



FORGING MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY: HOW SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES CAN HELP COLLEGE STUDENTS ENGAGE IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

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PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Forging multicultural sensitivity: How short-term study abroad experiences can help college students engage in a global society

Arisha Andha*, Peri Yuksel, & Frank Nascimento

Abstract: Transformative learning about global matters is becoming an important institutional mission for planning in the 21st century. Structured faculty-led programs may offer students a greater sense of society and global mindedness. The purpose of this study was to investigate the cultural sensitivity of students who participated in a one-week faculty-led spring break trip (Travelers) versus students who did not participate in study abroad experience (Non-travelers). We administered an adapted version of the Cultural Diversity Assessment Inventory (CDAI) to 67 students enrolled in an ethnically diverse urban university, assessing the following areas: a) creating a multicultural society, b) cultural awareness, and c) cross-cultural communication. Results show that Travelers are more aware of their role in society and seem to be more responsive to multicultural and global concerns than Non-travelers. Pedagogical aspects of faculty-led trips for experiential learning will be further discussed.

Keywords: faculty-led study abroad; student international travel; cultural sensitivity; global awareness; study abroad in higher education; internalization of curriculum.

Creating pedagogical experiences that help facilitate students' growth in cultural and global awareness is becoming an important institutional mission to be integrated into 21st century lesson planning. The era of globalization in which exchanges of ideas and goods are occurring at an accelerated rate has not only changed the labor market (Coatsworth, 2004) but also the curriculum in higher education (Suarez-Orozco, 2007). Transformative learning about global matters not only occurs within courses that explore various worldviews and cross-cultural content but can also be enhanced by short study abroad experiences integrated into the coursework.

The focus of this paper is on one study abroad experience, namely the faculty-led program (FLP) — a credit-granting college-level international short trip. In contrast to a semester-long study abroad experience, FLPs are shorter (ranging between one week and to up to six weeks) and developed by the faculty, who act as program leaders and accompany students abroad while teaching a course during the term. Structured FLPs offer students the opportunity to step outside of the classroom and to develop a greater sense of society through learning about the world first-hand while having close contact with the faculty as a mentor for feedback (Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018). Students benefit from such unique hands-on learning by growing intellectually and gaining increased awareness about other cultures, as well as showing academically oriented maturation (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Hadis, 2005). Being accompanied by the faculty who teach the course in which the study abroad experience is framed, provides students with an enhanced opportunity to make meaningful connections in a limited period of time. While such short study-abroad trips are on the rise (Redden, 2018), a majority of studies lack a comparable control group and focus on long-term study-abroad experiences and the positive effects on the student travelers' overall intellectual and personal growth (Hadis, 2005).

The purpose of the current comparative study was to investigate the cultural sensitivity of college students who participated in a one-week long faculty-led spring break trip (Travelers) versus students who did not participate in an FLP abroad experience (Non-travelers). A modified version of the Cultural Diversity Assessment Inventory (CDAI) by Henry

(1991) was used to test college students' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences with diverse cultures right after spring break — a time to elicit information about off-campus activities and engagements. After reviewing the literature on the benefits of study abroad programs and presenting our data, we offer some pedagogical considerations in the design of faculty-led study abroad trips to nurture cultural sensitivity in higher education.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Importance of nurturing cultural sensitivity in higher education

To thrive in a society that is becoming increasingly diverse and complex, students in higher education need to acquire skills that go beyond critical reading and academic writing or scientific thinking — they need to be curious about the rapidly changing world and be knowledgeable about global issues. Attention to cultural sensitivity and competence and attunement to diverse perspectives are key skills that can help students prepare for current and future world demands by nurturing global competence (Wynveen, Kyle, & Tarrant, 2012). Mass migration, the globalization of economies, the digital revolution, and the impending rise in global health crises require the new college graduate to navigate a complex web of cultural groups distinct in ways of living, speaking, thinking, and acting, based on ethnic norms, values, beliefs, and other cultural aspects. When serving a diverse population, multicultural understanding is a vital part of training students to become engaged, ethical civic members of their communities as future teachers, policemen, policymakers, scientists, health or other types of public servants. At the same time, multicultural training helps alleviate, for instance, the problem of biases and discrimination in decision making (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 2013). For instance, care in the medical system is highly affected by race and understanding of cultural diversity (Garb, 1997). Research suggests that patient-clinician interactions vary based on clinicians' cultural background knowledge of their patients, as personal biases, assumptions, or stereotypes can alter the clinicians' perceptions, communication, and treatment plans (e.g., Ayonrinde, 2003; Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018). Similarly, mental health professionals (who usually study the theory of prejudice as part of their training) are also not immune to stereotypical thinking either (Abreu, 1999).

