

Can You Ever Really Go Home Again?
An Examination of the Reentry Phenomenon for College Students Who Have
Studied Abroad

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Universities serve the public by maintaining an academic and social environment which encourages free speech and new ideas, as well as the appreciation of individual differences. When revisiting the very ancient beginnings of higher education one recognizes a theme which has remained present throughout the centuries: humankind advances through the adaptation to, and understanding of diverse cultures and their teachings. Indeed, pursuing the ancient mission of the university, the discovery and imparting of knowledge, the concept on leaving one's familiar surroundings to study in a foreign land is not a new one. Ever since the middle ages, scholars have traveled throughout the world to study, teach, and learn (Klineberg, 1976). In this tradition, the promotion of both study abroad and foreign student exchanges by American colleges and universities has been recognized as a means by which to foster economic, political, social, and technological growth for the entire nation (Garraty, von Klemperer, & Taylor, 1976).

While such programs have seen tremendous increases in student participation, the Council on International Educational Exchange estimates that over 250,000 U.S. high school and college students studied and traveled abroad between the years 1980 and 1981, one particular aspect of the study abroad experience has not received adequate attention. Addressed as "reverse culture shock" or "reentry crisis," this under-researched phenomenon occurs at the opposite end of the continuum from culture shock (Hogan, 1983). Researchers in such disciplines as anthropology, psychology, international education, cross-cultural communication, and intercultural training have long recognized the phenomenon called "reentry culture shock" - a process of readjustment at home (Uehara, 1986). Yet, an extensive review of the literature between 1950 and 1980 revealed only 20 articles specifically focusing on the topic of reentry (Bochner, Lin, & McLeod, 1980).

Aspects of the Reentry Process

The reentry adjustment process contains both positive and negative elements for the returning student. In effect, the cross-cultural learning experience through which the student evaluates and becomes aware of what he or she has experienced while living abroad can foster a well informed and worldly perspective on both a student's home culture and the culture in which the student lived (Uehara, 1986). From a psychological standpoint, the individual learns new coping skills, values, and perspectives, which are integrated into cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains (Raschio, 1987). Yet, on the other hand, the failure to successfully meet the challenge and implications of reverse culture shock can result in confusion and alienation or geographic expatriation or psychological expatriation. The extreme reaction is a zealous conversion to the new culture, in many respects similar to cult experience (Hogan, 1983).

The reentry process can be facilitated in a positive and growthful manner if returning travelers are prepared to address the cognitive dissonance caused by the reconfrontation with the home culture (Rhinesmith & Hoopes, 1972). Adaptation can occur if the returnee is patient, trusting, analytical, and able to develop a cognitive map of experiences in cultural learning (Raschio, 1987). In addition, Adler (1975) posits that unless culture shock is perceived and reacted to as a developmental crisis of identity, a valuable opportunity for growth is being lost. Adler maintains that training and simulation models, in addition to counseling strategies which are developmental as opposed to adjustive in nature, can generate more positive results with respect to reentry adjustment (Adler, 1975).

Empirical Studies on Reentry

Most studies investigating reentry have been atheoretical and non-data-based in nature. Many studies seek correlations among selected returnee characteristics (age, gender, previous intercultural experience) or host culture variables such as length of stay in host culture, degree of integration into the host culture and severity of reentry shock (Martin,

1986). For example, Gama and Pedersen (1977) studied the experience of 31 Brazilian study abroad participants returning from a stay in the United States. They assessed the extent and nature of the reentry problems via an interview format, and discovered two general problem areas: family problems and professional problems (Martin, 1984). Furthermore, Gama and Pedersen discovered that female grantees returning home after studying in the U.S. experienced more reentry difficulties than their male counterparts.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) found that younger scholars experienced more difficulty readjusting to the home culture than older scholars. To carry out this study, the researchers interviewed and administered questionnaires to 400 American students in France (1956) and 5300 American Fulbright and Smith Mundt grantees (1958 & 1969) who had studied throughout the entire world and returned home (Uehara, 1986).

Examining the reentry process for working adults, Adler (1981) surveyed 200 corporate and governmental employees returning to Canada after working overseas for an average of two years. Adler discovered that reentry into the original culture was a more painful transition than the adjustment to the host culture. Further, Adler found that irrespective of overseas location or kind of work assignment, the amount of reentry shock was equal for everyone. In addition, Adler also stated that within six months after arrival home, a majority of the returnees were able to adjust to their situations at home (Uehara, 1986).

Moreover, Adler (1981) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) reported that reentry difficulties are more intensive and occur a short period after the return, as opposed to occurring immediately upon return. In conclusion, it is apparent that these previous studies deal with reentry adjustment as a process of adaptation in a foreign country and readaptation at home. In essence, each investigator reported how different critical factors seem to influence the reentry adjustment process (Uehara, 1986).

Critical Variables in Research

Taking into consideration the empirical studies described in the previous section (Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; and Adler, 1981), Uehara (1981) selected the following important factors which are significant in the process of reentry adjustment: age, length of stay abroad, value change, level of adjustment in the foreign country, level of desire to return home, amount of information about home country, level of satisfaction in the foreign country and at home, past experience of travel abroad, motivation for travel abroad, and personal character. Uehara further remarks that studies have yet to examine such critical variables in depth (Uehara, 1981).

Some researchers posit that the relationship between these "critical" variables is not very clear. For example, a study by Martin (1983) examined 13 selected study abroad participant variables and 13 selected host culture variables, as well as reentry adjustment for 175 returned U.S. study abroad students. The data generated from the survey questionnaires revealed no statistically significant relationship between any of the selected "critical variables" (Martin, 1983). Martin (1986) further maintains that while the critical variable approach to understanding the process of reentry has stimulated thinking about significant influences on reentry, there remains a strong need to explore new theoretical directions for grounding of future research (Martin, 1986).

