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## **Pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership as Applied to Study Abroad**

J.P. Bongila

*University of St. Thomas, United States*\*Corresponding author: Email: [JPBongila@stthomas.edu](mailto:JPBongila@stthomas.edu)

Address: 1000 La Salle Avenue, MOH 217; Minnesota, USA

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article examines how the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) enhanced the educational and global leadership mindset of graduate students who participated in three short-term study abroad programs in Cuba (2015), and Brazil (2016 and 2017). In this study, GPL also made use of grounded theory to analyze the change of worldview students experienced upon taking this interdisciplinary course. The focus was to assist students to achieve cross-cultural success, address serious issues in culturally relevant ways, and to gain a peak learning experience that could propel them toward relevant action. To assess students' change of worldview, GPL proceeded through five stages: 1) fleshing out individual preconceptions; 2) writing up four individual goals; 3) analyzing conflicting narratives; 4) engaging in experiential learning; and 5) mapping post-conceptions. Findings reveal that student immersion in Global South social realities results in significant individual, social, educational and professional change of worldviews.*

**Keywords:** global leadership, higher education, pedagogy, study abroad

## INTRODUCTION

Short-term study abroad programs have provided students the opportunity to discover themselves and develop a global mindset, which they otherwise would not likely have acquired (Geyer et al., 2017). Research also shows that study abroad programs have contributed to the enhancement of student cognitive and affective skills, while increasing their cultural empathy, intercultural awareness, and global mindset (Braskamp et al., 2011; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Ruth et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2013). Some scholars go so far as to conclude that study abroad is critical to success in an educational and global economy (Eagan et al., 2013; Twombly, 2012). However, study abroad programs have mainly concerned undergraduate students who have extensively benefitted from them throughout the United States (Niehaus et al., 2012; Ruth et al., 2019; Streitwieser & Light, 2018).

Holcomb (2019), in her doctoral dissertation on study abroad in higher education and student affairs programs, highlighted the increased interest in study abroad for graduate students, particularly those in educational leadership programs. Studying abroad has become an educational linchpin for instilling in graduate students the necessary intercultural competencies for success in the global economy. A few graduate schools, such as Schools of Business, took advantage of study abroad to refocus the experiential learning of their students (Dayton et al., 2018; DuVivier & Patitu, 2017; Kwok & Arpan, 2002; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018). For many years, educational leadership lagged other professions (DeCieri et al., 2005; Schweitz, 2006), such as business education, with regard to experiential learning in foreign countries, particularly those in the Global South. Holcomb (2019) posited that recently more educational leadership programs have included experiential learning abroad in their curriculum. These programs have realized that, today, effective leadership is dependent upon hands-on understanding of other cultures because of the interconnectedness of our continuously globalized world (Wibbeke, 2009). Study abroad yields positive impacts on graduate students in educational leadership (Gaia, 2015; Ingle & Johnson, 2019). A study by Richardson et al. (2014) found that doctoral students in educational leadership who had participated in an experiential study abroad program which focused on defining the concept of diversity acquired a more global and educated view of what diversity connotated. Likewise, Gearing et al. (2020) conducted a survey of 90 MSW graduates who participated in a learning abroad program during their graduate studies. The results of their study indicated that participation in study abroad had a strong impact on student competency development. Ruth et al. (2019) concluded that short-term study abroad provides additional values to graduate students when it also includes an experiential pedagogy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of such a shift of worldview, however, lies on a rigorous pedagogy of short-term study abroad programs. Bai et al. (2016) presented the results of their research on a cross-cultural pedagogy they used to conduct a three-week study abroad in China. Findings indicated that the success of the pedagogy was based on a six-step strategy consisting of pre-departure preparation, integration with the local community abroad, diversity and small group integration, establishment of weekly themes grounded in academic content, use of experiential activities, reflective assignments, and short- and long-term evaluations. Bai et al. acknowledged some critical shortfalls to their pedagogy or short-term program, namely the insufficiency of pre-departure preparation as well as linguistic barriers. Some studies have also

raised concerns about the ability of pedagogy in short-term study abroad programs (Bai et al., 2016; Pipitone, 2018) to meet the academic and cross-cultural expectations of students' learning. Scholars agree that a short-term program usually lasts from one week to six weeks in a country other than that of the participants, whereas a long-term program extends beyond a semester. Paige et al. (2009) conducted a survey of 6,391 study-abroad alumni from 20 universities who participated in short- and long-term studies abroad over a period of 50 years. They focused their survey on student global engagement, which the authors defined as inclusive of civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship and voluntary simplicity (i.e., the ability to adopt a more modest life), and educational and career choices. Most respondents reported that their time abroad enhanced their global engagement; the survey revealed no significant difference between short-term or long-term studies abroad (Paige et al., 2009).