Cultural bias and inadequate multicultural training are issues plaguing various professions dealing with direct human contact, including educational programs (FitzGerald & Hurst, 2017; Smith et al., 2006). Given that estimate of over 30 million school-aged children are international migrants, it is imperative that the 21st lesson plan includes multicultural knowledge and sensitivity across disciplines. It is reported by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a high-level general assembly meeting of the United Nations that migration is “an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety, and a better future”, and “it is a part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family.” (UN Press Release, October 4, 2013). Teaching sensitivity to various cultures helps avoid discriminatory attitudes and minimizes disparity in the quality of services offered to marginalized and/or minority ethnic populations (Whaley & Davis, 2007). For instance, counseling students reported that experiential learning helped them the most to acquire skills in multicultural competence, rather than develop those skills by completing courses that included multicultural sensitivity as part of the curriculum (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). Arguably, cultural bias in decision making is present in all fields. In the legal field, jurors often misremember facts in a racially biased way (Levinson, 2007). In intelligence testing, there tends to be a socioeconomic bias (Macarthur & Elley, 1963). In medicine, ethnic minorities are more likely to be rejected from medical schools and less likely to seek out and receive adequate care (Garb, 1997; McKenzie, 1995; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2018).

As shown above, higher education lesson plans that facilitate hands-on experiences with new cultures and unfamiliar forms of living foster the development of intercultural competence. By expanding the Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) project (Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Jon, 2009), Murphy and her colleagues (2014) showed that a study abroad program has lasting positive effects on global engagement, specifically in the realms of civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity. Their report compares US university alumni who travelled abroad for at least one semester with students who did not travel abroad. Although Murphy et al. (2004) rely on self-reports of unmatched alumni, the data show that study abroad provides an overall benefit to the student travelers in their post-graduate careers and strengthens their civic leadership roles. The current study presents data on students' multicultural sensitivity and engagement after a one-week faculty-led study abroad trip allow students who were enrolled in coursework with cross-cultural content but without the international travel component.

1.2. Benefits of study abroad

Over one hundred years ago (in 1923) the first official accredited study abroad program was launched in the US, following the request of Dr. Raymond W. Kirkbride -- a WWI veteran and instructor in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Delaware (<https://www.udel.edu>). Today, study abroad programs are increasingly becoming popular in both

developed and developing countries. Government-funded scholarships, such as the Gilman Scholarship Program, IIE's Generation Study Abroad Initiative, ERASMUS, or private foundations (e.g. Ford Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, DAAD) strive to help marginalized and underrepresented students to study abroad. Such generous help to increase the international educational experience has shown benefits beyond the individual learner and has led to positive communal outcomes (Rama, 2003; Ortiz-Ospina, 2018). Experiencing contact with individuals of a host country where identity, language, and lifestyle differ forces traveling students to reflect upon their own worldview in light of others and allows them to experience differences less as a threat but rather as an opportunity to learn from each other to coexist in a diverse society, encouraging exchange and collaboration (Süssmuth, 2008, Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018).

Most large colleges and universities offer different types of study abroad programs, such as short faculty-led programs (ranging from one to six weeks), semester- or year-long abroad programs, and exchange programs sponsored by third parties (such as research, internships, etc.), however, it is estimated that 90% of the US students graduate from college without any study abroad experience (IIE, 2017). Students from all different majors are encouraged to go on these trips, but only a few can break their situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers (Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018). Students have exposure to more experiences the longer they are in a different cultural environment, but many students cannot dedicate long periods of time to study abroad. Many college students lack the funding to participate in semester-long study abroad programs, hence short-term study abroad programs are becoming much more accessible to underserved minority students (Redden, 2018; Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018).

