

beyond “it was great”

A few provocative ideas about studying abroad



David Wong

Michigan State University

Mick Vande Berg

MVB Associates

Lilli Engle

American University Centre
of Provence

Bruce La Brack

University of the Pacific

the plan



The Issues: Wong (10 min)

Responses: Vande Berg, Engle, La Brack (20 min)

Panel Interaction (10 min)

Audience Discussion (25 min)

Final Thoughts (5 min)

who am i



Associate Professor, Michigan State University
Ph.D. Stanford University

Educational Psychology (learning, motivation)

Study Abroad Leader and Researcher

moving beyond “it was great”

The theme of the 2013 Forum Conference



A wake-up call to study abroad program leaders and researchers.

Assertions about the nature of the problem and best solutions

beyond “it was great”

Two Central Assertions



Assertion 1: Contrary to common belief, results are disappointing at best” (growth in global competency)

Assertion 2. Student learning is best improved when study abroad leaders intervene (arrange experiences, facilitate activities, encourage reflection)

results are disappointing

Students did not grow



Evidence. Research often finds little growth in global competency

Vande Berg et al. (2009). Georgetown Consortium Project. *Frontiers*.

Twombly et al. (2012). Study Abroad in a New Global Century. *Assoc. for the Study of Higher Ed*.

Lewin, R. (2009). *Handbook of Research and Practice in Study Abroad*

results are disappointing

Students did not grow?



On the other hand...

Some research points the profound influence of the study abroad experiences

results are disappointing

Students did not grow?



Evidence. Retrospective studies.

Paige et al. SAGE Research Report

- 6400 study abroad alumni
- outcome variable: global engagement
- over 50% cited SA as influential
- 83% cited SA as most influential college experience

results are disappointing

~~Students did not grow.~~ We could not see growth.



What is going on? Perhaps...

the impact of SA emerges slowly (how fast do we expect to see change?)

what was “great” lies beyond global competency

“global competency” is narrowly defined & measured

*students can not (yet) articulate their growth
(Gardner & Gross, 2009)*

global competency

How is it defined and measured?



In the literature, many definitions and measures
(Deardorff, 2006)

In practice, relatively few measures

- * Intercultural Development Index
(Bennett, Hammer)
- * Global Perspective Inventory
(Braskamp)

must we intervene?

Development can happen in more than one way



Alternative theories

Modeling, imitating, roles & norms
(Bandura, Lave & Wenger, Vygotsky)

Reinforcement Theory
(behaviorism)

Situations, Affordances, and Constraints
(Brown, Resnick)

Attitude & belief development

Summary



Beyond “It was Great” – an important wake up call

Our field is characterized by a few dominant assertions about the problem and the solution

My question to you is, “*What are alternatives?*”

Assessing Student Learning Abroad: Responding to Knowledge Claims

**MICK VANDE BERG, RESPONDING TO DAVID
WONG**

FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

SAN DIEGO, CA

APRIL 3, 2014

Studying abroad: Historically common assumptions and “evidence” about intercultural learning*

Assumptions:

- Students become more interculturally competent through studying abroad.
- How? They improve ICL when they're *exposed* to other cultures.

OR

- How? They improve ICL when they're *immersed* in other cultures.

Commonly Cited Evidence of success:

- Students often tell us they've been “transformed.”
- We're sending more and more students to study abroad.

Studying abroad: What does the evidence tell us?

More than a thousand study abroad research studies were published in the first decade of this century.*

But not all evidence is created equal.**

*Comp, D., Gladding, S., Rhodes, G., Stephenson, S., & Vande Berg, M. (2007). *A guide to outcomes assessment in education abroad*. Carlisle, PA: Forum on Education Abroad.

** Vande Berg, M., Paige, R. M., & Lou, K. H. (Eds.) (2012). *Student learning abroad: What our students are learning, what they're not, and what we can do about it*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

What to make of the traditional evidence: Why question “Study abroad transformed me?”*



- 1. In other learning domains, we measure student learning against recognized external standards**
- 2. The student may not have enough knowledge about the phenomenon**
- 3. The student may not be “telling the truth”: social desirability**
- 4. *The student may be framing study abroad as “that experience that transforms students”***

Intercultural competence: An emerging consensus



We learn *to interact more effectively and appropriately with culturally different others* through:

- Increasing cultural self awareness,
- Increasing awareness of others within their own cultural contexts,
- Managing emotions in the face of ambiguity, change, and challenging circumstances and people, and
- Bridging cultural gaps—*shifting frames and adapting behavior* to cultural contexts different from our own.

