Demystifying the Role of the Facilitator in a Tense Learning Environment

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Learning Objectives

● Redefine role of facilitator in a changing landscape
● Understand the importance of incorporating intercultural learning and diversity training in program development
● Identify practical strategies to support student learning via facilitator development, including using the Brave Spaces framework
AGENDA

1. THE FACILITATOR DEFINED
2. REAL WORLD SCENARIOS
3. BRAVE SPACES
4. KEY TAKEAWAYS
In 3 words or less, describe the responsibilities of a facilitator in the context of study abroad.

Send a text 22333 and type in: 588478 and your response.
In 4 words or less, what are some responsibilities of a facilitator in the field of Study Abroad?

“meet learning objectives”  “manage student safety”
Characteristics of a Strong Facilitator

- Instructor recognizes their own intercultural development
- Inclusive and accessible learner-centered approach that embraces diverse demographics of students
- Focus on student intercultural skill development in course design
- Provide individual attention and encouragement
Characteristics of a Strong Facilitator

- Engage in multiple teaching and learning styles to support inclusivity
- Mindful about group dynamics and individual identities
- Bridge the academic discipline with the home culture(s) and host culture(s)
- Debriefing and engaging with students and colleagues
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Scenario #1

You are a study abroad professional traveling with 20 students and a faculty leader on a 5-week, multi-city study abroad program in Europe. Throughout the entire program the faculty leader struggled managing group dynamics and negotiating cultural identities of undergraduate students.

The instructor’s lack of self-awareness and awareness of others coupled with pre-existing assumptions of student identities ultimately diminished the intercultural learning outcomes.

The main focus of the program moved from student engagement to faculty support.
Think-Pair-Share

What would you do…. 

In the moment:

● Would you address this issue with the faculty leader in-country?
● How would you approach the students, especially when they are taking their cues from the faculty leader, sometimes even reinforcing cultural stereotypes?

Debriefing post-program:

● How would you address this issue with the students and or faculty leader?

Future planning:

● The faculty leader is going to return next year, how would you support student intercultural development moving forward?
● Pre-emptive measures, what could we have thought of prior to the program to facilitate training?
Scenario #2

You manage a semester study abroad program in Madrid. It is an island program with a cohort of only 25 students who live and take a limited number of classes together. Before the program starts, you are thrilled to see that the cohort’s makeup is more diverse than in previous years.

Once the semester gets underway, 3 separate students email you describing how they are being socially excluded and experiencing various forms of microaggressions, not from the host culture however, but from their peers. They believe it is racially motivated, which is very upsetting to them. They don’t know what can be done but they want you to know what they are feeling/experiencing.

Each student cites that they were emotionally prepared for some form of discrimination from the host culture and don’t typically experience this type of discrimination at the home campus in the US.
Think-Pair-Share

What would you do…. 

In the moment:
● As the on-site program manager, knowing you could potentially further escalate the issue by addressing it in a group setting, how would you approach this scenario?
● How do you respond as the home campus study abroad director?
● As the on-site instructor, in what ways could you support these students?

Post-program:
● How would you follow up with the students?

Future planning:
● To what extent do you help manage identity formation?
● What preventive measures would you put in place for future planning?
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From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces

- This is a framework/activity/mindset that can be applied to both of these perspectives
- Alternative framework to the safe space paradigm
- Establishes intentions for conversations and behavior in a course or program
- Ideal for group learning about diversity, social justice, and intercultural communication issues
- Should be used at the outset of a program, workshop or class but it’s not a prelude -- it’s an enduring methodology to strengthen learning
Brave Spaces - Group Activity

- **Student Activity:** As the facilitator will help your students create a list of guidelines to help students participate in full and truthful engagement.

- **Purpose:** To establish a group dynamic that emphasizes the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety.

- **Learning Objectives:**
  - To reframe and reinvent ideas about previously recognized classroom ground rules.
  - To identify characteristics of what makes a brave space vs. a safe space.
  - To help participants describe and define the groups’ expectations for themselves, their peers, and their instructors.
BRAVE SPACES
GROUP ACTIVITY
Brave Spaces - Group Activity

1. In what ways did this poem resonate with you?
2. Are you familiar with the term “safe space”?
3. Are there designated safe spaces on your campus? What are they like?
4. What does safe space mean to you?
Brave Spaces - Group Activity

- What is “safe space?”
  - A safe space is a manifestation of dominance and privilege
  - Safety is not a reasonable expectation in an honest discussion about social justice issues
  - Framing activities are vital to creating a brave space, particularly the ground rules
- As facilitators, we have a responsibility to foster a learning environment that supports participants in the challenging work of authentic engagement with regard to issues of identity, oppression, power, and privilege
## From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule/Guideline</th>
<th>SAFE</th>
<th>BRAVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agree to disagree</td>
<td>Controversy with civility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Don’t take things personally and no judgements</td>
<td>Owning your intentions and your impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Challenge by choice (you decide the extent of your own participation)</td>
<td>Stepping in and out of challenging conversations and being aware of what factors influence our decisions about whether to challenge ourselves on a given issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule/Guide line</td>
<td>SAFE</td>
<td>BRAVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Developing deeper clarity about what respect entails from a mindfulness and cultural perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>No attacks</td>
<td>Clarifying differences between a personal attack on an individual and a challenge to an individual’s idea/belief/statement. Recognizing that an attack may not be an uncomfortable experience that can lead to a defensive reaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brave Spaces - Facilitating the Activity

Facilitation Intro:
- Introduce the activity and the context (CIEE course example)
- Divide the board into two columns: SAFE vs. BRAVE and below that OUT vs. IN
- Introduce the first three OUT characteristics and have students define these “old” rules, then move on to the last two

Facilitation Questions:
- Rule #1: What are qualities of being brave?
- Rule #2: What might “controversy with civility” mean in XYZ context?
- Rule #3: How might this be more effective than “agreeing to disagree”?
- Rule #4: How do you define risk? What might happen if we risk honesty?
- Rule #5: Clarify this idea of respect - personal attack on an individual vs. a challenge to an idea or belief that makes the individual feel uncomfortable
Brave Spaces Connection to the Context of Facilitators in Study Abroad

- Did you find the Brave Spaces activity useful? In what ways?
- With this activity in mind, does this change your perspective on the role of the facilitator?
- How can you use the brave space approach in your own job as a study abroad professional?
- How might you use this brave space mindset to prepare colleagues and students to travel?
- Think of your own experience as a facilitator. Can you think of your own scenario that you would approach differently with this activity and the Brave Space mindset?
- As a facilitator today our role involves engaging in difficult conversations around race, power, privilege, social justice, and intercultural development. What tools can you take from this activity to approach these conversations?

Download the Brave Spaces Facilitation Guide here:
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Key Takeaways

- Be proactive in cultivating an inclusive and supportive learning environment not reactive
- Adopt and promote a brave mindset
- Redefine the idea of confrontation
- Emphasize the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety
- Balance...
- Find time for self-care
- Always find time to debrief with your colleagues, your students or yourself!
THANK YOU!
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