

STUDYING ABROAD: THE CHANGE DOES NOT STOP WHEN STUDENTS COME
HOME

by

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Abstract

Study abroad participation has grown throughout the years at a steady pace (Chow & Bhandari, 2011; Fischer, 2011; Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, & Roller, 2012). A length of stay can range from a few weeks to a year. A high majority of students who have experienced study abroad have changed in some way throughout their stay, but what about when they return to the United States? What other changes do students go through and experience when they come home? The change simply does not stop once a student comes home from studying abroad. This report discusses the various transitions students go through when they go abroad, but also what student affairs professionals can do to help students get through the process of change and acclimation back in the university. Conversations with students who have studied abroad and professionals in study abroad will be referred to throughout the paper. The students were chosen based on their experiences abroad and their willingness to participate. Personal experiences will also be utilized by the author to provide perspective of the experience of reentry to the readers.

Research highlighted the benefits of going abroad are broad (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2010). However, the reentry phase back to the United States is an area yet to be thoroughly studied. Through a review of past literature and conversations with professionals and participants in study abroad, it is clear that a reentry model needs to be implemented so that students can be assisted in a more helpful manner. As part of this report, a reentry model will be discussed and will include specific suggestions to assist students with the reentry process.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Current Context of Studying Abroad.....	2
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	5
Cultural Identity.....	5
Reentry from Study Abroad.....	7
Problems Students Experience with Reentry.....	10
“New” Normal.....	12
The W Curve.....	15
Reentry Problems.....	17
Relational Effects.....	20
Maturity.....	23
Need for Reentry Support.....	24
Chapter 3 - Discussion.....	26
Reentry Support at Kansas State University.....	26
Chapter 4 - Model for Reentry.....	29
Supporting the Individual.....	34
Chapter 5 - Conclusions.....	36
Implications for Practice.....	36
Future Research.....	37
Final Thoughts.....	38
References.....	39

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Dedication

To my supportive parents, Fred and Delores: You have given me the tools, now watch me work.

To my niece Ryleigh: Follow your dreams, you will not be disappointed.

To those who have come into my life and have left a mark on my heart, this is for you.

“For me, I am driven by two main philosophies: know more today about the world than you knew yesterday and lessen the suffering of others. You'd be surprised how far that gets you.”

–Neil DeGrasse Tyson

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Many people know that studying abroad changes students. Most would say these changes are for the better; a part of the students' identity changes. What factors related to studying abroad changes students? Identity has much to do with it; growth and self-awareness are aspects of the study abroad experience.

When a student returns from a studying abroad experience, the transition is almost as important as when the student went abroad. The student returns to the environment of pre-studying abroad; what changes have happened in this environment? This report will discuss transitions, both those related to studying abroad and coming back to the United States; however, the central focus of this report is the transition from studying abroad to returning to the United States.

This is a particularly interesting topic for me, for I studied in Argentina for six months in 2009. The reentry process will be discussed within my report, including changes I experienced with my family, friends and my identity. Within higher education and specifically within study abroad, this report will address what type of support is available to students coming back to the United States. I also conducted personal conversations with students to discuss their feelings about reentry and their relationships with family and friends.

Studying abroad is a well-researched topic (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2010). The reentry process is a more narrowed focus within the study abroad arena. With the growth in numbers of students wanting to study abroad, universities have a large stake in their success. "As the number of students involved in study-abroad programs mushrooms, such experiences are becoming a central component of the internationalization efforts of colleges and

universities [and] these programs are increasingly viewed as a means to enhance the quality and reputation of an institution” (Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg & Roller, 2012, p. 2). What about when students return home? What type of support is provided to students?

This report will cover the following topics: current context of study abroad, problems with reentry, the “new” normal, the W curve, symptoms of reentry, relational effects, maturity, need for reentry support, and reentry support at Kansas State University. A model for reentry will be provided, as well as implications for practice, support for the individual, and areas of future research.

Current Context of Studying Abroad

Going abroad is a common desire for many people. One of the ways students can go abroad is to do it while in college and take courses that apply to their major as well as get an in-depth experience of the host country’s culture, language, and history. As the world becomes more globalized, studying abroad in college is a great way to expand cultural competency and challenge preconceived notions of other countries. However, even as the world is becoming more globalized, the United States needs to compete on a global scale and increase the number of those who study abroad. Globalization is the recognition of the development and the integration of the world’s ever-increasing communication, economies, and politics, in a world-wide view instead by a country by country basis (Zeiler, 2002).

The world is becoming interconnected. Studying abroad has a role to play in helping people and cultures to become interconnected. “College study abroad programs are increasingly popular. U.S. student participation has grown 150% over the past decade, and 223,534 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2005-2006” (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 649). “Yet less than [one] percent of American college students study abroad each year. And of

those who do, almost one-third enroll in programs that take place in English-speaking countries or [in countries] that use English as the language of instruction. That reduces the impact of the experience because of the lack of immersion in a foreign language” (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005, para. 1). It is key for students from the United States to realize that not only is it important to study abroad for the experiences to be gained, but it is also important because the United States needs to appreciate the effects of being in a globalized society. Graduates are not only competing with domestic students, but also those from countries such as Argentina, South Africa, and Australia. When educated United States citizens are not exposed to the world beyond their borders, they may have a reduced ability to influence and persuade foreign governments and world opinion (Kean & Hamilton, 2008).

Juhasz and Walker (1988) looked at college students who went abroad and those who did not. Posttest scores for self-esteem and self-efficacy were lower for students who had studied abroad. The researchers argued that those who studied abroad, having been subjected to a more challenging experience, had developed more realistic self-appraisals than those who remained at home. This is beneficial to those students who are advancing towards maturity because students have encountered difficult situations and can assess a similar situation with prior knowledge. However, the long term benefits of studying abroad outweigh the immediate reentry issues a student may face. “Alumni [of study abroad] maintain culturally diverse worldviews, engage in civic responsibility, attain higher levels of academic achievement, and make career choices based on their study abroad experience” (Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, & Roller, 2012, p. 3). Even with the benefits of studying abroad, it is important to look at the study abroad experience and the impact on students. This report focuses on the transition of the reentered students.

Are there transitional issues that arise depending on the country? Based on a report by Adler, (1981) who studied employees of companies who sent them abroad:

Re-entry from cultures similar to the home culture may be assumed to be easier than from dissimilar cultures. The assumption would posit that a return from England to Canada, for instance, would be easier than a return from Saudi Arabia to Canada. The present study found no detectable patterns, either among countries or types of assignments, across a wide range of cultures. No aspect of the re-entry transition systematically varied according to either the geographic area or the type of overseas work. Therefore, it should not be assumed the re-entry transition will be easy or trivial for employees returning from similar cultures or assignments. (p. 353)

According to the research, the employees went through difficult re-entry processes no matter where they went.