Need to Examine the Processual Nature of Reentry

Prior research has conceptualized reentry as a rigid phenomenon, or in some descriptions, as occurring in discrete stages. In several of the studies cited previously, reentry is believed to begin when the traveler is physically returned to the home environment and to finish at some point when the returnee is supposedly "readjusted." Disputing this though, Koester (1983) posits that this framework is conceptually inadequate because reentry cannot be defined by external temporal boundaries, and that the locus of the process is internal. It could be considered that the process of reentry may start when

the traveler is actually still in the foreign culture, yet anticipates the return (is "psychologically returning") or may begin some time after the physical return (in the case of the traveler who still acts as if still living abroad after the return home) (Martin, 1986). Finally, Koester (1983) challenges researchers to examine the processual nature of the reentry adjustment and to determine methods in which to investigate the phenomenon in terms of a process.

Communication-Centered Approach

Martin (1986) contends that given the empirical conceptual limitations of previous research (examining critical variables), a new theoretical approach based on a communication-centered perspective on reentry should be considered. Such a perspective recognizes the processual nature of reentry and represents a shift from the critical variable approach.

Explaining the nature of this different approach, Koester (1983) asks researchers to conceptualize reentry as the returning students' wrestling with their changed communication patterns (changes in meaning for symbols and changes in rules that govern interaction) in the foreign and home culture. Much of this proposed theory is compatible with modern communication theorists' emphasis on meaning and rules as the basic framework of the communication process (Barnlund, 1982). In summary, this communication approach stresses the importance of sojourner change and conceptualizes reentry as the sojourner's interpreting change through interaction, which in turn provides a rationale for studying the impact of communication in the reentry process (Martin, 1986).

Rationale for a Communication-Centered Course

According to Koester (1984) an academic course with the goal of studying communication processes during the intercultural reentry can be justified by exploring the following arguments: first, that intercultural reentry exhibits a unique communication forum; second, that returnees share common experiences and inquires which can be successfully

dealt with in a classroom environment; third, that attainment of the goals of international education require particular attention to reentry; and finally, that the study of communication is a useful perspective from which to understand the intercultural reentry (Koester, 1984).

Need for Reentry Programs

A survey of study abroad program directors from both public and private colleges and universities reported that over 68% of the responding institutions did not offer any type of reentry program (Gregori-Gahan, 1981). Surprisingly, of the 82 directors of such programs only 2 conduct mandatory workshops. Further, of the 82 directors surveyed, 26 actually offered reentry workshops, and 16 of the 26 described their workshops as informal in nature. These workshops ranged from walk-in help sessions to more extensive academic reviews of the study abroad process. It should also be noted that these workshops often did not focus on the problems related to reentry, and while several hours of the reentry workshops were dedicated to practical and personal issues, they lasted only one afternoon (Raschio, 1987). Most readjustment problems arise after the initial return, therefore making it necessary to deal with the problems and issues of reentry over a longer period of time (Uehara, 1986).

The Proposed Study

The author will support the contention that an undergraduate course (designed specifically for study abroad students) in which exchange program participants study aspects of interpersonal intercultural communications, as well as the role of communication in the reentry process may lead to lower levels of psychological distress upon return to the home culture. The psychological distress generated from the reentry process has been termed "Disintegration" by Adler (1975). The following paragraph by Adler summarizes how returning students are affected by the reentry process in terms of psychological stress connected with the second "U" (reentry phase) in the "W" shaped-curve hypothesis:

"The second stage of the transition is marked by a period of confusion and disorientation. Differences become increasingly noticeable as different behaviors, values and attitudes intrude into the perceptual reality of the sojourner. As cultural distinctions come into the perceptual foreground tension and frustration increase as the individual's ability to interpersonally and socially predict is deflated. More important is the growing sense of being different, isolated, and inadequate to new situational demands. Bewilderment, alienation, depression, and withdrawal give rise to disintegration of personality as confusion over individual identity in the new cultural 'scheme of things' mounts" (Adler, 1975, p.16).

Specifically, the author contends that psychological distress associated with the reentry into the home culture could be measured by the Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984). This 50 item instrument provides individual scale measures of respondent depression, anxiety, somatic discomfort, and stress, in addition to a profile of distress written and normed for the college student population (Sowa & Barsanti, 1986). Assessment of whether the proposed communication course lowers psychological distress associated with the reentry process, as measured by the Psychological Distress Inventory, would be facilitated by the administration of the PDI at times before and after the successful completion of such a course.

This paper suggests that the nature of the reentry process is unique. For example, Brislin and Pedersen (1976) contend that the readjustment to the home culture is often found to be more traumatic than going abroad in the first place. One source of difficulty during reentry which has been discussed in terms of changes in attitudes, behaviors, and interaction rules which the study abroad student made when adjusting to the foreign culture which in turn results in disruptions of behavior patterns with family, friends, and coworkers upon return (Koester, 1984). Moreover, Brislin and Van Buren (1974) maintain that the study abroad student who experiences the most problems in the transition back home is often times the kind of student who was most successful in adapting to the foreign culture.

Further, it has been found that younger individuals appear to experience more trauma during reentry than people who have experienced more intensive socializing in their home culture before an international exchange experience (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Finally, Koester (1984) suggests that many returnees do not anticipate a readjustment period, which in fact creates additional pressures during reentry.

Koester (1984) suggests that while there is little research which substantially describes the returned traveler, some general characteristics can be recognized. First, those returning often perceive themselves as "changed" and different as a result of their intercultural experience. Due to a separation from their home culture and environment they develop a new outlook on themselves as products of a particular culture. Moreover, returnees demonstrate a recognition that understanding the culture of their international visit continues to grow and change. Often the returnees express frustration with the lack of opportunity to discuss their personal experiences, and in effect, indirectly, to validate their unique experience and newly acquired knowledge (Koester, 1984).