Because two of the current short-term studies abroad occurred in Brazil (2016 and 2017), the literature review for this study has a focus on Brazil as well. Addressing the benefits of pre-departure preparation for study abroad, Dekaney's (2008) study of short-term programs in the fields of art and music in Brazil found that studying abroad enhanced students' worldview and openness to diversity. However, as a prerequisite to the above benefits, this study abroad program required that participants compare and contrast their social structure at home with Brazilian society, with the comparison focusing on the difference between the poor and the rich in both societies. To minimize the challenge of language barriers, students enrolled in this program also showed great drive in learning Portuguese before their onsite experience. Additionally, this study by Dekaney (2008) showed that, prior to departure, students were well prepared on-campus through lectures and meetings. The high level of preparation helped participants anticipate and gain meaning of certain social, cultural, and artistic features of the country of Brazil.

More specifically, Hernandez and Walenkamp (2012) suggested training for both participants and directors of abroad programs, acknowledging that a complex, short-term study abroad pedagogy contributes to enhancing student learning. Their pedagogy begins with a pre-departure process aimed at helping students anticipate challenges and develop a sense of ownership over their own learning. Secondly, the program exposes participants to international competencies and features of cultural adaptation. During this phase, the training program also addresses the critical issue of language, including academic and social skills, and other logistic issues (Hernandez & Walenkamp, 2012). Additionally, the program requires students to set individual goals in addition to course goals. The specific feature of this program lies in its mentorship, which the program says it provides students before, during, and after completion of the study abroad experience.

## **THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT**

This paper aims to examine the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL), which was developed from the experience of teaching over 150 graduate students at the Midwestern University (pseudonym). These students participated in a short-term study abroad course titled "Leadership in the International Contexts," which was first offered in 2009. Since then, cohorts of graduate students have attended summer fieldwork experiences in South Africa (2009 & 2010); Tanzania (2011-2014); Cuba (2015), Brazil (2016 & 2017); Ghana (2018); and Uganda (2021). This article analyzes the data collected from the experiential learning that occurred in Cuba and Brazil and how GPL contributed to transforming student worldviews and to enhancing their global mindset.

Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) seeks to be an engaging system that would provide a leadership tool which can be used locally and globally to position oneself almost comfortably in any given cultural environment. It is particularly meant to address and engage the growing disparity between the socioeconomic contexts of the Global North and the Global South. Figure 1 below presents the sequences of GPL's pedagogy, including six stages: 1) students' reflections on their initial perceptions; 2) students' four specific measurable goals and strategies to attain those goals; 3) initial dialectical views of a Global South country to visit; 4) immersion in cross-cultural experience; 5) review of goals set prior to traveling abroad; and 6) students' change of worldviews or post-conceptions.

**Figure 1: Process of Global Positioning Leadership Pedagogy**



Since Global Positioning Leadership proceeds dialectically through thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, the methodological approach used in this study also navigates through seemingly polar opposite statements or realities, and encourages students to participate in drawing conclusions or syntheses (Buchwalter, 2012). The underlying process which Global Positioning Leadership uses to create learning contrasts with Black and Gregersen's (2000) proposed model for Global Leadership Development (GLD). The essential elements of their model, according to Oddou and Mendenhall (2013), include *contrast*, *confrontation*, and *remapping (or replacement)*. These authors underscore the critical role of *contrast* in the learning process. "We need to experience *contrast* to those views [preconceived notions] and *confront* our beliefs and assumptions" (Oddou & Mendenhall, 2013, p. 220). According to them, change only occurs when contrasting information confronts individuals' traditional way of seeing or doing. Confrontation of preconceived notions, then, would lead to "*replacement*" or "*remapping*" by a process of "letting go and taking on" (p. 220). Oddou and Mendenhall referred to this process of confronting assumptions and mental pre-acquisitions as "unfreezing," "changing," and "refreezing," which they maintain stands at the heart of the process to become a global leader.

At the origin of this approach lies Hegel's dialectical method, which itself dates back to the Greeks' *dialektik*, or discourse between two parties holding opposite views (Bushwalker, 2012). Worth mentioning is the fact that Hegel himself never used the formula of dialectics that history attributed to him. Hegelian dialectic comprised three dialectical stages of development: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. A *thesis* is an initial statement including a personal view or preconceived knowledge, the *antithesis* contradicts the thesis, and the tension between both results in a compromise or a *synthesis* (Buchwalter, 2012).