Measuring intercultural competence



- **Many instruments claim to measure IC learning.**
- **The key question in choosing one over the others: Has the instrument been rigorously tested against standard psychometric protocols to determine that it is valid and reliable?**

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI):

Why do so many of us rely on this measure of ICL?

- **Grounded in a cross-culturally validated theory of intercultural competence—not simply a measure of psychological attitudes or traits**
- **Extensive testing has established its validity and reliability (testing history reviewed in Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003; Hammer 2011)**
- **Major reviews of IC instruments have identified the IDI as one of the very best (ACE 2003; Paige 2004; Stuart 2009)**
- **IDI used to measure intercultural learning in at least 67 doctoral dissertations**

To conclude: What does evidence from well-designed studies tell us?*

- **Most students do not develop interculturally, to a meaningful extent, through studying abroad.**
- **Most students do develop interculturally through studying abroad when educators are able to intervene in their learning, intentionally and strategically.**
- *** Paige, M. & Vande Berg, M. (2012). A review of recent research. *Student learning abroad: What our students are learning, what they're not, and what we can do about it*, 29-58.**

Interventions in Study Abroad

‘A Funny Thing Happened *after* the Forum’



Bruce La Brack

Responses to David Wong

Forum On Education Abroad
San Diego, CA
April 3, 2014

Dichotomous Arenas



VISCERAL EXPERIENCE

VS.

MEDIATED KNOWLEDGE

Borrowed from description of film director
Lars von Trier's approach to narration

Definitions Matter



David conceives ‘*intervene*’ as a mostly negative term and activity.

However, “intervention” can be seen as a supportive and empowering process, akin to counseling, mentoring, advising, mediating, and teaching. Results are often ameliorative and sometimes transformative.

The Stages of Instruction and Types of Intervention



Pre-Departure: anticipatory preparation, theoretical, diagnostic, developmental, factual

While Abroad: interaction/situation-based, immediate, behavioral/attitudinal focus, encouraged reflection

Post-Experience: holistic contemplation, cumulative analysis, future applications

Q. How Much Growth Do We Expect?



- A.* Enough to avoid the worst of culture shock, facilitate appropriate and respectful interaction with host culture, and increase intercultural competency, however defined.
- Would be nice if students could improve developmentally, as well.

Q. How *fast* do we expect growth?



- A. There is always an arc of learning that is idiosyncratic and dependent on complex factors. However, steeper learning curves generally occur during initial phases, which eventually plateau, although reentry can yield significant gains in self-knowledge.

Q. What kind of growth is not measured?



A. A great deal, probably, such as culinary, artistic, or athletic skills. Nor will such areas as emotional intelligence and global knowledge be captured unless data on specific topics is collected.

Nevertheless, aspects of intercultural competency can be rather accurately and easily charted.

Modest Aims & Claims

Diversity and Experimentation in Study Abroad



“The world is moving so fast these days that the person who says that it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it.”

**Attributed to American pastor, Harry Emerson Fosdick
(1878 - 1969)**

Intervening in Study Abroad

For or Against Intercultural Learning



**LILLI ENGLE – AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
CENTER OF PROVENCE (AUCP)
FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD, SAN DIEGO
2014**

Interventions



Client

- Assessment of Satisfaction
- Make at Home
- Grade for effort
- Offer Options
- Favor Assessability
- Cater to Desires

Student

- Assessment of Learning
- Make Adapt
- Grade for performance
- Impose Requirements
- Reward Preparedness
- Respond to Needs

Experiential/Intercultural Learning



- Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
- Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process.
- In the process of learning one is called upon to move back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking.

Alice Y. Kolb and David A. Kolb
[learningfromexperience.com/media/2010/08/ELT-Hbk-MLED-LFE-
website-2-10-08.pdf](http://learningfromexperience.com/media/2010/08/ELT-Hbk-MLED-LFE-website-2-10-08.pdf)

The Substance of « Greatness »



- If we fail to promote systematic, intentional intercultural learning, we fail, in the words of the Houlihan award, to « transform administrative responsibility into educational opportunity ».

Bennett, M. (2010). *A short conceptual history of intercultural learning in study abroad*. In W. Hoffa & S. Depaul (Eds.) A history of U.S. study abroad: 1965-present. Special publication of Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, pp. 419-449.

closing thoughts



The “Beyond it was Great” argument is an important wake-up call to researchers and practitioners.

These panelist have sounded an alarm and offered a solid response: a call for more intervention and reflection.

closing thoughts



SA is relatively new, small field dominated by a small number of perspectives

Scholars who have developed these perspectives are to be commended.

To the Leaders in the field (those who have power) foster a diversity of viewpoints.