

Recruiting, Organizing, Planning, and Conducting a 3-Week, Short-Term Study Abroad Program for Undergraduate Students: Guidelines and Suggestions for First-Time Faculty Leaders

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Abstract: The article provides an overview on the importance of international education, and the significance of short-term study abroad programs. It also provides specific step-by-step guidelines and recommendations to help first-time faculty members who are interested in conducting a short-term study abroad program in the field of child development and family studies. Explanations are given on conducting orientation sessions before departure, suggestions for fund raising activities, balancing the academic content with recreational and adventure excursions, making arrangements for guest speakers in the host county, arranging for visits to social service agencies, and lastly incorporating service learning activities in the program. Questions such as, "What are some of the typical challenges that a faculty leader is likely to encounter in the host country?" are addressed. A summary of the qualitative analyses that was obtained from the students, about their reactions to the program, and the impact that it had on them, after they returned from the 3-week program is explored.

Keywords: Study abroad, planning and conducting, pre-departure meetings, qualitative outcomes.

International education has become one of the core educational missions in many American colleges and universities. Many U.S. university campuses are recognizing that increasing global competence among the next generation of students should be a national priority and an academic responsibility of higher educators. In this age of shrinking international boundaries, changing cultural demographics, and global economy, all students irrespective of their major should possess an appreciation for cultural heterogeneity and diversity. Educators believe that this type of education is geared to instill in the students a sense of understanding, knowledge, and acceptance of diverse international cultures (Kitsantas, 2004; Munoz, Wood, and Cherrier, 2006).

Participating in study abroad programs and exchange programs are now an important and integral aspect of higher education in the United States, and in most other countries in the world. The objectives of study abroad programs, include the improvement of cross-cultural understanding, global competence, cultural immersion, and enhanced world mindedness (Fairchild, Pillai, and Noble, 2009; Kitsantas, 2004; Munoz, Wood, and Cherrier, 2006).

Individuals who are world minded are those whose primary reference group is human mankind, rather than

a specific ethnic group (Sampson, 1957). According to Douglas and Jones-Rikkers (2001), a world minded person, values the global perspective on different aspects of life. World minded individuals are more likely to see viewpoints that differ from their own ethnic, national, or religious perspective. They recognize, value, and appreciate cultural differences. Moreover, a global minded individual works effectively in multi-cultural environments (Cox, 1991). According to Douglas and Jones-Rikkers (2001) a world minded person will value a broad perspective on various issues, dislike prejudice, and sees viewpoints of others that differ from their own. Hett (1993) defined world minded as a, "worldview in which one sees oneself as connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility to its members (p. 89)."

In contemporary times, an understanding of international cultures of the world, other than our own, is an integral component of an undergraduate education and a key to developing future leaders that display global competence. With the rise of globalization, we are all familiar and aware of the saying, "the world is shrinking" and that "we live in a global village". Advances in technology such as the development of the internet, cell phones, telecommunication makes it easier to communicate with each other by the press a button, and the ease of travel allows us to be transported from one part of the world to another including remote areas in a matter of hours (Tuleja, 2006).

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Professionals in any field of study, should be world minded and embrace the idea that functioning in a world of international diversity is a "basic life skill" (Gullekson, Tucker, & Coombs, Jr. 2011). Advances in technology and increasing globalization have made it necessary for all students to have "global intelligence" (Knight, 2006; Tucker, 2011), be aware of, and informed about various cultural differences, and be knowledgeable about individuals and families in an international and global context.

There are many different ways to study cultural heterogeneity and diversity. Study abroad programs are defined as educational programs that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin, they have gained popularity and are sponsored by most universities worldwide (Carlson, Bum, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1991; NAFAS, Association of International Educators). There are different types of study abroad programs. Some of these programs, include studying abroad for a semester, others include studying in a foreign country for an entire year, and still others are short-term study abroad programs for 3-weeks to a month. Different study abroad programs are known to improve the students' knowledge of the host culture, they can transform their world views, the student participants gain greater independence, and enhanced self-awareness and self-confidence. Besides the excitement of traveling to a foreign country, a major benefit of the study abroad program is that the students can immerse themselves in a new culture and experience first-hand, new customs, novel ways to greet people, learn about art, music, foods, languages, socialization practices, beliefs, superstitions, meet interesting people, and experience ways in which holidays are celebrated (Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Hadis, 2005; Özturgut & Li 2007, Fairchild, Pillai, & Noble 2009).