With the recent increase and popularity in shorter study abroad trips, it is vital to focus on the design and assessment of shorter trips and examine how a broad student population can be exposed to those benefits. Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard (2006) tested the efficacy of shorter faculty-led trips on student cultural learning outcomes and compared the development of cross-cultural sensitivity in traveling vs. non-traveling students. The students studied for four weeks in Europe: two weeks in London, England, and two weeks in Cork, Ireland. They utilized the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to assess student pre- and post-trip experiences. Prior to the trip, traveling students prepared with faculty, attended classes during the trip, and explored foreign terrain by themselves. The traveling students also stayed with local families and regularly discussed their daily lives abroad. Anderson et al. (2006) showed that students participating in faculty-led trips become more adaptive and accepting of other cultures than non-traveling students (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006).

Likewise, in 2006, Anderson assessed intercultural development over an extended period of time in students participating in a semester-long study abroad program versus on-campus students (Anderson & Lawton, 2011). This time all students were administered a pre- and post-trip assessment, utilizing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), developed by Hammer and Bennett (2002), and the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI), developed by Braskamp et al. (2010). The pre-trip assessment results revealed that students enrolled in the study abroad program had similar results as students in other liberal arts classes. However, the post-trip assessment results found that traveling students became more intercultural sensitive than non-traveling students, as was the case in the 2006 short-term study abroad program (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Anderson & Lawton, 2011). Data indicate that despite the length of the study abroad program, students who travel experience an increase in intercultural sensitivity when compared with students who did not travel. This makes all study abroad programs an important part of student education in the 21st century. Students should be encouraged to travel abroad. As shorter study abroad programs are more accessible to students, more students are able to go on study abroad trips and experience an increase in cultural sensitivity and global awareness.

As seen above, study abroad is now an opportunity to learn about everyday cultural values and cultural sensitivity through the first-hand experience of the local culture and people instead of exclusively studying historical symbols and acquiring textbook knowledge. Study abroad programs are designed to expand students' learning experiences and increase cultural sensitivity. Multiple studies, analyzing both short- and long-term study abroad programs, highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and how it may be increased. Despite this, short-term study abroad programs have not received much attention from researchers, relative to longer study abroad programs. To remedy this, it is crucial that cultural sensitivity is measured in short-term study abroad trips, and how or if the program affects student learning.

1.3. Measuring intercultural sensitivity

Since the turn of the century's awareness that intercultural sensitivity allows individuals to work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Landis & Bhagat, 1996), various ways to measure cultural competence have been developed. The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), by Kelley & Meyers (1995), which assesses the effectiveness of intercultural communication and interaction, has gained wide popularity. The Global Awareness Profile (GAP), by Corbitt (1998), measures how likely an individual perceives complex and diverse intercultural experiences, enabling the integration of differing worldviews. As mentioned earlier, the IDI tests an individual's progressive change toward intercultural sensitivity through the use of six stages. The International Education Survey (IES), by DeDee & Stewart (2003), measures how an international experience affects intellectual and personal growth. Finally, The Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI), by Shealy (2005), measures intercultural competency on various levels, such as openness, the tendency to stereotype, and receptivity, and asks individuals to relate their agreement to various belief-value statements.

Due to the comparative nature of our study (i.e., comparing on-campus and off-campus experiences among Travelers vs. Non-travelers) within and outside the classroom setting, we chose to administer the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) developed by Henry (1991). This inventory consists of a 28-item agree/disagree self-response questionnaire, that has a 5-point Likert scale asking the respondents to best qualify their responses (strongly agree, agree, neutral, not agree, strongly disagree), measures an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior toward children of culturally diverse backgrounds. We created an online version of the CDAI and modified the questions to relate to both the college classroom experience and immersive experiences with other cultures. With the assistance of program leaders, students who participated in a faculty-led trip in 2018 were solicited by email. At the same time, the online survey was also sent to students taking courses with cross-cultural content. We changed questions that referenced "children" to "peers" in the classroom or in other settings. We also added additional questions concerning study habits and on- and off-campus activities to elicit information about student behavior in relationship to cultural exchanges not linked to international travel. Since not many studies have explored the effects of FLPs on students' cultural sensitivity compared to the classroom experience, it is important to conduct comparative studies between traveling students and non-traveling students. While large samples are ideal for most empirical research, large groups of students are not ideal for faculty-led study abroad programs. Since study abroad programs are experiential learning experiences, having too many students can hinder the process. Multiple studies show the disadvantages of overcrowded classrooms and the problems teachers face when they need to attend to too many students (e.g., Stecher et al., 2001). Typically, student levels of achievement are lower, the learning environment can become stressful, and the quality of teaching suffers (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). Overcrowded classrooms diminish effective teacher performance and lower the success rate in stimulating student interest in instilling critical thinking and problem-solving strategies (Matsepe, Maluleke, & Cross, 2019).