Specifically, the processes of developing globally positioned leaders and conducting the course "Leadership in Global Contexts" proceed in tandem. They begin with a self-examination of individual knowledge or even assumptions one holds about the culture of the country in which they are to be immersed. Mezirow (1978) and Black and Gregersen (2000) also recommended self-reflection in their Global Leadership Development programs (GLD). However, while Black and Gregersen paired this first step of

GLD with “exploration of options” (preconceptions) and “confrontation,” such activities appeared too soon to confront preconceived notions without using them to identify goals that could confirm or deny those uncritiqued ideas. The elements of preconceptions were not to be contradicted in a vacuum, as they constituted individual “theses,” so to speak.

In our approach, the establishment of individual goals came in as the second step of the methodology leading toward GPL. In their Leadership Development Plan, Niehaus et al. (2012) encouraged their students to outline three to four goals, then to list specific strategies to accomplish those goals. Borrowing from this process, GPL requires participants to lay out four specific and measurable goals, provide specific strategies to achieve those goals, and present evidence to demonstrate whether or not they had accomplished those goals (Niehaus & Wegener, 2019). At this point, preconceptions and goal establishment went hand-in-hand and they did not contradict each other.

The next stage, “contrasting knowledge,” consisted of a dialectic exploration of the readings and knowledge about the culture they intended to visit. Statements in a first set of readings may constitute the thesis element of the process, while contradictory notions or opposite statements constitute the antithesis. From the whole clash of knowledge, a synthesis should appear, at first in an incomplete manner, since the knowledge acquired prior to travelling would later have to confront the reality in the field in a new dialectic. Meanwhile, the preconceptions and goals that were established earlier (as thesis) were put to the test in the conflicting readings (first antithesis). From the collision between pre-knowledge and pre-travel, theoretical information emerged a first synthesis, although partial, pending the reality-check in the field.

The next big step was the field experience, which in itself encompassed “contrasting or disorienting dilemmas” (Oddou & Mendenhall, 2018). Field experiences overall confront the whole of pre-travel knowledge, including preconceptions, individual goals, and even conflicting readings. The experiential moments constitute a search for truth, a time where the realities of the culture are manifested, and are therefore a moment of antithesis. This sets up a back and forth interaction between the goals set and the reality in the field, which kicks off the process of assessing those individual goals. The last stage, “post-conceptions,” was the great synthesis that may correspond to the “replacement or remapping” that Oddou and Mendenhall (2018) have suggested in their process of global development. With post-conception as a stage of transformation, the progression of global leadership development comes full circle, and the participants revisit their goals in terms of concrete change which they could engage in globally as well as locally.

Having discussed the dialectical approach that sets into motion the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership and underpins the course “Leadership in Global Contexts,” I turn to the methodology I used to examine how the development of global mindset unfolded as participants immersed themselves in the human development sectors of Cuba and Brazil.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In order to analyze GPL’s pedagogical outcomes on graduate students who participated in the short-term studies abroad in Brazil and Cuba, I relied on grounded theory, which Charmaz (2014) identified as consisting “of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves” (p. 2). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as a constant comparative method of data analysis. Also *called substantive theory* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017), grounded theory owes its name to the fact that it is grounded in the data and emerges from the data.

Likewise, in this research I used qualitative methods as framed within a case analysis. I used a grounded theory approach to link emerging data to analytic concepts and took care to keep the recurrent

sequences of students' progress in focus while attending to relevant theories. In particular, I constantly compared how students evolved from one stage of the GPL to the other. Following Charmaz (2014), I address the most salient themes that emerged from the data with examples of the most relevant data collected from the 41 graduate students (MA and EdD) who took part in the Cuba (2015) and Brazil fieldwork experiences (2016 and 2017). As indicated in Table 1, a total of 32 MA students and 9 doctoral students representing 15 males and 26 females participated in the course and therefore in this study.

**Table 1: Number of Students in EDLD 869 Cuba and Brazil**

Country	Number	MA	Ed.D	Males	Females
Cuba (2015)	N = 19	17	2	8	11
Brazil (2016)	N = 13	10	3	4	9
Brazil (2017)	N = 9	5	4	3	6
Total	41	32	9	15	26

### Data Collection and Analysis

This study emerged from a compilation of four sets of data. The first set consisted of students' writing essays on their preconceptions about Cuba and Brazil in general. The essays also included four individual goals students identified prior to the abroad experience. The second category of data was made up of students' journal entries in which they detailed facts about their cross-cultural progression while in the host country. The third set of data included students' final comprehensive essays and presentations, which encompassed students' responses to their individual four goals. The fourth set of data consisted of students' evaluations of the course in which they were encouraged to provide extensive written comments.