Currently, short-term study abroad programs are primarily popular in the U.S. and in Western Europe. These programs are gaining popularity in Asian countries as well, i.e. China and Japan. Due to the effects of technological advancements and globalization, more and more countries are beginning to offer short-term study abroad programs to introduce the students to business practices, trade issues, innovations in music and fashion. political changes, and issues affecting children and families in various cultures. For faculty members who are planning to initiate a study abroad program, the qualitative results outlined in this study might serve as a starting point and guide with regard to the students' perceptions and

their attitudes about the short-term study abroad program.

The primary objective of this article is to provide an overview, and provide the benefits of short-term study abroad programs. The second objective is to present guidelines to first-time faculty members, who are interested in proposing, organizing, and conducting a short-term study abroad program in child development and family studies or family sociology. The third and final objective, is to summarize the qualitative analyses that were obtained after students completed the 3-week short-term study abroad program.

DO STUDYING ABROAD PROGRAMS ENHANCE STUDENTS' GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING AND CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS?

According to Hadis (2005), selective students tend to participate in the short-term study abroad programs. Students who have higher grades are those who are more interested in knowing more about the world and increasing their general knowledge. Most college students tend to be indifferent to international affairs, geographically illiterate, and ignorant about world affairs. He further argued that students who participated in a study abroad programs are more likely to become open-minded, gain independence, and acquire international mobility (Hadis, 2005).

Numerous studies focusing on study abroad outcomes have provided evidence that study abroad programs enhance the participants' global perspective (McCabe, 1994), cross-cultural understanding (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2002), interest in travel, foreign languages, policy issues, history, and architecture (Amuzie, & Winke, 2009; Fairchild, Pillai, and Noble, 2009; Goldoni, 2013; Gore, 2005; Koernig, 2007; Tuleja, 2006). Clarke III, Flaherty, Wright, and Mc Millen (2009) have argued that after a short-term study abroad program, students' intercultural proficiency, global mindedness, intercultural communication, understanding of diversity issues, and intercultural sensitivity increased. Norris and Gillespie (2005) remarked that after surveying 17,000 participants, they found that long-term effects of study abroad programs had a positive impact on the career paths for most of the participants.

There are numerous studies that have been conducted on the effects of short-term study abroad programs, and the outcomes of short-term study abroad programs in the area of foreign languages (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Engle & Engle 2004; Goldoni,

2013) and business (Hadis, 2005; Koernig 2007; Gordon and Smith, 1992; Munoz, Wood, and Cherrier, 2006; Schuster, Zimmerman, Schertzer, & Beamish, 1998; Tuleja, 2006). There is a paucity of published research information, on the outcomes of short-term study abroad programs in the field of child development and family studies, and family sociology. Moreover, most students select Western Europe as their study abroad destination (i.e., U.K., Spain, Italy, France, and Ireland). Although European countries have long been the most popular locations in which to study abroad, students are now choosing geographically diverse destinations. Our short-term study abroad focused on children and families in Fiji and in New Zealand.

The study discussed in this article, is unique in the choice of destinations, and the fact that a majority of the students in our study were first-generation college students from ethnic minority groups. Another unique feature of this short-term study abroad program, is that a majority of programs are conducted in one specific locale only. Our study abroad program is unique in that we take students to multiple locations (5 to 6) within a country, so that they can have a good basis for comparisons within the country and also with the US. Since the financial resources of the students are limited, and a majority of the students pay for their own program from their savings, and others take out loans, we strongly encourage students to fundraise and collect monies for their recreational excursions. To the researchers' knowledge, there has been no published research on students' outcomes after a short-term study abroad program to visit Fiji and New Zealand.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

The suggestions and recommendations offered in this article are a result of seven years of travel abroad experiences from conceptualizing, planning, organizing, conducting and revising a 3-week short-term study abroad course entitled, "*Children and Families in the Community: A Comparison Between Fiji, New Zealand, and the U.S.*" The primary objective of this course is to assist students develop an understanding of cultural similarities and differences in the ways in which social, political, economic, geographical, cultural, and immigration factors affect children and families in three different countries. Comparisons are constantly made with children and families in the Fiji, in New Zealand, and in the U.S. Another objective of the course, is to introduce to the students' "practical day-to-day" living experiences in a foreign country. As part of this objective, the students

meet students from the host country at a *Happy Hour* get together. They are also expected to do a service-learning component in the host community and mingle with the local people.

