Closing Thoughts

In 1839, at the age of 20, Herman Melville took to sea. For the next five years, he worked his way across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He lived among the Typee on Marquesas Island, traveled to Tahiti, and ended up in Honolulu before he returned home to New England. He wrote along the way and for the rest of his life. From this brief biography, two facts seem clear. First, Melville's authorship of great novels was possible only through his travels. Second, his travels *were* his education—education as *study abroad*.

The epigram of this chapter is especially fitting given a concern for global readiness. Melville writes, "having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore … " Translated into present-day educational policy, the concern is that underserved and marginalized students, often *students of color*, are especially not in the full fold of participation when it concerns study abroad programming.

Melville also charts a solution to the problem. In light of no prospects at home, he continues, "I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world." The challenge today is globalization. Even in Melville's day, the world seemed to be shrinking and intensifying through interconnection and competition between nations, economies, and people. Melville did not wait for the world to call upon him. Instead, he waded into the world in order to write his own story. Today, we might call this endeavor *study abroad*. Study abroad students have the opportunity for *self-authorship* and as a result *readiness* to face the world. In sum, considering "study away" opportunities (Sobania 2015) for global learning within one's local context fosters college and career readiness. With study abroad, community colleges can play an integral role in connecting the

global and the local to develop students' competencies, which, in effect, contribute to their global readiness.

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