A review of the literature provides more in depth information about the cultural aspects of the study abroad experience. The literature review presents more information that focuses on the relationship between the study abroad experience of college students and the reentry process.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Cultural Identity

Students who study abroad become a part of a culture. “A culture can be understood from [a] perspective [of] a network of shared meanings that are taken for granted as reality by those interacting within the network” (Zapf, 1991, p. 105). When that culture is disassembled, it can be difficult for them to find meaning for a period of time. “In addition to traditional behaviours [sic] and customs, culture then includes a conceptual style which reflects more a manner of organizing things, of putting things in a certain way, of looking at the world in a distant fashion” (Zapf, 1991, p. 106). Zapf continues with “when such a match is made, the person is able to give meaning to an outside event. If the match cannot be made, however, the person may feel disoriented, frustrated, or afraid” (Zapf, 1991, p. 106). The student needs that culture or connection throughout the pre-departure, study abroad, and the reentry process.

Cultural adjustment is the process in which individuals interpret new social norms, language skills, respond to their surroundings, and interpret the non-verbal actions of the new culture (Church, 1982). The adjustment influences identity formation with students while abroad. According to Walling, Eriksson, Meese, Ciovica, & Gorton (2006):

College students reported the experience of personal conflict when they became aware of the changes in themselves and when they compared their home culture to the culture they visited. Because of the unique identity formation and developmental stage that young adult college students find themselves in, it is reasonable to anticipate that international experiences have tremendous impact upon a student's sense of cultural identity. (p.154)

Typically, the changes that students experience in the new culture do not affect them until the students return home and encounter a dissonance that is surprising to them. Instead of feeling

excited to share stories of being abroad, some students encounter isolation and an inability to communicate the changes that have occurred.

When students study abroad, they acquire the meaning and rules of the new culture. Since most students have only lived in one country, much of that meaning is associated with the home country. Examining study abroad as a phenomenological occurrence, which focuses on meaning in human experience, meaning is not acquired through isolated happenings. How one finds meaning is through experiencing the country with others and exploring and discovering the area (Lester, 2000).

It is in the home country that the students acquire their culture. This is done without the students even knowing it while as a baby and carrying on throughout life. The meanings of symbols and rules of social interaction are created during this time and are the basis of communication. Without the shared communication, people are not able to create a coherent culture of shared meaning (Casmir, 1983). When students travel to a new country and culture, they are taking with them the innate culture meanings and structures of their home country and culture. They continue to communicate and to act in accordance with the home culture and also learn and interpret the new country and culture associated with it (Noesjirwan & Freestone, 1979). When the student is consumed with the new culture, it can be overwhelming at times. This is how the idea of culture shock was developed. “Culture shock [is] precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Zapf, 1991, p. 107). Zapf’s research reflects my own study abroad experience. In my experience abroad, I knew I would experience culture shock, but I was surprised at how long it took to feel like I was less of an American and more like an Argentine. The closest I got to feeling like an Argentine was when someone in the country thought I was Brazilian. I immersed myself in the

country, speaking Castellano as much as I could, traveling in groups and eventually alone, and volunteering within Buenos Aires. It helped to get as involved as I could so that the culture shock was lessened. It is in the home culture that the sojourner internalizes the rules that govern interaction with others, contributing to the formation of the sojourner's cultural identity. This cultural identity determines the implicit need structure and motivational foundation of behavior (Martin, 1986). All I had to rely on in my cultural competency was my limited knowledge of Argentina at the time and my experience in Switzerland for a few weeks. When I arrived in Argentina, I told myself to get to know the city and meet people; I needed the structure to make the meaning real for me.

Kealey (1978) mentions "it is not the new culture or environment itself that CAUSES the upset. Rather it is one-self in contact with the new environment that creates the physical/emotional upset" (as cited in Zapf, 1991, p. 107). All things familiar to me were gone for six months. All but two students I went with were new to me. In talking with the students for this report, each of us experienced varying culture shock experiences. Anyone who lives an alternate culture can expect to experience culture shock during the initial stay in the host country but the reentry phase varies from person to person depending on specific symptoms, intensity, and duration (Adler, 1975).

Reentry from Study Abroad

When it is time to come back to the United States, reentry occurs. Reentry is the "readapting of the individual to the home environment after an extended stay in another culture" (Martin, 1986, p. 1). Reentry can be seen as positive and/or negative, depending on the individual. Before leaving for Argentina, my pre-departure session had a section on reentry. One of the issues that was discussed was we needed to be conscious of the fact we may be

enthusiastic about our international experiences, but those to whom we tell the stories may display a lack of interest and we need to be aware of it.

Reentry can affect students at different times and with different levels of intensity. Even more, reentry difficulties can also be increased by lack of past international travel, personality, and age, among other factors. What affects personality is that some students are changed so much by the international experience that friends and family do not understand how to integrate the new person who has come home. Research shows that in terms of age, younger returnees are concerned about how their absence affected the dynamics of their personal relationships upon returning (Church, 1982; Martin, 1986).

For many students, reentry is a process of understanding and interpreting what coming home means for them personally, academically, relationally, psychologically. This takes time through interaction with others. Through the communication with others, the students begin to remember what it was like before they left for studying abroad but are now adapting that with the new individual who came back from studying abroad. Returnees know that change is happening for them upon return. However, they still need to connect with others to create a new pattern of relationships. The relationship will not be like it was pre-study abroad.

Once a student decides to go abroad, experiences the host culture, and then comes home, the journey back home can be difficult. “Whereas culture shock and entry transitions have been well documented in the literature, the re-entry transition has not. The implicit assumption has been that returning to a familiar place, to one’s home country, is easy” (Adler, 1981, p. 344). Reentry is one aspect of studying abroad that is still being developed. A student is going through many transitions when going to college, and studying abroad adds an extra dynamic. Pittman and Richmond (2008) mention, “Entering a college requires youth to face multiple transitions,

including changes in their living arrangements, academic environments, and friendship networks, while adapting to greater independence and responsibility in their personal and academic lives” (p. 344). The same can be said of studying abroad. Students are entering numerous changes like those who are entering college.

Martin and Harrell’s (2004) reentry research has uncovered three characteristics that impact the reentry process for students. These three characteristics can exacerbate the reentry process depending on the students’ connectedness to the characteristic. The first is participant characteristics, which include factors such as one’s personality, background, and readiness to transition back to the United States. The upbringing of a student has an effect on the experience abroad and reentry. In terms of personality, what is the student like before going abroad and when s/he returns? What is the student’s background of cultural competence? What has been the students’ experience with transitions? Students who are in consistent contact with family and friends are more likely to have a smoother transition back home than those who have inconsistent contact.