In order to understand and recognize the importance of "support" within the transition from foreign culture back into home culture the literature on self-help groups articulates the importance of "comparable others" in coping with an array of personal and relational problems (Lieberman & Borman, 1979). Lieberman and Borman posit that student groups, missionaries, and other social groups that move in-masse can function as flexibly designed "self-help groups" which anchor members in a collective experience, maintain a host of comparable others, and empower participants to share resources and information in dealing with the "new" environment. In many ways gripe sessions can be cathartic among members suffering from similar problems, if perceived stress is ventilated rather than escalated (Adelman, 1988).

It is anticipated that the supportive literature previously outlined sufficiently demonstrates the unique problems which students returning from a study abroad experience

must encounter. The author maintains that the design of the prospective communication course would stimulate retrospective and prospective thinking about social support systems (e.g., needs, functions, sources, structures), prepare returning students to recognize debilitating coping strategies and serve as a rehearsal stage for the exploring some of the difficulties which might lie ahead (Adelman, 1988).

Concluding this section which outlines the proposed study in addition to providing a supportive rationale for the treatment (reentry course grounded in intercultural communication), the author will summarize the purpose of the study and also suggest how the results generated from the study could be applied to other populations and generate new ideas for further research. Additionally, the author will explore the perceptions of returning study abroad students regarding changes in close relationships during the reentry transition. In an effort to understand the effects of the reentry phenomenon, in addition to aspects of the reentry transition with respect to psychological distress, the following research question is posed:

How does an undergraduate course grounded in intercultural communication theory effect the level of psychological distress of reentry students as measured by the the Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa & O'Hara, 1984)?

The author maintains that this research question is purposeful to review in that the data generated from the proposed project could help clarify how the communication process effects the transition of a study abroad student from a foreign culture back into the home culture. Additionally, the author anticipates that if such a course, grounded in intercultural communication theory, demonstrates positive utility in reducing the psychological distress encountered in the reentry process then other applications could ensue. Specifically, other stressful events related to the academic experience such as the "freshman first semester," or senior's transition into the work world could be addressed using similar models.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Examining the literature pertaining to the reentry phenomenon, as well as both its positive and negative side effects for college students who have studied abroad, one soon realizes that such students who are about to return home from a study abroad experience have special needs. This chapter contains a specific review of studies which attempt to understand the reentry process, its implications, and which discusses different ways and methods in which college student personnel professionals can better facilitate the reentry experience for students returning from abroad. It should be noted here that the term "sojourner" is used extensively throughout the literature with respect to the topic of "reentry." Sojourner is a term which describes an individual who is returning back into the home culture after spending some extended period of time abroad (Church, 1982).

Effects of Culture Shock

Oberg (1960) is often credited with introducing the term, "culture shock," observing it as an "occupational disease" suffered by individuals who are suddenly introduced to a culture and environment very much unlike their own. Oberg maintained that culture shock is usually caused by anxiety which results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social interaction, such as customs, gestures, facial expressions, or words (Oberg, 1960). Culture shock is generally considered a normal process of adaptation to cultural stress often involving such symptoms as anxiety, helplessness, irritability, and a desire for a more predictable and gratifying environment (Adler, 1975; Arensberg & Niehoff, 1964).

Adler (1975) posits that in one sense, culture shock is a form of alienation. In another sense, however, it requires an attempt to comprehend, survive in, and grow through the immersion in a second culture. He further maintains that although culture shock is most often associated with negative consequences, it can be an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth (Adler, 1975). Relating to the theme of this

paper, Adler contends that the problems and frustrations encountered in the culture shock process are important to an understanding of change and movement experiences, and that such transitional experiences can be the source of higher levels of personality development (Adler, 1975). Finally, the conflict and tension generated by the transitional experience can provide the potential for authentic growth and development, in essence, "the transcendence from environmental to self support" (Perls, 1969).

Related Applications of Culture Shock

In reality, travel outside of the country is not necessary to experience the culture shock phenomenon. Parole from prison, leaving the military, marriage, divorce, unemployment, mid-life career change are all "transitional experiences" which share similar processes, difficulties, and consequences (Adler, 1975). In addition, the stage specific model of grief discussed in the death and dying literature (Imara, 1975) is strikingly analogous to the culture shock processes categorized as phases of adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955) or as stages in the process of cultural transition (Oberg, 1960; Adler, 1975). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) maintain that much the patterning in the adjustment process seems to occur whenever one relocates geographically even within the United States. They suggest that one might encounter emotionally salient differences in social subsystems- for example, in moving from a small town to a metropolitan area or from the deep South to the North.

Oberg's Stage Theory of Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock

Hogan (1983) maintains that Oberg (1958) was the first theorist to develop a more comprehensive model depicting the entire process of culture shock and reverse culture shock. The specific stages are outlined in the following paragraph: (1) Incubation: the sojourner is fascinated by the new culture and may even be euphoric. (2) Hostility and/or Depression: the sojourner must face the crises resulting from even the smallest dissonances in daily activities, such as bathing and eating. Everyone seems rude and totally unreasonable. (3) Adjustment: the traveler either begins to understand the foreign culture

and regains his/her sense of humor or becomes stuck in extreme dissatisfaction with the host culture. (4) Biculturation: the host culture is seen as having both positive and negative aspects; the sojourner behaves within the cultural norms of the alien social system. (5) Reverse Culture Shock: the returnee must re-engage with his or her education or profession, peers and family. An unsuccessful reentry may pass from euphoria to alienation and rejection leading to either geographic or psychological expatriation (Oberg, 1958; Pedersen, 1975).

Adler's "Transitional Experience" Model

The "transitional experience" model of Adler (1975) states an upward progression from a state of low self-and cultural awareness to a potential end-result of self sufficiency. Like Oberg's model, Adler's paradigm starts with the excitement and euphoria of Contact. Then it progresses to the depression and withdrawal of Disintegration, moves toward angry rejection of the alien culture during Reintegration, climbs to the self-assured flexibility of Autonomy, and arrives at the stage of Independence with the acceptance and enjoyment of social, psychological, and cultural differences (Hogan, 1983). Adler contends that the person who is "independent" understands the stages he/she has been through, is emotionally intact, and is able to have new preconceptions, assumptions, values, and attitudes challenged (Adler, 1975).