Specifically, students who participated in the cross-cultural experience in Cuba and Brazil produced written reflections on their preconceptions and prejudices about Cuba and Brazil, in particular, and Latin America, in general. Additionally, they wrote out how they planned to test those perceptions and explore their professional interests through the field experience in Cuba and Brazil. I asked them to lay out four specific and measurable goals, provide specific strategies to achieve those goals, and present evidence to demonstrate whether or not they had accomplished those goals. Then, students read assigned books that presented sharply conflicting views on Cuba and Brazil, from highly supportive to strongly critical (for example, the contrasting values of "racial-democracy" versus "the implementation of affirmative action") and wrestled with the information and attitudes expressed, a first dialectical challenge to their own initial perceptions, as well as between the authors they read (Johnson & Heringer, 2015; Ioris, 2014). Next, students visited Cuba (in 2015) and Brazil (in 2016 and 2017) for two weeks for onsite lectures and site visits, and to talk directly with Cuban and Brazilian national and community leaders, thus experiencing a second dialectical challenge to their initial perceptions and to the materials they had previously read. During the fieldwork, they wrote 10 journal entries reflecting on the plan of step two to test out their preconceptions, on their professional goals, and on the goals of the course. At the conclusion of the Cuba and Brazilian field experiences, students contrasted their post-conceptions with their pre-conceptions, assessed their original goals, gave evidence for whether they had attained their goals, and described what they were taking away from the experience—especially how they might be "replacing" or "remapping" their initial conceptions.

To analyze data that spanned four years, I maintained a constant comparative orientation (Bazeley, 2013) at all levels of data analysis, from the initial comparisons of students' preconceptions to latter comparisons of codes and categories within the steps of GPL. I summarized each set of data to avoid obvious repetitions of students' preconceptions, goals, and similar journal topics and then contrasted them

with student evaluations of the course objectives. Then, I relied on memos to both refine and keep track of ideas that developed when comparing student preconceptions and post-conceptions, as well as the potential change in their worldviews (Charmaz, 2014). As stated by Birks and Mills (2011), “it is the iterative analytical method of constantly comparing and collecting or comparing data that results in high-level abstract categories rich with meaning” (p. 94). As indicated in Tables 2 and 3 below, I laid down recurring categories into the five stages of GPL, representing students’ preconceptions, goals, onsite experience, contrasting learning, and the outcomes of their goals. I placed the categories in a parallel table to allow for a synoptic view and an easier grasp of participants’ change of worldview along the lines of the steps of GPL.

## RESULTS

The worldviews of students who underwent the process of GPL noticeably changed, evolving from their preconceptions to the post-conceptions. Not all pre-departure pre-notions were met with responses in the field or at the end of the program. I have selected a few common preconceptions about education, healthcare, governance, and economy, which students raised at the beginning of the GPL application, and I observed how students strived to answer them as the process of GPL unfolded. Table 2 summarizes the progression—pre-conception, goal setting, contrasting knowledge, onsite experience, and post-conception—with regard to Cuba, while Table 3 presents the findings that emerged from the Brazil study abroad experience.

Most students already had a positive perception of education in Cuba. One argued “one thing I do know about the education of Cuba is that they have an almost one hundred percent literacy rate, which I think is really amazing.” Their post-conceptions can sum up to “Cuba has Global North-type of education. Challenges are posed by educational technology.” Before traveling to Cuba, most students preconceived the healthcare system of the island as “lacking technology and medical supply, but ahead of many developed countries, and healthcare is offered even to the poor for free.” At the conclusion of their study abroad, students confirmed their initial thoughts but went above and beyond to see the Cuban health system as “a high-level healthcare used also for global solidarity, from which hundreds of primary physicians in [the] world have benefitted.” As far as preconceived notions of Cuban governance, leadership, and the economy, students had this to say: “Castro’s Cuba has always been communist with lack of basic freedoms with constant military policing while its economy resembles that of middle-income country that lacks basic necessities.” However, post-conceptions revealed that Cuba has not always been communist, and had no visible uniformed police. “Cubans believe in their freedom from constraints (free healthcare, free education, free housing), whereas the US only has freedom of choice while lacking the basic human necessities”; there is a “visible presence of communism/Marxism; there exists two economies - one for national Cubans and the other for foreigners, with a timid infiltration of capitalism.”