The second characteristic is home environment characteristics, such as social and academic support when the student returns from abroad. What is the family dynamic like? Is it supportive and/or communicative? The same is true for the university. What support systems are in place to ensure a student has the proper care to acclimate back into the academic realm? Students may feel as though they are unable to demonstrate the skills they learned while abroad to those who are in the United States (Martin & Harrell, 2004).

Communication of the returnee is the third characteristic. How those skills are communicated is a reflection of the student’s ability to articulate the experience. One form this can take is the form of communication competence; this relates to how to effectively

communicate the experiences abroad to a potential employer, to one's family and friends, and feel as though the information was understood and validated.

Problems Students Experience with Reentry

Student affairs professionals, international programs offices, and career employment offices are able to assist students as they go through reentry, but many institutions are lacking in the organizing and implementing of such a program. Students are typically given information before they go abroad about the resources available while abroad and when back, but in many cases, the resources are simply wasted. Joe Milostan, an advisor for Kansas State University's Study Abroad Office provided insight to reentry. "The reentry process is one thing that study abroad offices do poorly" (J. Milostan, personal communication, March, 2, 2012). When asked why, Milostan went on to say, "The focus is on the preparation and sending students off to study abroad. If there is an emergency while abroad, then offices get involved to assist as needed when the student gets back" (J. Milostan, personal communication, March, 2, 2012). When reentry and the lack of development it has received were discussed, Milostan stated, "Reentry is ignored once back; university and program providers do not know how to set it up" (J. Milostan, personal communication, March, 2, 2012). This is to say that many universities like Kansas State University do not know how to engage students in the reentry process. University staff need to develop an understanding of what students need before they can engage students in the reentry process.

It is difficult to have all the students who come back from their study abroad experience discuss something that they may not have experienced, either. Students have distinct and varying experiences, and universities may find it difficult to cater to the needs of each student. A stereotype exists that assumes that going abroad always has positive results for those who go

abroad. The assumption is that there should not be any issues to coming back to the United States (Weber, 2009). As mentioned before, reentry issues may affect a student at different times. This means that the feeling of coming back to the United States may vary from student to student in terms of demeanor, severity, and emotion. It may affect a student as soon as s/he comes back to the United States or six months after returning. With study abroad numbers increasing, the need for reentry orientation and assistance will likely only escalate. That is why professionals in higher education must be trained and be made aware of the issues students who study abroad could potentially encounter.

Another problem students encounter upon their return is communicating the changes that have occurred while abroad. How does one integrate what s/he learned abroad with their pre-study abroad life? “Typically, these students are often returning to academic life within a couple weeks of their return to the United States. It is reasonable to anticipate that many students returning to the campus in the fall from these trips may be experiencing adjustment issues associated with the reentry process” (Weber, 2009, p. 5).

As students return from study abroad programs, student affairs professionals have a strategic role to play by intervening as needed with those who need reentry help. “By providing personal and programmatic support for students readjusting to American culture, we have the opportunity to assist students in integrating what they have learned from their global experience into the development of individual identities, values, and behaviors” (Weber, 2009, p. iii).

Student affairs professionals may help students make meaning of their experiences. “Counsellors [sic] may encounter persons who have been uprooted and transplanted, victims of culture shock, ‘casualties of intercultural mobility’” (Zapf, 1991, p. 105). Sometimes this may mean that professionals may be caught off guard with what the students’ needs are. Those needs

can include grief of losing a family member or friend, homosexual coming out process, financial assistance, significant transformation of political or religious views, all of which may need attention from student affairs professionals. However, these needs may be overlooked because of students being identified simply as adjusting to life back in the United States.

“New” Normal

There are positive aspects to studying abroad once back in the home country. Some of those benefits include maturity, foreign language exposure, and an increased perspective on world affairs and cultural diversity (Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, & Roller, 2012, p. 2). “Study-abroad participants reflected higher levels of different types of learning, as well as greater participation in diversity experiences. Students who studied abroad also showed greater gains in personal and social development” (Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, & Roller, 2012). Certainly the benefits of studying abroad are well-known and documented, but it is the fostering of these positive aspects once home that needs to be researched.

As mentioned before, studying abroad can affect students at different times and with differing severity. The following is a statement from a student who went to Cameroon and dealt with the effects of reentry after five weeks in Cameroon: “I found myself struggling to reenter my normal routine and the U.S. culture and realized that withholding my anxieties from my fellow travelers during the trip might partially explain my difficult reentry” (Kupo, 2012, p. 9). The story portrayed is what is considered the “new” normal one experiences once s/he comes back from studying abroad.

It can be quite difficult to verbally express oneself effectively when discussing the study abroad experience, as was described by Kara Disberger, a student who studied in Spain during 2010. Disberger was chosen to participate based on her experiences abroad and her willingness

to participate. When asked about her relationships with her family when she came back home, Disberger stated that, "I did not look forward to not being able to explain everything to my sister and family. No one truly 'gets it'" (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Once students approach the time to come back to the United States, there is an increased awareness of the time left in the host country and the anticipation of returning to the home country. The transition from host country to home country is called reentry. The desire to return causes the participant to anticipate the transition process back home. There is reentry stress for which the student is often not prepared. Many students lack in exposure to reentry and have difficulty adjusting back to the home culture (Weber, 2009). In my experience, my desire to return home was increased due to a death in the family. When I returned home, it felt as though my length of stay was appropriate for me. Some students see the changes as positive. Logan Gauby, who studied in Kenya, noticed that he paid more attention to others. Gauby was chosen to participate based on his experiences abroad and his willingness to participate. When reflecting about his reentry, Gauby mentioned that he went from being an independent individual to integrating himself back into his social groups. Gauby came back to the United States with the mantra of "being a better you," meaning that he was interested in helping others. Studying abroad helped him see that.

Gaw (1995) studied students who had studied abroad and were asked to discuss their reentry process and any issues they encountered. "The research identified the following percentages of students reporting various reentry symptoms: 30.3% experienced loneliness; 27.3% experienced issues in adjustment to college; 24.2% experienced alienation from others; 22.7% experienced depression; 22.7% experienced trouble studying; and 15.2% experienced academic performance stress (p. 16). The research suggests there is a population of students who

return from study abroad that experience negative reentry effects. Interestingly, per my conversation with Disberger, she did not see academic performance stress, but rather, an improvement in academic success. “I seemed to be a better student after returning. This is interesting because my classes abroad did not require much outside homework or papers, and there were very few exams” (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012). What Disberger did, however, experience upon returning to the United States was a sense of heightened security:

My backpack was stolen about halfway through the trip [in Spain]. I was coming back from Portugal, so I had my passport, along with numerous other valuables: my camera, cell phone, apartment keys, credit card, iPod, driver's license, 80 euro, my glasses, and favorite necklace. I was very upset with myself, as it was my fault for leaving the bag at my feet while on the bus, instead of clutching onto it. I did not even see them take it. However, this experience reminded me that material goods are not what really matter in life. For the first 24 hours or so, I was caught up with damage control – canceling my bank account, filing a police report, obtaining new apartment keys, borrowing money from friends, phoning home to talk to my parents, etc. But after I got things under control, I was walking home one day, passing multiple beggars as I had every other day, and I realized how fortunate I was. I started to feel guilty. There I was, a soon-to-be college graduate, a citizen of a free country, a member of a loving and supportive family - and on top of all that I had the great opportunity to study abroad. I realized that I was lucky to have ever had those material goods in the first place - my iPod, camera, cell phone, etc. I was suddenly more content than I was just a few days previously before my bag was stolen. I remind myself often of this experience when I'm feeling frustrated

and/or stressed; it really puts things into perspective. It was a very humbling lesson. (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012)

Disberger then mentioned that the experience made her paranoid about locking her car and leaving her purse in plain sight. She went on to say that at restaurants, she does not feel comfortable unless her purse is looped around her leg and nestled between her feet (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012).

The W Curve

Initially the U-curve describes the feeling at the pre-departure stage of excitement and anticipation; also a high sense of self-esteem and confidence is demonstrated. Students experience that initial feeling of excitement and anticipation when they first arrive in the host country. Next students may become homesick. It is during this time that cultural adjustments have taken place and results in a positive study abroad experience. When seen, the highs and lows are depicted as a U-shape (Cox, 2006). Once in the host country, typically those feelings drop off and feelings of fear of the unknown come through: unknowns of the country, language capabilities, customs, and shock that one is studying abroad. The duration of this varies among students, depending on factors such as length of stay, distance from home country, and effort put into acclimating oneself into the host country. As the study abroad experience ends for the student, the feelings of the excitement and anticipation return, resembling a 'U' shape.

The W-curve is an extension to the U-curve that was originally assessed when a student studied abroad. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) work on the W-curve shows that the U-curve becomes a W-curve when the student returns home and readjusts to their home culture. "Upon returning to their home country, sojourners experience a second decrease in adjustment followed by a second recovery stage. Returning sojourners may be 'out of phase' with their home culture"

(Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 650). The student may feel euphoric upon entry into the return home, but that euphoria changes into culture shock and discomfort and then finally to a gradual feeling of comfort and fit. Below is an illustration of the U-Curve (in light color) evolving into the W-Curve.

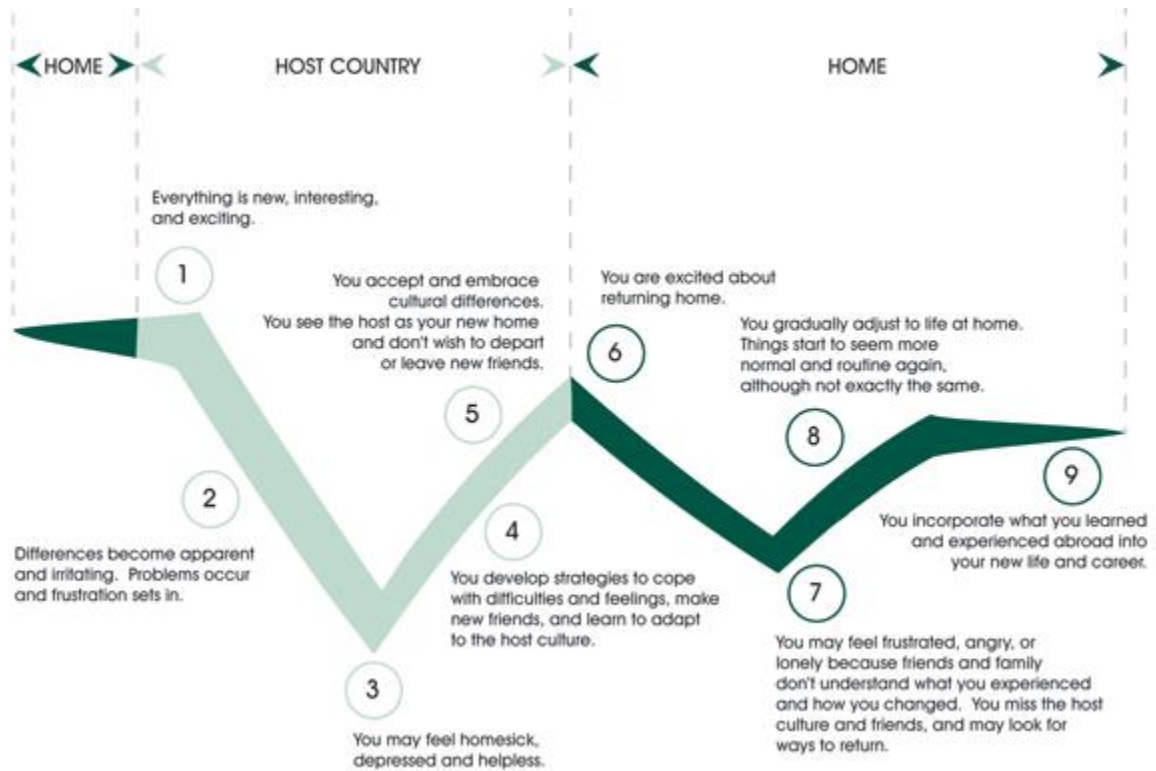


Figure 1. U-Curve evolving into W-Curve during a study abroad experience over time (Baldwin, 2011).

These “out of phase” feelings that students have upon their return also vary in severity and duration, just like while in the host country. In my personal experience and in talking with the students who studied abroad, all mentioned a period of time that we had different expectations of the United States upon our return. In my journey, I also had to adjust my social behaviors from Argentina back to the United States. This involved greeting others by kissing on the cheek in Argentina, no matter who it was. I also had to readjust to not having a maid in the

house. The last social change I experienced was an increased independence. “Thus, just as adapting to a new environment away from home causes emotional stress and anxiety, so can re-adapting to one’s own home culture after an extended period in another country. This is referred to as [reverse culture shock]” (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 650). Reentry can be as intense and sometimes more challenging than the overseas adjustment (Adler, 1981). Not anticipating this intense experience, the students are typically not prepared for the extent to which they experience dissonance and disorientation upon their return to their home culture and environment.

Reentry Problems

A study initiated by Raschio (1987) included interviews of 11 students who returned to the United States after studying abroad for periods ranging from three months to one year. What was found was that the respondents had a variety of reentry adjustment problems ranging from personal conflict to feelings of isolation, alienation, and hopelessness. Upon reentry, returning students sought support and receptivity from family and friends to decrease the impact coming back home (Raschio, 1987).