The course described in the article is a "*General Education*" course in the field of child development and family studies. The course is open to all undergraduate students and graduate students enrolled at the university. The graduate student is required to meet with the instructors before the program commences, and is required to do an additional assignment that generally includes a research paper focusing on cultural differences on a specific aspect of family life in the human life cycle in the host country. The course is capped at 30 students. It consists of two parts. The first part of the course includes 10, 3-hour classes for two weeks prior to departure. The second objective of the course is completed in the host country, which includes a few remaining lectures, the introduction of several local guest speakers, and visits to different preschools, elementary schools, and high schools, local home visits, visits to social service agencies, museums, and places of interest from a cultural and historical perspective.

PRE-DEPARTURE, PLANNING, AND ORGANIZING OF THE PROGRAM

This section outlines the steps that need to be completed by the faculty leaders to ensure that they successfully organize, plan, and conduct the short-term study abroad program successfully. Following these steps will ensure that the program is implemented effectively and is advantageous to the faculty members and to the students.

HOW TO START PLANNING AND ORGANIZING THE PROGRAM

There are different strategies that faculty leaders can use to successfully execute the over-seas program. One option, is to make all the arrangements in the host country on your own. We would not recommend this option, because it is a massive undertaking and difficult to implement, because it is difficult for faculty members to anticipate and be knowledgeable about everything in the host country. A second possibility, that some faculty leaders use are consulting travel agents in the host country. The travel agent makes most of the arrangements for lodging and sight-seeing in the host country. This approach might work if the travel agent(s) are known to the faculty leaders. Sometimes, travel agents are known to take

the deposit and take off or close the travel agency permanently.

The third approach, is to work with a university located in the host country. Generally, the university will assign this task to the university committee members who are known to the faculty member. Faculty members who have used this option, are content and satisfied with the arrangements that are made.

The fourth option, that we highly recommend, and the option that we use with our study abroad program, is to use a “provider” for the short-study abroad program. Examples of “providers” are AIFS (American institute for Foreign Services, CCE (Cross-Cultural Encounters), and ISA (Institute for Study Abroad). These are business or companies that are especially set up in the host country and specialize in assisting universities, faculty, and students on 1-year exchange programs, semester long programs, summer internship programs, or short-term study abroad programs. They are well versed with specific regions of the world and specialize in specific countries. They have contacts with universities, businesses, industries, social service agencies, government offices, schools, and other professionals in the community. They are flexible and work with faculty member(s) and tailor the itinerary to the specific needs of the course. They add or delete items to suit the budget, they find accommodations at different destinations, and make all the transportation arrangements, i.e. buses, trains, flights. They also arrange for pickups and drop offs at international and domestic airports.

ADVERTISING THE PROGRAM AND ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS

For us, advertising and recruitment of students is the most challenging and oftentimes frustrating component of the program. Recruitment for us, takes up a lot of time, effort, and energy because we have found that more than half of the students who sign up for the short-term study abroad program, drop out from the program, for monetary reasons, by the time, the first installment for the program has to be paid. Our recruitments efforts then have to commence again to recruit new students.

As far as getting students to enroll in the study-abroad class is concerned, colorful and enticing study abroad flyers are distributed to the majors in the department. These flyers are also put up on bulletin

boards in the home department and in various departments in allied disciplines, i.e. anthropology, sociology, education, social work. Information about the prospective program is put on the website of the department and on the university study abroad website which all students can access. The leaders of the program go to various classes and personally do a 15 minute presentation to the students, about the significance of taking the study abroad course which is offered for credit. We explain the process of substituting the study abroad course for other courses in the curriculum. Every year a recruitment DVD is made with the highlights of the previous year’s program. This DVD is shown to the students that we are planning to recruit. We have found that the personal presentation and the DVD inspire students to sign up for the course and are the most effective tools for next year’s study abroad program.

ORIENTATION MEETINGS

It is very important to give students and their parents an overview of the program and explain the details of what they should expect during the 3-weeks that they will be in the host country. Most of our students have traveled only within California and visited Nevada. They do not have any idea or concept of what traveling to a foreign country entails.

