Education for Responsible Future Leaders: International Experience and Civic Engagement

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Does international experience lead to more positive attitudes towards civic engagement among college students? We utilized a two-pronged approach to examine the relationships between global education and civic engagement. The results suggest that empathy and cultural intelligence enhance students' civic engagement, including community involvement and career aspirations to work for employers who demonstrate corporate social responsibilities (CSR) in the local community. In addition, we found that only when students develop more empathy and cultural intelligence, then they will have higher civic engagement. These findings suggest the need to carefully designing a curriculum that translates students' international experience into civic engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional educational goals of short-term study abroad programs generally are to improve students' knowledge of the subject taught in the course, enhance students' understanding of the host country culture as well as build students' confidence in international travels (Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010). Recently, the service learning component has been added to study abroad programs. These international service-learning programs have gained popularity as more and more higher education institutions are recognizing the importance of developing students into future leaders with a global mindset who are also civically engaged (Le & Raven, 2015). Responsible global leadership competency encompasses the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of service learning that can increase students' ethical literacy, self-development, community building, and global mindset (Lee, 2017; Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011). A few pioneering studies suggest that by incorporating community-service learning activities in an international setting, the study-abroad programs may encourage students to develop a sense of global citizenship and hopefully demonstrate greater willingness to participate in community services (Drnarch, Ruby, Kluender, Palomba, & Ursick, 2016; Larsen and Searle, 2017).

The trend of globalization has shaped the strong focus in international education in recent decades. However, the recent political climate suggests a reverse trend of globalization due to the rising concerns of how rapid globalization has taken away the public interests in domestic affairs (Witt, 2016). Similarly, it is intriguing how international experience, such as one attained through a study-abroad program, enhances students' willingness to participate in community affairs. One may argue that the experience gained outside one's home country can enhance students' awareness of global issues, but does not necessarily foster their interests in the local community.

The current study examined the seemingly incompatible focus of interests between global education and civic engagement in the local community. A two-pronged approach is utilized. First, a service-learning component was incorporated in a study-abroad program to China. Prior to the trip, the students were given a cultural orientation and information on the prevalent societal problem of migration in China. The influx of migrant rural workers to China's coastal cities is a relatively recent phenomenon which resulted from the rapid economic development in the last three decades (Chen & Feng, 2012; Zheng, 2005). The presence of migrant workers satisfied the need for cheap labor, but also presented much greater social issues due to the traditional household registry (hu-kou) system which excludes these migrant workers and their children from social and educational benefits in the urbanized cities (Chen & Feng, 2012; Zheng, 2005). Learning about the needs of migrant children in a city, the study-abroad participants took the initiative and solicited donations from student organizations in addition to preparing a two-hour English lesson to be taught in an elementary school which mainly serves low-income migrant workers' children. Through the literature review and students' reflection, we developed a set of hypotheses for probing the association between students' international experience and their attitude towards responsible leadership and civic engagement in a local community.

Second, we administered a campus-wide survey on students' international experience and attitudinal measures to test the hypotheses. The regression analyses of the moderating effects of empathy and cultural intelligence support that not all international experience can lead to higher civic engagement. Only when students develop more empathy and cultural intelligence, then they will have higher civic engagement. These findings suggest the need to carefully design a curriculum that translates students' international experience into desirable outcomes, including empathy and cultural intelligence, which in turn will help develop students into responsible future leaders.

This paper unfolds as follows. First, we review relevant literature and discuss students' reflection on the international service learning program. Second, the methodology is introduced to test the hypotheses. Third, we discuss results and offer suggestions for the curriculum development in management education.