Marsh (1975) mentioned six main symptoms of reentry. These symptoms are generally seen as the characteristics that lead to assisting a student who has come back from her/his international experience. The first is cultural adjustment. Cultural adjustment is the return to the routines a student had before going abroad. One can get into a routine while abroad, but overall the student knows s/he is coming back to the home country, so there is the feeling of pseudo-routine.

The second symptom is social adjustment. L. Gauby, a student at Kansas State University who went to Kenya in summer 2011 for two and a half months and went on a faculty-led trip

during spring break of spring 2010, spoke about his experience upon his return to the United States. When asked about his perception of his social circle of friends when he came home from his experience in Kenya, he stated it was “Weird; I had not seen them all summer. I found out who my best friends were because they wanted to know everything [about the trip to Kenya]” (L. Gauby, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Social adjustment includes those feelings of frustration and conflicting attitudes, much like what Gauby experienced. “Research thus far has indicated reentry problems such as cultural identity conflict, academic problems, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, grief, and interpersonal difficulties. Returnees may also experience alienation, disorientation, stress, value confusion, anger, fears, helplessness, disenchantment, and discrimination” (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 650).

Linguistic barriers are the third symptom and described as the verbal and non-verbal forms of communication that are misinterpreted by others (Marsh, 1975). I remember in the first days of being home, my thought process for speech was delayed because I was accustomed to forming sentences in Spanish. Also, when I had Spanish class at my university the semester after I studied abroad, my classmates thought my fellow friends who studied in Argentina with me and I had a weird accent and asked us to speak slowly. It felt at the time we were being ostracized for having this experience. As time went on, we felt proud that we had that experience to share with our classmates.

The next symptom, political conditions, affected me most since my experience abroad. The change in political conditions and my new political views helped me understand and learn from Argentina’s history and know more about it. A large educated majority in Argentina knows much about American politics: current foreign and domestic policy, past history, economy, etc. The same could not be reciprocated. It was an immediate experiential learning experience to

realize that I need to know more about other countries, not just my own. In addition, being in Argentina also strengthened my political views, and I have been able to voice those opinions effectively since, both in Spanish and English. The longer one studies abroad is related to one's changing political view and even skepticism of the United States. This is due to the exposure to a different culture, and the exposure helps them to challenge their home culture. "This reinforces the notion that the study abroad experience is the primary causal factor in the differences found in these scores, although it is possible that students choosing longer sojourns are predisposed in this direction" (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 658).

The fifth symptom of reentry is the educational adjustment a student experiences once back in the United States. When asked if he noticed any changes in classwork after he came back from Kenya, Gauby said that, "Once back, I was more driven to get my major taken care of with a more narrowed focus. I got a better perspective on what I wanted to do than before I left for Kenya" (L. Gauby, personal communication, March 6, 2012). The connection from his education in Kenya to America when he came back is what students often experience when they come back: finding relevance in their education.

The last symptom is professional adjustment. This includes a difficulty in communicating what was learned throughout the study abroad experience. Milostan expanded the existing reentry program when he began his career at Kansas State University. His professional development reentry event was adapted from the University of Minnesota's reentry program and adapted to Kansas State University. The reentry event starts with introductions of all the returnees including information such as major, country studied in and living arrangement while abroad. Next, in a 'speed dating' setting, students pair up and discuss for two minutes topics relating to study abroad. Topics include: favorite place traveled while abroad, describing the

culture, favorite food while abroad. This helps students to talk about their experiences abroad to those who can relate to a similar experience (Kansas State University Study Abroad Office, 2012).

Milostan's goal for the events is to identify skills that one gets while abroad. Students discussed what they learned during the study abroad experience and applied the experience to specific skills and abilities. A Career and Employment Services representative also attends so that a mock interview can give students an idea of the questions potential employers ask and to start thinking about how to communicate all the experiences and changes efficiently and succinctly (J. Milostan, personal communication, March 2, 2012). The program allowed students to see the positive impact of the study abroad experience.

Identifying these six symptoms is just the beginning of seeing what else affects reentry to the United States. The symptoms that are identified contribute to understanding what reentry is like for a student coming back to the United States. Much like symptoms affecting one's body, these symptoms fluctuate and can persist if not cared for properly.

Relational Effects

Studying abroad can have a tremendous effect on students' relationships. Martin and Harrell (2004) mention communication with friends and family throughout the time abroad is beneficial. Communication increases the ability for the student to know of any changes and events at home. In turn, this causes a smoother reentry because the communication has been consistent throughout the time abroad. One benefit of studying abroad is that family and friends have the opportunity to visit the student overseas to see first-hand what their child/friend has experienced. Disberger's family had an easier time transitioning her reentry with her family because her family understood the study abroad experience:

My brother also studied abroad. He went to Valencia, Spain, a few years before I went. He went for a spring semester, too, so my family had already gone through the process with him, so they were more prepared and knew what to expect when I arrived home. (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012)

Throughout my time in Argentina, I was in bi-weekly contact with my parents and friends which helped immensely when I found out my grandma passed away while I was abroad. Having the support of people already established, it was not awkward to Skype them and let them know what was going on in my life.

Research shows that romantic relationships have a large chance of failing while a student is overseas and in a romance (Wang, 1997; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). One of my friends was in a relationship when he left the United States. They talked multiple times a week and he often missed out on events in Buenos Aires and during our traveling because he was committed to talking with her. About halfway through the semester, she called him to let him know she wanted to break up. He was heartbroken, and the group did not know how to support him. He was 4000 miles away from home and could not face the issue until he got home months later.

Martin (1986) researched the change in relationships between three groups: family, friends, and relationships. The results showed that:

...examination of the reported change in relationship with friends reveals some similarity to the data describing family relationships. There was a relatively high number of relationships reported to have changed only positively (40%). However, friend relationships differed from family relationships in that approximately 20% of friend relationships were characterized as changing only negatively (compared to 2% of family relationships). Also, relationships described as changing both negatively and positively

were characterized as having relatively more negative change. The data in general reveal that relationships with friends were reportedly more complex and varied than relationships with parents and siblings. (p. 16)

When the student returns home, s/he reenters the environment of family and friends with altered meanings. That is, the meaning that was concrete before studying abroad has been altered to a new meaning. The new meaning can be seen as new communication, both verbal and non-verbal. “The sojourner may encounter new symbols and rules or, more problematic, old symbols and rules with new meanings. These internalized meanings and rules may result in confusion and difficulty in the sojourner’s interaction with friends and family” (Martin, 1986, p. 5).

