

Outcomes of Study Abroad in Three Domains of Human Development^{1,2}

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Abstract

Study abroad programs are important, increasing, impactful, and influential in agricultural disciplines. Research suggests that students who participate are changed. However, we do not yet have a clear understanding for how that change is manifested. How do students who participate in a study abroad program change? One measure of student change that has been employed at institutions around the country is the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI). Texas A&M University students who study abroad have been shown to be statistically significantly different from seniors in the national data. As such, investigation into the manifestation of changes in each of the domains measured by the GPI as a result of study abroad is warranted. The purpose of this study was to identify specific change outcomes in student's global perspectives through participation in a study abroad program. A qualitative phenomenology using semi structured interviews was conducted. Findings for the objective listed 45 specific outcomes, categorized across each of the three domains of human development.

Introduction

The American Association of Colleges and Universities recognizes the importance of integrating global learning into university curriculum and experiences (Hovland, 2009), and that study abroad programs play a critical role in global learning initiatives.

Study abroad programs have diverse and far-reaching impacts. They have been shown to influence culture, adaptation, communication, collaboration, and value of knowledge (Black et al., 2013) through empowering students to seek application of knowledge while embracing cultures. Other students have been shown to be impacted by exhibiting enhanced confidence, global

perspectives, intercultural sensitivity, and self-efficacy (Zhai and Scheer, 2001). Faculty participation in study abroad programs have stimulated curriculum development (Sharp and Roberts, 2013). Potential high school educators who participated in a study abroad program were shown to have substantial changes in knowledge and perceptions of knowledge, as well as perceptions of skills and dispositions in the context of global competency (Foster et al., 2014). Students have been shown to be impacted in their personal and intellectual development through constructs including empathy and emotional maturity as well as critical thinking and problem solving (Farrell and Suvedi, 2002). Still other students have been shown to be impacted in terms of intercultural awareness, personal growth and development, functional knowledge, and global interconnectedness (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004).

A record number of students studied abroad in 2015 (Institute of International Education, 2015). As they become more prevalent, it is necessary to foster deeper understandings of how they impact our students, and how we can shape educational experiences out of them. As such, multiple measures, theories and instruments have been created to explain and describe the impact that study abroad programs can have (Aboagye, 2011; Carlsen et al., 1991; Engle and Engle, 2003; Kelly and Meyers, 1995; Lee, 2011; Rhodes et al., 2014; Twombly et al., 2012). Carlsen et al. (1991) note that students who study abroad do change, and research exists that supports that idea. Indeed, the concept of what changes students incur through study abroad is well researched. However, less research looks at how that change happens.

Current data and the literature can show examples of students who have increased their global per-

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spective, intercultural competence, communication skills, teamwork skills, decision-making, and other soft skills through participation in a study abroad experience (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004; Farrell and Suvedi, 2002; Texas A&M University Office of Institutional Assessment 2012, 2013; Zhai and Scheer, 2001). Recent studies have shown agricultural study abroad programs lead to changes in critical thinking (Wingenbach et al., 2016), professionalism (Martin et al., 2016), self-management skills (Moore et al., 2016), and develop distinct viewpoints of growth after participating in study abroad (Redwine et al., 2015). The GPI is one effort at documenting and measuring that change (Braskamp et al., 2013), though it does not seek to explain those changes. We know that participating in a study abroad changes students. We need to know how.

Bolen (2007) asserted that assessment is one of the most important and relevant pursuits in the discussion of study abroad programs. The need for documented evidence of learning outcomes and measured successes as a result of study abroad programs is echoed by Chieffo and Griffiths (2004). Reflection is an integral part of study abroad programs (Harder et al., 2012; Lamm et al., 2011) and can be an important tool in experiential learning, as well as tool in measuring and assessment in study abroad programs (Black et al., 2013).

Ultimately, the literature points to the notions that study abroad program should continue to be studied, a need for assessing learning exists, and a need for a clear understanding of the impact on student participants is slow to materialize.