International Service-learning Projects and Civic Engagement Service-learning Projects and Learning Outcomes

"Service-learning or community-based learning" and "diversity/global learning" are two of the ten high-impact educational practices supported by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Kuh, 2008). Service-learning encompasses a field-based experience where students apply what they learn in the classroom into real life situations through reflective practices. The goal is to prepare citizens who are engaged with the community in which the university serves. Service learning programs increase civic engagement, foster critical thinking, and enhance civic and social responsibility among college students (Nokes et al., 2005). Furthermore, service-learning experiences transform students, especially in civic engagement-oriented programs, and foster their understanding of inequality within communities (Enfield & Collins, 2008). Service-learning experiences help develop students' sense of empathy and nurture students' psychosocial development, which includes developing mature interpersonal relationships (Armstrong, 2005). While much has been reported about the learning outcomes of domestic service-learning projects, more research is needed about the impact of international service-learning and study abroad programs (Mayhew et al., 2016).

Study Abroad Programs and Learning Outcomes

Diversity and global learning, the other high-impact educational practice relevant to this study, emphasizes the investigation and exploration of differences and inequalities that challenge humanities around the globe through programs such as a study abroad trip (Kuh, 2008). Study abroad has been found to enhance intercultural awareness and competence, tolerance, and interest in political and cross cultural issues, promote positive attitudes towards cultural pluralism and open-mindedness (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013), as well as positively influence civic values and community participation (Lott, 2013). Students who participate in study abroad programs develop a deeper understanding of diverse cultures. This cultural intelligence becomes an essential skill sought by companies and organizations as they compete in global markets. More and more employers seek individuals who have the ability to develop and maintain reciprocal relationships within communities, are empathetic, and can interact with others across cultural, racial, or social class boundaries (Enfield & Collins, 2008).

Although international learning experiences have been found to positively impact cultural intelligence among individuals (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011), this study addressed the gap in the literature on international service-learning projects. Specifically, the study explored the effects of combining international experience with service learning on students' civic engagement within the community of their home country.

Empathy and Civic Engagement

It is the goal of many higher education institutions that through civic engagement programs, students will develop a heightened sense of responsibility on and off campus. Enfield and Collins (2008) postulated that "responsible, moral, and productive citizens are committed to fostering social justice through civic engagement". Active civic engagement should be the channel for following democratic principles, which include justice and equality, in a multicultural society (Hurtado, 2007), and higher education should create these responsible, moral, and productive citizens (Enfield & Collins, 2008) who become involved and active in their local communities, ultimately enriching the development of societal good.

Although the number of students participating in service-learning programs has increased steadily in the last two decades (Einfeld & Collins, 2008); however, there has been little focus on students' motivation for participating in these community-involvement programs. Batson (1994) described the motivations for community involvement which include egoism, altruism, collectivism, and principlism. Of these four motivations, altruism or collectivism is the most promising traits in student learning and development (Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002). Altruism builds upon empathy, which is "other-oriented feelings congruent with the perceived welfare of another person" (Batson, 1991). Developing empathy within community engagement programs may increase one's altruism, or that "other-oriented" feeling that propels one to action.

A Case in Point: A study Abroad Program to China with a Service Learning Project in a School for Children of Migrant Workers

In the current study, we aimed to assess the various learning outcomes attained through a 2-week study abroad program with a service-learning project in China. Beside fulfilling their academic requirement of visiting Chinese companies and attending lectures at a local Chinese university, the group of study-abroad participants was involved in an effort to help migrant workers' children in Suzhou, China. Prior to the trip, student organized and conducted fund-raising events, such as placing bins on campus to collect children books donation. Students also solicited donations from local restaurants. Overall, students collected over 400 children books, numerous crayons and coloring pages, and other small trinkets to be distributed in China.

In addition to academic activities such as attending lectures and visiting local organizations, the study-abroad participants taught a two-hour block of English class at an elementary school that serves migrant workers' children in one district, and visited a non-government organization that was recently

established to serve migrant children and their families in another district. As one participant reflected, "The most exciting part of the day was going to the migrant school. The students were excited to see us from the second they saw us. They had no idea what we would be teaching them, but I don't think it would have mattered because they were just excited to see new and different people. We taught the students about Texas and some of the things we have in Texas, such as the Space Center and the Alamo. The children were so excited for us to be there, most of them stayed in the class for recess. We also taught them a song (itsy-bitsy spider). It was an amazing experience that I will never forget." Several students had similar sentiment about the transforming experience.