It is not just the student who goes through the changes of reentry. The changes in reentry relationships are a source of difficulty for family and friends. “Not only are the sojourners grappling with their personal changes, so are friends and family with their own” (Martin, 1986, p. 6). When Gauby was asked what it was like for his family when he came back from Kenya, he responded that above all it was a positive change with his sister and mother. For his father, Gauby said that he did not directly talk to Gauby about his experience, but “there was an unspoken understanding between them” (L. Gauby, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Gauby went on to mention that the unspoken understanding was his father approving of his experiences. There are challenges even on the people who are not the ones who study abroad to communicate their thoughts and emotions to the person who went abroad.

Disberger’s family was supportive and understanding of her experiences abroad:

My family was very welcoming - I do not recall any issues there. This may be largely due to the fact that we have always been big travelers. As a family, we have been to five of the seven continents. My dad has beaten the rest of us by also going to Africa, so he has

been to six. Therefore, they were somewhat more prepared to handle my ups and downs involved with returning to the US – they were understanding of my altered “cultural lenses” that were shifted as a result of my time abroad. They were able to relate to my experiences because they had similar ones during travels of their own. I think that families who have not traveled may struggle a bit to relate well to children or siblings who return after time abroad. It can cause confusion and tension when the study abroad student tries to explain a story and their loved one do not seem to “get” it, which can be frustrating. (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012)

Relationships have a profound effect on students both positively and negatively. Family and friends typically have a positive effect once the student comes back from abroad, while those in personal relationships have a negative effect. Through this observation, students who go abroad change throughout their experiences and those who are close in their lives may not be congruent with who the new student is once back in the United States.

Maturity

“In addition to these personal growth and attitude changes, it is also possible that the intercultural sojourn leads to accelerated maturation of the young sojourner, although [...] this has not been documented empirically” (Martin, 1986, p. 14). It is possible to hypothesize that a student who is interacting with many different variables in the foreign culture leads naturally to mature thinking. Variables include self-awareness, activities that increase problem solving skills like traveling alone, and cultural competence all can contribute to mature thinking. Disberger mentioned that she “heard stories of friends having issues with their friend groups upon return to the [United States]. Often returned study abroad students feel more independent and less interested in drama” (K. Kisberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012). When asked

what she meant by “drama,” Disberger mentioned that people who study abroad sometimes feel annoyed by friends who seem overly caught up in gossip and issues associated with gossip. “Students often feel bored and restless, which causes tension in friend groups because they cannot understand why their friend no longer is satisfied by the same types of activities as they were before their trip” (K. Disberger, personal communication, February 29, 2012). For example if the student who studied abroad was interested in immature activities such as gossiping, s/he may shy away from it upon return because of the maturation development s/he experienced while abroad. Gauby felt similarly, “I quickly noticed I felt more mature, more adult in a way. I now see and think of things differently-in a parent role because I saw myself as the patriarch while in Kenya. I was more responsible” (L. Gauby, personal communication, March 6, 2012). In his academics, he even noticed a maturation effect. “[Going to Kenya] also helped me realize what I want to do with my life and hone in on career path. It put things into perspective; how and what I learned in the past and apply it” (L. Gauby, personal communication, March 6, 2012). “The point is that these changes (personal growth, attitude change, accelerated maturity) may affect changes in reentry relationships. The student sojourner returns home more independent, more adult than when s/he left and this results in positive changes in their relationship” (Martin, 1986, p. 14).

Need for Reentry Support

Post study abroad support is needed. Most universities have some type of reentry program, but it is not uniform or as developed as it should be. Chappell, Inaldo, White & Pirani (2008) interviewed students about their reentry experience at their university and an overwhelming majority of students they interviewed noted that there was a reentry program or event at their universities, but many of the students did not want to be involved with the event. According to their results, almost two-thirds of students did not seek out reentry support because

they were too busy at the time the events were offered and they were not interested in the type of support being offered. Milostan, a professional in the study abroad field, he said the “focus nowadays is reentry. At conferences every year there are always representatives talking about reentry” (J. Milostan, personal communication, March 2, 2012). One of the rhetorical questions Milostan encounters is what can a professional hold as leverage to get study abroad participants to attend reentry programs?

In Brown's (1998) research of 181 study abroad returnees, she pointed out the students' desire for more reentry support services. According to Brown's research, many students disclosed that they were given plenty of information about the culture shock of going to another country, but not enough support about reentry. The universities that did provide reentry information to students overall did not view reentry to be difficult at all, without much impact. What students want is a reentry program to assist them in coming back to the United States; whether it is an informal setting or formal, students in Brown's study desired networking assistance so that students can utilize each another whenever the transition back to the university and United States became challenging.

Chapter 3 - Discussion

Reentry Support at Kansas State University

As cited in Weber (2009), Chappell, Inaldo, White, & Pirani researched various ways to assist students in their reentry transition. What they gathered was that students desired:

a welcome back session and gathering with friends who are also returning, a suggested reading list, an exit interview with a study abroad counselor, an online or on campus reentry course, and alumni contact information to begin setting up mentoring opportunities. Three months later [after returning from studying abroad], a majority of students were open to presenting their experiences publicly, mentoring underclassmen thinking about studying abroad, and working study abroad fairs for recruitment purposes.
(p. 24)

During the professional development and social reentry events that the Kansas State University Study Abroad Office provides, J. Milostan mentions many ways that a student involved with study abroad can have a smoother transition back to Kansas State and to the United States. One of those programs is Study Abroad Mentors (SAM). SAM is an opportunity to represent the Study Abroad Office and the country to which the student traveled, share the study abroad experience, and be a resource for prospective students so they can contact the student for questions. This would help students who reenter the United States become connected with others who are studying in the United States (Kansas State University Study Abroad Mentors, 2012).

Another program is International Buddies, a program that connects a domestic student with an international student so they can share with each other the culture of each country and help the international student get acclimated to Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas and

the United States (Kansas State University International Buddies, 2012). Lastly the International Coordinating Council represents many of the countries in the world and is for both international and domestic students to promote cultural competencies through understanding and collaboration (Kansas State University International Coordinating Council, 2012).

Beyond organizations, some students choose to study abroad again or to go into the Peace Corps after graduation. These options fulfill the student's desire to stay involved with international issues. Kansas State University also has a photo contest. "Common to many institutions [for example Kansas State University and Central Michigan University] are photo, poetry, art, or essay contests that allow returnees to contribute something from their experience for the benefit of the greater institution" (Weber, 2009, p. 25). There are other options, but these are initial ways to be involved once a student has reentered the United States. Milostan stated, "One of the best ways to get through reentry is to stay involved with international events, getting involved with international organizations and groups, and to stay in touch with the host family" (J. Milostan, personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Karli Webster, Director of Study Abroad at Kansas State University, mentioned some offices that may help with reentry. One of the most important offices to receive assistance from is the Financial Aid Office. Webster mentioned that it helps to understand the policies of loans, grants, and scholarships that students receive after they study abroad so they know what needs to be paid back to the loan institutions and what does not need to be paid back (K. Webster, personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The next office that Webster mentioned was International Admissions. This office verifies credits transfer from the host institution. One of the apprehensions I had when I studied abroad was wondering when my grades would come in and if they would all transfer correctly.