An explanation of how many orientation meetings, a faculty leader should have and what should be included in orientation meetings, has not been done in published literature (Koernig, 2007). Brokaw (1996) focused on the use of maps to learn about the geography, history, and transportation. Duke (2000) focused on the tour activities and places of interest in the host country.

Orientation meetings are an important vehicle that faculty leaders can use to reduce the anxiety level and uncertainty that students and their family may experience (Koernig, 2007). Gordon and Smith (1992) stated that orientation meetings, “help build a spirit which can be useful when stresses and tensions increase, during the overseas program (p. 49).” During the orientation meetings, the students get to know one another and bond with each other and get better acquainted with all group members and with the faculty leaders as well.

Some activities that enhance student bonding, and could be part of the orientation meetings include: (a) the use of an ice-breaker to get the students to talk to one another; (b) a discussion of career plans after

graduation; (c) a discussion of previous travel experiences; (d) each student explains why they decided to participate in the short-term study abroad program, "what they hope to get out of it" to get out of it and; (e) to specify one aspect (historical, cultural, geographical) of the host country that they are familiar with or have heard about.

The orientation meetings and pre-departure classes serve as a way for the students to learn about each other but also for the faculty leaders to get to know the students before leaving for the program. Understanding between the faculty leader and the students leads to a greater feeling of trust, which is important because the faculty member is the main lifeline and source of support, assurance, and information for the 3-weeks while they are in the host country (Koernig, 2007).

The "ground rules" and the "dos and don'ts" during the program are emphasized and all the students participating in the program are asked to sign two forms. One form is the "Code of Conduct" form that is required by the university and also by the "provider". The other form is entitled, "Ground Rules that I Will Observe During the Program" that we generate and ask students to sign. The content of these forms are similar and allude to the fact that the students will be respectful of all students and faculty leaders, they will not destroy any property in the host country, will be polite and courteous to the guest speakers, they will not use any drugs or get into trouble of any kind. Alcohol can be had outside the hostel premises but should be had in moderation. Both these forms specify that the faculty leaders have the authority and right to send the students back to the U.S. on the next flight if they misbehave and/or break the rules of conduct. We strongly recommend that all first-time faculty leaders use these forms and constantly remind the students that they signed these forms and must abide by the rules. They cover the faculty leaders and give them more power and authority to use disciplinary methods when things get tough and challenging.

It is of paramount importance for the faculty leader to build rapport with students enrolled in the short-term study abroad program. Researchers (Granitz, Harich, & Koernig, 2007; Koernig, 2007) have purported that three factors are needed to establish rapport --- approach factors, personality factors, and "homophily". Homophily is an important aspect of the program because it encourages a closer bond among the students ensuring that they are more comfortable

during the program. Ice breakers are also used to stimulate a close emotional bond between the students enrolled in the program and the group leaders.

Approach factors refer to the physical and psychological approachability of the professor (Faranda & Clarke III, 2004). It is important to communicate frequently and be available to the students via phone, e-mail, and after the orientation meetings, so that they feel at ease and comfortable in asking questions and getting clarification from the faculty leaders.

Personality factors refer to the kind, caring, compassionate, empathic, and respect that the faculty leaders show toward the students (Granitz, Harich, & Koernig, 2007). It is important to consider each student as "individuals", with a unique personality, be aware of personal and monetary situations, and be aware of most students' purpose for enrolling in the short-term study abroad program. This will assist the faculty leader(s) to better understand the students and build a good rapport with them.

Homophily or homogeneity refers to the fact that individuals are attracted to and bond with individuals who are similar to themselves. Faculty leaders could bring out the common features of the students in the group, and share specific issues about themselves. When faculty leaders share their personal experiences with the students about their own apprehensions and victories while traveling, they tend to bond better with the students (Koernig, 2007). We generally have at least five orientation sessions for the students before the program starts.

PRE-DEPARTURE CLASSES

After conducting seven short-term study programs, the most valuable advice that we can give to faculty members contemplating a short-term study abroad program, for the first time is to invest time and effort in pre-departure classes. We conduct 10, 3-hour classes in which we explain and introduce the program, introduce the host countries, and cover most of the lecture content.