Adler's (1975) model is a developmental one in nature, as it contends that cross cultural experience can be truly maturing in the sense of adult identity, rather than just being recognized as an enhancement of the resume (Hogan, 1983). Adler (1975) maintains that a large portion of American nationals do not learn the most from their cross-cultural transitional experiences, because they feel that they themselves, do not have a culture; they do not realize how respondent they are to their environment and thus are apt to an extreme degree of shock when their recognizable cues are changed or taken away (Hogan, 1983). The underlying premise here is that conflict, change, and movement lead to the temporary

disintegration of personality which is an opportune time for an upward thrust to higher levels. Conversely, it is also a time of extreme vulnerability where a maturing effect can be thwarted by feelings of anger, uncertainty, alienation, and disappointment (Werkman, 1979).

The "U" Curve of Adjustment

Some researchers have found support for what has been described as a U curve of adjustment, which outlines the sojourner's level of adjustment as a function of time in the new culture. The actual "U curve" reflects the initial optimism and elation in the host culture, the subsequent dip or "trough" in the level of adjustment, followed by a gradual recovery to higher adjustments (Church, 1982). The earliest research on which the U curve hypothesis is grounded was Lysgaard's (1955) retrospective study of 200 Norwegians who had previously studied in the United States for the following differing lengths of time: 0-6 months, 6-18 months, or 18 months and over. Incorporating several items indexing both professional-educational and personal-social adjustment, Lysgaard found, using pre-departure and post-return interviews and questionnaires, that "good" adjustment was reported by the first and third group, whereas the second group was "less well" adjusted (Church, 1982).

"W" Curve Hypothesis

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) suggest that the reentry process may be represented as an extension of the U-curve to the "W" shaped curve. They illustrate a cycle of adult adjustment and readjustment experiences in a foreign environment and subsequently in the home country (Uehara, 1986). Their contention is based on a study of 400 American students in France (1956) and 5300 American Fulbright and Smith Mundt grantees (1958 & 1960) who returned to the United States after studying in various countries around the world. Gullahorn and Gullahorn maintain that after the rise in adjustment to the host culture, and after the sojourner has been socialized into new ways of behaving and thinking, the return back into the home culture is an emotional "down." This is often followed by a

gradual rise in emotional adjustment, as the individual becomes reaculturated (Martin, 1984).

Problems with Both the "U" and "W" Curve Hypotheses

It should be noted that the U curve hypothesis has been met with skepticism by many researchers. Selby and Woods (1966) studied 68 non-European foreign students at Stanford University and found that both academic and social morale rise and fall with the phases the academic year as opposed to a U shaped curve. In a related study, Becker (1968) found support that the U shaped curve may be relevant for sojourner from European rather than from less developed countries. Further, Klineberg and Hull (1979) studied foreign students from a total of 11 different countries and divided up lengths of time spent abroad in several ways and looked for evidence of a U shaped curve for several different variables such as, number of problems reported, personal depression, loneliness, homesickness, and opinion regarding the local people. Klineberg and Hull's research revealed that there was relatively little cross-sectional support for the hypothesis.

Finally, a longitudinal study over an academic year of a subsample of 20 foreign students in each of the 11 host countries indicated the U curve occurs in only a small number of cases (Church, 1982). Uehara (1986) maintains that several researchers are critical of the W-curve hypothesis by reporting that their experiments generated no significant evidence for a W-shaped curve (Adler, 1981; Klineberg & Hull, 1979). In addition, Church (1982) points out that, although the curve depiction of adjustment implies a longitudinal adjustment process within an individual, Gullahorn and Gullahorn's original study was cross-sectional in nature.

Coping Styles For Reentering Sojourners

In order to conceptualize cultural adjustment, some researchers have tried to indicate common sets of patterns of adjustment- differing from those types who adjust easily to those who adjust with more difficulty (Martin, 1984). Nancy Adler (1976, 1981) has researched the reentry experience of returned Peace Corps volunteers and returned

corporation personnel and suggests similar patterns of adjustment or coping styles for reentering sojourners (Martin, 1984). She contends that prior research on reentry has been lacking with regard to an emphasis on potential growth as an integral aspect of the reentry experience. Further, she maintains that there are three styles of coping with reentry experiences (Adler, 1976). The proactive style portrays the most growth, where the traveler recognizes the uniqueness of the situation of having lived in two cultures, and is primarily affected by internal stimuli (Martin, 1984).

Contrasting the proactive style, are two reactive styles of coping with reentry: alienated and resocialized. Alienated reenterers are characterized by a high need for external validation, in other words such individuals need other people to recognize the value of their experience abroad in order to recognize it themselves. In addition, these sojourners fail to recognize the uniqueness of having lived in two cultures, react negatively to the home culture, and wind up experiencing very little growth (Martin, 1984). Like alienated reenterers, resocialized reenterers also have a high need for external validation and fail to value the uniqueness of the transition period. Unlike the alienated reenterers, though, resocialized reenterers respond positively to the home environment, attempt to adjust back into the culture, and thus ultimately experience a period of adaptation, as opposed to a period of growth (Adler, 1976).

Critical Variables in Reentry

One purposeful approach in attempting to understand the reentry process is to explore critical variables which may impact upon the reentry experience. Some researchers have suggested that cultural adjustment is affected by several variables which may determine the adjustment of the sojourner (Martin, 1984). Such variables influencing the adjustment to a foreign culture have been identified and elaborated upon: background variables (nationality, status, language, etc.), as well as situational variables (living arrangements in host family, social interaction) (Church, 1982).

While it is understood that many of these variables are critical for the reentry process, several additional variables exist which warrant further consideration when exploring the reentry experience of study abroad students. In the following sections, three sets of such variables (background, host culture and reentry variables) are identified and elaborated upon. Martin (1984) posits that future research should study these variables and their relationship to the reentry process.