The empathy developed through an international service program is also evident. One student commented, "I was able to see a variety of people, such as the farmers, retirees, students, and working class. To sum it up, the East and West are similar in that everyone just wants to do what is best for them and their family." The first-hand experience in China has greatly enhanced students' ability to see through the differences and find the similarity that is relevant to his or her own circumstances, which empower students' capacity for empathy.

Students' career aspiration is another area postulated to be impacted by their heightened sense of empathy. Consequently, students who developed greater empathy are more likely to be attracted to future employers who demonstrated CSR in the local community. As indicated in one student's reflection, "Companies that use migrant workers are taking advantage of the cheap but efficient labor that is available. These same companies can improve the educational level of the future labor pool by helping to fund education. By spending a small amount now companies can increase the future benefits for the regions they operate in and themselves... It is my hope that children with academic talents will be given chances to progress and not marginalized as a result of their place of origin."

> *Hypothesis 1*: Greater empathy leads to higher community involvement (1a) and greater career aspirations to work for employers who have demonstrated CSR in the local community (1b).

Cultural Intelligence and Civic Engagement

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the capability of individuals to interact appropriately across cultural situations with diverse individuals (Earley, 2002). Earley's construct of cultural intelligence includes three facets: cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. The cognitive element can be explained using the concept of self which is formed by negotiating one's interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences (Gecas, 1982; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Kitayama & Heiman, 1997 as cited in Earley, 2002). Having cultural intelligence means not only being cognitively aware of oneself, but rather being flexible as one constantly reshapes and adapts the self in new cultural settings (Earley, 2002). Having high CQ also means having high inductive reasoning skills and meta-cognitive strategies to negotiate knowledge that help understand cultural nuances. In addition to this cognitive knowledge, one must also be motivated to use the new knowledge to construct culturally appropriate responses, and be capable of adapting and behaving in ways that are consistent with the new culture.

On student reflected, "By participating in the study abroad I was able to use all my senses to see, touch, smell, taste, and hear at every location we were at. You cannot get this experience from a book. I love traveling internationally. It makes you more aware of other ways to do something and ultimately makes you a better person." Individuals who have a high level of CQ, it seems, possess the advantage to exercise the meta-cognitive capacity to be sensitive to others' needs and expectations as well as the adaptive capacity to act on the initiatives to build a greater community where the desire for self-realization aligns with the best interests of the community. Hence, the students who have a high level of CQ will aspire to work for employers who value the social responsibilities in the local community.

> *Hypothesis 2*: Greater cultural intelligence leads to higher community involvement (2a) and greater career aspirations to work for employers who have demonstrated CSR in the local community (2b).

The Moderating Role of Empathy and Cultural Intelligence

International study abroad programs often provide students spaces to interact with cultures and environments which are very different than their own. Empathy was one skill noted by Enfield and Collins (2008) that was needed to successfully interact in these multicultural environments. Ferranto (2014) found that students who participated in a short-term international cultural experience, like study abroad, gain in cultural empathy, self-awareness, and leadership skills. Therefore, it is plausible that international experiences enhance students' civic engagement through their enhanced empathy and cultural intelligence.

Hypothesis 3: With higher empathy, international experience leads to higher community involvement (3a) and greater career aspirations to work for employers who have demonstrated CSR in the local community (3b).