In Cuba, students noticed that many of the older people they met were strong supporters of the Castros and remembered the revolution as a glorious time in Cuba’s history. That democratic elections existed in Cuba was a shocking reality for students:

Are there really democratic ideas working in Cuba? It appears so. The neighborhoods vote for representatives and the delegates do not have to be a member of the Communist Party. The People’s Power delegates are elected with no campaigning, and anyone can run for the position. In the Marianao neighborhood, there are 21,293 people with 11 delegates (serving 2 years) that form the Popular Council. Mercedes spoke of the “potential of the people”

Students particularly noticed that grassroots leadership was much at work in the local communities of Cuba. To the surprise of most students, one does not have to belong to the Communist Party in Cuba in

order to be socially and politically active. The Communist Party had relaxed on that point (a little bit) so that Party members sometimes now belong to a church. Most Cuban community leaders were quoted as saying “Our democracy is not perfect, but it is our democracy.” In contrast, younger people showed a more casual affiliation to Cuban social democracy and its legacy. For example, I asked Reinier (a tour guide in his late 20s) if he was a party member. His eyes lit up and he said, emphatically,

“No way!” He said that younger people are tired of life the way it has been for them, and they do not harbor the fond memories of the struggle for independence from the US.

In sum, it is safe to state that the process of GPL pedagogy, as applied to the contexts of the study abroad experience in Cuba, operated a positive shift in the global mindset of participants, as shown in Table 2. Students’ post-conceptions in the areas of education, healthcare, governance, and economy represent students’ responses to their preconceptions, as well as their takeaways from the field experiences.



**Table 2: GPL as Applied to Cuba**

	<b>Education</b>	<b>Healthcare</b>	<b>Governance/ Leadership</b>	<b>Economy</b>
<b>Pre-conceptions</b>	High literacy rate intertwined with poor economy Poor educational system	Lack of technology and medical supply Ahead of many developed countries The poorest receive healthcare	Always communist Lack of basic freedoms Military policing	Middle income or developed country Lack of basic necessities Insight into US. Embargo
<b>Goal Setting</b>	Explore school system and use of internet Discover education in socialist contexts Interact with students Study Portuguese	Discover healthcare access Discover doctors' compensation Gain insight into nursing profession Find ways to move past propaganda on Cuba	Discuss Cuba/US rapport and relationship Discover human rights abuses	Develop relationship Gain insight into food security Learn effect of US. Embargo
<b>Contrasting knowledge</b>	Free education vs. TV. Education and scarcity of teachers	Free and universal healthcare vs. empty pharmacies and lack of basic drugs.	Marxist-communist vs. grassroots and municipal elections	Unfreedom of Cuba (Sanchez, J). vs. freedom from constraints.
<b>Onsite Experience</b>	Only public schools; Small size classrooms; teaching English	Health system well organized in national, provincial, and local units	Elections of community and municipal leaders; No money involved in election campaigns.	Two currencies: national Pesos for locals and International Pesos for foreigners
<b>Post-conceptions</b>	Cuba has Global North-type of education. Challenges posed by educational technology.	High level healthcare; Global solidarity: Cuba has trained hundreds of primary physicians in world.	Visible presence of communism/Marxism; Rigid old generations; younger generations leaning toward capitalism; Evident equality between men and women.	Two economies: tight grips of socialist economy; timid infiltration of capitalism.

Table 3 summarizes the process of GPL, as applied to Brazil. In the preconception stage of GPL, students thought of Brazilian education as inclusive of “multiple disparities, yet home to Paolo Freire; high literacy rate, yet lack of education opportunity in rural areas, and centralized curriculum.” In post-

conception, students retained that Paolo Freire does not have the same impact in his native country; “school experiences are quite different for private and public students leading to a large racial gap.” As far as healthcare, most participants did not have a clue about the Brazilian system(s) before the study abroad. However, some preconceived it as exclusively government-run and had “a growing concern about the Zika Virus outbreak” in 2016 and 2017. Upon their travels to Brazil, participants discovered that “healthcare in Brazil is a constitutional right; however, [a] racial gap exists in private vs. public healthcare,” and Zika Virus was not as big an issue as the world had made it to be.

Regarding the leadership/governance of Brazil prior to traveling to that country, participants had this to say: “A class-based society; unjust and hierarchical system of authoritarian rule and exploitation of the lower classes; a government like the US; however, Brazil holds a strong central government run with heavy white upper-class influence.” Before departing to Brazil, students thought of its economy in terms of “no income inequality based on race; no economic racial inequality; no economic voice for poor communities; however, there is illusion of economic equality.” Although participants did not confirm or inform their apprehensions of economic racial inequality, they observed that the “lighter the color of one’s skin, the more likely to be economically well-off in Brazil.”

I have also learned that a country cannot be defined by the corruption in their leadership. Brazil is so much more than their political climate. It is beautiful and rich and diverse, and it is made up of people that are fighting to make a difference for the future of Brazil. Based on our

current knowledge, the race-based violence we see in other parts of the world is nonexistent in Brazil. However, the large racial gap in many parts of Brazilian society brings into question racial democracy. Through my experience in spending time in Brazil, and meeting with leaders in both small communities and large organizations, my growth as a leader has evolved. I feel like leadership is universal, but has different contexts depending on where you are from. Brazil’s most important political leaders are overwhelmingly white. Black political leaders have often been the strongest advocates of affirmative action and similar types of social and educational reforms.