Background Variables

Gender

Since it has been reported that gender is likely to affect the cultural adjustment in the foreign culture, other supporting research suggests that gender may impact upon the reentry process as well (Baty & Dold, 1977). In their study of returning Brazilian students who had studied in the United States, Gama and Pedersen (1977) chronicled sex differences in the perceived level of difficulty of readjustment. Their study reported that males perceived themselves as being more adept than their female counterparts in dealing with family expectations and coping with family supervision. Females described more administrative redundancy and found value conflicts with their American family to be more of a difficulty than did their male counterparts (Martin, 1984). Moreover, Gama and Pedersen (1977) reported that female students stated changes in their attitudes and beliefs toward interpersonal relationships and sexuality while living in the United States, and as a result faced considerable difficulty readjusting to their families' rather conservative stances toward such topics.

Also addressing the impact of gender on intercultural adjustment, Baty and Dold (1977) maintain that an intercultural homestay experience was more distressful and upsetting for male college students than for their female counterparts. Baty and Dold (1977) contend their discoveries could be attributable to either a relatively greater adaptive efficiency on the part of female students or by the very nature of the homestay and experiences alone. In

essence then, Baty and Dold state that female college students may be more skilled in adapting to novel situations, or, on the other hand, it may be due to the fact that females were more protected in the homestay environment, and therefore less subject to stress (Martin, 1984).

Age and Academic Level

Research on intercultural adjustment and readjustment supports the idea that age and academic level also seem to be critical variables which impact upon the sojourner experience (Deutsch, 1970; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Specifically related to reentry research, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) suggest that older scholarship recipients, who were well established in their professions, reported less difficulty with reentry issues than younger grantees who were still dealing with identity issues. These younger scholars stated that "the resolution of their identity conflict abroad often meant they had become zealously converted to new values and they were reluctant to relinquish the security they had achieved" (p.40).

Martin (1984) supports the likelihood that college-aged students may be in a phase of "readiness when they embark on their study abroad experience. She contends that many have not settled upon stable attitudes and beliefs. As a result, exposure to a new cultural system where they are free from parental and social constraints may assist in the acquirement new beliefs and attitudes which may be difficult to abandon upon return home (Martin, 1984). For these individuals who were "searching" for themselves prior to their departure from home, the study abroad experience did not lend itself to a comparison of cultural systems regarding beliefs and attitudes. In reality, many of the students chose a cultural system of the new culture as their own, along with the adjoined beliefs, values and attitudes (Martin, 1984).

Also supporting the contention that age and identity are important factors in the reentry process, Hogan (1983) maintains that those study abroad participants who had not found

either their own identity, in the case of the immature adolescent, or their social identity, e.g., art students or minority students, become extreme converts to the security and prestige of their special role in the new culture. Moreover, research by David (1975) states that in fact a large contingency of Peace Corps volunteers return to live in their host cultures.

Previous Cross-Cultural Experience

According to Klineberg and Hull (1979) the amount of time an individual has spent time abroad previously does influence the cultural adjustment he or she makes in a foreign country. Once again addressing reentry research, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) report that students who had not previously been exposed to a major geographic move, or more specifically, a "psychological relocation" were particularly more likely to feel out of place upon their arrival back in America (Martin, 1984).

Martin (1984) contends that reoccurring experiences in traversing cultural boundaries could account for easier adjustments to divergent cultural systems, regarding either host or home cultures. Moreover, since expectations, or in some cases, lack of expectations, account as a critical factor in the reentry process, the reentering sojourner, who has in the past experienced reentering the home culture would at least anticipate some difficulties associated with such a phase (Martin, 1984). Also addressing the topic of previous cross-cultural experiences, Church (1982) suggests that those persons who have studied abroad previously could in reality be the members of a very select group. According to him, those who could not deal positively with experiences abroad in the past, in all likelihood would not volunteer to travel abroad again (Church, 1982).

Nationality

Martin (1984) contends that while there is some evidence that nationality of the sojourner represents an integral component in determining the sojourner adjustment in foreign countries, there seems to be little research supporting a similar conclusion about returning study abroad participants. Martin (1984) reports that compared to the numerous

studies examining nationality as a variable for foreign students' adjustment to studying in the United States, (Lysgaard, 1955; Hull, 1978), actual reentry has focused on only two nationality groups: American (Adler, 1976; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) and Brazilian (Gama & Pedersen, 1977). Moreover, Martin (1984) contends that further research needs to be conducted to discover the relationship between nationality and the reentry process.

Host Culture Variables

Location and Length of Time Abroad

According to Martin (1984) both location and duration of time spent abroad have been considered important variables impacting the sojourners' adjustment to a foreign culture. Illustrating this point, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) posit that students studying in European countries scored higher on satisfaction indexes than those who were spending time in Middle Eastern or South American cultures, where they may have met with greater communication and value dissonance. Furthermore, Brislin (1981) contends that sojourners residing in rural areas may be more satisfied than sojourners living in more populated areas and cities, because in effect there is less "competition" from other sojourners. Moreover, individuals studying in rural or "undermanned" areas are on one hand usually given more work to do, yet on the other hand are given more credit for their efforts than those working among larger populations. In addition, those who reside in the rural areas are given more attention, encouraged to contribute within the host community, and are often more likely to be remembered (Martin, 1984).

Addressing the influence of duration of time spent abroad on intercultural adjustment, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) suggest that duration of time abroad interacted with location in generating satisfaction. They maintain that the best amount of time to be spent within a particular culture, in actuality, may vary from culture to culture. Furthermore, it seems that the location and actual length of time spent abroad may also be significant in affecting the reentry process of the returning student. According to Brislin and Van Buren (1974) the

degree to which a sojourner accepts the foreign culture influences the severity of readjustment to the home culture. In other words, study abroad students who have absorbed the foreign culture's societal system face more difficulty returning as opposed to those students who may not have acculturated as well into the host culture. In conclusion, the more time an individual spends in a foreign culture, the better the likelihood that the values of that culture can be seized, which often leads to a stressful reentry (Martin, 1984).