Hypothesis 4: With higher cultural intelligence, international experience leads to higher community involvement (4a) and greater career aspirations to work for employers who have demonstrated CSR in the local community (4b).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A survey was created using Qualtrics and distributed by the student affairs office in one university located in a southern state of the U.S. This regional university serves a majority of students who are retired from military and are seeking degrees to start a second chapter of life. Student participation was voluntary and confidential and there were no compensations for those who participated. Emails with the link to the survey were distributed to a total of 2,658 students. After two rounds of reminders in a month, a sample of 265 usable surveys was collected. The respondents had an average age of 36.7 with 30% males and 70% females. This pattern closely mirrored the student population at this university with an average age of 34, 40% male and 60% female.

Dependent Variable

Community involvement is measured by a 10-item scale adapted from Pless et al. (2011). Sample item includes "It is important to me to gain an increased sense of responsibility from participating in community service". All items are listed in Appendix A. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.88, which achieves an acceptable level of scale reliability.

Independent Variables

International experience is measured by having respondents report the length of time spent outside the U.S. To help respondents recall the length of time, we ask respondents to list the foreign countries as well as the years and months that they have stayed in each foreign country. The total length of time is calculated by summing the total of months spent in countries outside the U.S.

Cultural intelligence is defined as "a person's capability to adapt effectively to a new cultural context" (Earley, 2002). In this study, we used the recently updated shortened 10-item scale (Thomas et al., 2015). Sample item includes "I can change my behavior to suit different cultural situations and people". The Cronbach's alpha achieves 0.90.

Empathy is measured by an 8-item scale (van der Zee, van Oudenhoven, Ponterotto, & Fietzer, 2013) with a Cronbach alpha of 0.93. This scale taps into the dimensions of empathy including empathizing with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of culturally diverse individuals (van der Zee et al., 2013). Sample item includes "I sympathize with others". All items for both *Cultural intelligence* and *Empathy* scales are listed in Appendix A.

Control Variables

In addition to gender and age, we also controlled for the respondents' military affiliations. It has been argued that the international experience gained through military oversea assignments serve a unique purpose that prevents interactions with civilians in the foreign countries, so the international experience gained through military affiliations is arguably less likely to enhance students' cultural intelligence (Tsai & Liou, 2016). Therefore, we asked students to report whether they are active in duties (3.4% of the sample), have retired from military (31.5%), are a military spouse (16.2%), or grew up in a military family (23.4%). When students reported any of the above affiliations, the student's military status is coded as "1" and otherwise "0".

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics and pair-wise correlations of all variables are reported in Table 1. The highest correlation occurs between community involvement and cultural intelligence with a coefficient of 0.49, which indicates 24% of variance is shared between two variables. The multivariate OLS regressions are utilized for hypotheses testing. In all regression models reported in Table 2, the VIF values are below 5 which indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern for us to interpret the results (O'brien, 2007). In addition, the independent variables are centered before creating the interaction terms to test the moderation hypotheses (Aiken & West, 1991).

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS FOR ALL VARIABLES

	Mean	Standard deviation	Community involvement	Gender	Age	Military	International Experience	Empathy
Gender	1.71	0.456	-0.374**					
Age	35.82	10.61	-0.052	0.153*				
Military	0.74	0.437	-0.148*	0.149*	0.203**			
International Experience	12004.6	144726	-0.115	0.259**	0.336**	0.364		
Empathy	5.8702	0.94446	0.397**	-0.225**	0.03	0.001	-0.007	
Cultural Intelligence	5.7936	0.79092	0.491**	-0.015	-0.074	-0.075	0.107	0.436**

*p-value < 0.05; **p-value < 0.01

In Hypotheses 1 and 2, we tested the main effects of empathy and cultural intelligence on two outcome variables, including community involvement and career aspirations to work for an employer who demonstrated local CSR. Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 2a state that the empathy and cultural intelligence enhance students' community involvement. In Table 1, both main effects are supported with positive coefficients for empathy ($\beta = 0.42$, p-value < 0.01) and for cultural intelligence ($\beta = 0.32$, p-value < 0.01). As for the career aspirations for CSR employers, only cultural intelligence ($\beta = 0.21$, p-value < 0.01) has a positive significant main effect as shown in Model 2 in Table 3. Empathy is not significantly related to students' career aspirations for future employers' CSR. Therefore, H2 is fully supported for both outcomes, while only H1b is supported.