The first part of the course includes 10, 3-hour classes for two weeks prior to departure. During these lectures, an introduction to the geographical and historical factors of the host country, colonization and immigration issues, political, economic, cultural, social factors that are prevalent and salient, dating, mate selection and family life patterns, parenting strategies, the human life cycle stages, beliefs and superstitions

are explained. Basically, approximately 80 percent of the lectures are covered in these pre-departure classes. Before departure, students are expected to complete an international and host country general knowledge quiz, submit a term paper on one of the ten topics assigned in the course syllabus. They are expected to complete a 66-item multiple-choice exam that is based on the lectures and assigned course readings which are based on book chapters, journal articles, and web citations.

The second objective of the course is completed in the host country which includes a few remaining lectures, the introduction of several local guest speakers, and visits to different preschools, elementary schools, and high schools, local home visits, visits to social service agencies, visits to museums, and places of interest from a cultural and historical perspective.

Exams are stressful and anxiety producing for the students and detract from the time that could be spent learning about the new culture (Koernig, 2007). Written projects are likely to take time away from other cultural activities, and it may be difficult for the students to find good scientific resources to complete term papers (Duke, 2000). The students are also required to write a "Reflection Paper" which is experiential in nature. For the study abroad program, the *final exam* which is not a cumulative exam is given in the host country.

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Since most of the students who participate in our short-term study abroad program are first generation college students, their funds are limited and hence, we encourage them to fund raise for at least one semester and generate \$500.00 each. This money will be used to pay for their recreational and cultural excursions in the host country. There are many different ways in which funds can be raised for the program. We encourage our students to attend T.V. show tapings in downtown Hollywood and Los Angeles. The studios pay each participant \$20.00 or \$30.00 for attending the T.V. tapings. We encourage students to bring family and friends to the T.V. tapings to increase their "pot of money". Another fund raiser that we ask our students to pursue is to sell tubs of cookie dough and chocolate bars. Finally, we have a massive garage sale two months before departure. Whoever contributes to the garage sale is compensated accordingly. We have been able to collect approximately \$10,000.00 through fund raising activities which has enabled many students to take advantage of optional excursions, which they otherwise, would not be able to afford.

THE FIRST DAY IN THE HOST COUNTRY

After landing in the host country, the first day of the study abroad program is often exhilarating, exciting, yet challenging. Students faculty leaders are tired and jetlagged, and need a change of clothes, they are hungry, and they are in need of sleep. At the same time, there is the excitement about being a foreign country and exploring the city.

Before the sight-seeing commences, the students need to check into their hostel and deposit their luggage. In most instances, the flight to Fiji and New Zealand arrives in the early mornings at which time the hostel rooms are still not ready for the students to check-in. We recommend that the students freshen up and change clothes in the restroom, and then eat a hot breakfast. After this, students are taken on a walking tour of the city that is led by one of the local guides. A walking tour is a good way to re-energize the students and acclimatize the students to the city, the bus stops, train stations, banks, ATM machines, grocery stores, and the post office, are pointed out during the walk. By the time the walking tour is completed, it is time for the students to check into the hostel and get settled in their rooms in the youth hostel. The rest of the afternoon is free for the students to take a nap, or explore the city on their own,

A good way to end the first day in the host country is to have an early, "Welcome Dinner" at a nice local restaurant where the students can further bond with each other and the faculty leaders. At this time, the activities for the next day are explained.

BALANCING THE ACADEMIC CONTENT WITH CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

We believe that attending class lectures, reading book chapters and journal articles, submitting term papers, and completing exams are significantly important for the course, but these are better suited for the pre-departure classes. A heavy emphasis on academics during the pre-departure classes/lectures, allows more time to be spent on cultural and recreational activities in the host country instead of spending time in the classroom.

As mentioned earlier in the article, we present 10, 3-hour sessions which focus on the academic content of the course before departure. We limit, the lectures that we deliver in the host country, but allow more local guest speakers to share their expertise with the students, schedule visits to museums, we spend time

visiting local families, we spend time visiting schools and interacting with the local children, we encourage students to participate in experiential learning activities, visit various museums, social service agencies, and spend time in cultural shows, i.e., Maori Dinner and Cultural Show, and spend time learning about the Fijian culture.

We strongly believe that it is important for students from the U.S. to meet and mingle with, and interact with students from the host country. This is done by arranging one evening at the beginning of the program as a “*Happy Hour*” where the U.S. students are able to meet their peers in similar fields of study to learn about the unique features of the host country.

While the students are visiting the host country, we complete the remaining 20% of the lectures. The students are expected to complete a reflection paper and a final exam that has multiple-choice questions and essay questions.

