Access Denied?
Examining Parent Roles in Enhancing Student Development Through the Study Abroad Continuum

Dr. Paige E. Butler – Middlebury Institute of International Studies
Dr. Kira Espiritu – University of San Diego
Ms. Sara Troy – CEA Study Abroad
Have you heard similar sentiments from parents/families?

- *I am very apprehensive about him spending two hours alone in the airport on a layover*

- *I need copies of all of the information. I don’t trust her to tell me and she is not responsible enough to get this done.*
So what does this mean? Reframing in Student Development

- I am very apprehensive about him spending two hours alone in the airport on a layover
  - I am concerned about my son’s ability to be independent and navigate unfamiliar environments.

- I need copies of all of the information. I don’t trust her to tell me and she is not responsible enough to get this done.
  - I am concerned with my daughter’s time management and decision-making skills, I’m not sure she’ll be responsible.
Whether we like it or not...

- PARENTS WILL BE INVOLVED! Helicopters, snowplows, loudspeakers or background investigators...
Taking a Pulse on Parent Involvement

1. Do you communicate with parents throughout the study abroad continuum?

2. What are some of the primary study abroad concerns that you hear from families?

3. Have you incorporated parent/family engagement formally into your office responsibilities and/or a job description?
Who are the students?

Emerging Adults (18-29)

- New development stage in industrialized world
- Self-Focused Exploration “selfies”
- Risk Taking Behaviors
- Delayed interest in former markers of adulthood (marriage, children, home ownership)
- Also known as “teacups” – parents fear students are fragile and will break easily under pressure

Examples of common student development challenges

- Fear of making the right decisions
- Strong focus on utilitarian results (will this help me get a good job?)
- Managing emotions / building emotional resilience
- Difficulty managing up – authorities, parents, etc.
- Difficulty disengaging
Who are the parents?

Gen X (mostly) 1961-1981

- Grew up in era where both parents began working
  - “Latchkey kids” – time of societal focus on adults, thus more individualistic

- Involved Parenting: “Security Moms & Committed Dads”

- Highly involved in students’ lives & heavily interconnected via technology

- Trying to “smooth a path” to make child’s life easier -with good intentions

- No longer simply “hovering” and watching

- Also known as “stealth fighter parents”, due to the tendency to let minor issues go, but to intervene forcefully and swiftly in the event of more serious issues (Howe, 2016)

- “Believes anything immeasurable is untrustworthy” (Howe, 2016)

- Major concerns about: safety, security and reliance; Want their students to be more self-reliant UNTIL perceived threats occur
What do we know?

Student Needs:

- independence
- competence
- ability to form and maintain relationships with others

Challenges:

- Students communicate with parents on average twice/day (Shiffren, 2014)
- Parents are unsure of boundaries
- Risk Averse culture
- Technology as a curtain/Immediate connectivity
Implications

**HIGHER EDUCATION:**
We label students as adults but developmentally research suggests that they are in an exploratory stage prior to adulthood, thus, we need to continue to scaffold their development.

**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION:**
Students utilize study abroad for self exploration, and are seeking a balance of “connected independence” with access to supporters.
A Call To Action...

Partners

Parents
Environmental Scan

- Parent Survey – University of San Diego *(almost 70% study abroad participation rate)*
  - 6,789 parents surveyed
    - 685 responses *(10% response)*
      - 35% parents of study abroad participants
      - 65% parents of non-study abroad participants

- Main Areas of Analysis
  - Communication
  - Concerns (level of and type)
  - Impact of Experience on Student
  - Degree of Parental Involvement & Decision Making
## Data Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Parent Considerations</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Development</strong></td>
<td>Communication / Autonomy</td>
<td>Did not change while student was abroad; both parents &amp; students report communicating 2-3 times/week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student Responsibility /Personal Safety &amp; Access to Health Care Abroad</td>
<td>Concern for safety was very high for parents whose student studied abroad; Concern for health care access was very high for parents whose student had not yet studied abroad</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student Independence &amp; Self-Confidence</td>
<td>Parents anticipated a significant change after Studying Abroad</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Student Abilities related to problem solving, Self-Awareness/Understanding &amp; Flexibility</td>
<td>Parents anticipated a moderate change after Studying Abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td>Program Location &amp; Financial Decisions</td>
<td>For students who were applying: Parents reported to be very involved</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Decisions</td>
<td>For students who went abroad already: Parents reported to be very involved</td>
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<td>Decision – Whose Decision Was It to Study Abroad or to NOT Study Abroad?</td>
<td>Student: 68%</td>
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<td>Parent: 32%</td>
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Institutional Examples

Examples of Parent Engagement Strategies:
  • CEA
  • Rotary International
  • University of San Diego

Common Themes and Successful Practices:
  • Goal to empower both students and parents with resources throughout the continuum of study abroad
  • Creating partnerships with other departments and leveraging technology
  • Desired outcomes are anchored to student development
  • Intentional Strategies for Direct and Indirect Engagement
## Putting Theory Into Practice

### Table Discussion - See handout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Strategy</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Parent newsletter, webinar, parent invoice, email communication with parents, etc.</td>
<td>Reduces boundaries; Establish a rapport before problems occur; messaging intended for their needs; proactively anticipate needs/questions and provide strategies in advance</td>
<td>Requires extra staff time and attention; may invite more engagement in smaller elements throughout the process; not all parents may be interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Parent section on website, information given to students for parents, access to student information (with student permission), etc.</td>
<td>Interested parents can seek out information on their own; still creates boundaries between family and Ed Abroad office; not a big shift from current reality</td>
<td>Less resource intensive, but still requires some ongoing attention; may not prevent parents from intervening; parents may/may not look at resources or know where to find them</td>
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## Empowering Parents

- Help parents develop their own support strategies to support student development throughout the study abroad continuum

### Some Examples:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Choosing the Right Program; Goal Setting; Building Trust; Decision-Making; Challenging Assumptions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning &amp; Development</td>
<td>Challenge &amp; Support; Inquiry vs. Problem Solving; Allowing Growth and Failure; Fostering Student Responsibility and Accepting Consequences of Poor Decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural Awareness</td>
<td>Accepting daily challenges; allowing space for questioning values; recognizing differences; encourage language &amp; ICC skills practice</td>
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Thank You!

Dr. Paige E. Butler – Middlebury Institute of International Studies
  • pbutter@miis.edu

Dr. Kira Espiritu – University of San Diego
  • kespiritua@sandiego.edu

Ms. Sara Troy – CEA Study Abroad
  • stroy@ceastudyabroad.com