BEFORE, During and After:
Enhancing Resilience in Students Engaging in International Experiences

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Session outline

- Project background
- Funding opportunity
- Forming the team
- Website creation
- Website demo
- Video viewing and group exercise
- Discussion, feedback, and questions
Project origins - the theory

- 750 U-M graduate students conduct research, teach, or provide professional services in 80 countries

- Graduate students are necessarily exposed to environmental and psychosocial stressors

- There are no preventative mental health programs at the UM for students preparing for foreign fieldwork

- Evidence suggests that these students may experience significant psychiatric symptoms post-placement

Pollard, A. 2009
Project beginnings - the need

Trends in number of reported events

Much of the increase in the number of hazardous events reported is probably due to significant improvements in information access and also to population growth, but the number of floods and cyclones being reported is still rising compared to earthquakes. How, we must ask, is global warming affecting the frequency of natural hazards?
Project beginnings- the need

- Mental illness
  - Culture Shock (21)
  - Anxiety (17)
  - Depression (15)
  - Alcoholism, Drug Abuse (3)
  - Repatriation stress (12)
  - Manic state, halluc. (1)

- Interpersonal hazards
  - Criminal, robbery (17)
  - Criminal, assault (19)
  - Political turmoil (19)
  - Suspicion of spying (13)
  - Factional conflict (10)
  - Arrest (6)

- Injury Accidents
  - Vehicle (auto, bicycle) (13)
  - Other (weapons, falls) (14)

- Other common
  - Malnutrition (4)
  - Dehydration (11)
  - Influenza (16)
  - Dental (22)
Project beginnings- forming hypotheses

• Preventative intervention increases flexible coping skills
  – Pre placement intervention improves identification of at-risk students

• Flexible coping strategies improve protective factors for students experiencing adverse events

• Students who have preventative intervention will show better academic readjustment and report better functioning within their professional roles and relationships
Project beginnings- the need

- An increase of pre-disclosed mental health diagnoses in students traveling abroad
- Numerous anecdotal stories of students encountering challenges related to stress and mental health issues while abroad
- Decentralized nature of University of Michigan
Project beginnings- the opportunity

• Reconfigured provost position- Vice Provost for Global and Engaged Education

• A focus on building infrastructure and resources to support campus wide education abroad

• Collaborative Grant for Education Abroad Resources (CGEAR grants)
Project Team

Project Leaders
Katie Lopez, School of Social Work
Lawrence Root, School of Social Work

Project Manager
Melissa Meyer, Psychological Clinic

Project Team
Todd Favorite, Psychological Clinic
Kelly Kowatch, School of Information
Susan Watts, Psychological Clinic
Sandra Wiley, School of Art & Design

Project Intern
Brandon Patterson, School of Social Work

Video Production
Blake Wagner, School of Public Health
Peter Leix, School of Art & Design
Collin McRae Leix, School of Art & Design

Website UX Design
Mengdi Zhang, School of Information

Web Programming
Robert LaRoe, School of Social Work
Randall Bilby, School of Social Work
Project beginnings- the concept

• For all U-M students (and beyond) engaging internationally in various international opportunities

• Useful for students before, during, and after the abroad experience

• Self-paced pathway as well as instructor lead resources
Early formulations

Assumptions:

– Studying abroad for educational purposes and service learning is inherently stressful

– Coping skills decrease intensity of distress and increase resiliency for students traveling abroad

– There is a lack of unified protocol/required training in this area
## Process overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Short</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - $25,000 resiliency group grant  
- Resiliency group project manager  
- Creative Director  
- S of 1 student  
- Art and Design student?  
- Bi-weekly meeting of grant group  
- Space on Global Michigan Site  
- Information from Psych Clinic and Hardiness Project  
- Videography and editing of vignettes for prompting and learning | - Submission of resiliency grant application  
- Bi-weekly meeting of Resiliency Grant group  
- Develop online workshop that focuses on enhancing experience and resiliency/coping of students traveling abroad. Modules include: [Group dynamics, Culture, experiencing hardship, isolation and distance]  
- Gain input from students and Council on Global Engagement  
- Promote usage of the site/application for students, facilitators and group leaders  
- Assess usefulness, application and access of product | - Students pre and post departure  
- Teachers, group leaders and facilitators  
- All schools that have international placements and service learning  
- Communities and other schools (broad access)  
- Leaders of Michigan Global initiatives | - Awareness of the need for unified and centrally housed resiliency training for University of Michigan students traveling abroad.  
- Knowledge of basic ways to cope, where to get help.  
- Development of coping skills  
- Increased awareness of need of emphasis on emotional coping in pre- and post-departure training | - Policy of mandated or strongly encouraged usage of the resiliency modules to enhance student experience.  
- Further resource development (on campus and in community) for students seeking services after returning from placement | - Enhancement of student resiliency in the field |
Taking resiliency step by step

• Stories
  – What does it look like?

• Clinical research
  – How do I get there?
    • Stress inoculation
    • Flexibility and connectedness
The Model

- Self-awareness
- Optimism
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Connection
- Self-regulation
Resilient traveling website

tinyurl.com/resilient-traveling
Capturing resiliency- the background

• **Inkblots**
  – “tiny shifts can lead to big changes”

• Focus groups to understand what students want and need [and will use!]

• Re-occurring themes
  – Brief
  – Engaging
  – Relevant
  – Convenient
  – Practical
Capturing resiliency- the process

Step 1:

• Key informant interviews to determine content areas
• Psychological Clinic
• Council on Global Engagement

Identified domains

• Personal struggles
• Loneliness
• Culture shock
• Group conflict
Capturing resiliency- the process

Step 2:
• Identify and interview students with relevant and compelling personal stories to represent each domain

Step 3:
• Draft scripts and solicit feedback from team members, students, and key informants

Step 4:
• Recruitment of actors
• Theatre and drama school
• Flyering (student union, local coffee shops)
• Posting to community boards
• Craigslist
Capturing resiliency

Production and post-production

- filming
- editing of first cuts
- solicit feedback from team members, students, and key informants
- final cuts (including music scores)
Discussion Questions

What is your reaction to the video? How do you think students will react?

How could you envision using this website and associated videos with your students?

What additional tools and strategies have been successful in addressing similar issues on your campus?

What additional work needs to be done in this area?
Feedback or questions?
Thank you!

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