As part of the program, we plan once-in-a-lifetime recreational activities for students to participate in. These excursions are on the expensive side. Most of these excursions are not possible in the U.S. Funds from the fund raising activities are used to fully pay for these activities for students who participated in the fund raising activities and collected the required amount of money. Some of these excursions include: black water rafting, Ogo, a tour of the glow worm caves, zip lining, gondola and lugging, a cruise on the Milford Sound fiord and jet boating.

“Ogo” is an excursion that was introduced in New Zealand a few decades ago. Two or three students get into a gigantic plastic ball filled with a little warm water. The seal is closed and the ball is then pushed down a zig zag hill. The students “splash” around while the ball rolls down the hill, sometimes getting stuck at the zig zag corners.

Another excursion that students enjoy and get an adrenaline rush from is “*black water rafting*”. This excursion is sometimes called “*black tubing*”. This is a rigorous excursion and physical fitness is essential. The students are divided into groups of ten students. Each group has an experienced guide in the front and another guide at the back of the group. The students zip line from the ground level through a deep cave, to a river that is located in the cave. The students are given a rubber tube to sit on and a helmet with an emergency light that should be turned on only in an emergency.

The students sit with their feet locked under the armpits of the student sitting in front. They move in total darkness with the current of the river. If they fall off the tube, they are allowed to turn on the light on their helmet and one of the guides immediately rushes over and assists them. From start to finish, this excursion takes approximately 3 hours. Students inform us that this is one of the most exciting and exhilarating excursions that they have participated in.

Koernig (2007) specified that he believes in giving 1-2 free days to the students during the program. We too believe in this philosophy and sentiment. It is important to give students a few free days to explore the city and participate in cultural excursions that are meaningful and of importance to them. We found that tours to the “Hobbit” film shooting site, and the “Lord of the Rings” film locations are very popular and a favorite for many students.

POTENTIAL ON SITE PROBLEMS IN THE HOST COUNTRY

No matter how carefully and diligently the program is planned, small glitches, hiccups, and logistical problems will always occur. These problems are difficult to anticipate and plan for before the program. An explanation of commonly encountered challenges in the host country is absent in the literature (Koernig, 2007). Gordon and Smith (1992) remarked that romantic entanglements, getting up late, and misplaced airline tickets and passports are few of the challenges that the faculty leader(s) are likely to encounter. In this next section, we will present some of the typical challenges that we run into during the program. We will also provide some solutions, on coping with these possible problems.

Forming of Sub-Groups Among the Larger Group

During some of the programs that we have conducted, we found that students from similar ethnic groups tend to cluster together to form, smaller subgroups. Also, those who like to drink alcohol and go to bars and clubs at night tend to form their own small subgroup. This seems to destroy the group dynamics and cohesive spirit of the larger group. We have coped with this problem by bringing this issue up on numerous occasions in the orientation meetings, pre-departure meetings, and on the first day in the host country. We also assign points, which is a certain percent of the grade for the class to: positive and tolerant attitudes towards others, respect and

inclusiveness of all class members, and consideration and acceptance for different points of view.

Keeping Track of all the Students

One of the problems that the faculty leader is likely to encounter in the program, is keeping track of all the students in the group. A system that has worked well for us, is to assign a sequential number to all the students in the group before we leave the U.S. We make them go through this exercise in the pre-departure classes. We formally start this exercise at the airport when we depart. From this time onwards, whenever, the group gets on and off the bus, or when we visit schools and/or museums, or have restroom stops, we go through the "count off" exercise. So far, this system has not failed us.

Every morning, during breakfast, we discuss backup plans in the event that a student gets left behind. In most instances, we tell the students to take a business card of the youth hostel where we will be spending the night. In the event that they get lost, they can take a taxi from wherever they are and get to the youth hostel.

Students Arriving Late to Depart for the Next Destination

Each student is given an itinerary with times clearly specified for departure and arrival at different venues. The importance of punctuality is mentioned in the orientation and pre-departure meetings, and after landing in the host country. So far, we have not had problems with punctuality, except at one time, a student was trying to pack all her clothes and shopping items, when her bag gave way and completely disintegrated so that it could not be used. We advise all the students to carry a duffle bag inside their suitcase. In this case, other students helped this student by putting her things in their duffle bags. This unexpected calamity, delayed the departure of the bus by approximately 15 minutes.

