Global learning is increasingly discussed as an outcome of both international and domestic programs (Alonso García & Longo, 2013; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Hovland, 2014; Sobania & Braskamp, 2009; Whitehead, 2015). But while global educators are open to the idea of domestic programs supporting global learning outcomes, too little work focuses on the role of domestic programs in achieving them. Putting the Local in Global Education is a diverse collection of program exemplars that demonstrate this important definitional shift in the field. The editor, Neal Sobania, selected a wide array of domestic programs that pursue global learning outcomes in off-campus programs from Hawaii to Maine. Many of the programs described could be identified as global service-learning (GSL), as defined by Hartman and Kiely (2014), because they include most notably a recognition of domestic and international civic responsibility. As a result, scholars and practitioners of GSL now have a diverse collection of resources upon which to build future programs and frame scholarly inquiry in pursuit of domestic global learning outcomes.

As a practitioner-scholar in the GSL field, Putting the Local in Global Education has deepened my interest and inspired me to consider domestic models to achieve global learning student outcomes at my university. In this book review, I first describe and add to the authors’ and others’ contributions in establishing the value of global education programs in this country. I then discuss the text chronologically through its five parts: Framing Study Away, Faculty-Led Semester-Long Programs, Faculty-Led Short Term Programs, Consortium Programs, and Community Engagement and Domestic Study Away. Finally, I offer critique and identify future opportunities for research.

Sobania’s volume solidifies the role of domestic programs in achieving global student learning aims, citing a plethora of program examples that achieve learning outcomes more traditionally associated with international programs. Such outcomes include those described by AAC&U’s Global Learning Rubric (2013): global self-awareness, perspective taking, cultural diversity, personal and social responsibility, understanding global systems, and applying knowledge to contemporary contexts. For example, in Chapter 20, in the context of urban immersion in the Upper Midwest, Pradt describes learning goals including self-awareness (conscious of one’s own worldviews), personal and social responsibility (critical thinking skills to make responsible, conscious choices), and understanding global systems (inequalities and social challenges in our society).

Throughout the text, domestic programs across a host of academic disciplines achieving global learning outcomes abound. The cases described, when taken as a whole, present a strong argument for domestic programs supporting global learning – a privileged conceptual and applied space previously held solely by international programs (Sobania, 2015). In the introduction, Sobania asks two powerful yet simple questions: “What does it mean to be a global learner?” and “Must a student always go overseas to be a global learner?” (p. 2). Throughout the remainder of the text, authors seek answers and provide program case studies to answer both questions. In answering the first question, the volume advances the dialogue, acknowledging it will remain a contested space, adding to the conversation without finalizing it. The second question is answered with a resounding “no.” The text overwhelmingly makes clear – in each chapter – that crossing an international border is not necessary to achieve global learning outcomes. However, as discussed further in this review, this volume could benefit from larger empirical studies that consider the local and global distinction and purposefully compare outcomes across...
institutions and programs.

As a former executive director of the Wang Center for Global Education at Pacific Lutheran University, Sobania is well positioned to assemble this diverse group of authors. His previous work and accolades as a globally-focused educator (2006 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Institute for the International Education of Students, Senator Paul Simon Award for Internationalizing the Campus from NASFA: Association of International Educators) have positioned him well to have a comprehensive perspective on the field of global education. The authors included in this book represent a wide swath of public and private, urban and rural, coastal and inland educational institutions and partnering community organizations.

Academics, practitioners, university administrators, students, community organizations, and program administrators can utilize this volume to strengthen their practices and learn from the work of others. This volume does not seek to elevate domestic programs over international ones but rather to broaden the types of programs under the global learning umbrella. For example, in Chapter 13, Manning and Dinges discuss how Susquehanna University’s programs utilize the same curriculum regardless of domestic or international location. And in Chapter 23, Koth powerfully summarizes: “The homeless shelter, the public school, and the health clinic may be only blocks from the college campus, but frequently they are a ‘world apart’ from the typical college experience” (p. 298; emphasis in the original).