One tool used in assessing study abroad programs is the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI). The GPI creators sought to create a tool to help answer: "How do I know," "Who am I," and "How do I relate to others?" (Braskamp et al., 2013). These questions are typified and expressed in a three-domain dynamic, focused on the cognitive (or thinking) domain, intrapersonal (or feeling) domain, and the interpersonal (or relating) domain (Kegan, 1994).

Since its development, researchers continue to examine the how differences in global perspectives are expressed by different students, and whether changes that occur in students who participate in experiences like study abroad are manifested in their perspectives measured in the GPI (Braskamp et al., 2013).

Texas A&M University has been employing the GPI to measure global learning outcomes since 2010. In the most recent study, the Texas A&M University Office of Institutional Assessment (2013) notes that students who studied abroad were significantly different from seniors in general at Texas A&M University in the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domain. More specifically, students who studied abroad were statistically different from seniors in each of the following constructs on the GPI: cognitive knowing, intrapersonal affect, interpersonal social responsibility, and interpersonal social interaction.

Since the GPI has shown to be reliable and valid (Braskamp et al., 2013) and students who have studied

abroad at Texas A&M University have been shown to perform significantly different from the general population of seniors at the university (Texas A&M University Office of Institutional Assessment, 2013), the constructs that the GPI measure are worth investigating in terms of how they impact change in students who study abroad. This study will utilize the theoretical underpinnings of the GPI as a theoretical framework, and employ a qualitative follow-up on the quantitative measures of the GPI.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by two theories, Kegan's theory of Human Development (Kegan, 1994), which is the theoretical framework used in constructing the GPI (Braskamp et al., 2013) and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). Both theories are focused on cognitive processes that occur as we make meaning from events in our life. Kegan's theory of Human Development defines domains that explain the nature of changes, where Bandura's Social Cognitive theory addresses causal dynamics.

Kegan's theory of human development (1994) presents a multi-dimensional perspective on holistic development. Kegan notes that as people seek to make sense of the world around them, they rely on thinking, feeling and relating with others to construct their own meaning. Thus, three domains of human development were identified: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. King and Baxter Marigold (2005) connected these domains to student development. As we seek to explain how changes happen in students as a result in study abroad programs, it is essential to view them through a lens of interpersonal, cognitive, or intrapersonal domains. The interpersonal domain addresses the question, "How do I relate to others?" (Braskamp et al., 2013), while the intrapersonal domain addresses the question, "Who am I?" and the cognitive domain answers the question, "How do I know?" Though useful in framing context, this model does not claim to offer causal discussions. Additionally, specific deliverables, skillset benchmarks, or learning outcomes are not explicitly addressed in the model.

In seeking causal models, we turn to Bandura (1986) who does claim to explain causality, and does so with a model of triadic reciprocity: *"In this model of reciprocal causality, interpersonal factors in the form of cognitive, affective and biological events; behavioral patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally."* (Bandura, 1999, p. 23)

Bandura (1999) notes that behavior effects and is effected by our personal factors. Our personal factors effect and are effected by our environment. Our environment effects and is effected by our behavior.

In this study, we sought to investigate how changing environments (through study abroad) leads to change in personal factors and behaviors as explained by three domains of human development (interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive), thus connecting Bandura (1986) to Braskamp et al. (2013).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify specific change outcomes in student's global perspectives through participation in a study abroad program. In meeting that purpose, the following objectives were employed: (1) identify specific change outcomes in students' global perspectives through participation in a study abroad program, and (2) connect specific changes identified in the first objective to Kegan's domains of human development.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative phenomenology design using semi-structured interviews to collect data and constant comparative method with grounded theory to analyze data. Selected methods and results of this study are part of a larger project and similar descriptions exist (Redwine et al., 2015) but full descriptions are disclosed herein.

The population of this study comprised student participants in the Texas A&M University Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC) department's Namibia study abroad program from 2012-2014 (N=34). These students are mostly female, though both genders were represented; mostly undergraduate, though both graduate and undergraduate students were represented. Students are mostly white and are between the ages of 18 and 28. These students participated in an international education program in Namibia, where they earned six hours of credit from the department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications at Texas A&M University. Each iteration of the program was more than two but less than six weeks in length, and occurred in July and August of each year.