Students' Overindulgence in Alcohol and Staying Out Late at Night

The drinking age in New Zealand is 18 years, so many students take advantage of this and sometimes young and underage students overindulge and drink a bit too much. The following day, we have a follow-up discussion with the students who over indulged and remind them that they are attending an academic course and are not taking a holiday. We remind these students of the "Course Ground Rules" and the "Code

of Conduct" they signed before departure. We also remind them that according to university regulations, if a student has problems with alcohol, they will be sent back to the U.S. on the next flight at their own expense. Koernig (2007) remarked, that this type of threat, can be extremely effective in preventing and/or solving this problem. To try to cut down on such incidents, we do not allow any type of alcoholic beverages inside the youth hostels.

Students Getting Sick

There have been numerous times when students have had minor medical problems while in the program. The common flu, respiratory problems, having an upset stomach, getting mosquito and insect bites, and experiencing nausea and vomiting are some of the common ailments experienced by students. One of the requirements that we insist on is that all the students get a dose of antibiotics from their family physician in the event that they might have to use it.

As faculty leaders, we too carry medicines with us for most remedies, especially medications for the common cold and cough, stomach problems, and insect and mosquito bites. The university provides medical insurance for all the students and the faculty members who participate in the study abroad program. In the event of a more serious illness, the students can visit doctors, dentists, and be checked into a medical facility.

STUDENT FEEDBACK FROM STUDY ABROAD COURSE

Recently a group of 28 students enrolled in our study abroad course, twenty-four of the students were female and four were males. The average age of students was 21 with a range of ages from 18 to 30 years old. Over 42% of the participants self-identified as Hispanic (N = 12), followed by White (N = 7), then Bi-racial (N = 5), Asian (N = 3) and African American (N = 1). The majority of enrolled students were seniors (N = 17), followed by juniors (N = 7) and sophomore (N = 4). Over 75% of students reported GPAs above a 3.00 and most students were Child Development and Family Studies majors or minors. In addition, to their academic standing, over 67% of participating students worked outside of school with work hours ranging from eight to 45 hours a week. Although all students reported being born in the United States, more than 50% of students had foreign born parents.

Upon completion of their three week study abroad program, students were asked to complete a mixed methods survey. For the purposes of this paper we have analyzed the qualitative data from these surveys and drawn out themes in their responses. There were three sets of open ended questions: The first set of questions stated "Did you find the study abroad program worthwhile? Did the program change you in anyway? If it did, specify and explain what type of effect it had on you." The second set of questions asked "How would you describe the study abroad program experience? How did the 3-weeks study abroad experience to Fiji and New Zealand change you as a person?" The third and final set of questions stated, "What qualities of the program did you think enriched your life the most?"

Did you find the study abroad program worthwhile? Did the program change you in anyway? If it did, specify and explain what type of effect it had on you. Three main themes, "*Environmental Exposure*", "*Personal*" and "*Future*", were identified as factors that impacted students and caused change in their lives. The "*Environmental Exposure*" theme emerged when students identified "experience of a new culture" (N = 10) had on them, and how being in a new culture facilitated their "learning about global issues" (N = 13). Thus student responses demonstrated that the environmental exposure they had from residing in a new culture not only made their study abroad experience worthwhile but it also had a profound impact on their learning. The second theme that emerged from student responses was the "*Personal*" theme. Under this main theme we identified personal development as students commonly reported on how this trip allowed them to "grow as a person" (N = 6), "become more independent" (N = 7) and finally students felt that during the trip they "found [themselves]" (N = 8). We also identified "personal awareness" under this main theme as students reported that their experience was "humbling" (N = 5), "changed perspective towards life" (N = 8), and allowed them to "[become] more open minded" (N = 7). The third and final main theme that emerged from these series of questions was a "*Future*" theme as students commonly reported that from this trip they feel they want to "explore more", "travel" and have found new "future goals".

How would you describe the study abroad program experience? How did the 3-weeks study abroad experience to Fiji and New Zealand change you as a person?

Two main themes of "*Environmental Impact*" and "*Individual Impact*" emerged from the students' responses to these questions. Within the "*Environmental Impact*" theme students commonly reported on specific cites visited "Fiji had the most impact on me" (N = 10) and how the trip made them aware of the different cultures, poverty and global issues (N = 7). The second main theme that emerged from student responses was the "*Individual Impact*" theme which captured student responses such as "changed perspective on life" (N = 8), or "eye opening experience" (N = 8) and finally the "experience of a lifetime" (N = 7).