The process of GPL pedagogy utilized in the contexts of Brazil shows that participants in this short-term study abroad also underwent a change of worldview as they responded to their initial preconceptions with more informed and more educated post-conceptions.

**Table 3: GPL as Applied to Brazil**

	<b>Education</b>	<b>Healthcare</b>	<b>Governance/ Leadership</b>	<b>Economy</b>
<b>Pre-conceptions</b>	Multiple disparities, yet home to Paolo Freire; high literacy rate; lack of education opportunity in rural areas; centralized curriculum.	Universal, public and free healthcare; No knowledge at all of healthcare in Brazil; government funded; growing concern of the Zika virus; private healthcare just for the rich	A class-based society; unjust and hierarchical system of authoritarian rule and exploitation of the lower classes; Government like the US; Strong central government run with heavy white upper-class influence	No income inequality based on race; Economic racial inequality; no economic voice for poor communities; illusion of economic equality.
<b>Goal Setting</b>	Interact with Brazilian students; discuss access and equal opportunity in education; discuss higher education quality	Discover healthcare disparities; interact with children on welfare; discover socialized institutions of healthcare.	Learn impact of slavery and colonization; discuss women's challenges; develop intercultural understanding; discover sources of favelas.	Discuss impact of the Olympics on economy of Brazil; discover the influence of BRICS on Brazil.
<b>Contrasting knowledge</b>	Expensive private schools for the rich; free public universities for the rich. Controversial affirmative action	Expensive private insurance for the rich; public healthcare for the poor	Whether Brazil is a race democracy: "Brazilian races relations have developed in a tolerant and conflict-free manner" (Palmer, 2006)	The lighter the skin color the more likely to be economically well-off.
<b>Onsite Experience</b>	Well-equipped private schools vs. poor public schools.	Crowded and depraved public hospitals vs. first class private hospital such as AMIL.	The favelas have their own rules and governance. Police and strangers are unwelcome.	Favelas, slums or shantytowns are home to the poorest.
<b>Post-conceptions</b>	School experiences are quite different for private and public students leading to a large racial gap.	Healthcare in Brazil is a constitutional right. However, a racial gap exists in private vs. public healthcare.	Brazil's most important political leaders are overwhelmingly white. Black political leaders have often been the strongest advocates of affirmative action.	The lighter the skin, the better-off; Tourism is huge; oil refinery and agriculture.
<b>Student</b>	<b>Evaluations</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Objectives</b>

To analyze how students overall met the course objectives, I collected IDEA scaling evaluations, as well as written comments by students who participated in the immersion experiences. With regard to the minor objective (IDEA # 4): "Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course," students' average point was 4.6 out of 5. For the important objective (IDEA # 12): "Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers," students' average point was 4.5 out of 5. Regarding the essential objective (IDEA # 11): "Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view," students' rating was 4.7 out of 5.

The overall ratings indicate the following: Excellent Teacher (4.7 out of 5) and Excellent Course (4.7 out of 5). The result shows that the goals and objectives for the course were sufficiently met. However,

these positive numbers are more a reflection of students' appreciation of the course, which does not reveal much about the worldview change in students who took the program. Rather, tensions and contrasts between students' preconceived notions and student takeaways are likely to determine whether students' worldviews have shifted one way or the other.

### **Tensions between Preconceptions and Post-conceptions**

Further analysis of the findings shows that 60% of students' preconceptions, before they embarked in their study abroad in Cuba and Brazil, did not match realities in the field and caused them to incur a change of worldviews. Concerning Cuba, most students believed that the island has always been a communist country, that Cubans suffer from complete lack of freedom, that it was excluded from the world economy, and that Cuba was a dangerous place for Americans. No wonder students set goals that aligned with their unproven knowledge. They wished "to meet and speak with local Cubans about their life, their attitudes toward the Americans, their perception of freedom and democracy." Most of these preconceptions proved to be the opposite, causing students to change their worldviews about the countries and their people. In the post-conception stage, students had more positive feelings about Cuba, journaling:

Cuban people are the warmest and most welcoming people; Cuban solidarity is about people; little did I know that Cubans organize their own elections, and candidates do not have to campaign; therefore, there is no money involved, like in the US; Cubans seem to enjoy their freedom from constraints because their education is free, as well as their healthcare.