Phenomenologies are conducted to "depict the essence or basic structure of an experience," (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Merriam notes that qualitative research is useful in determining "*how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences,*" (Merriam, 2009, p.5). Qualitative studies oftentimes follow quantitative studies in a similar area of inquiry (Merriam, 2009). Quantitative data about potential change in students' global perspective has been collected and published by Texas A&M University's Office of Institutional Assessment. This study focused on the interpretation of the experience and how students define and make meaning of changes resulting from their study abroad experience.

We purposively sampled students who completed the study abroad program prior to 2014. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that in qualitative studies, adequate sample size is achieved when data saturation is achieved. As such, our sample size was determined by data saturation. In this study, data saturation was reached at the completion of ten interviews. The sample population included both graduate and undergraduate students, both males and females, and students of

multiple majors and academic disciplines. Subject were assigned aliases using popular Namibian names gathered from <http://www.top-most-popular-baby-names.com>.

Merriam asserts that interviews are the most appropriate form of data collection in qualitative phenomenologies (Merriam, 2009). As such, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data about how students changed through participation in a study abroad program. Questions were created with Patton's (2002) six types of interview questions in mind: experience and behavior questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographic questions. An interview protocol was developed by the researcher based on the theoretical frameworks of the study, as well as practical knowledge from being a co-program leader and instructor for a study abroad program. Questions were designed to promote discussion about each area of Kegan's (1994) Theory of Human Development. Two pilot interviews were conducted to refine and solidify interview protocol (Merriam, 2009). Participants in the pilot interview were chosen because of their participation in the ALEC Guatemala study abroad program and ALEC Brazil study abroad program. Participants were interviewed in person, when possible, or by Skype when the participant was geographically prohibited from meeting with the researchers. Participants were coded anonymously, and informed consent was obtained before interviews commenced. Interviews were recorded for clarity and member recall.

Trustworthiness was maintained by triangulation, peer debriefing, and frequent member checks (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Researchers triangulated data collected from interviews with field notes and observations from the study abroad program, and with observation notes collected during the interview. Researchers engaged in frequent member check and peer debrief with non-involved personnel, as well as on-site team interactions.

Data was collected and analyzed using grounded theory and the constant comparative method (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Interview transcripts and field notes were used to compare participant responses and identify patterns in the data. Using grounded theory, researchers used a theoretical sampling (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) approach to identify outcomes and group them according to domains of growth identified in the theoretical framework (Kegan, 1994). Therefore, we aligned specific outcomes identified in the data with domains of human development. Thus, findings show outcomes specific to the intrapersonal domain, outcomes specific to the interpersonal domain, and outcomes specific to the cognitive domain.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). As such, it is necessary to identify and monitor potential bias or subjectivity from the researcher's perspective. The lead author's bias manifested from expe-

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Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Interview Participants

Alias	Study Abroad Cohort	Gender	Classification	Major
Martinique	2013	F	Graduate	ALEC
Ninda	2013	M	Junior	AGCJ
Berriz	2013	M	Sophomore	AGCJ
Shilli	2013	M	Junior	AGCJ
Ndali	2012	F	Senior	AGCJ
Hilya	2013	F	Graduate	ALEC
Tuhafeni	2012	F	Senior	AGBU
Serio	2012	M	Junior	AGCJ
Nande	2013	F	Senior	AGCJ
Annika	2012	F	Junior	AGBU

Note: Classification at time of study abroad is reported.

periences as an instructor of the ALEC Namibia Study Abroad program. Therefore, when analyzing data, it was likely that observations were influenced from that experience as an instructor and enhanced by that perspective.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive characteristics of the sample are displayed in Table 1. Participants represented undergraduate and graduate students majoring in ALEC, Agricultural Communications and Journalism (AGCJ), and Agricultural Business (AGBU), and included males and females.

As described in the methods section, based on the principal of theoretical sampling (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) we coded data by aligning identified outcomes with each domain of human development (Kegan, 1994).