What Qualities of the Program did you think Enriched your Life the Most?

Two main themes of "*Interaction*" and "*Travel Companions*" emerged from student responses to these questions. Within the "*Interactions*" theme students commonly reported on how "meeting incredible people" (N = 12) and visiting places such as the "Fijian villages" (N = 20) and the exposure to Fijian's simple lifestyle has enriched their lives as American students. Interestingly "*Travel Companions*" emerged as a second major theme in the responses of the students. Respondents identified traveling with a particular group of students (N = 5) being with their professor (N = 9) were major factors that enriched their lives enriched their lives.

Our findings indicate that the majority of students felt personally impacted by their experiences abroad. Students reported not only an experience of personal growth and development but greater personal awareness in terms of open-mindedness and appreciation. The level of impact was not only due to the exposure to people and experiences but also due to the exposure to physical places, such as schools, local people, and villages. The students highlighted the many different environments that had lasting impacts on them.

In addition to new experiences and exposure to people of another culture and physical environments, students identified study abroad companions as an additional factor that has impacted them during this experience. Students identified classmates and the instructors of the course as impactful and we believe this is an issues that deserves further exploration.

The results of this study are in agreement with the results of other studies that have been done on middle-class White students. Earlier studies also found that

participating in a study abroad program resulted in personal growth, increased social skills, increased self-esteem, and a changed perspective on life in general. Future studies might consider looking at further differences between middle-income White students' attitudes and those of first generation minority college students. These studies can explore if there is a difference between the cultural awareness and "world mindedness" of these two groups after a period of six months. These studies can also look at what types of jobs these students aspire to get after graduation. Finally, did the short term study abroad program ignite a thirst for travel in these two groups of students and who seemed to travel and do their internships in foreign countries?

It should be noted that one of the reasons that the program probably affected the students in such an influential way, could be that since a majority of the students were first generation, college students, they had not traveled outside the U.S. Thus, traveling to another country and being immersed in another culture for the first time, might have a greater impact on them compared to their White middle-class counterparts.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion and summary, the best advise that we can give to first-time faculty leaders who are interested in planning, organizing, and conducting a short-term study abroad program are: First, be very organized and try to keep the students busy and occupied for as long as you can. This is likely to keep them away from drinking alcohol and getting into anti-social activities. Second, every morning, while we are on the bus, we remind students to take their itinerary out and we go through the events of the day with them. If there are any changes in the itinerary, we pass this information on to them. Third, every few days, we remind the students about the "Code of Conduct" that they have signed. Fourth and finally, two or three times, during the program, we "check the pulse" of the students by asking if they have any issues and/or difficulties, and if so, they should discuss these issues with the faculty leaders.

In this article, we have given tips for faculty members who are interested in initiating, organizing, and conducting a short-term study abroad program for the first time. Developing, planning, and executing a short-term study abroad program for any length of time, can be a challenging and time-consuming endeavor. It can, however, also be one of the most professionally

rewarding and memorable experiences that faculty leaders are likely to experience in their professional life.

During the program, it is rewarding to see how within a 3-week time period, students mature, start asking a lot of questions, become more inquisitive, and tolerant, their social skills are enhanced, and they become more independent. For many of our students, this may be one and only overseas experience that might have in their lifetime. These students are eternally thankful to us for making such a difference in their life. For others, the program has struck a new awakening, and the thirst for travel has just been initiated. After this program, a few students become seasoned travelers and truly become global and world minded citizens. The students who have participated in our short-term study abroad programs, keep in touch with us, years after they have graduated and always tell us that the program was a defining moment in their life.

All the time and effort that the faculty leaders invest in the study abroad program, benefits the faculty leaders too. First, taking students on a short-term study abroad program and widening their horizons is an extremely satisfying and rewarding endeavor. The faculty leaders will gain exposure to and experience in different cultures and this knowledge can be very beneficial in the classroom to enhance teaching any course with international content. The faculty member is also able to establish contacts and liaisons with educators and researchers in the host countries and do cross-cultural research with them. More importantly, friendships and ties with colleagues from the host countries can result in lifelong friendships.

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