

## Chapter 57

# Fostering Intercultural Identity During Study Abroad to Strengthen Intercultural Competence

Niki Sol

Anglia Ruskin University, UK

### ABSTRACT

*Universities are eager to foster global citizenship within their students, including through study abroad opportunities. However, studying abroad does not necessarily guarantee gains in intercultural competence (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012), especially for the shorter programs that have gained in popularity among university students. This chapter examines the recent literature and argues the need to nurture identity negotiation for students who choose to do part of their higher education abroad; the understanding of one's self is a key component to intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). More and more study abroad providers (universities and businesses) have begun to use guided intervention during abroad programs to enhance students' intercultural competence. With careful and intentional pedagogical design, study abroad programs can help students better understand their intercultural identity and become better global citizens.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the increase of globalization at governmental, economic, and social levels, universities seek to increase globalization at academic levels to better prepare students to be contributing members of an interdependent, intercultural world. Part of this preparation is increasing students' cultural awareness and global competence, and one of the main avenues for university students to increase these areas is through studying abroad. More than 150 universities have committed to the Institute of International Education's Generation Study Abroad initiative to drastically increase student participation in study abroad by 2020. In 2010 and 2011, respectively, President Obama launched the 100,000 Strong in China

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and 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiatives to get as many U.S. students studying abroad in China and Latin American countries by 2020. The push to immerse our students in different cultures through study abroad has become a focus for increasing this cultural competence.

Paige and Vande Berg (2012), Salisbury, An, and Pascarella (2013), and Dockrill, Rahatzad, and Phillion (2016) note that intercultural learning and development are not necessarily taking place when students go abroad. Students may return to the United States with a handful of anecdotes and some stamps in their passports but no real appreciation for cultural perspectives beyond their own. These students may have spent time living in another country, but not engaging in it. Universities have begun to realize that merely sending their students across borders does not instill the cultural awareness and global competence they seek to develop in those same students.

One of the benchmarks of positive intercultural development is a keen awareness of one's self in the wider global context (Kim, 2000; Deardorff, 2006). This chapter argues that one of the most effective approaches for abroad students to increase their cultural awareness and global competence is with supported identity negotiation from pre-departure through re-entry. Through deliberate and effective pedagogical devices that foster identity negotiation in education abroad students, the resultant self-understanding will better aid students in meaningful global competency development and cultural adaptation. By examining the framework of study abroad's benefits (including intercultural awareness and growth), the chapter demonstrates how the current research, when effectively drawn together, indicates that understanding one's own identity is key to understanding other cultures and that guided intervention in abroad experiences facilitates better gains in cultural competency. With these key points outlined, the assertion for structured intervention in student identity negotiation is discussed and further supported, including the use of Personal Leadership, reflective journaling, experiential learning, and technology. The chapter concludes by outlining the implications and actions that study abroad providers and practitioners should execute as best practices for enhancing their students' intercultural growth.

## **BACKGROUND**

This chapter defines study abroad as the academic study of "university students who do part of their degree program requirements outside of their home university and their home country for a temporary period" (Sol, 2013, p. 25). The concept of study abroad can theoretically be traced back to ancient times when scholars would travel to neighboring countries to learn from other cultures, though the more current model of study abroad in the United States emerged in the late nineteenth century (Hoffa, 2007). According to the Institute of International Education, more than 300,000 students studied abroad in the 2013–2014 academic year, increasing from just over 190,000 ten years prior (IIE, 2015). They also report that 87% of study abroad students in that academic year were undergraduates; the research presented here focuses almost exclusively on this group of students, as does this chapter in its analysis.

Scholars have long touted the personal benefits of study abroad (Pfnister, 1972; Nash, 1976; Kauffmann & Kuh, 1984; Yachimowicz, 1987; Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990; Kauffmann, Kuh, Weaver, & Weaver, 1992; Miller, 1993; Sharma & Mulka, 1993; Laubscher, 1994; Drews et al., 1996; Bates, 1997; Gmelch, 1997; Thot, 1998; Dwyer, 2004a; van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Guerrero, 2006; Che, Spearman, & Manizade, 2009; Fry, Paige, Jon, Dillow, & Nam, 2009; Gillespie, Braskamp, & Dwyer, 2009; Cho & Morris, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2015). From the Grand Tour of Europe to today's multiple options for learning in different countries and cultures, study abroad has become a fixture within

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