In telling stories of global learning from domestic locations, the book seeks to further our understanding of learning from the “global next door.”

One of the driving rationales for this text is to expand student access to global learning outcomes. Regrettably, many study abroad programs attempt to replicate the comforts of their home campus. American students abroad, largely visiting cosmopolitan cities from a hotel or university dormitory veranda, are technologically connected to home (Huesca, 2013) and are more supported than ever by university staff and faculty (Ogden, 2008). While marketing promises the adventure of a lifetime, housing, student life, and academic services continue to support students while abroad, replicating the experience on their home campus. As a result, disruptive experiences – often important to transformational global learning outcomes (Kiely, 2005) – are diminished or even precluded. Additionally, expense remains a large factor for the majority of students who might benefit from programs abroad. Even though scholarships and tuition-sharing Memos of Understandings make international study possible for more students, over the last twenty years the percentage of students studying abroad has remained stagnant at about 2%, despite quadrupling in raw numbers (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, & Klute, 2012). Therefore, domestic programs with global learning aims are well-positioned to develop new pathways to achieve global learning outcomes for more and more diverse students.

The book uses the term “study away” as an inclusive language shift to include domestic and international programs for global learning. Popularized by Sobania and Braskamp (2009), study away alters language previously reserved for study abroad. Study away is much more than semantic evolution (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009), instead representing a fundamental shift in reframing the distant lands narrative of international education. Given continual global flattening (Friedman, 2007), the issues of the world are local regardless of whether they relate to migration, resource distribution, poverty, commercialism, etc. Sobania positions study away at the intersection with community-based education – including service-learning and internships, domestic off-campus study, and overseas off-campus study commonly referred to as study abroad. Following the survey of literature on study away as a reframing of study abroad, the book blurs the distinction between local and global, suggesting program duration, pedagogical method, and intentional learning strategies trump location in contributing to global learning outcomes.

After the initial discussion exploring the broad concept of study away, the remainder of the text provides specific program examples divided into four parts. In Parts Two and Three, the editor utilizes program duration to distinguish programs – again eschewing an over-reliance on location. In Part Two, Faculty Led Long-Term Programs, the focus is on semester-long programs. While the concept of place is central to each program described, each program achieves global learning outcomes for students in a domestic location. The location of these domestic programs varies widely, many with unique cultural contexts, such as in Chapter 6, in which Lamson and Merline discuss the “denationalized” Arizona borderlands where students examine the “social, economic, and political questions surrounding immigration to the United States” (p. 107). Similarly, although geographically distinct from the U.S. southwest, in Chapter 8 Benton educates and enlists students in the preservation of the local Gullah culture of the gulf Sea Islands through local practitioners and scholars. In Chapter 9, Pyatt, Benning, Tilsen, Tinant, and Hill describe a coalition of educational and community-based organizations on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation focused on promoting sustainable housing. In each of the above examples, place is particularly salient in the curriculum and design of the programs. However, place is not always singular; in...
Brick’s Chapter 7, while the idea of place is central to the experience, the place changes as students and faculty traverse the western portion of the country. In Chapter 16, Miller explores place and summarizes the issue this way: “attending to place is critical to student development and integrative learning. But the important essential learning outcomes don’t happen just because of the location of a program on the globe” (p. 232).

Miller’s insight is supported by other recent research that asserts effective teaching pedagogies implemented by skilled educators deepen the learning possible from immersive experiences and are not dependent on location alone (Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming Lou, 2012). Using The Philadelphia Center as a case study, Miller describes how students engage and interrogate the program through texts, guest speakers with different perspectives (Brick, 2015), journal reflections (Benton, 2015), and service-learning (Pyatt et al., 2015). Through such pedagogical strategies, domestic immersive programs and complementary systematic classroom instruction may intentionally achieve global learning outcomes (Hartman, Lough, Toms, & Reynolds, 2015). In other words, student learning is not dependent on a singular programmatic element such as location.