Further, we tested the moderation effects of empathy and cultural intelligence on the relationship between international experience and two outcome variables. Table 2 suggests that the moderation effects

exist for the community involvement. However, in Table 3, we did not find the moderation effects for students' concerns for future employers' CSR.

TABLE 2
INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE, AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Control variables						
Gender	-0.363	**	-0.319	**	-0.283	**
Age	0.023		0.063		0.047	
Military	-0.098		-0.051		-0.046	
Independent variables						
International experience (IE)			-0.081		-0.07	
Cultural Intelligence			0.131	*	0.42	**
Empathy			0.439	**	0.324	**
IExCultural Intelligence					0.351	**
IExEmpathy					0.121	*
Adjusted R^2	*0.136*		*0.381*		*0.444*	
Change in R^2			*0.251*	**	*0.067*	**

Standardized coefficients are reported for variables *p-value < 0.05; **p-value < 0.01

TABLE 3
INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE, AND FUTURE EMPLOYER'S CSR

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Control variables						
Gender	-0.311	**	-0.287	**	-0.273	**
Age	0.031		0.042		0.037	
Military	0.055		0.071		0.071	
Independent variables						
International experience (IE)			-0.015		<0.001	
Empathy			0.095		0.217	
Cultural Intelligence			0.212	**	0.155	
IExEmpathy					0.135	
IExCultural Intelligence					-0.045	
Adjusted R^2	*0.079*		*0.136*		*0.137*	
Change in R^2			*0.07*	**	*0.01*	

Standardized coefficients are reported for variables *p-value < 0.05; **p-value < 0.01

DISCUSSION

Study abroad programs have been found to positively affect intercultural competence, tolerance, and promote positive attitudes towards cultural pluralism and open-mindedness (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Salisbury et al., 2013). The current study examined the relationship between the predictors, cultural intelligence (CQ), empathy, and community engagement. The results point to a stronger correlation between CQ and community engagement than the relationship between empathy and community engagement. From this finding one may infer that CQ is a stronger indicator of community involvement because it encompasses the ability to interact with those who are different (Thomas, et al., 2015). So while empathy propels one to do good, these good deeds may be directed to only those who are "alike". Given that today's political climate and as communities become more diverse, it is crucial to cultivate cultural intelligence in students. The findings in this study support that cultural intelligence and empathy indeed are associated with the heightened sense of civic engagement among college students.

Another area being examined in the current study is the relationships between empathy and CQ and students' aspiration to work in a company that has demonstrated corporate social responsibility (CSR) in a local community. The analyses indicate that empathy is not significantly related to students' career aspiration, while CQ is positively correlated to students' aspiration to work in a company with demonstrated CSR. This finding further implies that CQ seems to have a more profound impact on student actions than empathy in their career aspirations.

The study further explored the moderating effects of empathy and cultural intelligence on the relationship between international experience and community involvement, and between international experience and future career aspirations. The results indicate that there is a moderate effect between international experience and community involvement, but not aspirations to work in a company involved with CSR. We find that with higher empathy and higher cultural intelligence, international experiences lead to higher students' community involvement. On the other hand, when students do not develop empathy or CQ, international experience tends to have an opposite effect on their community involvement.