There are also tensions between preconceptions and post-conceptions in the case of Brazil. Most students thought positively of Brazil as "a country with no income inequality, which has attained a racial democracy, home of Paulo Freire and, therefore, a country of high literacy rate with a strong balanced education system." Although the participants believed that all Brazilians benefitted equally from the public health system, they raised great concerns about the Zika Virus outbreak that occurred before the first study abroad in Brazil in 2016. Like in Cuba, these preconceptions in Brazil yielded opposite results and shifted students' worldviews. They acknowledged that "speaking with natives changes mindsets: income disparity goes along the lines of skin color;" "racial democracy is only on the surface. In Salvador, a city with 80% black people, the issue of race discrimination is a daily reality;" "public universities are free but for the elite;" "the line of people waiting to see a doctor in public hospital was despicably long ... whereas private hospitals are first-class and for the rich only;" and "political leaders are overwhelmingly whites."

However, about 40% of students pre-acquired knowledge about Cuba and Brazil matched reality in the field and seemed to have bolstered their resolve to cross-culturally exchange with the people of Cuba and Brazil. Rightly so, students' preconceptions about Cuba mentioned "old cars and houses;" "the Elian Gonzales saga between the US and Cuba;" "Bay to Pigs fiasco;" "US embargo that has had implications in Cuban society;" "Castro surviving US assassination attempts;" "communist holdout;" and a "high level of literary and free education." This alignment between preconceptions and post-conceptions in Cuba had some students blame most of Cuban conditions, including old cars and aging housing, on the US embargo, which has prevented the island from importing necessities. One participant had this to say, "[the] US embargo badly affects Cuba ... for me, returning to Cuba to establish some form of partnership is a must."

Likewise, some of the students' predictions about Brazil fell right in line. There was a noticeable lack of educational opportunities in rural areas visited by students, and the universal public healthcare reinforced the preconception that Brazil was a tourist wonder, citing in particular the statue of Christ the Redeemer and touristic towns such as Paraty, a fishing town located between San Paolo and Rio de Janeiro. That some students extended their stay to interact with the people and learn Portuguese is indicative of their changes of worldviews as a consequence of the study abroad programs, which GPL facilitated.

## DISCUSSION

### Study Abroad and Preconceptions

Before setting foot in Cuba and Brazil, study participants had preconceived notions from their parents and other sources. For them, Cuba had always been a completely communist nation, and Cuban communism represented a total lack of freedom and a great danger against the American dream. One student reported, “I knew little facts about the country beyond knowing that it was a communist holdout [and that] Fidel Castro had survived multiple assassination attempts, had a legendary beard, and enjoyed cigars.” Although most participants in this study confessed to their lack of specific knowledge about the country, they also preconceived it as a perfect racial democracy that had overcome racial divides. Another student stated a post-conception about Brazil: “My contact with Brazil in the past few months for work has underscored that this is also an incredibly open-minded and progressive population.”

The pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) begins with self-emptiness of preconception, allowing more room in the minds of study abroad participants. Participants in the Cuban and Brazilian programs scrutinized their knowledge and presuppositions to uncover the fantasies and grudges they held, knowingly or unknowingly, about these two countries. Many scholars of learning transformation - including Mezirow (1978), Oddou and Mendenhall (2013), and Taylor (1994) - agreed on the importance of keeping preconceptions or assumptions under check in order to construct new ways of perceiving, understanding, and feeling about other cultures.

### Study Abroad and Goal Setting

With their pre-departure assumptions sorted out, participants in these study abroad programs also set some goals and strategies to prove or disprove their pre-conceptions. By allowing students to set their own goals (besides the course objectives), they developed a sense of ownership of their own learning. The success of the program, and ultimately the change of worldviews, occurred as students strove to find answers to their goals. In like manner, before embarking in a study abroad program, Niehaus et al. (2012) encouraged their students to outline three to four goals, then to list specific strategies they would put in place to meet those goals. These authors implied that goal setting encouraged students to deepen their cross-cultural experiences.

### Study Abroad Contrasting Knowledge

This GPL pedagogy presented to participants in the Cuba and Brazil programs conflicting views, which they were required to reconcile in theory, as well as throughout their study abroad experiences. Regarding Cuba, students had to synthesize the contradictory facets of Cuban society presented in the two books by Veltmeyer and Rushton (2012) and Sanchez (2012). The former dwelt on the distinction Cubans draw between freedom from constraints (influenced by Marxist socialism), which they relish, and freedom of choice (founded on capitalism). The latter presented a day-to-day degradation of basic living conditions of the average Cuban and the complete lack of freedoms, particularly the freedom of expression. With regard to Brazil, students were to solve the dilemma of whether Brazil was a racial democracy entailing a racially, economically, and academically harmonious society (Ioris, 2014). On the other hand, a book edited by Johnson and Heringer (2015) discussed the implementation of affirmative action for students of color who could not otherwise afford access to public universities, which admit, in an almost exclusive manner, white students.