Readiness to Return Home

Another factor to consider in the reentry process is a students' attitude toward returning home. Brislin and Van Buren (1974) contend that reenterers who are strongly opposed to the idea of returning home and who want to continue living in the host culture, are usually assured candidates for a stressful reentry experience. Conversely, Brislin and Van Buren also report that research supports the idea that reenterers who were looking forward to returning to the home culture experienced less stress upon reentry. Moreover, Adler (1976) conjectured that students who had a moderate ambition to return home would have the most growth inspiring reentry experience (proactive learning style) (Martin, 1984). In addition, Adler also hypothesized that students who exhibited a high ambition to return home would portray a "resocialized" style of coping, which represents more readjusting than growing (Martin, 1984). Finally, Adler (1976) claimed that "alienated" reenterers were characterized by either their very high or very low desire to return home.

Reentry Variable

Home Environment

According to Martin (1984) a final factor which may influence the reentry process of study abroad students relates to the reentry "environment" (physical and social) into which the student returns. Martin maintains that there are only two possibilities concerning the reentry environment: one, a student may return to an environment which is familiar or similar to the one he or she left (e.g., return to the same college, same home, same

friends). Two, a student may return to a different environment (e.g., change colleges, drop out of school, family changes due to divorce or remarriage) (Martin, 1984).

It seems that on the one hand, if a student comes home to a different academic or living environment, less difficulty in adjusting may be experienced due to the fact that such a move may be interpreted as just another environment to which one must adjust. Yet, on the other hand though, the reentry process may be more problematic if the environment is different from what he or she left because the person may not have anticipated the change or be prepared to cope with such change (Martin, 1984). Outlining the other situation, Martin (1984) posits that a return to a familiar environment may be disappointing to a returning student due to the fact that it might become apparent to the returnee that he or she has changed dramatically and yet the home environment has not changed at all. In conclusion, Martin (1984) contends that the environment into which the study abroad student returns may affect his or her reentry adjustment, yet the nature of that impact has not been addressed.

Intercultural Communication

Another approach that has been discussed is an intercultural communication perspective of cultural adjustment (Church, 1982). Brien and David (1971) explored the cultural adjustment of sojourners through the examination of actual communication processes between sojourners and host nationals. They contend that an integral component of adjustment seems to be effective intercultural communication. The authors further posit that such communication depends on the degree to which a flow of information and mutual understanding is transferred between the sojourner and host (Brien and David, 1971). Moreover, mutual understanding relies on the degree to which the sojourner comprehends the host culture. The prescription then for the sojourner, according to Brein and David, is to understand cultural factors which influence the communication situation. In conclusion, they suggest that additional research concerning cross-cultural differences

should be able to establish areas in which intercultural communication may be improved (Brien & David, 1971).

Intercultural Communication and Reentry

Koester (1983) has submitted a communication perspective in exploring the reentry process. She challenges the critical variable approach and offers a more theoretical framework of intercultural communication and its application to the reentry phenomenon. Koester (1983) states the following with respect to the reentry process: "A communication perspective on the return phase of the intercultural sojourn can provide a plausible explanation for the diverse descriptions of reentry and the variables that have been systematically researched, as well as take into account some of the important assumptions which underlie intercultural exchange (p.9)".

Koester submits the communication perspective as a method for reenterers to understand their experiences abroad and home at various levels (Martin, 1984). First, she contends that reenterers contemplate communication experiences in the host culture as a way of understanding the impact of the intercultural experience. Secondly, she maintains that reenterers study their interpersonal communication after they return to the home culture (Martin, 1984). A person who has resided in another culture for a period of time has been subjected to new symbols and new definitions for customary symbols, both verbally and nonverbally. When sojourners return to their home culture, they take back with them all of the interpretations of "new" symbols in addition to novel interpretations of old symbols (Martin, 1976). In a sense, communication during the reentry phase involves confrontation with previously known patterns of interactions with significant others which are no longer predictable (Koester, 1976).

Martin's Assumptions Regarding a Communication Perspective

According to Martin (1986) the following four assumptions form the foundation for a communication perspective on reentry. Assumption one, in order to comprehend the role of communication in reentry, an examination of the sojourner's communication (acquisition of meaning and rules) in three cultural contexts: the home environment before leaving, the foreign culture, and the reentry environment. Assumption two, the intercultural experience should be observed as a process of change for the individual. This process includes changes in meaning structure, in internalized rules for social interaction, and in communication behaviors. Assumption three, from the sojourner's stand point, reentry is the process of understanding and interpreting changes in the home environment and in reentry relationships. And finally, assumption four, it is only through communication with others that the sojourner reenters (interprets and facilitates these changes) (Martin, 1986).

Political Implications of Reentry

Exploring the political implications of the reentry process, Koester maintains that moving from the individual level to the macro level reenterers investigate the social and political messages sent from their country. During the reentry process a reexamination of such messages takes place. A person who spends an extended period of time in another culture, upon return comes face to face with a multitude of messages which may have been taken for granted in the past (Koester, 1976).

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects for this study would be selected from a student population at a large, public, eastern, predominantly white institution (N=35,000 undergraduates). Within this population, one-hundred subjects (N1=100) would be selected as an experimental group from among a subpopulation of undergraduate students participating in semester long study abroad experiences. This experimental group (N1=100) would receive as a treatment, enrollment in a semester long college level course grounded in intercultural communication. In addition, a control group consisting of one-hundred subjects (N2=100) would also be selected from the pool of undergraduate participating in semester long study abroad experiences. The control group (N2=100) would not be enrolled in the intercultural communication course. In order to account for the variance in the type of study abroad experience a student may have encountered (European vs. Third World) a stratified random sampling method would be employed. The following geographic subgroup categories: European, Third World, and Asian study abroad site locations will be used.