Part Three, Faculty Led Short-Term Programs, delves into the rapidly expanding sector of programs of shorter duration (Wheeler, 2000). As the most popular option for study abroad (Donnelly-Smith, 2009), short-term trips appear to be a response to student demand. While short term duration in this text ranges from one to four weeks, Donnelly-Smith (2009) has defined short-term study abroad experiences as eight or fewer weeks on site. In Chapter 11, Thaler describes pedagogical approaches to develop global learning in short term programs such as experience and reflection that was “time, energy, and emotion intensive” (p. 169). Intercultural service-learning is utilized by Burleson in Chapter 15 as co-educative pedagogy in a concentrated time period. Program duration has previously been considered a leading factor in effective abroad programs (Dwyer, 2004; Kehl & Morris, 2008), but subsequent scholarship (Engle & Engle, 2012; Hammer, 2012) elevates the importance of other program factors above duration, such as reflection, pre- and post-experience curriculum, and clarity of learning goals, among others. Such short-term programs can appeal to more students and broaden access given the smaller time commitment, often reduced cost, and lower emotional investment (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2009). Requiring longer immersive experiences may serve to further limit access to important global learning programs – domestic or international.

Another common theme emerging in Part Three is the often liminal and contested space in global and local, international and domestic programs. This section describes programs that are broadly geographically based. In Chapter 12, Marajh and Onaga discuss a program in Hawai‘i that the university classifies as abroad, and in Chapter 14 they discuss a program on the Makah Reservation at Neah Bay in Washington State. Whether located in the most geographically isolated state or an officially-classified “domestic dependent nation” within contiguous borders, these distinctive site locations problematize the traditional notions of what may be classified as domestic versus international, and they create an opportunity to see inherent flaws in location-based classifications for educational programs and their respective learning outcomes.

Part Four, Consortium Programs, explores five domestic programs led by, or in partnership with, community organizations. Importantly, this section includes community organizations alongside academic institutions as co-educators. In Chapter 18, students learn from and with the Newberry Library as a community educator as part of a program conducting cross-disciplinary research. In Chapter 19, Northwest Connections, a nonprofit organization, provides a clear example of community educators leading students through Montana’s Swan Valley. This example and others demonstrate the value of tapping knowledge and experience from a range of practitioners in and out of academia. More chapters utilizing community co-educators and community-driven learning would have strengthened this section to better represent equitable partnerships (Hartman, Paris, & Blache-Cohen, 2014).

In Part Five, Community Engagement and Domestic Study Away, the authors introduce community-engaged learning as a pedagogy fostering global learning outcomes. Through four examples, this section positions community-engaged learning, or service-learning, as an important pedagogy in reaching global learning outcomes from domestic experiences. Notions of community collaboration and co-education are present in each of these chapters, yet Chapter 24, by Keller, McKenney, Russell, and Zylstra, uniquely acknowledges the inherent tension present in attempting to create a genuinely equal partnership. Because the academic program described is administered through the university, it is difficult to determine if the partnership is truly community-driven. Equitable partnerships originate from the design of a relationship where all organizations are valued as co-creators. While domestic service-learning has great potential to reach global learning outcomes, it is important to acknowledge the additional challenges of collaborative, engaged work with community partners.
This volume begins to repair the rift identified by Slimbach (2016) between local civic engagement offices and study abroad offices. One could add to this list other frequently siloed units responsible for achieving various global student learning outcomes, such as multicultural affairs offices, diversity offices, and international student centers. Beyond definitional change, the reorientation advocated for in Sobania’s book toward study away also requires institutional change, potentially using such new terms as global education or study away. Additionally, institutional resources previously reserved for international efforts may need to be expanded to support domestic programs achieving comparable student learning outcomes. Such a shift may necessitate campus units collaborating across traditional institutional boundaries and developing a common understanding for study away (Twombley et al., 2012). Ultimately, an integrated campus approach to global learning is needed (Nolan, 2009). Robust development of study away programs, adding to and not replacing, study abroad, has the potential to widen access to important global learning goals for students across socioeconomic strata. Universities that seek to include more students in global learning programs may want to consider broadening financial support to domestic programs that aim to achieve global learning outcomes.