In support of this dialectical pedagogy, Oddou and Mendenhall (2013) maintained that a learning process that includes “*contrast, confrontation, and replacement*” (p. 219) is a *sine qua non* to enhance change. Among the critical elements that enable change or transformation, these authors discussed the ability to tolerate ambiguity, to embrace curiosity or openness, to initiate interpersonal relationships, and

to develop relationships.

### **Experiential Learning**

Participants in the study abroad programs in Cuba and Brazil learned by observing and by immersing cognitively in global events, with specific attention to issues that create gaps between the powerful and the powerless in the two countries. One student exclaimed that “no one library would procure me with the amount of knowledge I am getting by living the life of people, smelling their air, eating their food, and interacting with them.” As opposed to Niehaus et al. (2012), who argued that students can acquire the same learning experience whether on campus or on a short-term study abroad, Oddou and Mendenhall (2013), as well as GPL, underscored the irreplaceable importance of experiential learning in the field. They argued that both classroom and experiential learning are complementarily important to bring about a global mindset and a change of worldview in participants. The experiential stage of GPL aligns with Bandura’s (1977) states of social development, suggesting that people develop through learning from their surroundings. Learning happens through interactions with other individuals or by observing other people’s attitudes, behaviors, and the outcomes of their behaviors.

### **Study Abroad and Post-Conceptions**

Participants in the two short-term abroad programs in Cuba and Brazil affirmed the necessity to experience other cultures in order to increase individual understanding and broaden their perspectives. They accomplished their expansion of worldviews by interacting with Cubans and Brazilians in their communities, workplaces, and in their daily routines. Livermore (2015) and Mendenhall et al. (2013) shed light on the wealth of experiential learning and the courses of action that unfold as a consequence of undertaking a study abroad. The stage of post-conception in GPL anticipated that students who benefitted from the three studies abroad would revisit their preconceptions (or non-critiqued knowledge) held prior to their immersion in the new cultures of Cuba or Brazil. Somehow, the process of GPL has helped these students acquire the capability of “leading through cultural intelligence” (Livermore, 2015). For Livermore, learning to lead with *cultural intelligence* (CQ) amounts to “the ability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures” (p. xiii).

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Although the study yielded non-replicable and non-generalizable findings, the ultimate result of this study is heuristically valuable as an exploratory analysis. It shows that, through the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership, graduate students can take advantage of a study abroad in Cuba and in Brazil to gain a global leadership mindset and enhance their self-awareness by confirming or refuting their own perceptions of cultures of the two Latin American countries. Graduate students enhanced their understanding of the distinction that the people of Cuba place between freedom from constraints and freedom of choices. They also grasped the rationale behind the Brazilian underpinning of racial democracy (in theory) and its corollary: the recent implementation of affirmative action in institutions of higher learning. The experiential learning in Cuba and in Brazil feeds into the dialectical and pedagogical nature of Global Positioning Leadership.

In addition to serving as a pedagogical process, GPL also emerged as a theory grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2014) collected during the study abroad programs in both Cuba and Brazil. As a grounded theory that spanned from students’ preconceptions to their post-conceptions, GPL pedagogy relied heavily on a constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) of students’ progress through each stage of this pedagogy.

In sum, participants in this study began their journey toward Cuba and Brazil by identifying whatever preconceptions they held about the two Latin American countries. They adopted measurable goals to make the best of their short-term studies abroad. They contrasted and compared new knowledge and

synthesized it to seek answers from experiential learning in the field. After setting foot in Cuba or Brazil, participants deployed their global mindset by “observing, retaining, remapping (or post-conceiving) their experiences, which prompted them to local and global actions.” No wonder some students returned to Cuba and Brazil to either conduct further research, establish themselves, or create lasting partnerships with segments of those societies. This study focused only on 41 graduate students who participated in three short-term studies abroad in Brazil and Cuba. Future research should examine how the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership affects the experiential learning of a greater number of students in other Global South countries.

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**JEAN-PIERRE BONGILA**, Ed.D., is Associate Professor and Director of the MA in Educational Leadership in the School of Education, University of St. Thomas, MN (USA). A champion of building cultural bridges of learning and understanding, he also serves as a member of the core doctoral faculty with expertise in global and ethical leadership. He has led a yearly graduate course titled “Leadership in the International Contexts” of various countries. His most recent book was published in 2018 under the title of *Developing Global Positioning Leadership: Fieldwork Learning in Cuba*. He can be reached at [JPBongila@stthomas.edu](mailto:JPBongila@stthomas.edu).