Intrapersonal Domain

Braskamp et al. (2013) notes that the intrapersonal domain encompasses both identity and affect. Identity is characterized by an awareness of what makes an individual unique, and acceptance of demographic dimensions of an individual's identity. Braskamp et al. (2013) describe affect as an equivalent to an individual's emotional intelligence or emotional confidence.

This theme was represented in the data by statements that described outcomes specific how participants viewed themselves. The demographic dimensions of intrapersonal outcomes were noted by Ndali who stated: *"I remember being on the trip. I was the only African American in the group. I was the only African American woman as well. So a lot of people there would ask me where I am from, figuring out, 'What race are you, are you Namibian, are you American?' I would tell them, 'No I am not, my parents aren't from Africa. I don't know how far back my roots go or if I tie to the area.' It was cool to have them call me out and have those discussions and those thoughts"* (Ndali).

Intrapersonal outcomes relative to emotional confidence or intelligence also emerged. This was characterized by statements that showcase confidence or emotional change, as Tuhafeni noted, *"It built me. I felt more confidence in myself. I have done this before, I can take negative feedback and it helped in that sense."*

Overall, intrapersonal outcomes spanned multiple concepts and specific deliverables. Some saw improve-

ments in financial skills: *"It brings you back to reality that you do spend a lot of money on ridiculous things. I think I am more frugal since I have been back. I see that in myself,"* noted Tuhafeni. Others gained a propensity to travel; Shilli, Ndali, and Tuhafeni indicated that this study abroad program led them to go on a second study abroad program.

Ninda said, *"I learned all this fun stuff, and I got back to a classroom and it's like... Can I just have a major in study abroad?"* Serio noted, *"I feel like one thing is that it helped me to become more independent. After study abroad, I went on several trips by myself. Before I had only traveled with my family. After study abroad I didn't need to rely on others for contentment."*

Still others grew in emotional intelligence; *"I am more fearless now,"* (Nande), and *"I was a more mature person coming out of the trip than I was going into it,"* (Serio). Serio also highlighted concepts of self-management and awareness: *"I didn't need to rely on others for contentment. I learned to be able to facilitate my own needs."*

Interpersonal Domain

The second theme that emerged from interview data included outcomes that related to Kegan's (1994) interpersonal domain, as typified by Berriz: *"My biggest growth was with people. You are with other people constantly, either from another culture or who you traveled with. Two people can look at the same thing and have a different opinion of it."* Braskamp et al. (2013) notes that this domain is usually characterized by interdependence and concern for others, as well as engagement with others, especially those who are different.

Many interpersonal outcomes were characterized by interdependence, as evidenced by Tuhafeni's comment: *"I think there are personal benefits that we get from study abroad. I had three weeks with new people and you've got to figure it out. I met great friends, and actually friends that I still talk to on a regular monthly basis."* Shilli said, *"There was a moment when I realized we were all friends. We all sat for an hour and a half, crying and laughing. That's when I realized how close we all were. We depended on each other to get through."* Nande echoed, *"Getting to go on a trip like that where you depend on people that you don't really know was a big adjustment and a big learning experience."*

Interdependence was also characterized by civil disagreement for the greater good. Berriz noted the need for growing in conflict management, *"I learned how to deal with people in a different way. Before I was hesitant to confront people and tell people 'No.'" Tuhafeni said, "There are people that have differing viewpoints and ideas, and you become more patient. You have to decide that this is not your place to interject."* Martinique echoed, *"I have a low tolerance for certain things in people. I tried to not let that show as much. I have an awareness of that and how to handle people."*

Along this vein, Serio noted, *"I was on a trip with fourteen other people the entire time. I don't consider myself*

much of a people person and I thought, 'How am I not going to kill everybody by the end of the trip?' I learned ways to be adaptable and work with other people."