In the context of an FLP, faculty preparation is a very big part of enhancing cultural sensitivity during study abroad programs (Johns & Thompson, 2010) and a large traveling student group may require more resources and energy to effectively implement the program, potentially lowering the positive educational impact of study abroad programs, for both the teaching and learning experience. The faculty's role in the process of trip preparation and post-trip re-entry has been identified as an important component in the process of developing cultural sensitivity through a study abroad experience. Compared to longer study abroad programs, shorter faculty-led study abroad trips may also enhance student learning outcomes in societal and global matters, which we sought to examine in the current paper.

2. Methodology

2.1. Recruitment & participants

After four distinct, one-week long study abroad programs, sponsored by an urban university in 2018, program leaders who had spent spring break with small student groups in Thailand, Italy, Greece, and Germany received an email eliciting participation in a research study examining how college students spent their spring break. 48.21% of the 56 traveling students responded to the online survey. Students not participating in a faculty-led trip were recruited from a graduate-level multicultural counseling course (taught by the third author) and two undergraduate developmental psychology courses (taught by the second author). These courses were picked because the courses covered cross-cultural content (Woolf, Hulsizer, & McCarthy, 2002). 61.54% of students of the chosen courses responded to the online survey.

Our final sample represented a diverse student body and consisted of 67 college students (20.89% male, 79.11% female). We divided the data into two groups: the study group (47.5% Hispanic, 30% African American, 20% Caucasian, 2.5% Middle Eastern) -- from now on called Travelers (N=27, 70.4% undergraduate students and 29.6% graduate students) -- participated in a faculty-led short trip and the control group (55.6% Hispanic, 18.5% African American, 20.2%

Caucasian, 3.7% Middle Eastern) -- from now on called Non-travelers (N=40, 85% undergraduate students and 15% graduate students) -- mostly spent spring break earning money (55%), engaging in academic activities (25%), or just relaxing (20%). In our data, we had three students who privately travelled overseas during spring break. Since they did not participate in a formal academic travel-abroad experience, we counted them as Non-travelers. Compared to Non-travelers, who had an average GPA of 3.05 (SD=.80), the Travelers' average GPA was 3.65 (SD=.37), out of 4 points. In general, Travelers (M=11.22, SD=9.23) spent more hours studying than non-Travelers (M=8.52, SD=7.95).

2.1. Measures & instruments

We used an adaption of the Cultural Diversity Assessment Inventory (CDAI) by Henry (1991). With the CDAI we measured the level of sensitivity to cultural diversity in 3 areas: a) creating a multicultural society, b) cultural awareness, and c) cross-cultural communication. In addition to the CDAI, we also collected socio-demographic data on the respondents, included additional questions about study habits, on- and off-campus activities, and asked open-ended questions about identity and culture. The adopted CDAI had a total of 48 questions and was administered online. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of New Jersey City University (NJCU) and student participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. Below we report the results of the CDAI and examine the response of the student open-ended questions in the discussion section.

3. Results

3.1. More multicultural society awareness among travelers

Travelers showed a higher level of sensitivity (M=19.81, SD=2.80) toward the creation of a multicultural society than non-travelers (M=18.63, SD=2.01), $t(65)=-2.06$, $p=.047$.

3.2. Travelers and non-travelers show cultural sensitivity

Displaying cultural sensitivity in the positive range, no statistically meaningful difference was found in measures of cultural awareness for Travelers (M=12.93, SD=2.36) vs. Non-travelers (M=13.21, SD=2.96), $t(65)=.531$, $p=.597$, nor for cross-cultural communication between Travelers (M=7.74, SD=1.40), and Non-travelers (M=7.53, SD=1.60), $t(65)=-.568$, $p=.572$.

