

Optimizing the Reentry Process



Raquel Arouca, Ph.D.

Reverse Culture Shock/Reentry Shock



- How do you/have you dealt with Reentry Shock with your students?
- What other information would you wish to know about Reentry Shock?
- What are the challenges to helping students with Reentry Shock?



Introduction

- Source: Ph.D. dissertation that examines how reentry support programs help students during the reentry process and how participants integrate the study abroad experience into their academic careers.
- A case study methodology was employed and qualitative data was gathered from eight students who volunteered to participate in two 90 minute workshops and an individual interview. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data with NVivo.

Workshops

- The workshops' broad questions and issues were designed to create discussions through a three-pronged approach to elicit information regarding responses to changes (external), changes in the self (internal), and coping mechanism.



Designing the Workshop

- I designed workshops that would acquire information from the students on linguistic, communicative and psychological issues as they went through reentry
- I made sure the participants were in a comfortable environment conducive for sharing



Participants Group 1

G1 students
did 1
semester
abroad
during Fall
2011

Returned
during
winter
break

Went
through
workshop
February
2012

Did
interviews
April 2012

Went
through
workshop 2
end of April
2012

Did
interviews
2
September
2012



Participants Group 2

G2 students did
1 semester
(Spring 2011) or
2 semesters (Fall
2010/Spring
2011) abroad

Returned during
Summer 2011

Went through
workshop
February 2012

did interviews
April 2012

Went through
workshop 2 May
2012



Optimizing the reentry process

Awareness

Returnees are exposed to different facets of reentry and a facilitator engages them in a honest, reflective, face-to-face dialogue about reentry.

Real Life

Validation



The students spoke

- Study Abroad
 - Changes in the self: “the fact that you were on your own, challenging yourself in your daily life” “much more independent”
 - G2: depersonalization “[one time] unattached to the situation”;
 - G2: negative case no change
 - Maintained LDR: “I Skyped with my parents” “I kept a photo blog” “kept everyone updated with a blog”
 - Disconnected: “easy to use technology as a crutch and not have to deal with issues of adjusting”
 - Perception of American culture abroad: (G2) “my friend turned to me and said ‘how does it feel having your president kill this guy’”
 - Sharing the experience: (G2) “my friend/boyfriend came to visit”



The students spoke

- Reentry
 - Positive: “felt like nothing had changed” “relief knowing how to act”
 - Negative: “trouble studying” “lost connections” “they just can’t relate” “people being wasteful bother me” “I miss my friends” “produce is not appealing here”
 - Depersonalization: (G2) detached from mental processes “and I forget a lot of things because of it”
 - Derealization: (G2) “I feel this is the trip [return]”
 - Perceptions of culture: “punctuality, it’s very cultural here (US), time is money thing” “there is a certain island mentality, being wary of people (there)” “I can pick out things I appreciate more”
 - Gender: “it was nice to feel more respected [in US]” “my manners were appreciated more [in US]”



The students spoke

- Reentry
 - Change in the self: “confident” “independent” “learned to be patient”
 - Social Dynamics: “people too busy to hang out” “it’s a struggle to reassert yourself back into your old life” “felt a little bit like an outsider”
 - (G1) Photo shopped
 - Nonverbal impact: “I touch people even less” “way more touchy-feely” “I miss their greetings” “it’s nice to have people keep a more respectful distance”



The students spoke

- Coping
 - Compartmentalizing: (neg) “I found myself internalizing and moving on” “a large chunk of my life is not talked about much, just pushed aside, I’m moving on” (pos) (G1) “things get ingrained and you don’t notice what is study abroad and what is just you”
 - Decluttering: (G1) “I put a lot of things in bags for Goodwill”
 - Decompressing: “I unloaded with my parents” “I went on a vacation before coming back” “I traveled for 5 weeks after”
 - Previously learned to decompress, because: “I’m away from my family already when I’m in Missoula”
 - Finding Balance: “I started shaking hands” “I feel like my old self” “it’s ok to be back”

Continue next



The students spoke

- Coping
 - Keeping busy: “learned to say yes to different opportunities” “getting involved in activities helps”
 - Memory: (G1) “nostalgic about it”
 - LDR: “keep in touch through Skype” (G2) “sending letters and postcards”
 - Social Dynamics: “picking individuals and individual situation” “more special to talk to someone who studied abroad” “my boyfriend was there for a while so we talk a lot”



Optimizing the reentry process

Awareness

Real Life

Returnees take the awareness of the changes that happened during the study abroad that are influencing their reentry and find ways to incorporate those changes in their own identity and their group memberships.

Validation



The students spoke

- Workshop:
 - Helped find balance: “I hadn’t realized how much my study abroad experience was still affecting me” “questions were really important, but I never would have thought of them” “I had thought about subconsciously and never put into words” “process it a lot better” “share the great and not so great experiences”
 - Coping: “when you talk to people who have the same feelings, it calms you down” “listen to other’s experiences of reentry helps”
 - Difference: (G1) “there is a difference between going about it without being conscious and going about it while talking about it”



Optimizing the reentry process

Awareness

Real Life

Validation

During Awareness, returnees validate both study abroad and reentry experiences. However, a second meeting after incorporation of the awareness into real life that validates those changes is also necessary.



The students spoke

- Students first framed the reentry by talking about the Study Abroad experience,
- then compared that experience with the Reentry,
- Among the discussions, they talked about the coping with the study abroad and figure out how to cope with the reentry or became aware of how they were coping with it.



Optimizing the reentry process

Awareness

Returnees are exposed to different facets of reentry and a facilitator engages them in a honest, reflective, face-to-face dialogue about reentry.

Real Life

Returnees take the awareness of the changes that happened during the study abroad that are influencing their reentry and find ways to incorporate those changes in their own identity and their group memberships.

Validation

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Reentry Support Programs

- How do reentry support programs help?
 - Someone to help them process the experience, facilitate interpretation of feelings and a safe environment to be vulnerable to talk about positive and negative experiences
 - A place to become more aware of their own changes in or reasons for their behaviors
 - Help professionals in the field gather information on what is happening during the Study Abroad (i.e., computer mediated LDR) and what strategies students are using to cope
 - There is a power imbalance between student and university's administration – potential problem for reentry support administered by the Study Abroad program



The Reentry Process

- The Reentry Process has a component of Reentry Shock:
 - Reentry Shock is the sudden awareness that there is a disconnect between the individual's inner cultural being and the social system around him/her.
 - Reentry Process: pertains both to the shock as well as the process to find balance between internal changes and the external reality
- Coping with Reentry means finding balance, living in the present and becoming conscious of the changes in the self, as well as finding validation for the experience as a whole (Study Abroad and Reentry)

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Questions?

Website access to the dissertation:

etd.lib.umt.edu/theses/available/etd-07082013-132127/