Treatment

For the purposes of this exploratory study, the treatment in this case would take the form of a semester long, three credit, undergraduate course which focuses upon aspects of communication and intercultural reentry. The ultimate purpose of the course is to study the communication process for an individual returning to his or her native culture after completing an extended stay in a foreign culture (Koester, 1984). The central integrating focus of the material covered in this particular course is grounded in the communication process. The materials used in the course highlight previous research on the general characteristics of reentry and descriptors of returned travelers. Course content and teaching methods are designed in a manner which maximizes opportunities for students to develop

awareness of change and to receive confirmation for an international study experience (Adler, Kealy & Hawkes, 1979).

Course Treatment: "Intercultural Communication and Reentry"

The central focus of material covered in this course is the communication process. The course material reflects previous research on the characteristics of reentry and descriptions of returned students. Course content and teaching methods are set up to allow maximum opportunity for returning students to develop awareness of change and to receive confirmation for their international study experience (Koester, 1984). The students taking this course would be motivated to continue their exploration of the international study experience within the realms of a formal academic channel, as opposed to just informal organizations and activities. Prospective students enrolled in this course would be expected to create a learning environment which relies heavily upon student involvement and participation (Koester, 1984).

UNIT I: Interpersonal Communication During the Intercultural Transition

This unit is designed around three sections. First, class discussions and exercises occur which allow students to describe their own reentry experiences generating an encompassing description of the characteristics of reentry. From these open discussions, students are able to recognize both the similarities and differences between his or her reentry and that of others (Koester, 1984). In the second section, time is allotted to developing a common understanding of the nature of human communication, specifically the role of symbols (meanings), perceptions, and expectations. A concise paper at the end of this unit asks students to depict a communication model of their own reentry (Koester, 1984).

UNIT II: The Relationship Between Culture and Communication

During this unit lecture-discussion, a more abstract level is provided for the major elements of the interpersonal intercultural communication process (i.e. values, perception,

patterns of thought, non-verbal communication) (Koester, 1984). In addition, students are called upon to recognize how these concepts apply to their own intercultural interactions. Finally, students are required to write papers and present class projects which demonstrate how a specific incident which occurred during their time abroad could be explained using intercultural communication theoretical principles (Koester, 1984).

UNIT III: The Impact of the Study Abroad Experience on the Individual

The purpose of the third unit is to provide students with the forum to investigate ways in which the international study abroad experience has brought about changes in professional or academic goals, values, attitudes and behaviors (Koester, 1984). Course activities in this unit start with an exploration of alternative explanations such as biculturalism and moral development, for the transformations which often accompany international experiences. Moreover, an attempt is made to encourage students to perceive themselves as change agents, who, because of their international exposure, are compelled to integrate cultural diversity into their personal and professional lives. Finally, students are asked to write a short paper in which they anticipate their role as a change agent (Koester, 1984).

UNIT IV: Intercultural Reentry and Communication Messages from Social Systems

This fourth unit attempts to explore how cultural value symbols, political terms, social roles, and foreign policies are questioned and reinterpreted during the reentry phase. Discussions readings and lectures which stimulate an awareness of the messages put out by larger social systems are provided. The unit topics include the following: cultural values, the family, the political system, the economic system, social organization of society and the nation's role in the international arena (Koester, 1984).

UNIT V: Integration

The last course activity in this course requires students to integrate all the course materials in the form of a final paper and class project. Students might create a hypothetical orientation program which for a group of international students about to arrive

in the United States, or an ideal reentry program designed for U.S. students who are about to return home after a study abroad experience (Koester, 1984).

Instrument

To assess changes in the reentry attitudes and personal adjustments of returning study abroad students due to a communications course offered upon return to a student's native culture, the following instrument is recommended.

The Psychological Distress Inventory

The Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa & O'Hara, 1984) is primarily designed to measure life stress in college age students. The 50-item PDI maintains four (4) individual scale measures of respondent stress, somatic discomfort, anxiety, and depression. Reasonably high test-retest reliability coefficients are reported for each of the four scales ($r = .72$ to $r = .83$) (Sowa & Barasanti, 1986). Students are asked to mark life events which they have experienced with the last twelve months. For each event experienced, they rate how adverse or stressful that event was on a Likert Scale where 1 indicates the item to be not adverse and 5 to be extremely adverse.

Scores are then calculated by adding the ratings for the experienced item in the appropriate PDI scales: Depression, Anxiety, Somatic Discomfort, and Stress (Lustman, Sowa & O'Hara, 1984). Apart from interpreting each scale as an index of symptom severity, counselors or programmers could use the PDI scales to create a distress profile. The authors warn though, that symptom comparisons within the profile should be made carefully, since the scale scores are not standardized (Lustman, Sowa & O'Hara, 1984). Support for the construct validity of the instrument ($r = .65$ to $r = .83$) stems from the strong relationship found between the PDI scales and stress-related dependent measures. The PDI is reported to be relatively unrestrained from social desirability biases and is not confounded by age, sex, or geographic location (Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984).

All of the scales on the PDI were developed by regressing items on the following self-

report measures of stress, Life Stress Questionnaire (LSQ; Lustman, Sowa, & Day, 1981) depression (Beck Depression Inventory, BDI; Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1972), ill health (Cornell Medical Index, CMI; Brodman, Erdman, Lorge, & Wolff, 1949), and anxiety (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, STAI; Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1975). It should be noted that the developers of the PDI maintain that caution should be employed in research applications that try to establish causal connections between scale scores and future illness (Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984).

The PDI is intended for use in college counseling centers and university medical centers; it has many advantages over other instruments used in such settings. Unlike the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway and McKinley, 1943) and related personality inventories, the PDI is concise and can be hand scored easily. In spite of its short 50-item format, the PDI allows a multiple problem assessment not achievable with measure like the BDI. Finally, the PDI was constructed, normed, and validated on a college population and is oriented toward the clinical disturbances of this specific group (Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984).