3.3. More cross-cultural activities needed for non-travelers

Non-travelers (M=3.25, SD=1.01) reported that their off-campus activities involved little cross-cultural work compared to Travelers (M=2.56, SD=1.09), $t(65)=2.684$, $p=.009$. Also, Non-travelers (M=3.30, SD=.883) believed that their courses covered little cross-cultural work in contrast to Travelers (M=2.74, SD=1.023), $t(65)=2.386$, $p=.020$. Overall, the results suggest that students engaged in experiential abroad education are more aware of their role in society and seem to be more responsive to multicultural and global concerns than students have not been engaged in international academic trips.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the multicultural efficacy and understanding of cultural sensitivity and global awareness within college students who participated in a short-term, faculty-led study abroad experience (Travelers) versus students who did not (Non-travelers) but were enrolled in coursework with cross-cultural content. We administered an adaption of the Cultural Diversity Assessment Inventory (CDAI) to 67 students enrolled in an ethnically diverse urban university, assessing the following areas: a) creating a multicultural society, b) cultural awareness, and c) cross-cultural communication.

4.1. Creating a multicultural society

Our data show that students participating in structured faculty-led travel abroad programs are more aware of their role in the society and seem to be more responsive to multicultural and global concerns than students who are not engaged in academic international trips. When we asked our participants how they would describe culture and identity in their own words, distinct perceptions of culture are evident between Travelers and Non-travelers, as illustrated in the following excerpts (1, 2). The Traveler in excerpt (1) positions culture "within the larger picture of society" and expands its meaning to various contexts of life. In contrast, the Non-traveler situates culture within her own context and provides a more subjective view that culture is "interesting," "beautiful," yet "controversial, at the same time."

Excerpt (1) by an undergraduate male Traveler majoring in Business:
“Culture is a group's diverse way of life governed by their societal norms, history, religious/spiritual influences, and current roles within the larger picture of society.”

Excerpt (2) by an undergraduate female Non-traveler majoring in Psychology:
“It is expressing your background being yourself using the customs and traditions you were brought up by. My culture is very interesting and diverse within itself. The music, dance, traditions, religions, and ways of life and politics make it very fun, beautiful, diverse, mysterious, and controversial all at the same time.”

In contrast to the Non-traveler above in excerpt (2), the Traveler in excerpt (1) adopts a broader view and acknowledges the role of society in the shaping of culture. When students participate in international multicultural exchanges, they engage in cross-cultural comparison and reflect upon their own worldview (Süssmuth, 2008), as illustrated in the excerpt (3) below:

Excerpt (3) by an undergraduate female Traveler majoring in Biology:
“Culture is a society's way of life that is influenced by actions, traditions, and beliefs distinct to each group of people. Filipino culture greatly emphasizes the values of family, respect, religion, and community.”

Similar to the Traveler in excerpt (1), the Traveler in excerpt (3) embeds culture within the bigger context of society and distinguishes her Filipino identity from the broader societal way of life. In comparison to excerpt (3), in excerpt (4) a Non-traveler, who spent spring break overseas for private purposes, puts culture in the context of people (“they”) and how they “dress in a certain way”

Excerpt (4) by an undergraduate female Non-traveler majoring in Women and Gender Studies:
“the way they dress. I would say that we act a certain way and dress in a certain way.”

Although the student in excerpt (4) spent spring break overseas, she provides a limited view of culture and focuses on salient visual traits of people, such as clothing. When students participate in structured faculty-led international trips they have the opportunity to step outside of their comfort zone and are encouraged to explore foreign terrain and reflect upon their own worldview (Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018), as is evident in the Travelers portrayed in excerpts (1, 3).