While Putting the Local in Global Education is a solid addition to the global education literature, there are some ways it could have been a stronger volume. First, the book skims over an important tension in the study away field regarding the significance of program duration. Various empirical studies inform this and related conversations. For example, Twombley et al. (2012) and others report greater perceived effects as duration increases across all measured outcome areas, including academic, intercultural, career, and personal outcomes. Second, if program lengths are shortened, as implicitly advocated for with the case studies in Part Three of this book, what valuable global learning outcomes are neglected or shortchanged? Third, while shorter-term, less expensive trips may broaden access (Ogden, 2010) because cost is often a consideration in student study abroad decisions (Martinez, Ranjeet, & Marx, 2009; Soria & Troisi, 2013), this may potentially create a tension between greater access and deeper learning. Arguably, domestic global learning programs could offer insight into this tension, as opportunities for immersion closer to home may still be more affordable than comparable time farther away. While important research suggests duration is less consequential to student learning than intentional educational interventions [e.g., Vande Berg et al. (2012) identify the role of skilled instructors as more important to student learning outcomes than program duration or other factors], additional discussion to shed light on this issue would have strengthened the value of this book.

Positioned at the intersection of the work described in this book is the concept of global service-learning (GSL). Hartman and Kiely (2014) identify five elements that distinguish GSL from traditional (mostly domestic) service-learning: intercultural competence development, structural analysis, occurring within a global volunteerism market, immersive, and engaging critical global civic and moral imagination. Along with other scholars (Alonso García & Longo, 2013; Whitehead, 2015), they intentionally position GSL as a big tent in which domestic programs are welcomed and valued. Niehaus and Crain (2013) examined these elements empirically; they compared week-long, often co-curricular domestic and international service-learning programs, and found important differences in international settings, such as the quality of engagement with the community and amplified cross-cultural student learning. Niehaus and Crain’s work was limited to examination of alternative break programs, but this kind of empirical research can further inform assertions about program factors influencing outcomes such as those advanced in this book. Simply put, we need to better understand how global learning outcomes result from program factors such as international or domestic location, program duration, pedagogical strategies, and academic or co-curricular status?

Many of the chapters and programs described in this volume leverage community-based educational practices such as service-learning. As global learning often includes notions of civic education, the service-learning pedagogy can be an effective means to deepen learning and commitment to citizenship education (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013). However, service-learning is not immune from unintended consequences. Building on Dewey’s (1938) mis-educative concept, Giles (2014) explores the idea of “risky epistemology” in which mis-learning can occur and stereotypes can be reified through service-learning experiences that lack intentional, structured reflective practices. Putting the Local in Global Education could have gone further in presenting best practices in pedagogy, in addition to program design, to help practitioners not only strengthen global learning outcomes but also limit the potentially harmful impacts of community-based education.

Putting the Local in Global Education presents models for domestic, immersive programs that will inspire others, as it has done for me, to pursue additional avenues for global student learning. While the percentage of students studying abroad has remained dishearteningly stagnant (Twombley et al., 2012), and while this book does not advocate for reducing study
abroad opportunities (in fact quite the opposite), this collection describes programs that can achieve global learning goals with the other 98% of college students. The value of study abroad should be in the learning outcomes achieved and such outcomes should extend to a wider array of students. This volume demonstrates domestic study away as one means to increase access to global learning outcomes.

The work assembled here represents an optimistic future for higher education and sets a high standard for global learning outcomes. In essence, this volume pushes for an inclusive understanding of global learning and questions the uniqueness of crossing a national border to achieve global learning outcomes. It is accessible and relevant for practitioners, scholars, and students, and provides a wide array of program options for those seeking to learn from existing expertise in the field. I consider this book required reading for anyone developing new models or refining existing ones – domestic or international – that are intended to achieve global learning outcomes.

References


Review Essay


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