Procedure

Selected participants included in the study (N1=100 & N2=100) would be compared on the basis of scores derived on the Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa & O'Hara, 1984). The Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI) would be administered to selected subjects included in this study (N1=100 course takers/experimental & N2=100 non-course takers/control) at two particular times. The first administration of the PDI would occur approximately two weeks after a study abroad participant returns from overseas. A two week interim time between arrival in the home country and the administration of the instrument is proposed due to a phenomenon which is supported in the literature referred to as the "honeymoon phase." Martin (1984) posits that often times the newly returned study abroad participant is excited and happy to be home. After the initial period of visiting

with long-missed relatives and friends, the actual recognition that the returnee is at home begins to set in, thus the two week period processing the home environment has been worked into the design of the study.

The second administration of the PDI would take place in the final week of the intercultural communication course for the experimental group (N1=100/course takers) at the end of the first semester back home subsequent to a semester long study abroad experience. The control group (N2=100/non-course takers) would also take the PDI for the second time at the end of the first semester back home subsequent to a semester long study abroad experience. Since the experimental group (N1=100/course takers) will be exposed to the independent variable (intercultural communication course), it would be expected that significant variations in scores could evolve.

Hypotheses

H:0 (1). The control group and experimental group of returning study abroad students will show no significant differences in scores derived on the Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984) administered upon initial return from a semester long study abroad experience.

H:0 (2). Study abroad students participating in a semester long, three credit course grounded in intercultural communication theory will show statistically significant lower scores derived on the Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984) when compared to the scores of a control group not participating in such a course.

H:0 (3). Returning study abroad students who had chosen to study in either Third World or Asian locations would show statistically significant gain scores (post-test minus pre-test) compared to students who had chosen to study in Europe, as a result of participation in a semester long, three credit course grounded in intercultural communication.

Design

A Quasi-Experimental Design has been selected for use in this study. More specifically, the procedures proposed would fall into the Concomitant Variable Design category (Shavelson, 1987). The researcher would administer the Psychological Distress Inventory to both groups of study abroad students including the experimental group (N1=100/course takers) and the control group (N2=100/non-course takers) two weeks subsequent to arrival home after a semester long study abroad experience. These results would be recorded before the control group (N1=100 non-course takers) began participation in a semester long intercultural communication course designed for returning study abroad students.

This process would be facilitated through the cooperation of the Offices of International Education and Records and Registrations. Upon return to the United States after the completion of the study abroad experience all students would be contacted via a letter generated by the researcher and distributed by the Office of International Education. This reentry letter would contain a request by the researcher to volunteer to partake in a research study in which was related to the reentry experience of returning study abroad students. All students contacted would have the option of signing the request form and therefore agreeing to volunteer in the study, or not signing the document and therefore forfeiting their opportunity to be involved in the study. Also included in the letter would be a detailed description of all the procedures and responsibilities which participating students would have to abide by.

In order to maintain uniform procedures regarding the administration of the instruments, returning study abroad students would be required to pick up their following semester course registration materials at the Office of International Education where the Psychological Distress Inventory (PDI; Lustman, Sowa, & O'Hara, 1984) would be completed. Finally, the researcher would administer the PDI at three designated times, two weeks after students

had returned home.

In order to further facilitate procedures needed for the completion of this study, a concise "reentry" information packet and cover letter developed by the researcher and the Office of International Education would be distributed along with the PDI when students came into to collect their following semester registration materials. The information packet and cover letter would outline the procedures involved in the study once again, as well as provide some background information regarding the nature of the reentry phenomenon. Finally, in order to insure that student volunteers who had agreed to participate did not skip taking the PDI, an administrative mandate could be enforced by the Office of Records and Registrations which would block any returning study abroad student from registering for the next semester without a stamp from the Office of International Education stating that the PDI had been completed.

After the successful completion of the intercultural communication course designed for reentering study abroad students by the experimental group (N1=100/course-takers) the PDI would be administered during the last week of classes. The control group (N=100/non-course takers) would take the PDI for the second time also and a comparison of the test scores for each group would then follow. In order to assure that the control group participants (N2=100/non-course takers) complete the PDI for the second time, the same "administrative flag" procedure could be enacted once again with regard to registration for the following semester. In other word, control group participants (N2=100/non-course takers) could not register for the second semester following the return home from a study abroad experience without taking the PDI for the second time.

It could be expected that the experimental group (N1=100/course-takers who had received the independent variable (intercultural communication course) might display lower levels of psychological distress as depicted by the PDI.

Analysis

Psychological Distress Inventory

H:O (1). To insure similarity before treatment, analysis procedures would be based on a t-test comparing mean PDI scores of the experimental group (N1=100/course takers) and the control group (N2=100/non-course takers). **(Beginning of Semester)**

H:O (2). Analysis procedures would be based on a t-test comparing mean PDI scores of the experimental group (N1=100/course takers) and the control group (n2=100/non-course takers). **(End of Semester)**

H:O (3). Analysis procedures would be based on an assessment of gain scores (post-test score minus pre-test score) for students who had studied in either Europe, Asia, or the Third World. It should be clarified that the actual country studied in would be considered the independent variable and that the PDI score would be considered the dependent variable. An analysis of variance could be performed on the means of the three groups in order to demonstrate which groups benefitted most from the treatment (semester long course grounded in intercultural communication.). Furthermore, if statistically significant differences exist between the groups, post-hoc tests could be conducted in order to determine which groups are different with respect to the PDI scores.

CHAPTER IV IMPLICATIONS

If the results of this study indicate that a reentry course designed for returning study abroad students, which is grounded in intercultural communication theory, has a significantly positive effect upon lowering study abroad students' level of psychological distress often associated with the process of reentry, such findings could help foster the implementation of other reentry programs and courses. In addition, other courses designed to mediate stressful events associated with the academic experience could result. The author maintains that the content of the course proposed in this proposed study, intercultural communication, could be interchanged with any one of a number of different content areas given a particular student populations' specific needs. It could be reasoned that programs designed to familiarize freshman students to a university campus or graduating seniors to the working environment could use a similar format.

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