4.2. Cultural awareness & cross-cultural communication

Considering that the study sample was from a very diverse campus, it is not surprising that we found no group differences for cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication between Travelers and Non-travelers in our data. Although we found no differences in cultural sensitivity, when asked if students would consider living outside the US, it is interesting to note that Travelers were more likely to respond “yes” (25.9%) than Non-travelers (17.5%). Future studies should examine students from various institutions and control the student groups for academic status and experiences in coursework and travel-abroad. A study abroad experience seems to be an integral part of intercultural development and helps students seek out a greater diversity of friends and ways of living (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

Another possible reason for the null findings in cultural-awareness and cross-cultural communication might be that students in the non-traveling group were taking coursework with cross-cultural content. Although we do not have a measure of how much or how little cross-cultural material was discussed across all courses of our participants, research stresses the importance of course design that provides students opportunities to engage in self-examination and to reduce resistance to multicultural instructions (e.g., Brown, 2004). By simply watching diversity unfold in action, e.g., classroom observation of inner-city youth via means of observation sheet, students “may understand the message but fail to connect it in meaningful ways,” and consequently become passive observers and bored of ethnographic fieldwork (Brown, 2004, p.336). The Non-travelers in our data reported that their coursework covered fewer multicultural matters than the Travelers. Hence, it is crucial that instructors design student projects that enhance self-reflection on their civic and ethical roles in the society but also for student travelers to use their international curriculum to make meaning beyond the travel (Rowan-Kenyon, & Niehaus, 2011). Travel abroad programs often enhance the cross-cultural curriculum, as evidenced in our findings. Yet it is still unknown how the traveling students will use their cultural and global skills years after their

educational travel. We recommend that future studies pay attention to the coursework of educational programs that integrate a study-abroad feature in comparison and design a pre- and post-test assessment of cultural and global knowledge.

5. Pedagogical Points for Intercultural Development

Faculty preparation is very time-consuming but a crucial part of enhancing multicultural sensitivity during faculty-structured study abroad programs (Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018). Faculty members are responsible for organizing the trip, preparing students for the trip, looking after the students and responsible for exposing the students to the host culture. All of this has been identified as important components in the process of development of cultural sensitivity through a study abroad experience (Johns & Thompson, 2010). Faculty can help students prepare for the trip through literature, meeting with the traveling group, and reducing overall anxiety related to the trip (Koernig, 2007). These efforts enhance the student experience by giving students a preview of their trip instead of overwhelming them during the trip. This allows students to begin focusing on and enjoying the culture rather than being sidetracked by their fears of travel abroad and minimizes cultural shock when in the host country. Moreover, such faculty-led short trips function as high impact practices, as students learn first-hand about new cultures, practice critical communication skills, gain civic and ethical responsibility, and connect course content to complex real-world problems (Yuksel & Nascimento, 2018).

Learning is integral for study abroad programs, both short and long term. While longer study abroad programs provide more exposure, shorter study abroad programs can be just as effective. According to Kamdar and Lewis (2015), short-term study abroad programs can be made more effective by pairing them with a traditional academic course. This allows the students to both prepare and then apply the knowledge gained from their experience in a classroom setting. Other ways to enhance short-term study abroad programs, these programs need to include community-based research, community service learning, and an emphasis on research skills and interdisciplinary connections (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). There is also evidence that even a year after a week-long study abroad trip, students continued to find meaning in their experience. For some students, the experience faded, but those who continued to engage in ensuing learning opportunities continued to identify the positive impact the study abroad experience had on their lives (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). Shorter study abroad trips can be life-changing experiences based on how the faculty and students approach the trip and the learning. As evidenced in our data, students participating in faculty-led trips can highly benefit from these programs and become more culturally and globally aware.

6. Conclusion

Structured faculty-led travel is a high-impact educational practice and should be embedded into the 21st century lesson planning in higher education institutions because students benefit from experiential learning, grow personally and intellectually, and develop a functional knowledge of world geography and language. In times of interdependence and interconnectedness due to globalization, the new graduate student needs to be curious about the rapidly changing world and be far more knowledgeable about global issues and systems than compared to the previous generations. Faculty-led short study abroad trips allows students to step outside of the classroom and to experience an internationalized education with little costs but great professional and personal benefits. The presented data suggest that students engaged in such faculty-led experiential abroad education are more aware of their role in the society and seem to be more responsive to multicultural and global concerns than students who are not engaged in international academic trips. Although students seem to learn cultural sensitivity through coursework as suggested in our data, it is recommended that future studies examine students from other institutions and continue to compare the traveler group with a non-traveler group across various courses and travel programs.

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Disclosure of Conflict

The author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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