In addition, interpersonal outcomes were characterized by engagement. Ndali noted: "We had a group of students who come from different backgrounds and cultures and we also have persons of authority, graduate students, undergrads, and our professors as well and everybody brought their own perspectives to the group, their own beliefs, and their own knowledge. Even with that there were some struggles within the group. We had to work together." (Ndali)

Also relative to engagement, Hilya said, "I am more comfortable with people. When you engage with other cultures, you are more comfortable with your own." Annika also echoed the engagement aspect with other cultures, "I am a relator. I can relate to those from another country or those that have been in another country. I relate better now." Annika succinctly captured engagement: "I expected differences, but there were similarities too." Each of these characteristics were manifested in the outcomes associated with the interpersonal domain.

Cognitive Domain

Braskamp et al. (2013) described the cognitive domain as being characterized by knowing and knowledge, where knowing comprises complexity in making judgments and decisions about truth and importance as well as how information is learned, and knowledge comprises understanding issues and awareness of or proficiency in global concerns. Outcomes related to both knowing and knowledge were articulated by interview participants.

Martinique noted the concept of increasing complexity, "Working on an international research project, it was [another student's] first grad school assignment, and I realized how much I had grown. I learned to clarify when needed. I thought about how I can adjust my teaching."

As for judgments and decisions, Annika noted, "When I got back, that is when I started making decisions that were important to me, not just making decisions because of what was expected of me."

Methods of knowledge gain were also typified in this theme. Berriz said, "I think about it a lot. I appreciate school more now. It makes me want to attend class to learn and not just get the grade." Serio described a revelation in learning styles: "I am a very kinesthetic learner and I learn by doing. This program helped me do that and it was a great process to practice that. Before I went, I had more formalized classroom learning experiences. Once I got to Namibia, it reaffirmed for me that yes, I can learn in a classroom, but it showed me that there is a better more practical way of learning: through experience." (Serio)

Serio further described the concept of knowing, "I think that I learn by doing and being thrown into a situation where I had to do and being in close quarters with so many people for such a compact period really pushed me to learn those sort of skills." This learning style assessment was congruent with the views of Nande, who said, "I am very kinesthetic. I have to be moving to learn something. Sometimes it was hard to learn but it was an experience in itself. We were out getting our hands dirty and interacting with it."

Ndali extended this theme to instructors as well as students, "Study abroad trips to me are not about us taking a vacation. It's a learning process for both students and teachers." Regarding understanding issues of global concern, Martinique stated, "I always went into the trip with the traditional ag sense, like dairy and crops, but the other components like water and different crops were insightful. I learned a lot." Hilya echoed, "I

Table 2. Specific Outcomes of Study Abroad

Statement Number	Theoretical Domain	Statement
IA1	Intrapersonal	I am more independent
IA2	Intrapersonal	I am more likely to travel now
IA3	Intrapersonal	I am more confident in my skills and experiences
IA4	Intrapersonal	I handle tension better
IA5	Intrapersonal	I learned to appreciate the comforts of my life
IA6	Intrapersonal	I no longer rely on the comforts of my life
IA7	Intrapersonal	I feel more privileged now
IA8	Intrapersonal	I am more financially responsible
IA9	Intrapersonal	I solidified/ clarified my career goals and interests
IA10	Intrapersonal	I understand my strengths and abilities better
IA11	Intrapersonal	I am proud of my academic achievement
IA12	Intrapersonal	I try not to be too introspective
IA13	Intrapersonal	I enjoy being outdoors more
IA14	Intrapersonal	I am more mature
IA15	Intrapersonal	I am more flexible in making plans
IA16	Intrapersonal	I am more organized now
IA17	Intrapersonal	I realized how small I am
IA18	Intrapersonal	I am more fearless now
IE1	Interpersonal	I am better at facilitating conflict resolution
IE2	Interpersonal	I am more people oriented
IE3	Interpersonal	I am more comfortable interacting with people I don't know
IE4	Interpersonal	I communicate better with people I am close to
IE5	Interpersonal	I can forge friendships quickly now
IE6	Interpersonal	I appreciated being alone more
IE7	Interpersonal	People see me differently now
IE8	Interpersonal	I am more tolerant of others
IE9	Interpersonal	I am less tolerant of certain traits
IE10	Interpersonal	I seek others with international experiences
IE11	Interpersonal	I have a deeper appreciation for my family
IE12	Interpersonal	I am better with non-verbal communication
IE13	Interpersonal	I don't like to talk about my experiences all the time
IE14	Interpersonal	I listen more now
C1	Cognitive	I understand international issues more
C2	Cognitive	I became more patient
C3	Cognitive	I reaffirmed an interest in international development as a passion/ career
C4	Cognitive	I am better able to make comparisons to other cultures
C5	Cognitive	I learned how to do research and test an idea
C6	Cognitive	I look at decisions differently
C7	Cognitive	I relate everyday experiences to my international experiences to make sense of them
C8	Cognitive	I am more academically focused now
C9	Cognitive	I choose harder classes now
C10	Cognitive	I am a more adaptable learner
C11	Cognitive	I learned to prioritize activities now
C12	Cognitive	I no longer jump to conclusions
C13	Cognitive	I experienced depression when I got home