The current study suggested that empathy and cultural intelligence have a positive effect on students' community engagement. Batson et al. (2008) suggested altruism as one of the four possible motives for civic engagement. Altruism is the ability to identify and empathize with the situation of others, and this empathy propels individuals into action. While the current study provides a glimpse as to what motivates students to be civically engaged, it does not point to a cause and effect relationship. Does higher empathy lead to higher civic engagement, or does civic engagement foster empathy? If higher empathy leads to higher levels of civic engagement, then how can students who are less empathetic be motivated to be involved? A longitudinal study will be at a better position to study how empathy is developed among students in higher education. While there is ample research on study abroad experiences, and just as much on service learning projects, studies on projects that combine the two are still scant. The current study attempted to provide insights into the relationship between empathy, community engagement, and cultural intelligence, but it barely scratched the surface in the understanding of the potential benefits of infusing service learning component into study abroad experiences. Further studies may look into the benefits of international service-learning experience for students with various level of international experience. For instance, what are the justifications for creating a more costly version of service learning that is carried out overseas when we already have a body of research supporting local service learning projects that are much more economical? In other words, does international service learning project provide above and beyond what students can learn from a local service-learning project?

Implications for Practice

Cultural intelligence (CQ) as constructed by Earley in 2002, is considered one of the global leadership competencies (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2001) highly valued in both academia and the corporate world, thus a logical learning outcome for higher education institutions in the preparation of their graduates for global effectiveness. In fact, global learning is no longer "an option, but a priority"

(AAC&U, 2017). Higher education institutions are urged not only to subscribe an international stance on their mission statement, but to provide intentional, high-quality global experiences so students can be equipped with the multiple perspectives necessary for engagement in meaningful conversations surrounding global issues. In other words, it is imperative for higher education institutions to develop students' CQ. Developing students' CQ takes many forms and through many avenues, one of which is study abroad programs. In this study, CQ is found to be positively correlated to community engagement, another high-impact practice in the teaching and learning of higher education. What that implies is that colleges and universities can develop students' CQ through community engagement at the local level, at a much lower cost than study abroad programs. While it is ideal for all students to participate in international learning opportunities, financial or time obligations may render them unattainable for many. Especially for public institutions with budget constraints, it may mean a compromise shifting resources from global learning opportunities to local civic engagement opportunities. As this study implies, opportunities for civic engagement are also effective in nurturing CQ in responsible leaders.

Another implication can be drawn from our results showing a correlation between students with higher CQ and higher empathy and their international experiences leading to higher community involvement. What that may mean is that institutions should set clear selection criteria using students' CQ, or be intentional to include curricular activities geared towards developing students CQ prior to and during the program so that the emotional benefits of international experiences be capitalized and maximized. Institutions may also consider setting clear selection criteria to recruit students who may benefit the most from these experiences.

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APPENDIX A

SCALE ITEMS

Scale	Items
Cultural Intelligence	1. I know the ways in which cultures around the world are different.
	2. I can give examples of cultural differences from my personal experience, reading, and so on.
	3. I enjoy talking with people from difference cultures.
	4. I have the ability to accurately understand the feelings of people from other cultures.
	5. I sometimes try to understand people from another culture by imagining how something looks from their perspective.
	6. I can change my behavior to suit different cultural situations and people.
	7. I accept delays without becoming upset when in different cultural situations and with culturally different people.
	8. I am aware of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with someone from another culture.
	9. I think a lot about the influence that culture has on my behavior and that of others who are culturally different.
	10. I am aware that I need to plan my course of action when in different cultural situations and with culturally different people.
Empathy	1. I pay attention to the emotions of others.
	2. I am a good listener.
	3. I sense when others get irritated
	4. I get to know others profoundly.
	5. I enjoy other people's stories.
	6. I notice when someone is in trouble.
	7. I sympathise with others.
	8. I set others at ease.
Civic Engagement/ Community Involvement	1. Our community needs good volunteers.
	2. All communities need good volunteers.
	3. When I meet people who are having a difficult time, I wonder how I would feel if I were in their shoes.
	4. I feel bad that some community members are suffering from a lack of resources.
	5. Volunteering in community projects can greatly enhance the community's resources.
	6. Contributing my skills will make the community a better place.
	7. My contribution to the community will make a real difference.
	8. It is important to me to gain an increased sense of responsibility from participating in community service.
	9. Lack of participation in community service will cause severe damage to our society.
	10. I will participate in a community service project in the next year.