The last area Webster mentioned was the use of academic advisors in the students' departments. Before going abroad, students meet with an advisor to verify that the courses taken abroad will transfer correctly. All students are required to check with their academic advisor to be sure they have the precise classes for their study abroad experience. The advisors need to know how study abroad works and how credits transfer so they can effectively tell their advisees the right information (K. Webster, personal communication, March 2, 2012). The need for academic integration is important to students who come back from an experience abroad to help them transition more easily. As the student is dealing with relationships, culture, hometown, and school factors, academics is another aspect that can be targeted as helping the transition from abroad.

A future area of research would be to determine if taking pre-departure and reentry study abroad courses would be beneficial to students. Students vary in their reentry symptoms or may not know they even exist. A semester-long course may be most appropriate to track the students' progress towards the "new normal" they are feeling and experiencing.

Chapter 4 - Model for Reentry

There is a need for higher education professionals to implement a model to assist students upon their return to the United States. This facilitation helps students explore, connect, and cope with the incredible experience of studying abroad to the return home and what it means to the student. This model will be based on Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Schlossberg's Transition Theory encapsulates the transition of coming back to the United States; a student just does not return to his/her old self. The transition that occurs and transition theory will supplement the research within this report and the personal transition the author has had. Schlossberg's Theory provides insights into factors related to the transition, the individual, and the environment that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have at a particular time. Reentry focuses on changes that Schlossberg addresses in the theory and fits well with how student affairs professionals can help the student after returning from abroad.

Professionals can provide assistance through many facets of university life. This can be through reentry events, financial aid meetings, Career and Employment Services meetings, etc. Some offices may provide assistance to students prior to leaving for their study abroad experience: academic departments or faculty groups, women's centers, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (GLBT) offices, career and employment services (CES) and counseling centers just to name a few (K. Webster, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, & Roller, 2012). Each office above and other offices throughout a university can assist students in their holistic needs. If the student has an issue of transferring credits, s/he would go to an academic department. If the student wants information about safety while abroad, the women's center would be a great resource for her/him. A student who wants more information about

GLBT resources while abroad may consider utilizing the GLBT office. Career and Employment Services would be a beneficial resource for students looking to include their experience on a resume and communicating their experiences to a potential employer. Counseling centers can help students to process through their experiences abroad.

Based on the research given, the following is a model for reentry that campuses could utilize throughout the country. The overarching goal for the reentry orientation will be to empower returnees to understand the importance of their study abroad experience and the associated experiences.

For those who come back to the university, a welcoming environment is needed in order to facilitate a successful reentry orientation. The orientation will be in two sessions: one immediately after students return from studying abroad and another orientation mid-semester to offer assistance to those students who have lingering reentry symptoms or are experiencing those feelings for the first time. A limitation for any reentry orientation is the ability to transition the students who have since graduated, transferred, or withdrawn from the university.

At the first study abroad reentry program, there would be an icebreaker for all the students to get to know each other. In a setting much like speed dating, students would have a topic to discuss for two minutes and then move to the next partner. Topics will be country-specific ranging from food, language, travel, and so on. This will solicit thoughts associated with the country and help students get in the mood to discuss their experiences.

After the icebreaker, the facilitators for the group will begin a discussion about reentry. The facilitators will be an advisor from the Study Abroad Office and a student who has studied abroad recently. "In academic settings, faculty and many staff members have a background in group dynamics and in facilitating discussions. Counseling Center staff could be available as

consultants or be involved directly as facilitators. In business settings, the human resource personnel are likely to have group facilitation skills” (Lester, 2000, p. 92). The discussions include asking students to talk about changes they have been through since coming back, communication issues, and anything else that the students want to discuss. What assistance do they need to succeed, and what differences do they see in the university, friends, or family?

Adaptation is an area where students are affected, first through the student’s perception of the reentry and change. Adaptation is the ability to adjust to the emotions and behaviors that affect the student upon return (Adler, 1975). The perception of change can affect a student mildly or severely, and at any time. When the change comes, how s/he adapts to it is important and should also be discussed during the orientation

Expectations, as well as adaptation, play an important role in a student's new environment and his/her return home. Students coming back to the United States have at least some expectations as to how the return will be accepted, not knowing it is the beginning of their reentry process. These expectations can be labeled as fulfilled and unfulfilled. “Fulfilled expectations result in positive evaluations of the reentry experience and ultimately good adjustment, whereas unfulfilled expectations result in negative evaluations of reentry and a poorer adjustment” (Weber, 2009, p. 17). Unfulfilled expectations students have may lead to an overall positive adjustment because students often times do not have expectations of which to compare. There is not an automatic a negative adjustment to reentry to the United States. Before leaving for Argentina, I was excited but did not try to have any expectations so that my experience was not tainted by any prior biases I might have.

Next, a short presentation will be given from student organizations that can further assist in the reentry transition for students. Three groups that Kansas State University has are SAM,

International Buddies, and International Coordinating Council. The next referral will be given from counseling services, if students have additional concerns to resolve from studying abroad or since returning from an abroad experience. The last speaker would be an academic advisor. This person will discuss the process of how transferring of credits work and if there are questions from the students who have recently returned.

The second reentry program would be more discussion-based, held in the middle of the semester. It will begin with another icebreaker; similar to the first icebreaker. Once completed with the icebreaker, students will sit in circles and discuss the similarities and differences of their countries they studied in while abroad. These will be through guided questions that the facilitators will have already prepared. The students reflect on their sense of self, adopt new ways of relating to their home culture, and accept their present identities that allow them to live adaptively at home without forgetting their old lives abroad and see how others are adapting to life at home. Empowerment is the goal of this orientation, to have the students guide the discussion and to feel welcome. They are among a core group of individuals who have gone through similar transitions and know what each other is going through. Facilitators will also mention the resources mentioned during the first orientation.

The symptoms of reentry are the identifiers of reentry. The student remembers what it was like before studying abroad, but noticing those changes and identifying if assistance is needed is essential for a smoother transition.

The characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition are the deciding factors of the severity and duration of reentry effects for the student who studied abroad. Disberger and Gauby's experiences upon their return differed greatly, but that is how they transitioned and changed when they came home. They made their study abroad experience meaningful to them.

Besides the actual transition that occurs, Schlossberg lists the type, context, and impact the transition has on a person (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). For those who study abroad, as well as for those living life in general, anticipated, unanticipated transitions and nonevents will occur indefinitely. How one deals with the situation is how one copes with that type of transition. My unanticipated event was that my grandmother passed away while I was abroad. While at my pre-departure orientation, the facilitators talked about how we need to talk to our family about the unforeseen events that may happen while we are overseas. One of the topics was a death in the family. Having that conversation before I left, however unpleasant, helped me make the decision to stay in Argentina when someone died so my emotions did not dictate my decision. My parents and I already had a plan.