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definitely have been able to increase my knowledge of southern Africa, definitely increased knowledge of cultural sensitivity, and photography, and more knowledge of landscape and trans-boundary issues." These characterizations of knowing and knowledge helped define the cognitive domain.

Specific Outcomes

Each outcome statement from all the interviews that identified a specific outcome was arranged into one of the three domains of human development. We used constant comparative method to compare each statement against others until a complete list of outcomes was created. Those outcomes are reported along with their thematic categorization in Table 2.

These outcomes were attributable to participation in a study abroad program. Just as Bandura (1986) notes that a change in environment elicits a change in behavior and personal factors, interview participants recognized the impact that a new learning environment had on their development. Ninda noted, *"I feel better as a person. I have more knowledge. You come here and it's the same old thing. You go there and it's something completely new and completely different and that's good. New is good."*

Further evidence that the outcomes identified were attributable to study abroad is related to Bandura's (1986) suggestion that change in behavior can elicit change in personal factors and environment. Berriz noted, *"I was absolutely impacted. It would be impossible not to. Especially given the tools we were given from instructors, like the assignments and stuff."*

The study abroad program being investigated in this project featured several purposeful assignments, including intense group reflections designed to further enhance the experiences of students and allow them to internalize and conceptualize their experiences. These reflections and assignments are likely the genesis for the findings and the catalyst for similar causal implications. Findings indicate that the outcomes that participants identified fit within Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, and those outcomes can be attributed to participation in a study abroad.

Practitioners should avoid limiting definitions of student change to performance on surveys like the GPI or other measures. Such inquiries are myriad and purport to explain changes in student development (Carlsen et al., 1991), however, as this study suggests, those measures may be theoretically sound, the nature of student change is more complex and subjective than can be accurately captured by such methods. By only investigating student change with traditional quantitative methods, unanswered questions about the manifestation of change would linger.

Universities should continue to facilitate opportunities for global learning. This recommendation supports the body of knowledge concerning the benefits of global learning and the complex nature of global learning (Carlsen et al., 1991; Farrell and Suvedi, 2002; Hovland, 2009). Practitioners and educators in international agri-

culture and extension education have committed to global experiences for our students. This study suggests that those efforts should continue and be further encouraged. Global learning does indeed change students. Now, armed with a clearer understanding of how students change, practitioners are better able to be responsive to the needs of students in recruiting and facilitating these experiences. Just as Dewey (1938) noted nearly a century ago, all education is experiential but not all experiences are educational, so it is with global learning. Let us employ this knowledge toward meeting the call of building meaningful experiences for our students in an international setting with renewed vigor and purposeful approaches.

Summary

Study abroad programs play an important part in higher education, as does understanding how students change and grow after participating in a study abroad. Students in this agricultural study abroad identified 45 specific outcomes attributable to their participation in study abroad. These outcomes manifested in each of Kegan's (1994) model of human development: intrapersonal (n=18), interpersonal (n=14) and cognitive (n=13). Study abroad leaders should plan instructional and reflective activities that highlight these areas of growth. Recruitment strategies can tout these outcomes when soliciting future participants or in articulating the benefit of study abroad to administrators, parents or other stakeholders.

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