The context of my situation was that I had a friend visiting from the United States when I found out about my grandmother. It helped to have someone who knew me for years to support me while I was going through my grieving process. My host parents understood and let me grieve with them as well. Once my grandmother passed away, I was prepared to go home. Prior to that, I was not ready to leave Argentina.

The impact of my grandmother passing away still affects me today. That feeling of finding out, the moments and days after her death is still with me, as if it was only a month ago. It added a higher degree of a transition to my life when I returned because I was going through all the changes of reentry, but I also went through another grieving process because I was not there to be with my family. When my other grandmother passed away 10 months later, I wanted to be there, and I wanted to say goodbye, something I was not able to do while abroad.

In the larger transition of studying abroad reentry, the four S's in Schlossberg's Transition Theory help with the coping process (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

The four S's are situation, self, support, and strategies (Evans et al, 2010). Coping with studying abroad varies depending on the student. Situation refers to the surrounding factors of the transition. Country, distance from home, length of stay, and if the student has been abroad before are all factors that can help a student to cope. Assessing as many factors as a student can to help the transition is best.

The next S is self. What can the student do to help him/herself? What are the resources available to help? Since I know the most about myself and the experiences I had while abroad, how can I best help myself in the reentry phase of studying abroad?

Support is the third S. Support can come from offices across campus, especially the ones that K. Webster mentioned to help students reacclimatize back to the university. How each one functions in the student's life varies; Career and Employment Services may offer interviewing skills to one student but offer a different option depending on his/her needs.

The last S is strategies. How is the student going to modify and adapt the new world after reentry? Once the student finds meaning to the experience, that will aid in alleviating some of the stress associated with any reentry effects a student may have.

Reentry support is not only about assisting students through the reentry phase but also giving assistance for professional development, academics and emotional transitions. Also, providing opportunities for continued social action and civic engagement is influential to share with students upon return. We as student affairs professionals have various ways to involve returning students.

Supporting the Individual

Student affairs professionals can assist study abroad students by listening, asking, and guiding them. This can alleviate much of the stress associated with the reentry process for

students. My experience in knowing other study abroad participants, all we want is for people to listen to us tell our stories. How is that different from a student who wants to connect with a university? Students want to feel connected; student affairs professionals can be a resource for that student who is trying to make a connection. By asking questions, the student will know that the professional is engaged in the conversation and that the student knows that s/he is explaining the experiences effectively. Guidance will help the student, because as time goes on, it will help the student to realize how to explain and communicate his/her study abroad experience in a way that is efficient. By working with students in reentry, there is a learning opportunity to help students see and define themselves and how they see and define the world around them (Weber, 2009, p. 50).

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

Implications for Practice

When preparing students for studying abroad, Adler (1975) mentions five recommendations for student affairs professionals to consider before, during, and after a student studies abroad. The first is a pre-departure orientation. When offering one to students, it is important to educate them about the potential stresses that may occur with traveling to a foreign country and staying there for an extended period of time. Another stress to prepare for is the change in self and relationships. It is also important to mention that reentry is part of the study abroad experience and let them know that negative feelings about their home culture may be a normal part of their experience when they return to the United States. “[T]he success of the learning experience for students studying outside of the United States hinges on collaboration among all of the participating educators long *before* a crisis might occur” (Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg, & Roller, 2012, p. 2).

The next recommendation that Adler provides is in the selection process of those who study abroad. Indicators such as grade point average, letters of recommendation, and standing at university should be tracked; if a student is struggling in any of these indicators, it would be beneficial to meet with him/her when s/he returns from studying abroad to see how the semester went while abroad. Students are accepted as long as they meet the minimum requirements. If students are within the realm of struggling (which is to be determined by the university), then student affairs professionals should follow-up with him/her once back from studying abroad.

The third recommendation is to stay in consistent, but not daily, contact with the students who are abroad. This will remind them that they have resources at their university that can help if needed. It is important to note that the relationship built throughout the study abroad will only

strengthen if the student understands that the professional is available. Student affairs professionals researching the student's country will also increase the cross-cultural skills while the student is gone. This is another way to connect with the student and could alleviate symptoms of reentry.

The last recommendation is validation. Allow the students to share their experiences with others (Adler, 1981). "Study abroad programs have become an integral part of liberal arts education and participation is likely to grow. There can be little doubt that living in a culture different from one's own is likely to increase cultural competency" (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 662). Helping provide the large picture view allows the student to unite the time abroad to the university. This gives the student opportunities to utilize personal growth and knowledge acquired during the experience.

Future Research

As mentioned previously, students studying abroad will continue to grow according to recent trends. In order to strengthen and grow the reentry phase for those who come back, further research needs to be completed. An area for further research would be to discuss how students who study abroad during the spring semester are affected by summer break and to determine what, if any, changes occur. A student who studies abroad in the fall semester would receive a reentry orientation sooner than someone who studies abroad in the spring. The person who studies abroad in the spring has an entire summer without a reentry orientation because the university may not be in complete session.

Continuing research needs to be conducted on friend relationships a student has while abroad. "One might hypothesize that in some friend relationships, (those with older, authority figure adults, those with friends who keep in touch) communication plays a facilitative role that

reentry communication is characterized as closer, with increases in depth and breadth” (Martin, 1986, p. 18). Throughout the research, it would be interesting to assess why friend relationships typically are impacted negatively after studying abroad. Another area that deserves more research is grieving while abroad. Going through a situation that was impossible to prepare for is a topic needed for further review. A longitudinal study would be beneficial for students and professionals to see what common trends exist between students and reentry throughout a period of time. Through this study, common themes can be focused on in the reentry model for that campus. Finally, as mentioned earlier in this report, a final future area of research would be to determine if taking a pre-departure and a reentry study abroad course would be beneficial to students.

Final Thoughts

Studying abroad is an occurrence in one’s life that fundamentally changes a student in profound ways. The change does not just cease when a student returns home, but continues throughout the reentry phase and beyond. Typically one’s worldview is altered, one has a better comprehension of him/herself, and one is able to challenge one’s country to make it better.

In a learning society education has to be re-taught; it has to contribute to building the capacity of students to learn how to learn. Learning is never ending; learning is living. In a learning society a good citizen is a good learner. (Harris, 2007, p. 354)

As educators, we provide challenge and support in the various environments in which student learning and development can occur. With that growth, students’ reentry process needs to have better support from the study abroad offices and throughout higher education to see that the full transition can truly take shape because the change does not stop once a student returns home.

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